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#150 THE GERMAN AIR FORCE IN THE  
 SPANISH CIVIL WAR, by Gen. J. FLECK, a. D.  
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The German Luftwaffe in the Spanish Civil War

(Condor Legion)

Chapter I

The Spanish Civil War and the Intervention of the Condor Legion

Director  
Aeronautics Studies Inst.  
Air Force Academy  
Randolph AFB, Alameda

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I. The Historical Background of the Spanish Civil War

Anyone who is interested in following the history of the employment of German military forces in Spain needs, as background, a short introduction into the political and military situation at that time.

There were sufficient grounds for dissatisfaction at all levels of Spanish society. Quite apart from this, the Spaniards -- like all proud nations which are aware of their past and their former wealth -- suffered deeply from the circumstance that their land was describing a downward curve in the history of the world. During the course of the nineteenth century, there had been every conceivable motivation for a revolution -- it was a century of political, religious, Separatist, dynastic, economic, and social struggle. Riots and bloody conflicts had become commonplace. The twentieth century had failed to placate Spanish emotions; on the contrary, it brought with it additional factors capable of arousing indignation. It is true that the wealth of the country

1 - Chapter I was written by Generaloberst a.D. Jaenecke, who was released from Russian imprisonment at the end of 1955. His account is based on Werner Beumelburg, Kampf um Spanien (The Struggle for Spain), as well as on personal impressions gained during a number of prolonged visits in the Spanish theater of operations. It lies in the nature of things that Jaenecke's personal evaluation of the situation is strongly emphasized.

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had grown tremendously, especially during World War I, from 1914 to 1918. The way in which this increased wealth had been distributed, however, only served to emphasize the existing contrast between the enormous fortunes enjoyed by the few and the century-old poverty prevailing among the masses of the people.

While the intellectuals and the politicians held their long-winded speeches on the programs of the government, all in an atmosphere of rivalry and intrigue, the workers and peasants gradually became aware of their own interests and began to take steps towards their active advocacy. The ambitions of the military and the conservatism of the nobility and the clerical authorities took advantage of the general chaos to incite resistance movements or reactionary projects. Attempted assassinations became frequent, and a feeling of bitterness grew in the hearts of the Spaniards. King Alphonse XIII was well aware of the fact that thoroughgoing reforms were needed, yet he realized at the same time that he did not possess the power to effect them. His abdication was the most dignified step he could take under the circumstances. His act may have been the result of greater farsightedness than that possessed by other Spaniards, for he realized even then that the Civil War was imminent. In his abdication declaration of 13 April 1931, he wrote: "In all determination, I wish to avoid contributing in any way to developments capable of leading to civil war among the citizens of my country." His abdication did nothing to minimize the danger, however. On the contrary. It is true, of course, that the republic itself did not lead to civil war, yet it opened the door to certain elements which openly did their best to foment such a conflict.

During the period between King Alphonse's abdication in April 1931 and the outbreak of the Civil War in July 1936, the Spanish republic

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went through more than thirty governments, three general elections, an abundance of riots, an outbreak of Separatism in Asturia and Catalonia, a rapidly expanding collapse of administrative agencies, economic chaos, and the division of the country in a violent war between the classes. Spain was doomed to decline in a period during which other

countries had long since entrusted their fates to new personalities and, wielding unsuspected power, had taken their places in the circle of the great nations.

On 19 November 1933, the Spanish people elected a new Cortes (parliament). The Leftists, despite their utilization of terrorist tactics during the voting, were reduced from approximately 300 to 100 seats, while the Right Wing increased its representation from approximately fifty to 200 seats. But the parliamentary game already so familiar in Germany repeated itself here as well; the Right Wing, too weak by itself to win a clear majority, was deprived of its victory by the Left Wing in coalition with the Center. Nothing was done to save the country. The Anarchists, together with the Social Democrats, who had lost heavily in the election, combined with the Radicals. In Barcelona, Companys proclaimed the establishment of the Republic of Catalonia. In the Basque country, the misguided workers and peasants began to burn and plunder the first churches and monasteries. In Madrid the Radicals reigned in the streets for days on end, exposing the population to horrifying terrorist outrages. In all three areas the government, with the help of the Army, succeeded in suppressing the rebels after heavy fighting. The Asturian Radicals managed to hold out for two whole weeks, and troops had to be brought from Madrid and Morocco in order to defeat them. The fighting in the jagged mountains around Orviedo claimed over 4,000 dead -- a terrible prologue to the events of the year 1936. The ringleaders, Azana and Prieto, were able to escape. They were later to play significant roles in the Civil War.

On 16 February 1936, the People's Front won 256 out of 473 seats in the general parliamentary election, thus achieving a clear majority. Spain's fate seemed to be sealed. One month later the Radicals demanded the arming of the proletariat, in order -- as they said -- "to have a

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Red army on hand at the victory of the Revolution!". At the same time, at Prieto's demand, President Zamora was deposed and Azana appointed in his stead. Madrid was under the sway of the Revolution with all its corollary phenomena. The mobs forced their way into cafes and restaurants and made the proprietors serve them food and drinks without charge;

they paraded up and down before the homes of the wealthy and smashed window-panes; they plundered grocery stores and beat up or killed anyone who tried to stop them. At the order of the Government, the police stood by and did nothing. No one went to work any more. The water and electricity supply systems broke down. The city echoed with the noise of the drunk and the fanatic.

At the beginning of July 1936, the deputy Calvo Sotelo took issue with the People's Front Party in the Cortes and reproached its members with a list of their crimes against the people. A Radical deputy, Passimaria, interrupted him in a loud voice and shouted to the assembly: "This fellow has opened his mouth for the last time!" Four days later, Calvo Sotelo and the young Jose Antonio Primo de Rivera, one of the white hopes of the Spanish nation, were brutally murdered. The Government of the Republic did nothing. The Falange, founded by Antonio Primo de Rivera, was overwhelmed with membership applications during the following days. The tension had reached the breaking-point.

The Republic had done its best to reduce the size of the Army and to dissipate its power. It now redoubled its efforts in this direction. High-ranking officers who seemed suspicious in any way were transferred or forced to resign. Entire units were deactivated, while the Government militia was quietly built up. Weapons depots were placed at the disposal of the workers' organizations. Everything was done in feverish haste, and in the meantime the mobs of the revolution openly ruled in the streets. Agents were everywhere. In reality they were military instructors. The first ships with their cargos of war materiel were already under way.

Among the generals slighted by the Republic was the 44-year old General Francisco Franco, founder and director of the military academy in Zaragoza, whom the first government of the Republic had appointed to the



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post of Chief of the General Staff. Later on, they began to view him with suspicion, and he was

summarily named military governor of the Canary Islands. Here, the government felt, he would be too far away to do any harm. The People's Front was far more afraid of a number of other generals, including Sanjurjo, who had instigated an abortive rebellion several years before; Mola, who was in command of a division in the north; and Lopez-Ochoa, who had put down the revolt in Asturia. The Front regarded the Army as such to be sufficiently widely dispersed to make it innocuous. Through its revolutionary societies among the troops, the Front had the Navy and the Air Force almost completely in its hands. Yet it had good reason to worry about the tightly organized units of the Falange, with their high morale and enthusiasm, and about the pro-Monarchist ~~leader~~ Raquetes of Navarra, some 10,000 men, who were reserved and cautious in publicizing their disapproval of the goings-on in Madrid, Barcelona, and Valencia, but who were known to be a unit made up of experienced and disciplined soldiers.

The contagious enthusiasm with which their victory was celebrated in the streets led the politicians of the People's Front to overlook a number of very important things. For example, the news that General Franco had taken off from the Canary Islands on 17 July without any orders from the Government and had landed in Spanish Morocco caused relatively little excitement in Madrid. And when, on the evening of the ~~same~~<sup>same</sup> day, the young general called upon the entire garrison at Tetuan to join the fight against the Government in Madrid, the People's Front Government contented itself with commenting that Franco's undertaking was nothing but a ridiculous minor action, completely without significance. And at first the Government seemed to be right. During the course of 18 July nothing happened in continental Spain, at least nothing which was calculated to arouse the fears of Madrid.

II. The Outbreak of the Civil War. The Red People's Front and its Allies

Very soon it began to be apparent that the Reds were becoming less and less capable of ruling with a firm hand. The situation was most critical in Barcelona and, in fact, in all of Catalonia. There the Anarchists alone had almost all the power, and they lost no time in getting ahead of the all too systematic Communists and the eternally hesitant Socialists. It began with the implementation of the first point of the revolutionary program, the elimination of the social classes which stood in the way of rule by the proletariat. The purge was undertaken thoroughly and summarily, on the basis of previously prepared lists. The priests, monks, and nuns stood at the top of these lists, followed by the members of the right-wing parties, the Falangists (of course), and anyone who was even remotely suspected of Fascist tendencies. Then came the independent businessmen, the well-to-do, and, as a matter of fact, anyone and everyone who could be classified as a member of the bourgeois or capitalist classes. The lists were augmented by the names of those condemned to death because they had been denounced by someone else or because of a desire for revenge on the part of a list-maker. Day and night one could hear the rattling of the guns fired by the execution brigades, most of which operated entirely on their own initiative; their zealous activity was accompanied by the burning of churches and monasteries. As nearly as we can tell, an average of 100 executions took place each day in Barcelona alone. These added up to a rather tidy total during the course of the months.

The happenings in Barcelona were duplicated in about the same form all over the rest of Catalonia. Once the classes inimical to the proletariat had been removed, the government moved on to the next step, the establishment of a purely Anarchistic community system with the abolishment of all private property and the elimination of money. In certain other areas

in Spain under Red rule miniature soviet republics were set up in the rural regions.

In Madrid itself the revolution never progressed beyond the early stages, i.e. the revolutionists restricted themselves to the liquidation of the bourgeoisie. The total number of persons killed can be estimated only by reference to the number of dead bodies delivered to the morgues. By mid-November 1936, this total had reached 35,000. Let this figure suffice. During this reign of terror, the citizens of Madrid did not sleep at night, but stayed up, awake and trembling.

Despite all this, powerful foreign nations came to the aid of the government. Leon Blum's French People's Front government publicly proclaimed a policy of non-intervention and tried to get other foreign powers to follow suit, while the military aircraft of the French Air Minister, Pierre Cot, had already crossed the Spanish border. The first induction centers for Red volunteers had already been opened in France. Railway cars and trucks loaded with French war materiel, sold at a good profit, were already on their way to Red Spain.

Germany and Italy had already embraced the new ideology of Fascism, and if Franco and his Falangists were allowed to gain the victory in Spain, France would be surrounded by three totalitarian states. This would hardly be conducive to the security of the French nation. Thus every effort had to be made to avoid a defeat of the democratic forces in Spain.

But England's attitude served to prevent a French policy of all-out support of the People's Front in Spain. Under British pressure Blum was forced to refrain from any official intervention. Consequently France closed its eyes and continued to let through all volunteers who wanted to go to Spain, as well as whatever materiel was needed -- a highly profitable transaction.

England's position was difficult. On the one hand, she possessed impor-

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tant financial interests in Spain. The Rio Tinto mines, among the world's

richest copper deposits, were owned by British enterprises; British capital was invested in the mines in Asturia and the Basque country, in the industrial plants of Barcelona, in the railways and other public utilities. These assets, amounting to billions of pounds, were bound to be forfeited in the event that soviet republics should be established on the Iberian Peninsula. In addition, the British government could hardly be expected to welcome the inevitable increase <sup>in</sup> Russian influence in Spain.

On the other hand, a Franco victory could appear no more desirable in British eyes. British foreign policy had suffered one defeat after the other during the preceding months, and it looked very much as if London were losing its influential hold over developments in Europe.

The balance of power, that traditional guideline of British policy which permitted England to cast her weight into either camp according to the dictates of necessity, was fast turning into a ~~d~~esequilibrium. Germany had regained the right of sovereignty over the neutralized Rhineland. Italy had occupied Ethiopia and laid the cornerstone for a new Mediterranean empire.

Spain's helplessness represented security for the French nation and protection for the British Empire. Thus it lay in England's interests that neither of the two parties should win a clear victory. Instead, the struggle should end in a draw, with some sort of compromise which would leave things in the status quo. Spain would emerge so weakened from her internal conflicts that she would be more than willing to entrust her fate to the benevolence of the British Empire.

And London wished to make sure that this desired outcome should not be influenced in any way as a result of the intervention of any other foreign power. This was the reason for British efforts to achieve a non-intervention agreement, the so-called embargo commission.

In contrast to British policy, the policy followed by Russia was clear and direct. But because of the confusion prevailing in the opinions held by the Spanish "Reds", the Russian ambassador, Rosenberg, had a very difficult time keeping the People's Front from committing too many serious blunders. Above all, Russia mobilized the entire Communist world to send volunteers to fight for the Red cause in Spain and furnished the People's Front with valuable help in the form of instructors and arms of all kinds. The international literature on the Civil War in Spain contains very little indication as to the extent of Russian aid; this is in keeping with the Russian passion for airtight security measures.

