

COMINTERN AND THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR IN SPAIN

Svetlana Pozharskaya
Institute of Universal History of the Russia
Academy of Sciences

Resumen

El artículo se preocupa por la influencia del Comintern en la denominada Revolución española. La autora expone el papel desempeñado por la Comintern en la internacionalización del conflicto español. La intervención política de Stalin en España no fue sólo motivada por la ideología sino que también influyó el miedo a la amenaza del nazismo en Europa. Por este motivo, como argumenta la autora, la contribución del Comintern en la Guerra Civil española no sólo fue política sino también de apoyo militar a la causa republicana mediante voluntarios, armas y municiones.

Palabras clave: Comintern, Stalin, Brigadas Internacionales, Política europea.

Abstract

This article focuses the influence of the Comintern in the so-called Spanish Revolution. The author talks about the part played by the Comintern in order to make Spanish conflict international. The Stalin's policy in Spain was not only for idealism but for fear of the Nazi regime threat in Europe. For this reason, as the author argues, the participation of the Comintern into Spanish Civil War was not only political but military support to the Republican cause —volunteers, weapons and ammunition.

Keywords: Comintern, Stalin, International Brigades, European politics.

Civil wars were familiar to Spain not only in the 20th century. Thus, throughout the 19th century the country was twice involved in the internal armed conflicts of the opposing parties protecting the right to have their own vision of the socio-political order of the country. But then it was an internal affair of Spaniards themselves. In the tense internal atmosphere of the second half of the 30s of the 20th century it appeared no longer possible to consider the conflict internal. In very first days of the revolt that threw the country in trenches of the civil war, the opposing paved the way to the process of the conflict internationalization. That is the key asked for the external help: the government of Spanish Republic —Leon Blum in Paris—, Franco —Hitler in Berlin and Mussolini in Rome. Those decisions proved to be fatal though probably inevitable. But in the terms of international affairs there was no doubt in European capitals that the Pyrenean Peninsula would soon become the area of confrontation between Berlin and Moscow.

According to R.Vansittart, Constant Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Great Britain “Russian aspect in Spain” was the key factor which had defined Germany’s reaction to the Spanish Civil War. He arrived to that conclusion after the conversation with Hitler during his visit to Berlin on August 5, 1936.¹ But at that time Moscow interference into Spanish events was confined to Comintern instruction transmitted by its advisers. In the first days of the revolt V.Codavilla (pseudonyms “conspirational names” Luis and Medina) was in Spain: when after the 7th Comintern Congress its delegations were withdrawn, Spain was an exclusion. Hungarian Communist E. Gere (pseudonyms Pedro and Singer) was sent to Catalonia in August. Later on S.Minaev (known in Moscow as I.Stepanov and in Spain as Moreno) who had been supervising Spanish Communist Party since the twentieth years arrived in Spain. Stepanov was the very man who prepared the letter to the Executive Committee of the Communist International (ECCI) of June 7, 1926 which noted that the influence of Spanish Communist Party had come to naught.² And though the numbers of the Communist Party had increased many-fold within the past decade

its influence was essentially less than that of the Spanish Socialist Working Party and the weight of its trade-union centre subdued to the weight of the Anarcho-Syndicalist National Labour Confederation and General Union of the Workers. W.Churchill was obviously exaggerating saying in the House of Commons in November 11, 1936 that “there is no doubt revolutionary situation in Spain was initiated by Russia” and that “if not for Russia, Russian Communism whose propagation and intrigue had been tormenting Spain for more than six months before the revolt, there would be no Spanish horror”.³ It was only after the revolt began that “the Russian aspect” was a myth no longer but became real. The part played by Comintern as an instrument of the Soviet foreign policy turned out to be a factor which made the Spanish conflict international.

As early as on August 21, 1935 J.Stalin was elected a member of Presidium of Comintern Executive Committee for another term and a lot of Comintern documents signed by G. Dimitrov, were addressed to J. Stalin, V. Molotov, K. Voroshilov, National Commissar of Internal Affairs N. Ezhov, later on —to L. Beria.