Nevertheless it is clear that Russia played a very great role, both psychologically and materially, in the Spanish Civil War. This statement will be substantiated later on.

On Sunday, 19 July, the situation changed fundamentally and suddenly. The garrisons at Madrid, Barcelona, Sevilla, Salamanca, Burgos, Valencia, Bilbao, Oviedo, Valladolid, and Avila revolted. The Spanish fleet and the Spanish air force joined them. In Navarra, the Raquetes shouldered their weapons. The Falangists mobilized for action. Gravely threatening news was received from Morocco.

On the same day the Madrid government withdrew, and a new government was formed, which immediately placed the militia units on alert status. The day began favorably for the Nationalists, but the two days which followed quickly altered the situation. In Madrid and Barcelona there were bloody massacres among the garrisons. The air force deserted the army and went over to the Reds. At the command of the government, the Reds among the sailors threw their officers overboard by the dozens and managed to seize control of all but

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a few ships. The government in Madrid disbanded entire garrisons and issued orders that they be disarmed. Triumphant reports of a government victory<sup>c</sup> were hastily sent out to the world. There was no news at all from Morocco. Hundreds of Nationalist officers committed suicide in order to avoid falling into the hands of the Reds. The revolutionary tribunals in Barcelona were the scene of feverish activity.

Three more days passed before the chaos began to give way to more or less definite outlines. Taking the nation as a whole, the results were not favorable to the Nationalists. It turned out that they had achieved victory only in a few specific localities, and these points lay so far apart from one another that there seemed to be hardly any possibility of continuing the liberation action systematically. Morocco, to be sure, was firmly in General Franco's hands. In Andalusia, General Quiapo de Llano had seized possession of Sevilla by a coup de main. Whether or not he could manage to hold it was questionable. General Sanjurjo, selected by his comrades as leader of the liberation movement, had died in an air crash on his way back to Madrid from exile in Portugal. In Asturia, General Aranda was desperately holding his own against the Red forces, which had him trapped in Oviedo. In Pamplona, to be sure, General Mola had succeeded in gathering together parts of the regular army, the Raquetes, and the Falangists, but the result was hardly an armed force which one could employ in a decision-seeking operation. The Spanish fleet, which ruled over the intervening waters, served to keep General Franco cut off from the Spanish mainland. The majority of Spain's regular armed forces were in the hands of the Reds, including the entire air force and most of the navy. Nowhere did the Nationalist leaders, whose points of support were so far away from one another, hold points along the coast, which would have given them some measure of control over weapons shipments.

At no time in the history of the world were Europe's fate and future



so uncertain as during those hot summer days of 1936. Very few of the nations or individuals aware of what was going on in Spain realized that the bloody game of politics being enacted there was bound to concern them all.

At this stage of developments, of course, one could hardly speak of a firm government by the Red People's Front. As early as 19 July,

the government had ordered the dissolution of all army units which might conceivably have been connected with the uprising or which were in any way suspicious. For all practical purposes, this order was tantamount to the dissolution of the entire army, i.e. including those portions of it which were still loyal to Madrid. In other words, the government deprived itself of the one instrument which might have been of inestimable value to it. The government hoped and believed that it could prevail with the exclusive help of the republican and revolutionary force made up of its Party adherents. The armed proletariat, however, and the Red militia proved to be absolutely useless in systematic military operations -- at least during the early stages of the war.

These armed mobs and the dreamers who led them -- there is really no other name we can give them during this period of developments -- had been organized by the various workers' associations and remained under their command. There was no central command agency and no superior organization. Each group did as it pleased, went to the front or remained at home, just as it wished. Each one carried out its own personal little military actions and insisted on the right to fight in full personal freedom and complete independence. Their commanders were usually political leaders, whom the armed proletariat trusted at this stage of the game just as implicitly as before, when they had taken command during labor strikes or political meetings. They were, however, no better prepared for war than the people whom they commanded. They had absolutely no idea of even the simplest principles of tactics. Optimistically, their followers were convinced that their leaders' enthusiasm would make up for their complete lack of technical knowledge. They thought that they needed no trained officers, and the men who were transferred from the army to the militia were in an even worse position. "Every member of the militia was convinced of his right to criticize the measures taken and the plans worked out by his officers. An attack postponed, an artillery battery placed less or more favorably, a

cease-fire order -- all of these things could be interpreted as betrayal, and countless officers were murdered at the front. If they had to die, then at least it was better that they should die in honor."

Madrid at that time must have been a scene of complete chaos. As reported by an army officer attached to the government, people wasted everything -- food, materiel, means of transportation, and -- human life. The supply requests and requisition orders exceed<sup>ed</sup> all reasonable proportions. One day, for example, the commander of a front sector appeared in the offices of the general staff administrative section and requested 50,000 bread rations per day for his troops. "How many troops do you have?", he was asked. "Well", he replied, "there are the 5,000 who do the shooting, and 10,000 who appear to collect their pay of ten pesetas a day"(the amount set by the government for each militia man per day). "But what in the world will you do with 50,000 bread rations?" "Why, we need them, that's all!", was the reply.

Hundreds and hundreds of supply issue orders for all sorts of items went out every day -- for radios, fountain pens, typewriters, etc. Sometimes these orders bordered on the ridiculous, as when a militia man ordered one hundred brassieres for his unit!

Thus Madrid was plundered. Within a few days, most shops had run through their stocks and had nothing left on their shelves. And as if this were not enough, the government issued a decree requiring that employers continue to pay the wages of all those workers who had taken up arms for the Republic. It took only a very short time for this measure to ruin commerce and industry completely.

In spite of these conditions, Red leaders could have exploited the weakness and the geographical dissipation of the enemy's troops to suppress the resistance offered by his widely scattered strongholds and thus to rob him of a solid basis for successful continuation of the struggle. The morale of the Red forces was still good and they still boasted that they had all the money and all the weapons. They found it incomprehensible that anyone in his right mind could dare to resist them or

to wish to interfere with their political program.

In situations of this kind, insight, determination, and courage must be supplemented by rapid decisions. Nationalist Spain, small in its early stages and apparently not yet a factor to be reckoned with, had already made its decision. Franco and his comrades were determined to do everything in their power to salvage the situation, in spite of the fact that it was manifestly unfavorable for them, by relying on the forces which God, fate, and their own energy were bound to awaken throughout the country. They realized that the struggle would entail great sacrifices. But they were already one step ahead of their enemies in that their decisions were based on clear recognition of this fact.

Although their cause was almost hopeless and seemed to be lost from the very beginning, they found Germany willing to help them in their desperate situation.

### III. Germany's Decision to Aid Franco

On 26 July 1936, in Bayreuth, Hitler received a delegation sent by General Franco from Tetuan, consisting of two German citizens residing in Spanish Morocco and one Spanish officer. The delegation presented Franco's urgent request that the German Reich place a number of transport aircraft at his disposal so that he could bring his Moroccan foreign legion and the native Moroccan troops to continental Spain. There was no doubt that the successful outcome of Franco's struggle to liberate Spain depended upon Germany's agreeing to his request.

On the same day, after discussions with Goering and with a number of other military leaders, Hitler decided that Franco's request should be granted without delay. The scope of the proposed action was limited exactly. Twenty Ju-52 transport aircraft were to be dispatched immediately to Sevilla and Tetuan. Piloted by Lufthansa captains, they were unarmed and

were to be used exclusively for transport purposes. Six armed He-51's were to follow by ship, assigned to take over the protection of the transport aircraft but to refrain on any attack on the enemy. Twenty 20 mm antiaircraft artillery cannon were included for defensive operations only.

On the evening of the same day, a special agency was established in Berlin to take care of any questions which might arise as a result of Hitler's order. The agency was designated the "Special Staff W" (Sonderstab W), under which name it took its place in the history of the Spanish Civil War. Later on, it became the central office in charge of fulfilling all the personnel and material requirements of the German volunteers fighting in Spain. This Special Staff was responsible for such an abundance of quiet and thorough work that one is hard put to find a similar example in the annals of military history. Suffice it to say that for a period of three years the Staff sent four transport aircraft from Berlin to Spain and back every week -- summer and winter, in all kinds of weather, across the Alps and over the Mediterranean -- with a loss of only three machines during the entire period. In addition, 170 ocean transports were dispatched to Spain, every single of which arrived safely at its destination.

During the very first discussions, the "Hispano-Moroccan Transport Co., Tetuan-Sevilla" (Hispano-Marokanische Transport A.G. Tetuan-Sevilla) was founded. The very next day the Company dispatched its first aircraft, taken over from the Lufthansa with all their operating personnel. At the same time, the rather peculiar "Union Travel Society" (Reisegesellschaft Union) was established under the leadership of Major Alexander Scheele, and its members soon began to gather at Döberitz. These were the first German volunteers for Spain, and they certainly deserve special mention. A more than adventurous fate lay in store for them, a fate which they were able to master by the conscious recognition of their destiny and by the uncompromising exploitation of their

abilities.

The unusual political aspects of the situation necessitated

the strictest possible measures to maintain secrecy.

The orders issued in this connection were actually carried out so successfully that it was several years before the international Embargo Commission in London, whose task it was to keep all traffic to Spain under careful surveillance, was able to discover just how the German volunteers in Spain were being supplied.

The beginning of the Spanish Civil War naturally served to increase Hitler's determination to arm Germany and to free her from the restrictions of the Versailles Treaty.

As a matter of fact, Hitler's decision represented nothing new for Germany. Generaloberst von Seeckt and later the Minister, General von Schleicher, had already viewed the achievement of this goal as one of their primary missions in life.

At the time in question, Hitler was busily devising ways and means to bridge over Germany's lack of armaments and thus inadequate defensive power without at the same time taking too great a risk. His main worry at this juncture lay in the fact that France, which was extremely well-armed in comparison with Germany and which -- even more ominous -- was strongly infiltrated by Communists, might well decide to start a preventive war on its own initiative. And the actions of Pierre Cot, France's Air Minister, were hardly calculated to prove Hitler's fears groundless.

Even French observers feared for the stability and peace of the French nation during this period when the danger of Communist contagion was so grave.

Mussolini, obviously after having coordinated matters with his German colleague, had reached the same decision as Hitler. And Italy's participation in the Spanish Civil War, from the very beginning, was characterized by far stronger military and financial support than that of Germany.

As was clear from his discussions with Hitler, Mussolini hoped to achieve



the following secondary goals:

As a result of the control exercised by the British over Gibraltar and the Suez Canal, Italy felt herself to be a prisoner of England in the Mediterranean. Mussolini viewed Italy's participation in the Spanish Civil War, coupled with the

danger of Communism, as a method by which Italy might establish herself in Spain and thus gain access to the Atlantic, enabling her to circumvent Gibraltar by utilizing the hoped-for right of free transit over Spanish territory and undisturbed use of Spanish ports.

Mussolini placed a number of warships, including three light cruisers, at General Franco's disposal, as well as the Division Littorio, two militia divisions, and a good deal of war materiel.

The number of German personnel participating in the Spanish Civil War never exceeded more than 5,500. Thus Italian participation was numerically considerably greater than German military aid to Spain. Nevertheless (and this can be stated without any fear of being accused of arrogance), the German aid was far more valuable and deserves to be rated far higher.

## CHAPTER II

Activation, Organization, Strength, and Compositionof the Condor Legion; its Equipment, Leadership, Supply Line, andRear-Area CommunicationsI. The Activation of the Condor Legion<sup>2</sup>

Originally, German military aid to Spain was intended only to provide an airlift for the transport of Moroccan troops over the Mediterranean and to improve the training and the organizational aspects of Franco's Spanish armed forces. Active participation of German volunteers in the fighting in Spain was to be discouraged so that no evidence of German intervention could possibly come to light if prisoners should be captured. For anyone who is acquainted with the eagerness for combat inherent in the German soldier and officer, it is quite clear that it was completely unrealistic to expect them to stand on the sidelines and observe what was going on. Under the circumstances, it is no wonder that the German citizens living in Spain used all the means at their disposal to protest against the orders issued by their homeland. The early crash landings by Spanish pilots, the lack of skill demonstrated by the Spaniards in operating German tanks, the affair of the bombardment of the Red battleship Jaime I, and the system set up to supply the Alcazar in Toledo all contributed their bit towards making Hitler and Goering in Berlin more receptive to the wishes of the German volunteers.

The military missions to be accomplished in Spain increased rapidly in scope and variety, and as a result the number of volunteers in Spain also increased, so that -- in addition to Major von Scheele -- on 1 October 1936 Lieutenant Colonel (GSC) Warlimont was appointed to be in charge of German military aid to Spain.

<sup>2</sup> - Based on information provided by Generaloberst a.D. Jaenecke in his contribution to the study.

At the same time, he was assigned to act as German military advisor to General Franco. At this point the scope of Italian military aid to Spain, which had already achieved impressive proportions, played a much larger role in Hitler's deliberations than proved to be justified in view of the fact, soon clear, that Italy's contribution had been grossly overrated. In any case, Franco's extremely difficult situation and the relatively large extent of Italian military support were the fundamental reasons behind Hitler's decision to order the activation of the Condor Legion (in late October 1936), in order to lend greater weight to the goals he hoped to achieve within the framework of the Spanish Civil War. For Hitler, despite his firmly emphasized friendship for Mussolini and his sympathies for Fascist Italy, was not really interested in permitting Italy to become too strong in the Mediterranean.

Hitler's decision was rapidly followed by concrete action.

The majority of the Luftwaffe units selected to form the Condor Legion were assembled at Stettin and Swinemünde and went on board ship at these ports -- all under the camouflage designation of a "winter exercise on the island of Rügen" (Winterübung Rügen). In order to avoid undue notice, the transport was routed by way of Skagen, rather than letting it utilize the North Sea-Baltic Canal. From Skagen it continued, under inconspicuous escort by the German Navy, through the English Channel and the Bay of Biscay to Cadiz. Here the troops were loaded into trains for the journey to Sevilla. They had embarked at Stettin and Swinemünde in uniform, but had changed to civilian clothes while at sea so that they could disembark as civilians and go ashore as bona fide volunteers. This particular transport involved some 4,500 troops. After their arrival in Sevilla, with the help of the units already there they were issued new uniforms (similar in appearance to those worn by the Spanish) and organized into units. The on-the-spot experience

experience already gained proved to be of invaluable assistance here.

Another transport method was selected for the multi-engine aircraft units. They assembled at the airfield at Lechfeld, near Augsburg. From here they took off in small groups totalling approximately ten aircraft per day

(in order not to exceed Italian accommodation capacities) for the Italian airfield Campino Nord, near Rome. The crews spent the night in Rome and took off the following day. Their route led over Ostia and the Italian military harbor at Cagliari, located at the southern end of Sardinia, across the Balearic Islands to a point west of Malaga. From here, they flew over the mountain range to Sevilla. Italian warships were stationed along the entire over-water route to act as direction-finding beacons for the German crews during their first long-distance flight.

The entire transport operation had been so carefully planned and prepared that it was a complete success, with not a single loss among the thirty-three aircraft involved.

By the beginning of November 1936, then, the Condor Legion (as Germany's contribution was to be known from then on), including the smaller units which were there before it arrived and which were subsequently incorporated into it, was established in Spain.

## II. The Organization of the Condor Legion<sup>3</sup>

The German forces already in Spain (one bomber squadron, one fighter squadron, one naval air squadron, one heavy antiaircraft artillery battery, one light antiaircraft artillery battery) were integrated into the newly arrived units.

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<sup>3</sup> - Beumelburg, op. cit., page 56; The note to the effect that there were two light antiaircraft artillery batteries in Spain prior to the arrival of the Condor Legion must be an error. There was only the light (20 mm) antiaircraft artillery training center, run by Technical Sergeant Hakenholt, which was later designated the 9th Battery.

Horst-Adalbert Koch, Die Geschichte der deutschen Flakartillerie 1935-1945 (History of the German Antiaircraft Artillery Forces, 1935-1945), pages 151/152.

Air War Academy Manual (Leitfaden der Luftkriegsschule), pages 178/179.  
Köhler's Air Calendar (Fliegerkalender), 1940, "Einsatz der dt. Flakartillerie in Spanien" (Employment of German Antiaircraft Artillery in Spain), page 28.

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In January 1937 an experimental bomber squadron (Versuchsbomberstaffel) was established, whose task it was to test and try out new aircraft models in operations against the enemy. This squadron was integrated into the Legion's bomber group as its fourth squadron in April 1937; in 1938 it was augmented by a flight of dive bombers.

The organizational structure of the Condor Legion was as follows:

<u>Entity</u>	<u>Designation</u>
Operations Staff	S/88
Air Units	
1 bomber group, made up of 4 squadrons and (as of 1936) 1 flight of dive bombers	K/88
1 single-engine fighter group, made up of 4 squadrons	J/88
1 aerial reconnaissance squadron	A/88
1 haval air squadron	AS/88
Antiaircraft artillery	
a) original units (1936)	
Light (20 mm antiaircraft artillery training center (Tech. Sgt. Hakenholt) (as of June 1936)	
Heavy Antiaircraft Artillery Battery "Aldinger"	
b) Final organization (1938)	
Antiaircraft Artillery Battalion Staff	F/88
Staff Batteries	
1st Battery (88 mm)	
2d Battery (88 mm)	
3d Battery (88 mm)	

### III. Personnel Strength and Organization of the Condor Legion

Upon its arrival in Spain, the Condor Legion numbered 4,500 troops; counting those elements already there, the total was approximately 5,000. On the whole this number remained constant. In any case, the Condor Legion never exceeded a total strength of 5,600<sup>4</sup>.

The Legion was made up exclusively of volunteers and included not only commissioned and non-commissioned officers and enlisted personnel from all the various branches and sections of the Luftwaffe, but also Luftwaffe warrant officer personnel (Beamten) (administrative, technical, and meteorological personnel), as well as a limited number of civilians (e.g. as test pilots).

Volunteers of all ranks were relieved after a specific interval, not to exceed one year. The commander of the Legion, the staff chiefs, and staff members were relieved after about a year (as was also the case with the pilot personnel in the beginning), while all other personnel were normally relieved after about six months. The fighter pilots were sent home after downing five enemy aircraft.

The purpose of this personnel replacement system was to make available the largest possible number of combat-experienced soldiers to the German Luftwaffe, which was still in the early stages of growth.

As regards the selection process, each volunteer was expected to meet the usual requirements as far as character was concerned, and the pilot applicants, of course, the requirement of full professional mastery. In addition, the volunteers had to be in perfect health and relatively young; preference was given to those who were unmarried and without close family ties.

It is true, of course, that a certain inducement to volunteer was provided by the promise of specific advantages, such as preferential promotion, the chance to earn decorations, and very good pay (although in the beginning no definite promises were made as regards the kind and amount of payment). Yet, for the majority of the



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4 - Beumelburg, op. cit., page 175.

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4th Battery (20 mm)

5th Battery (20 mm)

6th Battery (88 mm) (originally a searchlight battery)

7th Battery (ammunition columns)

8th Battery (88 mm) (formerly the Aldinger Battery)

9th Battery (training unit for Spanish soldiers).

The light antiaircraft artillery batteries consisted of three 20 mm platoons and one 37 mm platoon each. A total of seven batteries (five heavy, two light) ultimately participated in operations.

One Luftwaffe Signal Communications Battalion, made up of Ln/88

1 telephone company

1 radio company

1 flight security company

1 aircraft reporting company

One air armament group, with aircraft park P/88

One medical battalion San/88

One meteorological service battalion W/88

Legionaires, the role played by these promises was of secondary importance. The determining factor in the success of Germany's participation in Spain was the personal satisfaction to be gained by each individual from the confirmation of his own professional skill, his appreciation of the opportunity to take part in combat, and his keen interest in gathering impressions of an unfamiliar country and its inhabitants. Last but far from least, there was his pride in his own nation and his determination to prove a worthy representative of German military power abroad.

All this provided the basis which made it possible for the Legionaires to enter the struggle willingly and with a sincere determination to emerge victorious, despite the fact that the struggle was taking place in foreign territory, was dedicated to the achievement of extremely remote objectives, and was based on deep-rooted factors which the majority of Legionaires were quite incapable of evaluating.

The Condor Legion represented an elite force, composed of the most capable and best qualified members of the entire German Luftwaffe. The feats it accomplished during the operations in Spain will be described in the next chapter, dealing with the course of military events. It can be stated without exaggeration that the ability and the combat morale of each individual Legionaire contributed materially to the outcome of the war.

It must be borne in mind that the entire situation -- the need for secrecy, the informal chain of command, and the very fact of being in a foreign country -- demanded a high degree of self-discipline from each and every member of the Condor Legion, and it was this self-discipline which created the definitive basis for the success of the operation as a whole.

A good deal of skill and the ability to improvise were also required of the Legion if it was to cope with the inadequacies and deficiencies encountered at every step in such a way as to prevent their having a derogatory effect

on operations. This aspect is particularly deserving of mention in view of the fact that the Legionnaires were accustomed to the firm and clearly-defined standards characterizing the chain of command, organization, administration, and supply of the armed forces in Germany.

Those errors and weaknesses which occurred in individual cases despite the great care exercised in the selection of personnel,

and which can probably never be eliminated entirely, were usually compensated for by the fine spirit of comradeship prevailing in the force as a whole. Any officer or enlisted man who proved in any way incapable of carrying out his share of the common task or who was guilty of misconduct was replaced without further ado and sent back to Germany. This principle, adhered to with ruthless consistency, naturally contributed a great deal to the fact that the units maintained a highly satisfactory record as far as the composition of their personnel was concerned.

In view of the unusual conditions, it was inevitable that the units as a whole, as well as the individual Legionaire, should acquire somewhat the aura of an adventurer, in the best sense of the word. And this must be viewed as a positive development, for a parade-ground soldier, at his best in military drill, would certainly have been out of place in Spain.

It should be emphasized at this point that the relations between the members of the Condor Legion and the Spanish population were extremely cordial from the very beginning. The Spaniards had a certain respect for the German soldier, his military accomplishments, and his personal bearing, and the German volunteers were received with admiration and eager hospitality wherever they went. Wherever their command posts were located, the communities -- in the persons of the leading families -- assumed responsibility for billeting and feeding them. Many a party was given in their honor<sup>5</sup>.

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5 - Beust, op. cit., pages 14, 57, 78, 79, 80; also Generalleutnant a.D. Jaenecke in his contribution to this study.

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IV. The Equipment of the Condor Legion

A. Flying Units

At the time of its arrival in Spain, the Condor Legion had the following aircraft at its disposal:

20 Ju-52's as transport and bomber aircraft

14 He-51's as single-engine fighter aircraft

6 He-45's as close-range reconnaissance aircraft

2 naval aircraft (1 He-59 and 1 He-60)

The following aircraft soon arrived for testing and experimental purposes (with civilian crews):

1 He-50 and 2 Hs-123's (dive bomber and close-support aircraft)<sup>6</sup>

Bomber Group (K/88)

Ju-52<sup>7</sup>

In the beginning, the bomber squadrons were equipped with the Ju-52, which had also been used to transport the Moroccan troops from Africa to Spain (30 to 35 men per aircraft). The Ju-52, which at that time was still the standard aircraft for the majority of the Luftwaffe's bomber units, was the familiar three-engine commercial model used by the German Lufthansa, which had been converted into a bomber by the installation of airborne armaments, bomb-release mechanisms, and aiming equipment.

The flight characteristics of the Ju-52 were excellent. It was easy to operate, stable in flight, robustly constructed, and capable of being flown entirely by instrument.

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6 - Information obtained from Generalleutnant a.D. Jaenecke's contribution to the present study.

7 - Beust, op. cit., pages 23-26, 38/39, and Appendix 1;  
Table of Performance Characteristics of German Military Aircraft, 1 December 1938 (Karlsruhe Document Collection);  
List of German Combat Aircraft (Karlsruhe Document Collection).

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Nevertheless, it was not entirely suited to employment in military operations because it was slow (approximately 150 miles per hour at very low altitude), not very maneuverable, and inadequately armed. The fact that the positions of the pilot and the bombardier were so far apart made exact adherence to the target approach course very difficult. The maximum altitude attainable with a full load of fuel and bombs, 11,480 feet, was inadequate.

Engines: 3 BMW-132 engines, with a rated power of 845 horsepower

Armament: In the beginning, only 2 mobile machine-guns, one in the tail and the other in the gun position under the fuselage (the so-called "pot"); both guns were aimed to shoot towards the rear, and their field of fire was limited. These defensive armaments were improved at troop level later on by the installation of additional machine-guns (up to five in number), including two fixed guns mounted on the wings between the lateral engines and the fuselage.

Bomb-Release and Aiming Devices: The maximum bomb-load consisted of 3,307.5 lbs., stored in bomb-bays and made up of 551.25-lb., 110-25-lb., and 22-lb. bombs and incendiary bombs. But in view of the extensive quantities of fuel needed for relatively longflights and the frequently inadequate airfields (short runways, soft or uneven ground), the bomb-load usually had to be reduced to from 2,205 to 2,646 lbs. The maximum fuel load of 495.2 gallons was enough for a total flight time of approximately five hours. Assuming an average fuel consumption of ninety-nine gallons per hour, this meant a combat speed of approximately 130 miles per hour at an altitude of 9,840 feet. Thus, with a bomb-load of 2,205 lbs., the aircraft had a maximum radius of action of 310.5 miles from its take-off field.

A mechanical bomb-sight, operated by the bombardier in a retractable "pot" under the fuselage, served as the aiming device.