On June 21, 1936, i.e. three days later the revolt started, the meeting of ECCI Secretariate devoted to the situation in Spain was held. On July 23 during the next ECCI meeting G.Dimitrov warned that the revolt could hardly be supposed and soon suggested that they be created army as a “state military organization”.⁴ The next day in his letter to J.Díaz and Luis (V.Codavilla) Dimitrov insisted on avoiding of any measures which could undermine unity of the National Front in its struggle against rebels. For this purpose he considered it necessary to do the following: “As long as it possible to do without direct participation of Communists in the government for this will make it easier to safeguarding the unity of the National Front. To participate in the government only as

1. Documents on British Foreign Policy. 1919-1939. 2 ser. London. 1979. Vol. 17, pp. 758-760.

2. Rossiisky Tsentr Khraneniya i Izucheniya Dokumentov Noveyshey Istorii (RTsKhIDNI). F.495. Op. 25. D. 616. L. 103-109.

3. Parliamentary Debates. House of Commons. Vol. 316. Col. 318.

4. RTsKhIDNI. F. 495. Op. 18. D. 1101. L. 22-23.

a last resort, if it is extremely necessary for the purpose of the revolt suppression".⁵

The solutions of Trade-Union International (Profintern) Bureau hold in Prague on July 26 witnessed to the effect that hopes for fast revolt suppression were hardly probable. The decision was taken that Profintern would undertake to initiate assistance to the Republic. It was also determined to establish the fund of 1 milliard of francs and the most part of the sum should be collected by the USSR Trade Unions. Those means were to be transferred to José Díaz, Dolores Ibarruri, M.Torez, P.Togliatti, F.Largo Caballero i.e. to two leaders of the Spanish Communist Party, two members of ECCI and one socialist. At the same meeting the solution was accepted to create one, or in case of necessity, several brigades of foreign volunteers. At first, it was planned to recruit five thousand of soldiers supplied by necessary arms. S.Álvarez who was of immediate creators of the Republican army supposed that the decision layed the basis of the process of international brigades formation.⁶ Afterwards the solution turned out to be rather well-timed: by that time not only the putsh had developed into a long-term civil war but the conflict had taken an international form.

According to many investigators' opinion the Kremlin was well aware of those complications created by the Civil War in Spain on the international arena, those complications being undesirable for it. The 3.5 thousand of kilometers separating the Peninsula and the Soviet Union also disposed to contemplations. Furthermore much in the "regrettable Spanish situation" had to be made clear for Moscow. For that purpose it was necessary to have a legal basis in Spain which would give the Kremlin the necessary information transmitted both through diplomatic channels and intelligence service. For the latter the Embassy would become a reliable screen.

In August, 1936 the negotiations between the USSR and Spain governments about assignment of appropriate diplomatic representatives at the level of embassy were finished positively. It should be reminded that the consent to restore diplomatic relations broken in 1918 was reached as early as in July 28, 1933. However, diplomatic representatives had

not been exchanged till August, 1936. That time M.Rozenberg was appointed ambassador of Russia in Spain, M.Pascua became ambassador of Spain in Moscow and Antonov-Ovseenko was sent as general consul to Barcelona. Together with the Staff of the Embassy military advisers and agents of intelligence service arrived in Spain. Rozenberg handed his credentials to president Azaña on August, 31.

According to the opinion of American historian and publicist H.Matthews "the impetus of Stalin's policy was neither idealist nor moral principles nor love for Spain. His fear of the aggressive Nazi regime was quite grounded... And he was searching *détente* with Britain and France... as a counterbalance of Nazi Germany".⁷ But Spain also became just the such field where *détente* turned out to be impossible. Furthermore, the importance attained to Comintern by Moscow played far from the least part in the situation.