The bombardier could also make minor corrections in course by adjusting an auxiliary side rudder.

Radio Equipment: Radio equipment was limited to the instruments needed for aircraft-based direction finding, which made both navigation and camouflaged radio communication extremely difficult. Instruments for direction finding on board, air-to-air communications, and intercommunications inside the aircraft were completely lacking.

For the conditions prevailing at that time, the Ju-52 was entirely inadequate as a bomber; technically, it was far inferior to the aircraft employed by the Reds in Spain. As a result, very soon it had to be restricted to day-time employment with a fighter escort or to night missions. Nevertheless the Ju-52 continued to be employed in Spain until the end of 1937, by which time the Legion's bomber group had been completely converted to the He-111. The Spanish units continued to fly the Ju-52 until the end of the war.

Despite an authorized equipment strength of twelve aircraft per squadron (thus a total of thirty-six aircraft for all three squadrons), an average of thirty to thirty-five operable Ju-52's was available to the bomber group during the period from the beginning of the undertaking up to the point when the group began the change-over to the newer models.

These figures do not include the three aircraft assigned to the staff squadron.

#### He-111-B+

The conversion of the bomber group to the He-111 began in April 1937. During the period from April to June of that year, the squadrons had a total of twenty of the new aircraft plus twenty of the older Ju-52's.

By the end of 1937, the bomber group had been completely converted to the He-111.

The He-111 was the most up-to-date bomber which the Luftwaffe had at that



time. It was a twin-engine machine, with a rated take-off power of 950 horsepower for each of its DB-600-type engines, and fitted with high-altitude superchargers.

Crew: Four men (pilot, bombardier, radioman, tail gunner)

Airborne Armaments: Three mobile machine guns

Radio and Navigational Equipment: Adequate to make the He-111 fully capable of instrument flight.

Operational Ceiling: 4.34 miles

Speed: Ground speed -- maximum 186 mph

-- cruising speed 174 mph

At altitude of 2.5 miles -- maximum 230 mph

-- cruising speed 214 mph

Flight Range: 276 miles at an altitude of 2.5 miles (cruising range)

Bomb-Load: Up to 3,307.5 lbs.

Flying Weight: 22,050 lbs.

Ju-87:

At the beginning of 1937, a few models of the first German dive bomber, the Ju-87, which was to play such a significant role during World War II, were assigned to the Condor Legion for experimental purposes. They were withdrawn quite soon, however, since they turned out to be not yet ready for employment from the standpoint of technological reliability. It was not until 1938 that a flight of Ju-87's was assigned to the Legion once more, for integration into the bomber group. The Ju-87 was also employed experimentally as a close-support aircraft, as was the other dive bomber model, the Hs-123.

Single-Engine Fighter Group (J/88)<sup>8</sup>He-51:

The fighter squadron already in Spain prior to the arrival of the Condor Legion was equipped with aircraft of the He-51 type, and this was also the machine assigned to the Legion's fighter group during the early stages of operations. The He-51 was a biplane with an open cockpit. It carried two rigidly mounted machine guns as armaments, and was equipped with a release mechanism for six 22-lb. fragmentation bombs. It had no radio equipment whatsoever, which meant that communication during formation flight had to be restricted to visual signals.

The Red fighter aircraft in use at that time, the "Rata" and the "Curtiss", were clearly superior to the He-51 in respect to speed, maneuverability, climbing performance, and airborne armaments -- in short in all those qualities which go to make up a good fighter aircraft.

For this reason the German fighters had to avoid aerial combat with the enemy whenever possible. There were occasions, of course, when an encounter with the Ratas or Curtisses could not be sidestepped. The German fighters were hard put to carry out their primary objectives, namely the defense of their own front area, their airfields, etc., let alone the mission of achieving air superiority by effective free aerial combat.

As a result, the He-51's were gradually restricted to direct support of ground operations by means of attack on objectives located in the immediate vicinity of the front, attack on enemy marching columns, and the elimination of enemy

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8 - Galland, op. cit., pages 46-48;

Beumelburg, op. cit., page 174;

Beust, op. cit., pages 38/39; and

Table of Performance Characteristics of German Military Aircraft, 1 December 1938 (Karlsruhe Document Collection).

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artillery and antiaircraft artillery by means of low-level attacks with airborne armaments and bombs. These were all tasks which the heavy bombers were unable to accomplish with precision and effectiveness. After the introduction of the Me-109, the He-51 was exclusively used for the tasks described above, achieving a large measure of success in this relatively new field of close-support operations.

Towards the end of 1937, the 1st and 4th Squadrons of the fighter group were completely equipped with Me-109's, while the 2d and 3d Squadrons retained the He-51's for special employment in close-support operations. During the summer of 1938, one of the two latter squadrons was also converted to Me-109's, so that a total of three squadrons were equipped with the new model.

Technical Data of the He-51<sup>8a</sup>

Design: Combined design, biplane, open cockpit, rigid landing gear

Engine: One BMW-VI, 750 horsepower

Crew: One pilot

Airborne Armaments: Two rigidly mounted machine guns

Radio Equipment: None

Bomb-Release Mechanism: For six 22-lb. fragmentation bombs

Performance:

Speed: maximum speed 205 mph

Climbing Ability: from 0 to 3,280 feet in 1.4 minutes

Operational Ceiling: 24,256 feet

Flight Range:

Armor Plating: None

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8a - Based on the catalogue of the Heinkel models, 1922-1940 (Heinkeltypenschau 1922-1940), 1941, Rostock, page 23.

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Me-109 (B):

Design: Light-metal low-wing aircraft, with cabin cockpit and retractable landing gear

Crew: One pilot

Engine: One Jumo 210-D

Airborne Armaments: Three rigidly mounted machine guns

Radio Equipment: Equipment for both air-to-ground and air-to-air communication

Bomb-Release Mechanism: For five 22-lb. bombs

Performance:

Speed: At altitude of 0 feet -- maximum speed 260 mph  
-- cruising speed 236 mph

At altitude of 2.5 miles -- maximum speed 284 mph  
-- cruising speed 245 mph

Climbing Performance: From 0 to 2.5 miles in 4.6 minutes  
from 0 to 3.10 miles in 6.2 minutes  
from 0 to 3.72 miles in 12.0 minutes

Operational Ceiling: 5.71 miles

Flight Duration: 85 minutes at an altitude of 2.5 miles  
95 minutes at an altitude of 3.72 miles

Armor Plating: None

Flying Weight: 4,410 lbs.

Me-109-D-(B):

By the autumn of 1938, both the Me squadrons of the fighter group had been equipped with the more up-to-date model, the Me-109-D. As compared with the Me-109-B, the D model could remain in flight longer

(125 minutes as compared with 95 minutes at an altitude of 3.72 miles), which made it possible to provide a longer-range fighter escort for the bombers. As far as speed and climbing ability were concerned, the performance of the new model was substantially the same as that of the older one. The D model carried four machine guns rather than three.

The Me-109-D remained the standard fighter for the Condor Legion until the end of the Spanish Civil War, and it proved to be very satisfactory in all respects.

#### Aerial Reconnaissance Squadron (1/33)<sup>9</sup>

##### Close-Range Reconnaissance Aircraft

###### He-46:

This aircraft, a few of which were used during the early stages of operations in Spain, was the model with which the close-range reconnaissance units of the German Luftwaffe were still equipped in 1936.

In mass production since 1933, it was clear that the He-46 was technologically out of date by 1936.

Design: Combination design, high-wing monoplane with rigid landing gear which could be replaced by sledge runners

Engine: One Siemens SAM-22-B, an air-cooled nine-cylinder radial engine without high-altitude supercharger; rated power 600 horsepower; non-adjustable propellers

Crew: Pilot and observer, in open cockpits arranged side by side

Airborne Armaments: One rigidly mounted machine gun aimed towards the front and one mobile machine gun aimed towards the rear

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9 - Beumelburg, op. cit., pages 35/36, 60, 69, 149, 174;

Beust, op. cit., page 39;

Table of Performance Characteristics of German Military Aircraft, 1 December 1938 (Karlsruhe Document Collection); and

List of German Combat Aircraft (Karlsruhe Document Collection).

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Radio Equipment: Long-wave key transmitter (Radio Model II) for two-way communication with the ground; trailing antenna

Photographic Equipment: Automatic aerial camera with focal distances of 200 and 400 mm; hand camera with focal distance of 190 mm

Bomb-Release Mechanism: For ten 22-lb. fragmentation bombs, which could be stored in the fuselage in place of the automatic camera; when the aircraft carried bombs, its radius of action was sharply reduced since the weight of the bombs precluded the carrying of extra fuel; mechanical bomb-sight

Armor Plating: None

The He-46 could not be operated by instrument alone.

Performance:

Speed: At an altitude of .62 miles, maximum speed 155 mph

" " " cruising speed 138 mph

At an altitude of 2.5 miles, maximum speed 151 mph

" " " cruising speed 124 mph

Flight Range: 158 miles

Operational Ceiling: 1,968 feet

Flying Weight: 4,961 lbs.

Twenty-one of these He-46's were turned over to the Spanish Air Force, where they were put to good use until the end of the war.

He-45:

The He-45, which had been introduced in 1933 and which had been the German Luftwaffe's standard close-range reconnaissance aircraft since 1935, had been designed originally as a long-range reconnaissance aircraft which, at the same time, was capable of employment as a light daytime bomber. In 1936, it still met the requirements established for the close-range reconnaissance aircraft employed by the Army.

One flight (three aircraft) of the Condor Legion's aerial reconnaissance

squadrons utilized He-45's for close-range reconnaissance operations in Spain until the end of the war.

Design: Combination design, biplane with rigid landing gear

Engine: One BMW-VI/7.3, liquid-cooled engine with twelve cylinders in a V-arrangement, without high-altitude supercharger; rated power 660 horsepower

Crew: Pilot and observer in open cockpits arranged side by side

Airborne Armaments: As in the He-46

Radio Equipment: As in the He-46

Bomb-Release Mechanism: For eighteen 22-lb. bombs, to be stored in the fuselage in place of the automatic aerial camera

Armor Plating: None

The He-45 could not be operated by instrument alone.

Performance:

Speed: At an altitude of 0 miles, maximum speed 170 mph

At an altitude of 2.5 miles, maximum speed 153 mph

" " " cruising speed 130 mph

Flight Range: Approximately 248 miles (at cruising speed)

Operational Ceiling: 18,696 feet

Flying Weight: 6,064 lbs.

Long-Range Reconnaissance Aircraft

He-70:

The He-70 was used by the Condor Legion as a long-range reconnaissance aircraft prior to the introduction of the Do-17. In the German Luftwaffe itself there was a flight of He-70's assigned to each long-range reconnaissance squadron



scheduled for reconnaissance operations for the Army; this was the case until 1937.

The single-engine He-70, also called the "Blitz" (lightning flash), had become famous as the Lufthansa's express mail airplane even before it was converted to a long-range reconnaissance aircraft by the installation of airborne armaments and other military equipment. The Blitz had created quite a sensation among experts because of its speed, which was based not upon the power of its engines but upon its particularly effective aerodynamic design. Nevertheless, despite the fact that it represented an advance over the He-45 (particularly as regarded speed), it proved to be not entirely suitable for use as a military aircraft, chiefly because of its low operational ceiling, inadequate defensive armaments, and the limited field of vision which could be covered by the observer. In comparison with the commercial Blitz, the military He-70 flew almost 18.5 miles per hour slower, as a result of the extra weight occasioned by the airborne weapons and the camouflage painting.

Design: Combination design; a low-wing aircraft with cabin cockpit and retractable landing gear

Engine: BMW-VI, twelve-cylinders arranged in a V-form, glycol-cooled, sustained performance 660 horsepower at 0 altitude; no high-altitude supercharger

Crew: Pilot, observer, and radioman

Airborne Armaments: One mobile machine gun aimed towards the rear and upwards; one mobile machine gun aimed towards the rear and downwards

Radio Equipment: Radio Model VIII for air-to-ground telegraphy; EZ-3 for direction finding based on audible signals

Photographic Equipment: As in the He-45

Bomb-Release Mechanism: None

Performance:

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48

Speed: At 0 altitude, approximately 199 mph

Flight Range: Approximately 310 miles

Operational Ceiling: 18,040 feet

The He-70 was the first German reconnaissance aircraft capable of being flown entirely by instrument.

Armor Plating: None

Do-17-P

Originally developed as a twin-engine fighter and light bomber, the Do-17-P was used by the Luftwaffe from 1937 on as a long-range reconnaissance aircraft for employment in Army-connected operations.

Ever since the equipment conversion of late 1937, the aerial reconnaissance squadrons of the Condor Legion had been utilizing Do-17-P's, not only for long-range reconnaissance but also for bombardment missions. The reconnaissance squadron had a total of four flights of Do-17-P's, one of which was assigned to long-range reconnaissance and the other three to employment as light bombers.

Design: All-metal high-wing aircraft, with cabin cockpit and retractable landing gear

Engines: two BMW-132-N engines (9-cylinder radial engines, air-cooled, with supercharger); adjustable propeller; rated power 845 HP.

Crew: Three men (pilot, observer, radioman)

Airborne Armaments: One mobile machine-gun in the nose (trained to the front)

One mobile machine-gun in the tail (trained to the rear)

One mobile machine-gun in the tail (trained to the rear and downwards)

Radio Equipment: Radio Model III for air-to-ground radio telegraphy; direction finding device (Model V) for direction finding on board on the basis of optical and audible signals; intercommunication equipment for the crew

Photographic Equipment: Automatic aerial camera for 210 and 500 mm focal distance; hand camera

Bomb Release Mechanism: For four 110-lb ETC bombs

Flying Weight: 15,739 lbs (as a reconnaissance aircraft)

The Do-17-P was fully capable of being operated exclusively by instrument.

Armor Plating: None

Performance:

Speed: At an altitude of 0 miles, maximum speed 217.3 mph

" " " cruising speed 192.5 mph

At an altitude of 2.5 miles, maximum speed 236 mph

At an altitude of 3 miles, cruising speed 217.3 mph

Flight Range: 434.7 miles

Operational Ceiling: 22,960 feet

Naval Air Squadron (AS/88)<sup>10</sup>

The Naval Air Squadron was responsible not only for carrying out reconnaissance missions against ocean traffic and seaports but also for bombarding these targets. The squadron was also employed for the bombardment of land targets located along the coast, in joint operations with the land forces. Its aircraft, weapons, and other equipment had been selected in keeping with these missions.

He-59:

The He-59 was a multi-purpose (naval reconnaissance, bomber, mine and torpedo carrier, and smoke-screen generating aircraft) aircraft equipped with floats.

In the beginning, the naval air squadron had two of these aircraft at its disposal; by July 1937, it had seven. During the course of the war, the number varied, but was never substantially higher than seven.

<sup>10</sup> - Evaluation of the "Air Exercise on Rügen" of the Naval Air Squadron, Condor Legion (Karlsruhe Document Collection).

Table of Performance Characteristics of German Military Aircraft, 1 December 1938 (Karlsruhe Document Collection).

List of German Combat Aircraft (Karlsruhe Document Collection).

The He-59 was a twin-engine float seaplane, which -- because of its relatively low speed -- could be employed against protected targets only in nighttime missions.

Design: Combined design

Crew: Three men

Engines: Two BMW-VI-6.0 engines, rated power 690 HP each

Airborne Armaments: Three mobile machine-guns, supplemented on an experimental basis by one 20 mm cannon

Bomb Load: Total of 2,205 lbs (110-lb, 505-lb, 1,100-lb), or one 2,866-lb torpedo, or mines with depth adjustment, or three smoke generators

Performance:

Speed: At 0 altitude, maximum speed 136.6 mph

" " cruising speed 125.4 mph

At an altitude of 1.2 miles, maximum speed 131.6 mph

" " " " cruising speed 121 mph

Operational Ceiling: 2.42 miles

Flight Range at 0 Altitude: as bomber: 301 miles

as torpedo carrier: 273 miles

as smoke generating aircraft: 301 miles

Flying Weight: 19,804 lbs (maximum)

He-60-D:

This was a single-engine coastal and ship-based reconnaissance aircraft, equipped with floats. The Naval Air Squadron had only a few He-60-D's at its disposal.

Design: Combined design, capable of being launched by catapult

Crew: Two men

Engine: BMW-VI-6.0-ZU, rated power 660 HP

Airborne Armaments: Two machine-guns

Photographic Equipment: Aerial cameras or, installed in place of these,  
one smoke generator

Performance:

Speed: At 0 altitude, maximum speed 150 mph

" " cruising speed 128.5 mph

At an altitude of 2.5 miles, maximum speed 140 mph

Operational Ceiling: 2.98 miles

Flight Range: 298 miles (maximum)

Flying Weight: 7,938 lbs

B. Antiaircraft Artillery Forces<sup>11</sup>

The heavy antiaircraft artillery battery which formed the basic artillery unit in Spain was equipped with four 88 mm antiaircraft artillery cannon.

This cannon, whose development goes all the way back to World War I, was employed in the beginning exclusively in accordance with its original purpose, i.e. for defense against enemy attack from the air. The fact that the Red air units, after losing sixty-one aircraft to the German antiaircraft artillery battery, began to avoid the battery positions entirely, coupled

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11 - Horst Adalbert Koch, op. cit., pages 20, 106/107, 109, 112/113, 118, 120/121, 123/124.

Air War Academy Manual (Leitfaden der Luftkriegsschulen), "Einsatz der Deutschen Luftwaffe während des spanischen Bürgerkrieges" (Employment of the German Luftwaffe during the Spanish Civil War), pages 178/179 (Karlsruhe Document Collection).

Volkman, "Kurzer Erfahrungsbericht über den Einsatz der Legion Condor in der Zeit vom 1.11.37-31.10.38" (Brief Report of Experience Gained during the Employment of the Condor Legion from 1 November 1937 to 31 October 1938), pages 11 and 12 (Karlsruhe Document Collection).

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with the lack of artillery equipment prevailing in the Spanish forces brought the employment of the German antiaircraft artillery cannon against ground targets more and more into the foreground. Thus the operations in Spain proved for the first time that the German antiaircraft artillery cannon were capable of being used for a number of different purposes.

The 88 mm cannon, with its high firing speed, the devastating effectiveness of its explosive shells and armor-piercing grenades, and its firing range of up to eight miles, was a weapon capable of deciding the outcome of an entire battle.

Ammunition: Cartridge grenades with time fuse for employment against air targets and with percussion fuse for use against ground targets; armor-piercing grenades with tracer ammunition.

In the case of employment against air targets, the computation and direction of fire for the entire battery was handled by the antiaircraft artillery fire control set, which provided constant firing data for each individual cannon in terms of distance, direction, and altitude (after making allowance for applicable weather factors and the loading lag), and which took care of adjusting the automatic fuse setter.

The range computer used by the heavy antiaircraft artillery battery was an optical device on the 4 m basis (stereo-photogrammetry).

The light antiaircraft artillery units, one of which was assigned to each heavy battery with the task of combatting enemy low-flying aircraft, consisted of three light (20 mm) antiaircraft artillery cannon each.

The 88 mm cannon were transported in two loads by means of special rubber-tired divided trailers drawn by tractors. Immediate firing readiness was guaranteed at all times.

The battery was augmented by an ammunition squadron, a signal communications squadron, and a combat supply group.



The searchlights used by the heavy battery for target illumination at night had a diameter of 4.9 feet. The arc-lamp produced an illuminating power equivalent to 1.1 billion Hefner candles. When weather conditions were favorable, this meant that a target could be illuminated at a distance of 26,404 feet and at an altitude of 13,120 to 16,400 feet. A 24-kw generator, driven by a gasoline motor, provided the power needed to run the searchlights.

Light Antiaircraft Artillery Battery

The light antiaircraft artillery battery was made up of four platoons of three 20 mm cannon each, plus a searchlight platoon.

The 20 mm cannon was a recoil-operated gun, with both semi-automatic and fully automatic firing mechanisms which could be adjusted for salvos or continuous fire.

The ammunition was fed from magazines containing twenty rounds each. It consisted of explosive grenades with percussion fuse and tracer ammunition, armor-piercing grenades, or armor-piercing explosive grenades. The weight of the projectiles was between 3.6 and 5 oz.

The triangular gun mounts were equipped with levelling devices at each corner in order to compensate for any unevenness in the terrain, and permitted all-round traverse. The gunner's seat moved with the gun, and the gunner could open either salvo or continuous fire simply by activating the proper switch with his foot.

The cannon were transported by means of a special two-wheel trailer, from which the gun could be dismounted and set up on the ground ready for action within a matter of seconds.

The searchlight platoon was equipped with four searchlights, each having a diameter of 23 inches; the lights could be adjusted manually. The carbon arc-lamps provided an illuminating power equivalent to 150 million Hefner candles. Targets at an altitude of 5,248 feet and at a distance of approximately 10,170 feet could be illuminated.

The 37 mm platoon was equipped with three cannon. This type of gun was semi-automatic in operation. In the beginning it was used with an outrigger-type mount like the one used with the 88 mm cannon, and later on triangular mounts similar to those used with the 20 mm guns were introduced.

The 37 mm cannon were transported in the same way as the 20 mm guns.

appeared to be most dangerous in his particular area of operations at any given moment. As soon as the target came into effective range, it was then hit by the concentrated fire of the entire section. The platoon leader could concentrate the entire fire power of his platoon on a certain target, either by giving verbal orders or by using pre-arranged signals. The actual firing of the gun was the individual responsibility of each gunner.

Thus each gun within the light antiaircraft artillery units was provided with its own control and sight equipment.

The light antiaircraft artillery units were also used frequently and successfully in ground operations during the Spanish Civil War. Their position during operations of this kind was usually right behind the forward infantry.

Ammunition: Highly sensitive ~~max~~ contact fuse, with tracer ammunition,  
Incendiary grenades with and without tracer ammunition,  
Armor-piercing grenades.

The light antiaircraft artillery units did not have a central fire control set to direct the fire of an entire battery or platoon. Each section chief independently had his gunners track whatever target

C. Motor Vehicles<sup>11a</sup>

The Condor Legion was equipped with approximately 100 different types of motor vehicles. And sometimes, even within the same type, there were as many differences in spare parts as there were different models and series. This led to difficulties and delays in keeping the Legion supplied with the spare parts it needed and sometimes made it impossible to carry out necessary repairs.

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11a - See pages 49/50 for further details in this connection.

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V. The Command Structure and Chain of Command of the Condor Legion<sup>12</sup>

The command structure of the Condor Legion was problematic and, at the same time, unique in that its commander remained subordinate to the Commander in Chief of the German Luftwaffe, from whom he received all orders, instructions, and directives. Nevertheless, the commander of the Legion, who had the authority of a commanding general, enjoyed a relatively high degree of freedom of action.

There was no official contact between German and Spanish command agencies, which meant that it was left up to the officers and troops to find the ways and means of ensuring effective and successful cooperation in each individual instance of joint action.

It is obvious that under these circumstances difficulties and instances of friction were bound to occur, especially among the higher-level command agencies. In the first place, the directives coming from Germany did not -- in fact, could not -- always give due consideration to the situation of the moment, and in the second place the German officers were frequently confronted by a lack of understanding or by pure and simple stubbornness on the part of their Nationalist Spanish comrades, all of which was hardly conducive to reconciling the views and coordinating the operational plans of the two forces. Finding a common meeting-ground and smoothing over apparently irreconcilable differences of opinion was surely one of the most demanding tasks of the leaders of the Condor Legion, a task which could be accomplished only with the aid of a large measure of tact and diplomacy. The fact that in spite of these obstacles the various commanders of the Legion managed to prevail in their views regarding the military situation and its operational implications not only for the Legion but also for the Spanish ground forces, speaks for the military competence and experience of the Legion commanders

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and their chiefs of staff as well as for the respect which Franco and his  
generals felt for them.

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12 - Beust, op. cit., pages 75 - 77.

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To begin with, the Condor Legion proceeded in accordance with the principles of command and employment valid at that time within the German Luftwaffe, with, of course, certain modifications needed to cope with the specific situation at hand. At the same time, however, the Legion was constantly gaining further experience, some of which affected basic principles of command and employment; those modifications deemed desirable in the light of experience were put into effect without delay and without any difficulty on the technical or tactical sectors. The fact that such changes could be effected so smoothly is certainly to the credit of the Legion's commanders, and it was surely one of the determining factors for the success achieved by the Legion as well as for the relatively low losses suffered by it.

The developments and modifications experienced by the Condor Legion during its two and one-half year assignment in Spain were many. Progressing from the first stage of initial difficulties and stop-gap solutions, as time went on all the requirements implicit in continuous development in the fields of tactics, organization, and technology were recognized and provided for.

After 1937, the peculiarities characteristic of the early stages of a civil war gradually gave way to the operations of a "normal" war. To be sure, this "normal" war was restricted to a relatively limited territory; it never reached the geographical extent or the military scope of the two World Wars and thus must be evaluated according to different criteria in many respects.

It lay in the nature of the <sup>a</sup>Spanish Civil War that the main emphasis was placed on the ground operations of the Army, on its local victories, and on its territorial gains. Thus it was first of all the principles governing the cooperation between the army and the air forces which were put into effect and subjected to further development. The valuable experience gained in this particular field will be discussed in detail in Chapter IV.

The concept of strategic air missions was relegated more and more to the



background, and it is definitely open to question whether this development was ~~xxx~~ really an advantage for the outcome of the Civil War in the long run. Today, of course, we are no longer in a position to provide a definitive answer to the question of whether the end of the war might not have been hastened materially by means of a systematic air campaign against strategic targets in the enemy hinterland, especially supply centers, seaports, and supply routes.