After the fall of Talavera de la Reina (Toledo) which opened the road to Madrid governmental crisis burst out. Largo Caballero declared to President Azaña that he was going to take historical responsibility but he stipulated socialists' predominance in the government. Socialist of centric orientation I.Prieto opposed Largo Caballero's presence as the leader of the government and socialists in state administration. He considered that it could compromise the Republic in eyes of West and alienate middle class of the country. Evidently similar were ECCI leadership's notions expressed at the Secretary meeting of July 24, 1936. They ordered the Communist Party to agree to enter the government "only as a resort, if it is absolutely necessary with the purposes of the revolt suppression". Largo Caballero came out with the ultimatum: either communists would enter the government or the Communist Party would be responsible for defeat.⁸ L.Coldavilla immediately informed ECCI Secretary about it. The result was the following:

5. RTsKhIDNI. F. 495. OP. 18. D: 1101. L. 25-30.

6. ÁLVAREZ, S. (1996): *Historia política y militar de las Brigadas Internacionales*. Madrid, p. 60.

7. MATTHEWS, H. (1973): *Half of Spain Died*. New York, p. 154.

8. MESCHERJAKOV, M.T. (1981): *Ispanskaja respublika i Komintern (Spain Republic and Comintern)*. Moscow, p.16.

two Communist representatives —members of CC CPS Politbureau— V.Uribe and J.Hernández were included to the government of the National Front formed in September, 4.

Researchers have more than once paid attention to the fact that the problem of military assistance was discussed as early as at the beginning of August. It is confirmed by documents stored in the fund “Referenture on Spain” of the Archive of Foreign Policy of Russia. But even after Rozenberg’s arrival to Madrid People’s Commissar of Foreign Affairs M.L.Litvinov let him know: “We have discussed the problem of help to Spanish government more than once but we have come to the conclusion that such deliveries are impossible from here”.⁹

Communists’ participation in Largo Caballero’s government became one of the factors which enhanced efforts to render military help to the Republic.

At the state level the solution to render military assistance to the Republic was accepted by CC All-Union CP(b) Politbureau at its meeting on September 29, 1936. The solution put an end to the preparatory process for starting military assistance to the Republic under the code title “Operation X”. Further events developed promptly Comintern and USSR institutes acting synchronously as a single organism.

On October 4, 1936 Spanish cargoship “Comnechin” arrived in Cartagena. It transported the first consignment of the weapon from Feodosiya. On October 14 the next vessel that time Soviet steamer “Komsomol” delivered 50 tanks. On October, 7 the USSR representative in London Committee on Implementation of the Agreement on Non-Interference to Spanish Affairs of S.Kagan, who was substituting for Ambassador I.M.Maisky during his holiday leave, declared: “The Soviet government cannot agree at any rate to convert the Agreement on Non-Interference to a screen... Therefore the Soviet government has to declare that if violations of the Agreement on Non-Interference are not stopped immediately it will consider itself free from any obligations implied by the Agreement”.¹⁰ On October, 23 I.M.Maisky forwarded the letter to Lord Plymouth —the Chairman of the Committee— saying: “The Soviet government... cannot consider

itself to be bound by the Agreement on Non-Interference more than participant of this Agreement”.¹¹

By that time the next of Stalin’s telegram sent on October 16, 1936 to General Secretary of the Spanish Communist Party J.Díaz had already been broadcasted by all leading news agencies of Europe and America. It said: “Working People of the Soviet Union fulfil only their duty doing what they can to help to revolutionary masses in Spain. They realize that liberation of Spain from fascist reactionaries’ oppression is not a private affair of Spaniards but common cause of the entire progressive mankind”.¹² It is remarkable that the telegram was not addressed to socialist F.Largo Caballero, the head of the government, its addressee being the secretary of the CC CPS. “Ideological orientation” of the help was clear enough.

First foreign volunteers arrived in Albacete on October, 14. The choice of Albacete as a base for International Brigades (further —interbrigade) was approved by Largo Caballero himself. He charged D.Martínez Barrio, President of Cortes and the leader of the Republican Party, to head the commission on organizing of interbrigades. André Martí, member of ECCI Secretary became the chief of interbrigades. When D.Martínez Barrio put the question “What are the conditions of your participation in our struggle?” the answer was: “We do not put forward any conditions. We do not wish anything but one: interbrigades should be considered as units subordinate the government and its military powers”.

This condition was not always executed by chiefs of Interbrigade Military Committee who were communists and many of them were members of leading organs of their parties. To a certain extent their political predilection was programmed by their political culture and previous Comintern aims as well as slogans of the Na-

9. See: ROBERT, G. (1999): “Soviet Foreign Policy and the Spanish Civil War, 1936-1939” in LEITZ, C. *Spain in International Context*. London, p. 87.

10. *Documenty vneshnei politiki SSSR* (Documents of USSR Foreign Policy). Moscow, 1974, vol. 19, p. 464.

11. *Ibid*, p. 514.

12. *Pravda*. 1936. 16 October.

tional Front which proclaimed tolerance to all antifascist forces since 1935. They could not overcome that prescription frequently which is confirmed by the documents included in this collection.

By October, 22 —the official date of interbrigades formation— three battalions had been formed. Later on they were joined into the 11th Interbrigade within the stuff of the Republican Army. On November 1, 1936 Largo Caballero being both the head of the government and the Minister of War appointed Kleber (Manfred Stern) the commander of the 11th Interbrigade giving him the rank of general. Mario Nikoletti (D.Di Vittorio) was appointed its commissar. Then five more brigades —the 12th, 13th, 14th, 15th and 29th— were formed.

Comintern interference into Spain affairs became not only ideological features but also acquired pure military. This added not only to internationalization of the Spanish Civil War but strengthened ideological polarization of the conflict eliminating any possibility of a compromise. Mere human factor did not resolve the problem. The Republic needed mass foreign deliveries of armament as the munitions industry of the Republic was unable to supply the Army. Both Soviet and Spanish freight vessels were involved in the process of realization of military deliveries within the framework of "Operation X". Ships on which arms arrived were conditionally named "Y". They delivered more than 500000 tons of arms, ammunition and other goods to Spanish ports. On the whole 66 "Y" were unloaded in Spanish ports between October, 1936 and February, 1939.

Means which could be collected by Comintern and Profintern were not enough for payment of arms and services of military advisers.

The act of transfer to the USSR of 510 tons of gold for storage that was $\frac{3}{5}$ of the entire gold reserve of Spain as the warranty for granting the credits for arms deliveries¹³ was signed by People's Commissar of Finance G.Grinko, Deputy People's Commissar of Foreign Affairs N.Krestinsky and Ambassador of Republican Spain M.Pascua in Moscow in November 1936. Despite all difficulties connected with arms delivery and their uneven character it is important

to mark that desperate requests of Spanish Republican government for deliveries found a response only in Moscow: London and Paris remained deaf to them. And it was their fault that internationalization of the conflict acquired a certain ideological tendency.

During the Civil War and specially after its end military experts of many countries could not help critical evaluation of Soviet arms quality. M.Tukhachevsky was one of the first to do so as early as in April, 1937.¹⁴ But there were some other factors which played the fatal role in the fortunes of the Republic such as: ideological tendency of Comintern recommendations which were accepted by Comintern advisers and the Spanish Communist Party. Those recommendations had special weight for Moscow uphold the Communist Party of Spain. Comintern representatives in Spain sometimes showed excessive intolerance and criticism to allies of joint struggle against Franquists despite the official directives of ECCI Secretariate calling to loyal, partnership relations with all allies. To a greater extent it concerned V.Codovilla, E.Gere, A. Marti, S.Minev, to a less one —P.Togliatti (Ercoli) delegated in Spain too.

As an example, we can draw the so called "problem of largo Caballero": during several months the Kremlin was insisting that Largo Caballero's candidature as a head of the government was most acceptable. But Comintern advisers made explicit their enmity for him and their opinion took the upper hand which brought about rather negative repercussions for Republic fortunes.