It is, of course, undeniable that the tactical employment of air units at the focal point of the ground fighting was extremely important, and sometimes even vitally necessary.

The first commander of the Condor Legion was Generalmajor Sperrle (from Nov. 1936 until 31 Oct. 1937); his first chief of staff (until January 1937) was Lieutenant Colonel (GSC) Holle, who was replaced in January 1937 by Lieutenant Colonel (GSC) Freiherr von Richthofen (Diplom-Ingenieur).

Generalmajor Sperrle's successor was Generalmajor Volkmann, who assumed command in November 1937 and remain<sup>ed</sup> until November 1938. Lieutenant Colonel (GSC) Flocher served as Generalmajor Volkmann's chief of staff.

The last commander, whose appointment continued until the end of the Civil War, was Generalmajor Freiherr von Richthofen, Sperrle's former chief of staff. Chief of staff during this period was Lieutenant Colonel (GSC) Seidemann.

VI. The Supply System and the Rear-Area Communications System of the Condor Legion

As is the case with any expeditionary corps, the problem of supply was of paramount importance for the Condor Legion. The main difficulties which it ~~presented~~ <sup>presented</sup> ~~posed~~ <sup>faced</sup> in this connection were the following:

1. Practically all replacement shipments, whether of personnel or materiel, had to come all the way from Germany, which meant that they had to cover a distance of over 1,200 miles. Most of the Legion's requirements in foodstuffs, as well as a few other supply items, could be met in Spain; everything else -- aircraft, engines and spare parts, weapons and ammunition, almost all aircraft and vehicle fuels and lubricants, and all other equipment -- had to be brought from Germany.

2. Supply shipments from Germany had to be sent exclusively by water. Cross-country transport was out of the question, since it would have meant travelling over French territory.

Air transport was reserved for a small number of personnel, for courier and liaison services, and for the delivery of multi-engine aircraft.

3. The accomplishment of the necessary sea transports was complicated by a number of political and military factors. In the first place, all transports of war materiel had to be carefully camouflaged, and their purpose and destination kept secret at all costs. There was always the danger of inspections in transit, which resulted in confiscation of the shipment or even in the sinking of the vessels involved by the Red naval forces. Once the Bay of Biscay was in Nationalist hands, of course, this last danger was practically eliminated. Even so, the German Navy was called upon to play an important role in providing escort services.

4. The transport of supplies from the seaports where they were unloaded to their final destination in the interior of the country was dependent upon the highway network, which -- in comparison with other countries -- left much to be desired in terms of density and road conditions and which, in addition, was constantly congested. The situation was made even more difficult by the shortage of transport space, since the number of German vehicles assigned to the Legion was inadequate and the available Spanish trucks few in number, obsolete, and in poor operating condition.

Rail transport facilities were very poor. There were very few freight cars available, and the Spanish railway network (sparsely laid out and poorly maintained in any case) was in a state of complete neglect as a result of the war<sup>13</sup>.

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13 - Beust, op. cit., pages 82 and 83.

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After the first transport of the Condor Legion itself from Stettin and Swinemünde to Cadiz, this particular route was no longer used. Instead the Special Staff W worked with a shipping agency in Hamburg, which had three or four of its own ships constantly at the disposal of the Staff. These ships took care of the routine shipments of weapons, ammunition, and equipment and also carried out the transport of experienced replacement personnel for Spain. The latter transports were handled as follows: The officers and enlisted men scheduled for replacement duty in Spain were brought together in a Luftwaffe camp inconspicuously located on the Havel near Gatow, in the vicinity of Berlin, where they were issued civilian clothing and oriented for their coming assignment. Transports of this kind usually included between 500 and 600 men. During the night, the group was loaded into buses and arrived in Hamburg before daybreak. Here they were loaded into launches and taken to a part of the harbor which was no longer in use, where they boarded a steamer which had already been loaded with its cargo of weapons, ammunition, etc. All the cabins were below deck and the hatchways were carefully concealed, so that there was nothing to detract from the picture of a perfectly harmless and innocent steamship.

The passengers immediately disappeared below deck, and the steamer got under way. During the entire voyage no one was allowed on deck as long as there was even a remote chance that a passing vessel might come close enough to get a good look.

It is important to note that these steamers sailed under the flag of Panama. Panama was one of the few nations which had not joined the embargo agreement concluded in London and was now engaged in the profitable business of charging a monthly fee in dollars to permit the ships of other countries to fly the Panamanian flag. In this way the German steamers avoided the danger of being boarded and inspected by an embargo officer during the trip to Spain.

As a further camouflage measure, after passing through the Straits of Dover the ship changed its appearance to avoid recognition. The name was changed,

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a second ring was painted around the smokestack, a dummy smokestack was added,  
or the entire ship repainted.

Later on, in order to check on its security procedures, the Special Staff W requested a German legation secretary employed in the office of the Embargo Commission to try to find out whether London knew anything about the German transports. But the entries in the Commission's lists indicated only that the Panamanian steamer "Golfo de Darien", for example, had passed through the Straits of Dover, with a remark in the last column to the effect that "its present whereabouts" were "unknown".

As the German steamer approached the Spanish coast, it was picked up by one of Franco's escort cruisers. Under cover of darkness, the steamer docked in the harbor of El Ferrol. At the end of this bay, quite well hidden by the contours of the terrain, lay the arsenal. Nearby a troop train waited, ready to bring the German group directly to Leon, where they were issued uniforms and processed for assignment to the appropriate units of the Condor Legion.

Leon, with its huge airfield, its spacious assembly hangars, its barracks, and its rail connections, was selected as the center of supply and equipment conversion activity. Only for less important deliveries were the depots at Seville, Salamanca, and Mallorca utilized. German hopes that the Legion might be able to utilize the harbors of Bilbao and Santander (along the eastern part of the northern coast) could not be realized, since both harbors were needed to handle the increasing volume of ore transports to Spain. The main reason, however, was the fact that it was only the centrally located airfield at Leon which provided the necessary facilities and equipment.

Vigo (located on the northwestern coast) gradually began to replace El Ferrol as the unloading port for the German transports. A railway line connected Vigo with Leon.

The German ocean transports invariably went smoothly. One of the ships belonging to the Hamburg agency was the steamship "Protos", previously assigned to the Baltic Sea route. The Protos had been used to transport locomotives, and for this reason had especially large loading hatches. This made it parti-

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cularly suitable for the transport of the characteristically long and unwieldy boxes containing aircraft sections. Otherwise, these would have had to be loaded on deck -- fully visible to all.

Every Wednesday, two courier Ju-52's took off from Berlin and two from Seville in order to take care of any emergency transports and to carry official mail, as well as personal mail and, sometimes, flying personnel. During the first day, the aircraft taking off from Berlin-Tempelhof flew as far as Champino Nord, near Rome. Here the crews spent the night, always at the same hotel, the Massimo Deseglio near the Termes railway station. On the following day, the flight continued over Ostia and Sardinia to a point off the coast of Malaga. From this point, if the weather was good, the route over the mountains to Seville was used; in case of bad weather, the aircraft flew along the Mediterranean, around Gibraltar, and then followed the course of the Guadalquivir River north to Seville. The duration of the flight was approximately eleven or twelve hours, and the aircraft were equipped with auxiliary fuel tanks to keep them airborne that long.

On the third day, the aircraft took off from Seville for the headquarters of the Condor Legion, wherever it might be at the time.

Later on, this route was shortened so that the flight could be accomplished in one day. The new route went from Berlin, via Milan and St. Bonet (on the island of Mallorca), directly to the Spanish mainland.

Studying these conditions in retrospect, we must bear in mind that Germany, in spite of all her bustling activity during these years, was carrying on a poor man's war which required constant improvisation. Never was she in a position to draw on unlimited resources; she was always forced to make do with stop-gap measures.

The main resource which Germany had at her disposal was the eagerness and courage of her soldiers, and it must be admitted that she used these to best advantage.

The following is included as an example of ~~the~~ Germany's straitened circumstances as far as supply was concerned:



After the Condor Legion had been transported to Spain, it was discovered that the units, totalling some 6,000 men, were supplied with 114 different types of motor vehicles, and that the spare parts for all these vehicles would have to be supplied from Germany, over a tremendous distance. In comparison with the Italians, for example, whose motorized units -- in exemplary fashion -- contained only a very few different types of vehicles, the Germans found the problem of spare parts to be a source of endless work, material, and expense. It soon turned out that there was no other way to solve the problem than to set up a railway train

as a spare parts depot. By the end of the war, spare parts in the value of approximately six million gold marks had been assembled in this train, neatly arranged on built-in shelves and classified according to type and model. When the Spanish Civil War came to an end, the train was smuggled through to Germany under cover of darkness, in spite of promises given to the effect that this would not be done. Its contents were simply so valuable that Germany could not afford to lose them. Later on, as a part of the war materiel captured in France, we acquired a huge and perfectly equipped spare parts depot which the British had established before the war on the coast of France. This was an example of excellent and far-seeing planning on the part of the British. But England was rich and Germany was poor.

In the light of the experience they had gained in Spain, the German soldiers protested violently against this unrealistic production policy. The Führer's special representative for motor vehicle matters (Bevollmächtigter für das Kraftfahrwesen), General von Schell, was ordered to do something about the situation and was allegedly given full authority in this connection. In the long run, however, his efforts in this direction were frustrated by Hitler himself and by Party pressure groups<sup>14</sup>.

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14 - Based on information furnished by Generaloberst a.D. Jaenecke.

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## Chapter III

The Part Played by the Condor Legion in the Overthrow of Communist Hegemony in Spain<sup>15</sup>

I. The First German Volunteers in Spain

At 0850 hours, on the morning of 27 July 1936, the first Ju-52, flown by Lufthansa Captain Henke, took off from Tempelhof Airfield in Berlin. The following day, after an intermediate landing in Stuttgart, Captain Henke landed at Tetuan and lost no time in beginning with the transport of the Moroccan troops. On the same day, he landed in Seville with a load of twenty-two Moroccan soldiers, who had survived their first airplane ride with equanimity. During its next transport flight, the Ju-52 carried more than thirty passengers. In this way it flew back and forth from Morocco to the Spanish mainland, sometimes as often as four times a day, paying little attention to the Red warships stationed in the Straits of Gibraltar, which soon began to observe and shoot at this strange bird which flew back and forth so regularly. A short time later, the rest of the German transport aircraft began to arrive. The transport aircraft in Spain were under the command of 1st Lieutenant Freiherr Rudolf von Moreau, who did so much to further the Spanish Nationalist cause during his assignment with the Legion, which lasted from July 1936 until the summer of the following year. Moreau was an exemplary officer and a fine person, a classic example for all his younger comrades and a worthy successor to his many great forerunners from World War I until his death in the service of his country.

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15 - Sections I through XI of Chapter III were written by Generaloberst a.D. Jaenecke. They are based on his own personal recollections as chief of the Special Staff W(ilberg), which was in charge of the activation of the Condor Legion in Germany, its transport to Spain, and its supply in Spain, as well as on his many inspection visits to the scene of action in Spain. In preparing his account, Generaloberst Jaenecke utilized two sources in

Footnote 15 (cont)

particular: Werner Beumelburg, The Struggle for Spain, and the material prepared by Colonel a.D. Freiherr von Beust in connection with the present study.

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On 31 July 1936, General der Flieger Milch, State Secretary in the Reichs Ministry of Aviation (Reichsluftfahrtministerium), held a speech in Döberitz in honor of the departure of the Union Travel Society, which we have already mentioned. At the order of the Führer, Milch proclaimed, German aid would be rendered to the cause of Nationalist Spain. He called upon the volunteers who had reported for duty to carry out the transport of Franco's troops to the Spanish mainland and to protect such transports under any and all circumstances. He pointed out that the volunteers were not to engage in hostile acts, and that the fighter pilots were expressly forbidden to attack except in self-defense. In the latter case, as Milch put it, the Commander in Chief of the Luftwaffe expected each pilot to do everything in his power to protect the transport aircraft in his charge; this included -- if necessary -- shooting down the enemy attacker. General Milch also conveyed to the Volunteers the assurance of the Commander in Chief, Luftwaffe, that he would not, under any circumstances, leave them holding the bag in Spain, no matter how the situation might develop.

The eyes of the volunteers sparkled. They were filled with strange emotions as they travelled through Berlin by bus in the afternoon, dressed in their new civilian clothing, to the Lehrter Railway Station, where they were assembled at a train bearing the sign "Union Travel Society". Their friendly leader, Major von Scheele, who had won his spurs in a number of foreign wars, escorted them to the steamship "Usaramo" in Hamburg. The ship was already heavily laden with aircraft, bombs, antiaircraft artillery cannon, and miscellaneous equipment.