In his report at the meeting of the Comintern Executive Committee Secretariate on October 11, 1936 A.Marti affirmed the following: "Internal discords do not cease in Caballero's government... Mr. Caballero is a type of a bad trade-union bureaucrat... The government loses its prestige".¹⁵

In a series of circulars within the period between March and the beginning of May, 1937 Moreno

13. PASCUA, M. (1970): *Oro español en Moscú. Cuadernos para el diálogo*, VI-VII.

14. Gosudarstvennyi voennyi arkhiv Rossii (State Military Archive of Russia). Fund 33987. Op.4. D.991. L. 215-232.

15. RTsKhIDNI. F.495. Op. 20.D.270. L. 103-105.

(Stepanov's pseudonym) rather strictly criticized capability of Largo Caballero's government. On May, 17 he informed ECCI that, in his opinion, latent governmental crises already existed in late January. At the beginning of February Caballero had already made an attempt to come to an agreement with anarchists and to break off the National Front. He even made an official offer to Azaña to reorganize the government and to form a new one on the base of the syndicalist block, General Union of Workers and National Confederation of Labour excluding communists and republicans. Azaña rejected that combinations vigorously.¹⁶

There is no doubt that it was Largo Caballero's intentions that caused such a negative attitude both to him personally and to the government headed by him: "The government is almost unable to exercise power. Everybody is aware of unusual weakness of the government".

Did the ECCI representatives carry out the instructions of Moscow or did they judge for themselves?

G.Dimitrov's diary note dated March 14, 1937 i.e. two weeks before Stepanov's letter shows that "discussion on the Spanish problem" (as G.Dimitrov put it) was the main theme at the dinner party in the Kremlin where representatives of ECCI (Martí and Ercoli) and CPSU Politbureau (Stalin, Voroshilov, Molotov and later on Kaganovich) were present. The opinion was expressed that it is not necessary to overthrow Caballero. Now there is not more suitable figure as the head of the government. It is necessary to insist on Caballero's refusal from the post of the Minister of War. (Let another person be appointed commander-in-chief).¹⁷

In his diary Dimitrov did not mark whose opinion it was. Probably the proposal emanated from Politbureau and most likely from Stalin because Martí's negative attitude to Caballero was known well enough and Ercoli (Togliatti) could hardly risk to change the situation drastically. Stalin suggested that the discussion on Spanish problem was continued on March 17.

On March 17 interbrigades were the main theme of the discussion in Stalin's summer residence. On May 20, 1937 during Stalin's conversation with Spanish writers Rafael Alberti and Maria

Teresa León the Soviet leader among other themes touched upon Largo Caballero's "problem". S.Hopner, candidate member of ECCI was interpreting those conversation. It was her account that served the source of Dimitrov's diary note.

Stalin said: "Caballero showed his rigid character and will to struggle against fascism. It is necessary to keep Caballero as head of the government. It is better that command be handed over another person".¹⁸

How soon did Stalin's opinion become known to Comintern representatives in Spain? And how much did it influence their position?

In his letter of March 28 Stepanov wrote: "We are advised from home to find the ways to convince Caballero to improve the situation in these organizations". First of all it concerned reorganization of the personnel of General Staff, Ministry of Defence and all those establishments which were in charge of military needs.

"But it would be an illusion to think that Caballero would take any of our advice and proposal in this field". As for the attitude to Largo Caballero's political concept Stepanov's point of view remained negative: "It is impossible to explain everything that happens by Caballero's personal qualities, his foibles, his individualism, his personal ambition... Caballero does not want a defeat but he is afraid of a victory. He is afraid of the victory because this victory is impossible without an active participation of communists".

Stepanov admitted that for Britain which in his opinion influenced to Caballero greatly it was "a great evil to have fascist Spain under the heel of Germany and Italy in the long run". This, he supposed accounted for the desire to complete the war by a compromise. "But Republican Spain arisen on the ashes of fascism, lead by communists, free Republican Spain, Spain of a new type, organized with the help of competent technics will be an economic and military force of great importance which will pursue the policy of

16. RTsKhIDNI. F.495. Op. 74.D.204. L. 15-32.

17. Dimitrov G. Dnevnik (9 marta 1933 – 6 fevralia 1949) (Diary, 9 March 1933 – 6 February 1949). Sofia, 1997, p. 125.

18. *Ibid*, pp.125-126.