By 5 August, the steamship had reached a point off the southern coast of Spain. Here the commander of a German torpedo boat stopped them and came on board to discuss the methods to be used in breaking through the sea blockade set up by the Reds. Under cover of darkness, the ship, its lights dimmed, entered the harbor of Cadiz. Fortunately recognizing its target too late, a

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Red ironclad vessel fired a few grenades into the harbor, where the crew was already busily unloading the cargo. A special train was waiting to carry the troops and supplies to Seville. The fighter crews and the antiaircraft artillery units set up an assembly center and began to put their aircraft and cannon together. Moreau and his staff took over the Ju-52's, which had been ferried to Spain in the meantime, and prepared to get to work.

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carried out without enemy interference, and ocean transports could be increased in number. This, in turn, helped to speed up the vital transfer of the Spanish colonial troops and their equipment from Morocco to Seville.

In the meantime, Lufthansa <sup>Captain</sup> Henke and his crew had been extremely busy.

Their record was 241 Moroccan troops transported from Tetuan to Seville in one day. By the time the transport action came to an end, a total of 14,000 troops and a good many weapon and ammunition cargos had been brought to Spain.

From the point of view of both strategy and tactics, it is interesting to note that this air transport action was the first of its kind in military history and that, politically speaking, it was of tremendously vital significance. In any case, it provided General Franco with the manpower which he needed to take up the fight which was to lead to the liberation of his nation.

The air transport actions from Tetuan to the Spanish mainland were followed by ocean transports, as soon as the German fighter units had taught the Red warships to be a bit more wary in their attacks.

But things did not always go so smoothly as in the beginning. In August the first volunteers lost their lives, when a Ju-52 crashed soon after its take-off from Jerez de la Frontera. The shortage of aircraft fuel presented a serious problem. Operating from Tetuan, Spanish water wagons were driven to Tangiers (French), where they were loaded with benzol purchased from a Portuguese firm; this helped somewhat at least, until arrangements could be made to ship fuel directly from Spain.

On one occasion, the Red armored cruiser "Jaime I" developed into rather a nuisance. Its anti-aircraft artillery was disrupting the transports by forcing the Ju-52's to fly at such a high altitude that they were unable to carry as much cargo as usual. Resolved to eliminate the problem, Moreau and Lieutenant Graf Hoyos loaded their transport aircraft with a dozen 550-lb bombs and, at the break of dawn, flew off towards Malaga. This was the first German bombardment mission of the war, and it was completely successful. The Jaime I received two direct hits from an altitude of 1,640 feet and disappeared from the Straits of Gibraltar. After this incident, the German air transports were



The Special Staff W (Camouflage Designation For the Office  
Headed By General Der Flieger Wildberg)

From September 1936 until the end of November 1938, Colonel (GSC, Army) Jaenecke was chief of staff of the Special Staff W. In this capacity, he was intimately acquainted with the details pertaining to the employment of the Condor Legion and other German volunteer groups in Spain. As what we may term an impartial observer of these happenings, especially insofar as they concerned the part played by the flying units, Colonel Jaenecke holds the following views:

In the literature published so far there are a number of decisive factors, some of them of vital psychological significance, which have been dealt with far too superficially.

When Hitler decided that Germany should participate in the Spanish Civil War, he was motivated not only by the wish to avoid a Bolshevik victory at all costs, but also by the desire to ensure the success of a National Socialist Germany. The Spanish Civil War was to provide the background against which troops were to be trained for Germany's coming struggle for supremacy in Europe, a struggle which -- presumably -- he was already planning at that time.

There can be no doubt today that Hitler was chiefly responsible for everything which happened then and later in Germany. Nevertheless, whether this is the case in connection with the employment of the Condor Legion and the build-up of the German Luftwaffe, must remain open to question.

In the year 1936, the German Luftwaffe had at its disposal a large number of outstanding officers, who, unfortunately, had no chance to put their capabilities to the test. This might be termed almost a tragedy, from the point of view of the officers concerned. Two of them deserve particular mention. The first of these was General Wever, chief of the general staff of the newly organized Luftwaffe. Coming from the General Staff of the Army, Wever met his death in an air crash on 3 June 1936, right at the beginning of what promised

to be a fruitful career dedicated to the establishment of a new German air  
arm. A man of quicksilver intelligence

and imperturbable logic, he would certainly have been able to find a solution to the many unsolved problems of Luftwaffe organization and employment, and we may be sure that he would have solved these problems so efficiently that the later friction between the Luftwaffe and the Army and the Luftwaffe and the Navy would never have occurred.

The second of these outstanding officers was General der Flieger Wilberg, who had served as a pilot during World War I. His knowledge and ability in the field of aviation were outstanding; he was far-sighted and energetic -- in short, an ideal commander in chief for the new German Luftwaffe. But circumstances decreed that Goering, the fair-haired boy of the Party and of Hitler, should be given preference over him -- in complete disregard of his <sup>o</sup>proven ability. Moreover, Wilberg was half Jewish, although one would never have known, to look at him. He even possessed a certificate signed by Hitler to the effect that he and his descendants were exempt from the Anti-Semitic laws; the fact remains, however, that Hitler never received him socially. Wilberg was killed in an air crash which took place after Mölders' funeral; this was after he had been relegated to the background, as far as his career was concerned.

The first German fliers to make names for themselves in Spain were Captain von Moreau and Flight Captain Henke. It was they who defied heavy enemy defensive fire to drop down over the 200-foot long courtyard of the Alcazar in Toledo in order to deliver badly needed supply cannisters. Their action provided the heroic garrison under Colonel Moscardo with the necessary morale boost to encourage it to keep on defending its almost hopeless position until it could be relieved by General Franco and his Moros. Both these outstanding fliers were killed in action soon afterwards.

Among the German pilots in Spain was an extremely capable squadron leader by the name of 1st Lieutenant Eberhard. On one occasion, after Eberhard had already brought down a record number of enemy aircraft (at a time when such feats really counted for something), a group of international journalists sit-

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ting on the terrace of a cafe along the Manzanares heard the unmistakable sounds of aerial combat over Madrid. They saw two aircraft go down in flames, but could make out only one parachute, which was hovering over the Red-held suburbs of

Madrid. A few days later we found out what had happened. Eberhard had died from a heart-wound received in combat and had crashed with his aircraft. His opponent was one of the most famous Russian pilots in Spain, and it was he who had bailed out of his aircraft and landed safely in the city of Madrid. Since he could not speak any Spanish, however, he was taken for a German by the Red mob and beaten to death. This incident had unsuspected consequences. The Russians were furious and issued orders that in future all stranded pilots were to be treated gently and turned over to the nearest military headquarters without delay. This order also saved the lives of countless German pilots later on, for it was often possible to exchange them for prisoners from the other side during lulls in the operations.

In order to speed up the flow of front-trained pilots to Germany, where they were needed as instructors in the flight schools, it had been made a standing rule in the German Luftwaffe that each fighter pilot was to be relieved of duty after having brought down five enemy aircraft. Captain Mölders, justly famed for his insatiable appetite for aerial combat, managed to keep his score a secret until it was finally discovered, quite by accident, that he had downed fifteen enemy aircraft.

Another interesting case concerns a certain 1st Lieutenant Kalderak, who normally carried out up to twelve bombardment and airborne fire attacks on the Red trenches a day in his open reconnaissance machine, an He-46. During his spare time, Kalderak practised with an He-51 and managed to train himself as a fighter pilot. One day, during a fighter scramble at his airfield, one of the He-51's was left over. Acting on his own initiative, Kalderak took off in it after the others and was actually fortunate enough to shoot down three French Brequet bombers in only one minute. Since he had no fighter pilot's license, there was a tremendous uproar when the Reichs Ministry of Aviation tried to contest his right to this victory -- a passion for flying versus bureaucracy! Soon after this incident Kalderak, too, was killed in action.

It should be mentioned here briefly that from the very beginning of the Spanish Civil War the utilization of antiaircraft artillery in operations against ground targets played a significant role and gave rise to a good deal of discussion. The factors which motivated the employment of antiaircraft artillery in actions of this kind were the following: What Spanish artillery was available was completely out of date and utterly inadequate to the demands of modern combat. The Commander in Chief, <sup>German</sup> Army, and the Chief of the Army General Staff, on the other hand, were both of the opinion that Germany was just beginning to rearm and was still so weak that it needed every single artillery piece, mine thrower, and machine-gun, as well as every single round of ammunition, for its own forces. Accordingly, in their opinion it was completely irresponsible to intervene in a foreign war. For these reasons, whenever they could, both refused categorically to release weapons or ammunition for the Spanish venture. It was not until years later that ~~they~~ they were persuaded to send two howitzer batteries (one heavy and one light) to Franco, and even then they did so only because they had been told that Franco might possibly return the favor at some later date.

At that time Hitler's position was not yet so secure that he could impose his will on such strong and such well-known personalities as these.

Later on, when this situation had changed, Hitler saw to it that Generaloberst von Fritsch and Generaloberst Beck were removed from office. It is quite possible that their lack of cooperation in the Spanish affair may have contributed to their ultimate removal.

It is important that we be acquainted with this background if we are not to draw erroneous conclusions from the experience gained during the Spanish Civil War. If the entire German Wehrmacht had supported the venture wholeheartedly, the results would have been quite different. As it was, however, the Luftwaffe alone participated in the war in Spain, while the Army and the Navy cooperated only when they could not afford not to. This statement may be countered by the argument that the Army, after all, contributed two armored companies and one intercept company. On the other hand it is clear that this was done for purely egotistical reasons, namely in order that the companies involved might gain a bit of experience. Incidentally, we might point out that, when the German tanks were first used in Spain, their armor plating was completely shattered by a direct hit from enemy artillery. Owing to her long inactivity in the field of armaments production, Germany had missed out on all the intervening developments pertaining to the hardening of armor<sup>f</sup> plating. And, as Fate would have it, when Germany sent her foremost armaments expert to Spain to investigate the situation on the spot, he was killed in the crash of one of the only three courier aircraft to be lost during the entire period of the war in Spain.

As a matter of fact, though, in all developments concerning the German tank forces the spirit of their true founder, General Guderian, was discernible. And he was extremely eager to try them out at the front.

\* As far as the employment of the intercept company and the minor role played by the German Navy were concerned, one need only be acquainted with the far-reaching interests of Admiral Canaris to realize that they reflected his wish to keep an eye on what was going on, just in case. In his capacity as chief

of German counterespionage and in view of his excellent connections with the German Navy and with General Franco, he had no difficulty in guiding these activities into directions which suited his own interests. It was also due to Canaris' skillful work that the many Spanish-speaking Germans residing in Spain were pressed into service in behalf of Franco's cause right from the beginning.



In the first place, they were able to provide urgently needed interpreters from among their ranks. And in the second place, all former soldiers and officers, after a short period of orientation to bring them up to date, were utilized in the many Spanish military training centers. It is worthy of note that these German-staffed schools turned out 60,000 Spanish officers, officer candidates, and non-commissioned officers during the course of the war, thus helping materially to improve the inadequate training standard of Franco's armies<sup>15a</sup>. In connection with this extremely important question of training in the Spanish Army, one expert gave the following criticism in Hitler's presence in 1937: "The Spanish generals and their higher-ranking officers are stupid, lazy, arrogant, and unteachable, and in the interests of a rapid and effective retraining of the Spanish Army it must be ~~admitted~~ regretted that the Reds didn't do away with more of them."

As far as the Spanish enlisted man was concerned, it must be remembered that he had been the terror of all the battlefields of Europe for generations. The qualities which had made him so were still there; they simply had to be awakened. Well-cared for, the Spaniard is one of the best and most willing soldiers to be found in all of Europe.

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15a - According to Generaloberst a.D. Jaenecke, German observers were not very favorably impressed by the standard of training in the Spanish Army, especially the standard prevailing among general officers.

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## II. The Struggle for Madrid (Summer and Fall 1936)

(See the map in Appendix 1)

Effective 8 August 1936, Franco transferred his headquarters to Seville. Thus, only three weeks after the beginning of the revolution, he was ready to begin his counterattack on the Spanish mainland. His first target was bound to be Madrid! If he should succeed in taking the capital, then the war would probably be over within a few weeks.

It was very important that Franco should strike as soon as possible, as long as his enemies were still relatively weak and without purposeful leadership. The Reds were exhausting their resources in dissipated, planless assaults, such as the ones against Huesca and Zaragoza in the east, on San Sebastian, Oviedo, and Gijon in the north, and on Cordoba and Granada in the south. So far they had been completely unsuccessful. It was obvious that this period of confusion in the enemy camp ought to be exploited.

The map in Appendix 1, showing the military situation as of July 1936, reflects the course of the front lines and the presumable intentions of the two forces at that time. It was evident that Franco, with his comparatively weak force of approximately 20,000 men, could not possibly succeed without help. It was urgent that he try to make contact with General Mola's northern army as early as possible.