solidarity in close reaction to the Soviet Union".¹⁹ In general Comintern advisers and Soviet Union leaders kept caution in their public prognoses as to the desirable future of Spain. In his conversation with Rafael Alberti while speaking about Spanish revolution character Stalin uphold Dimitrov's definition formulated on July 23, 1936: "It is necessary to tell the truth to the whole world and the people —nowadays Spanish people is unable to accomplish a *proletariat revolution* (underlined by G.Dimitrov) because internal and moreover international situation, are not favourable for this purpose... *If Soviets be proclaimed in Spain it will consolidate* (underlined by G.Dimitrov) all capitalist powers and fascism will win".²⁰

In the circular letter dated March 28, 1937 that was intended for a narrow circle Stepanov made that "formula" more precise: internal political priority was defined as "Republican Spain under Communist leadership" and foreign-policy priority as "policy of solidarity in close connection with Soviet Union".

This prospect though rather remote was unacceptable for both external world (first of all European one which considered the Pyrenean Peninsula to be historically preconditioned zone of its influence) and those within Republican Spain who resisted Spanish nationalists as well as Germany and Italy supporting them. It was obvious enough for their vision of future socio-political order and foreign policy priorities were different.

For many parties and organizations the borderline between "their own folks" and "aliens" did not always coincide with the line of trenches separating republican Spain from the nationalist zone. And researchers and journalist were not far from the truth when they noted that "the rear of republican Spain was involved into the genuine 'second' civil war where socialists and Trotskyists were struggling against communists while anarchists were doing the same against communists and socialists".²¹

Occasionally mutual distrust took the shape of armed conflicts, thus, for example, "1937th May putch" in Barcelona could be mentioned.

Togliatti appointed as Comintern adviser in Spain supposed that the mistrust could be arisen by his predecessors' manner of work. In his letter of

September 13, 1937 he offered ECCI leaders: "Your 'advisers' not mislead comrades to the wrong way means of improvised incorrect theories or introducing useless nervousness into the policy, which due to Spanish comrades' implusiveness gradually undermines the party tactics. This criticism concerns L. (Luis Codovilla's pseudonym) as well as Pedro (Gere); Your 'advisers' cease to consider themselves to be 'masters' of the Party, that they change their view of Spanish comrades as incapable lot, that they stop acting instead of them under the pretext to make everything better and faster than they can, etc.

This criticism mostly concerns L. If the latter cannot change his work methods he would better not return. Day after day I become more and more convinced that this point of view is correct". Togliatti comes to the following conclusion: "I think we have made a serious mistake having left Spanish Communist Party in its situation under L.'s guardianship".²²

But if Togliatti was dissatisfied by some ways of work of his predecessors, there was but one aspect in which his position completely coincided with their approach; that is all of them shared maniac possession of Stalin and his surroundings for whom Trotskyism was the source of all their failures in.

As early as in April 1936 when the beginning of the civil war was close at hand the report to Dimitrov signed by Gere emphasized: "The danger of Trotskyism is growing as Trotskyists will use the situation for provocation... The danger of Trotskyism is growing due to the fact that Maurin being an elected deputy has received a tribune. Moreover in these circumstances Spain adventurism of Trotskyism joins up with adventurism of anarcho-syndicalist leaders"²³. It did not trouble Gere that Maurin was not a formal member of POUM (United Labour Marxist Party) though he was close to this organization in many aspects. Shubin's report to Dimitrov and Manuilsky of Au-

19. RTsKhIDNI. F.495. Op. 74. D.204. L. 33-70.

20. DIMITROV, G.: *Op.cit.*, p. 126.

21. Politische Studien. 1959. N° 116, p. 827.

22. RTsKhIDNI. F. 495. Op. 74. D. 209. L. 96-98.

23. RTsKhIDNI. F. 495. Op. 74. D.199. L. 6.

gust 7, 1936 on the international setting around the Spanish war paid almost more attention to Trotsky and Trotskyism than to the problem of foreign interference of German and Italy.²⁴

In the series of Stepanov's information letters to the ECCI Secretariate in spring and summer of 1937, which can be considered as reverse and predicted response of CPI leaders to ECCI directives, POUM (Labour Party of Marxist Unification) was described as a force hostile to the Republic. In the letter devoted to the crisis of Largo Caballero's government which burst out in February, 1937 after the fall of Malague POUM was associated with "the dark common company" of socialists of other countries "plus Gestapo" against Comintern, the USSR, and Spanish Communist Party.

In the letter of May 11, 1937 devoted to the analysis of the May putsch in Catalonia POUM was called "the organization of fascists, provokers, spies, gangsters and murderers". The author of the letter was distressed that not only "anarchist press made every effort, undertakes mental tricks and sophistry trying to protect POUMists" but Largo Caballero himself "was not going to take vigorous measures against POUM".²⁵

In the letter of June 18, 1937 entitled "A month of Negrin's Government" POUM was called "a branch of Franco's stuff of General Headquarter, organization of Gestapo and Mussolini agents which also includes numerous agents of Intelligence Service and French secret police".²⁶

Among the documents permitting to amplify many details of POUM leaders' tragic destiny a special place is occupied by the report by F.Broakway, British MP and one of the Independent Labour Party leaders after his visit to Spain in late June—early July, 1937. The report was received and forwarded to Moscow through Comintern channels. According to the information received from the POUM members who escaped arrests he came to the conclusion that POUM was prohibited according to the Communist Party directive: "It is rumoured that Nin has been shot. He, Gorkin and Andrade have been moved to Madrid". On June 5 Broakway in his conversation with Minister of Foreign Affairs Giral declared that his party did not believe POUM to be a fascist party. Giral assured Broakway that

the case of POUM will be open and Nin will be judged by the national court instead of the military tribunal".²⁷ The process against POUM was held but Nin was not among the accused for by that time he was not already alive.

Nowadays accessible Comintern documents do not allow researchers to bring out many details of the tragic destiny of POUM leader. A. Nin. Nevertheless it is possible to trace his path from his illegal arrest at the first decade of May, 1937. There are still a great many enigmas in this matter: Who personally arrested Andreu Nin? Who circulated the slanderous legend reinforced by the skillfully composed photomontage about his alleged presence in Berlin? At last, who was involved in the murder of that sophisticated personage of the Spanish drama that, in spite of everything, payed tribute not only to Russian October?

But for those who supported Republic defenders from the outside POUM destiny was not only concern.

In his report *The Political Situation in Spain after Munich Capitulation* Togliatti reprimanded "proletarians of capitalist countries"²⁸ for their insufficient political help to the Republic. But the reproach was unfair. Moreover it was Moscow that was to a considerable extent to blame that historians of the Republic had to act under rather hard conditions. "Symbols of the first months of friendship —Rozenberg, Antonov-Ovseenko, Kolstov— mysteriously disappeared on return to their country".²⁹ This remark by French historian P. Vilar, one of the most prominent researchers of the Civil War in Spain, is another illustration of the fact that mass repressions in the Soviet Union were closely connected with fortunes of republican Spain. R.Rolland's letter to J.R.Bloch dated March 13, 1938 brings out the fatal influence of "Moscow processes" on world public opinion, on those for whom defence of Spanish democracy was the struggle against

24. RTsKhIDNI. F.495. Op. 73. D.33. L.102-103.

25. RTsKhIDNI. F.495. Op. 74.D. 204. L. 128-132.

26. RTsKhIDNI. F.495. Op. 74.D.204. L. 144-145.

27. RTsKhIDNI. F.495. Op. 74. D.211.L. 107-125.

28. RTsKhIDNI. F.495. Op. 20. D.274.L. 101-102.

29. VILAR, P. (1986): *La Guerra Civil española*. Barcelona, p.169.

fascist threat in Europe and all over the world: "Moscow process tortures me greatly. I am not willing to go into details here —we shall talk about it later on. However, the resonance of this event all over the world, especially in France and America, will be disastrous.

Don't the USSR best friends think that it would be necessary to send immediately the letter to the Soviet authorities (closed, not intended for press) forcing them to think about deplorable consequences of the death penalty to the convicts for the National Front, for cooperation of the Communist and Socialist Parties, for the joint defence of Spain?"³⁰

At the same time it is necessary to note that the consequences of "Moscow processes" would have been even more serious if it were not for the specific European and world conditions of the 1930s. That fact attracted attention of Spanish socialist Claudin (a former Communist) who in his last years was the director of Madrid Pablo Iglesias's Fund, the main archive of Spanish Socialist Working Party: "When in 1936 individual processes began in Moscow and the main authors of the October revolution were sent on the scaffold, reputation of Stalin and 'Motherland of Socialism' itself remained unshakable... The threat of fascism increased, Hitler seized the power, the Spanish Civil War began. The Soviet Union was the only power that rendered military assistance to the Republic. Even those who were sensitive to their voice of conscience and began thinking that something had rotted through in Stalin's kingdom retreated in the face of the main argument of Moscow supporters: any criticism against the USSR will play into the hands of reaction and fascism".³¹

Though the factors fairly marked by F.Claudin "eased up" perception of "Stalin's purges" by West democratic public opinion, the image of the country of Soviets had undergone essential changes in the direction of dehumanization. This, in its turn, influenced perception of everything connected with Comintern and Spanish Communist Party which could not be considered in close connection with the USSR.

Obviously enough the poisoned atmosphere of Moscow "purges" influenced frames of mind of Comintern representatives in Spain.

The tragic final being close at hand the circle of those accused of subversive activity was extending. Even Togliatti, who had made much effort toward smoothing of contradictions between defenders of the Republic, did not escape this pernicious tendency. In september, 1937 in order "to relieve tension of accumulated electricity of the last months fierce polemic" between the Communist Party and anarchists he called for "rapprochement with anarchists from the National Confederation of Labour without breaking off and damping the ardour of intercourse with socialists and other parties of the National Front". In his report *The Political situation in Spain after Munich Capitulation* Togliatti subjected to criticism every party and organization of republican zone. In the circle he included trucklers and anarchists (Juan Liopis, etc.), socialists (Araquistain, Liopis, etc.), regular servicemen (Asensio) and even republicans (Albornoz).

And though he kept on attaching the main role in ideological aspect to POUM Trotskyists who, in his opinion, pierced into the Socialist Party, anarchist, republican and even youth organizations, in an orb of his criticism one could find even freemason whom so called "nationalists" and first of all Franco hoimself held responsible for all troubles of Spain.

He accused mason organization of "defeatist moods and acting for failure of national front" which, in his opinion, has fatal consequences. The so-called freemason cells functioned actively in the army and in the entire state apparatus. The police was almost entirely in the hands of freemasons. The significant majority of servicemen including members of the Communist Party were also masons. Masons' connections extended from the Republican Party to the Socialist one and to NKT leaders penetrating deeply into Catalonian General Union of Workers. United Party of Catalonia and even into the Communist Party. Togliatti accused air-force commanders Camacho and Alonso, chiefs of the Central Front Barcelo, Bueno and Ortega

30. Cited by: *Inostrannaia literatura* (Foreign literature). 1988, N° 4, p. 166.

31. CLAUDIN, F. (1985): *Un notorio español en Rusia*. Madrid, p.15.

—all of them were masons— of passiveness and hesitation. He was sure that their behaviour helped Casado to accomplish *coup d'etat* on March 5, 1939. After that the Republic did not manage to recover.

Bibliographical references

ÁLVAREZ, S. (1996): *Historia política y militar de las Brigadas Internacionales*. Madrid.

CLAUDIN, F. (1985): *Un notorio español en Rusia*. Madrid.

LEITZ, C. (1999): *Spain in International Context*. London.

MATTHEWS, H. (1973): *Half of Spain Died*. New York.

MESCHERJAKOV, M.T. (1981): *Ispanskaja respublika i Komintern (Spain Republic and Comintern)*. Moscow.

PASCUA, M. (1970): *Oro español en Moscú. Cuadernos para el diálogo*, VI-VII.

VILAR, P. (1986): *La Guerra Civil española*. Barcelona.