Francisco's first victory was the capture of the ancient Roman city of Merida, on the Guadiana River. Moving forward from this point, on 15 August his Moroccan legionnaires managed to take the vitally important fortifications at Badajoz, on the Portuguese border, fortifications which had always played a significant role in Spanish history. This represented a large step forward. Above all, it brought Franco's forces into contact with General Mola's army and provided Franco with an important supply line to Portugal. Once in possession of these advantages, the long-delayed march on Madrid could be re-

sumed.

In addition, Franco and Mola had the opportunity to draw up a systematic plan for the coordination of the operations to come.

Franco released some of his troops to Mola, in order to enable the northern army

to take Irun, already under seige, and thus to seal off the border to France.

In order to understand why Franco's march on the capital took so long, one must bear in mind that, in addition to carrying out military operations along the way, Franco's forces also had to restore order, set up new administrative agencies, and start the economy on its way to recovery. In connection with this activity, there is one fact which stands out as unusual. Neither in Andalusia nor in Estremadura, areas in which the workers and peasants were regarded as particularly radical and in which the dictatorship of the proletariat had been established on a number of occasions, nor anywhere in the rest of Spain was there the slightest attempt to rebel or to create disorder during the years to follow. It was astounding how quickly the specter of Red rule had disappeared. This goes to prove that the Spanish people were fundamentally unsusceptible to Communist-Bolshevist ideals (which, in any case, are foreign to the Spanish character), and were perfectly willing to submit to an order which recognized and guaranteed the simple right to exist of the poor and the dispossessed. The senseless terrorism, the murders, and the executions had evoked such a deep horror among the population that the entry of the Nationalist forces into a village or town was welcomed as the arrival of a liberation force.

In the meantime, the Red People's Front of Madrid was making a desperate effort to meet and ward off the attacking troops of Franco and Mola; the defenders did their best to exploit the favorable terrain to the utmost. On 29 August, after heavy fighting, Franco's forces occupied Ortesa, and on 4 September, after a struggle lasting for several days, they launched an attack against the heavily defended enemy position at Talavera, near the Gredos mountains.

On the same day Mola's troops succeeded in capturing Irun, thus disrupting the rear-area communications lines between the People's Front and France.

Not until 22 September was Franco able to occupy Maqueda, which brought him within just forty-five miles of his primary target, the city of Madrid.

From the point of view of present-day concepts it is difficult to understand why it should not have been possible, even with primitive means, to move forward more rapidly.

in order to take the capital before its defenses could be effectively organized. We must remember, however, that Franco had more to consider than just military deliberations.

Between Franco and Madrid lay Toledo, where the Alcazar was being staunchly defended by Colonel Moscardo and his small, but heroic, force. The eyes of the whole world were watching anxiously to see whether Moscardo could be relieved in time or would be forced to surrender. The Alcazar had become a kind of symbol for the spirit of the Nationalist movement. Only when one has seen for himself the ruins of this old Moorish fortress and has heard the tale of the bloody and tragic struggle to hold it, can one understand why Franco, at this point, relegated all strategic and political considerations to the background. He did not hesitate one moment, but set out immediately for Toledo, completely disregarding the loss of time and the lost opportunities involved. The detour was simply accepted as a necessary evil.

The garrison holding the Alcazar had been cut off from the outside world ever since 20 July. In spite of this, it had bravely turned back all enemy attacks, at the cost of heavy losses, and had held out through artillery fire, bombardment from the air, and three attempts to explode the fortress with mines, all without losing courage.

The mine explosions had brought down towers and parts of the outer walls. The entire fortress was a veritable heap of ruins. Not a single one of the surviving defenders had escaped being wounded. Nevertheless, whenever the alarm was given for a new Red attack, every man still capable of holding a gun crawled to his position and tried to repel the enemy with his infantry rifle.

The first sign that the outside world had not forgotten the beleaguered fortress came on 21 August, when a German Ju-52 dropped supplies into the fortress courtyard from the air. During the days which followed, Captain Moreau and Flight Captain Henke repeated their foray with equal success

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six more times, each time in the face of increased enemy artillery fire.

Nevertheless, it was a long, long month before help finally came. After the last two mules had been slaughtered and the last bites consumed, General

Varela, a combat-seasoned soldier and an old comrade in arms of General Franco, entered the city with his Moroccan volunteers. The first man to enter the Alcazar, on 27 September, while the fighting was still raging in the city, was Captain Tiede, a German serving in the Spanish Foreign Legion; it was he <sup>who</sup> ~~he~~ brought the news that the liberating force was on its way. In recognition of his deed, Franco promoted him to the rank of major. Soon afterwards, he was killed in action.

The operation at Toledo was more than a military victory; it was also a moral one, and the world saw it in this light. This probably accounts for the echo it evoked abroad. And the reaction in Spain was similar; people accepted Toledo as a symbol of the spirit and strength of the Nationalist movement. The news of the liberation of the Alcazar was received everywhere with deep emotion, which meant a good deal more than mere jubilation at a military success. It strengthened the faith of the people, made them more firm in their will to resist the Reds, and brought the doubters and the timid over to Franco's side. People recognized that Spain was now really on the way towards the long-awaited rebirth, no matter how long, thorny, and wearisome the way might be. One might well term the ruins of the Alcazar the birthplace of the new Spanish nation.

And this was given expression in an important step. So far it had been the Junta of National Defense (Junta der nationalen Verteidigung), a council made up of several members, which had taken over the functions of government in the territory won by the Nationalists. This was merely a provisional solution, and there had been much talk of changing it. The leadership was to be entrusted to a single individual, and this individual could only be Franco. Franco himself, however, had requested that no action be taken until such time as the Nationalist cause might be backed by a tangible victory which would bring the Spanish people thronging about him. The moment had now come.

On 1 October 1936, in a solemn ceremony at Burgos, the Junta appointed



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General Don Francisco Franco to the office of head of state, "uniting in his person all the authority of the new state".

After the capture of Toledo, the military situation was as follows:  
Franco's small, but extremely effective African army was in the southwest,  
ranged

along the two highways leading to Madrid, one via Maqueda and the other via Toledo. General Mola's forces, made up primarily of the Free Corps of Requetes and Falangists, together with a number of units from the former Spanish Army, maintained only loose contact with the Franco forces. General Mola's army was occupying -- in places rather sparsely -- a semi-circle which extended from the Gredos Mountains in the northwest to the Guadarrama Mountains in the north, and -- describing a flattened curve towards the northeast -- reached a point the other side of Sigüenza.

Thus there was no longer any chance of carrying out a surprise attack on the capital. In the meantime, the romantic enthusiasm with which eager bands of teen-agers (of both sexes), armed with nothing but rifles and pistols, had ~~repeatedly~~ volunteered to help defend the city, was rapidly subsiding. The inhabitants realized that militia and untrained volunteers would be hopelessly outmatched by trained soldiers. It suddenly dawned on them with horror that the arming of the masses and the senseless waste of supplies had brought them into a hopeless situation. Prime Minister Largo Caballero himself took over the command of the defense operations. The chief credit for having brought reason and order into the confusion, however, doubtless went to the foreign advisers of the Madrid government, especially to the Russians, whose shipments of tanks and aircraft were also to play a valuable role in the defense.

Franco was soon to realize what he was up against. First of all, though, it was not until 7 November that his forces managed to reach the suburb of Manzanares and that Colonel Yague and his men were able to gain a foothold in the university quarter.

At this juncture, there were dramatic discussions among Red leaders in the capital, who could not decide whether the People's Front should remain in the city or flee to safety. It was only after several days had elapsed that the population learned that the Madrid government had fled to Valencia, leaving the defense of the city in the hands of a defense committee headed by a militia

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general. The inhabitants of Madrid were thoroughly indignant, but this was not the deciding factor.

The International Brigades

On 7 November, the morning after the government's flight to Valencia, the inhabitants of Madrid were greeted by an unexpected sight. Long columns of soldiers came marching down the street, not slouching along, as people were used to seeing the militia troops do, but in perfect order, marching in perfect step. It was obvious at first glance that these were genuine soldiers. Most of them were older men, their features sharpened by experience, and their gaze severe and determined; a conspicuously large number of them were blond. In the beginning, the watchers took them for Russians and greeted them as such. They were wrong, however; these were the first international brigades.

They were made up of foreigners who had come to Spain from all different countries. Most of them had already been issued Spanish passports in their induction centers abroad, permitting them to cross the French border unchallenged; the majority had come by train, crossing the border from Perpignan. There was a Thälmann battalion, a Garibaldi battalion, and a Lincoln battalion -- the latter under the command of a Negro.

To begin with, these international soldiers, most of whom had already fought in World War I, were assigned to the militia units at the various sectors of the front, so that the latter might profit from their military training and experience. But they were unable to accomplish very much, dissipated as they were in such small groups. Later, they were withdrawn from the front and sent to the camp at Alicante, where they were reorganized into special units.

The international units had arrived in Madrid just in time to decide the outcome of the fight for the city. The Red leaders deployed them tactically as follows: Defense positions of all kinds had been prepared in and on top of the houses in that part of the city bordering on the Manzanares, and all these positions were to be manned by the militia.

The international units were to be ranged behind them, ready to be employed as reserves in a counterthrust.

Without any artillery preparation of their own, Franco's forces had a difficult time getting across the wide Manzanares in the face of heavy defensive fire from the enemy. All the same, the incomparable bravery of his Legionaires and Moroccans seemed about to do the trick, when they were suddenly overrun by the counterthrust of the international brigades.

The combat-seasoned veterans of World War I now came up against the fatalistic-minded Moroccans and Legionaires, whose assault came to an immediate standstill with heavy losses for the Franco forces. Then began a heated battle which spread from one house to the next, with each man relying on his own experience and ability to see him through.

The struggle lasted for ten days until both sides were finally too exhausted to continue. The enemy was left in possession of a line extending diagonally across the Casa del Campo and the Manzanares.

On 23 November, Franco called a conference of his commanders in General Varela's headquarters. He was faced by a difficult decision. Should he continue the struggle for the capital right away or not? The decision not to do so would be bound to bring about a drop in morale, in view of the high expectations with which the world had followed his progress towards the capital. Nevertheless, he had no choice but to decide against immediate continuation. Careful appraisal of the situation and thoughtful consideration of the advice given by his generals convinced him that his forces were no longer strong enough. His small army had been on the move for more than three and one-half months, fighting almost uninterruptedly, and was at the end of its strength. And Franco had no reserves to fall back on. Therefore he ordered his troops to call off all further assaults; they were simply to hold the line they had already reached. Yet the capture of the capital remained the most urgent

goal of operations. A new attempt would have to be made with a stronger force  
as soon as possible.

The Red Government in Valencia

The military victory achieved by the defenders of Madrid, a victory attributable to the international brigades in large part, had done much to strengthen the Red People's Front and to spur its supporters on to greater efforts in its behalf.

The activity of the Russian and French instructors began to bear fruit. It was largely due to them that the first shipments of weapons, ammunition, and equipment, most of which had been compiled quite unsystematically, were put to the most economical use possible. Supply was a relatively simple matter for the Reds, in view of their direct contacts with France and in view of the fact that Bilbao and the most important Mediterranean seaports, which received supplies coming from Russia, were in their hands.

While he was a prisoner in Soviet Russia, Generaloberst Jaenecke had several lengthy conversations with a Russian tank captain<sup>15b</sup>, who claimed to have spent two years with the Red government in Valencia as an instructor. Judging from the captain's exact knowledge of geography, political conditions, etc. and his accurate descriptions of the country and the people, it seems apparent that he was telling the truth. He described the all-out efforts made by the Russians to mold their Spanish allies into an effective military instrument. The Russians had placed their very best aircraft specialists, tank experts, and instructors of all kinds at the disposal of the Spanish Reds. According to the Russian captain, the Soviets never for a moment considered it possible that they might lose the war in Spain. The captain told Jaenecke that he was still unable to understand how it had happened and, knowing that Jaenecke had been in a position to follow closely the course of the war from one year to the next, asked him to explain why the Reds had lost. Jaenecke told him that, in his opinion, the real reason for the Red defeat had been the political confusion which prevailed on the Red side -- with Stalinists, Trotzkyists, Anarchists, Nihilists, and the countless groups of Nationalists, such as the Basques and the Catalonians,

constantly disagreeing among themselves, and each group spying on

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15b - During the summer of 1948, in the Brickyard Camp (Ziegeleilager) on the Workuta River, about six miles west of the city of Workuta. This camp was notorious for the severity of its administration.

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and opposing the rest whenever it could. The captain admitted that Jaenecke's analysis was probably correct. Jaenecke continued, mentioning that his own (i.e. the captain's own) fate -- first a trusted tank expert and then a lowly prisoner in a Russian concentration camp -- should have been enough to make him realize the truth. Again the captain agreed, recalling that always after his arrival at a new place of assignment he had had to spend a good deal of time finding out which faction was in command and had the greater authority. In reply to Jaenecke's question as to why he had been sentenced to imprisonment, the captain answered that his tongue had betrayed him. Jaenecke mentions that he had often heard this statement made by Russian prisoners. The tank captain had simply seen too much during his sojourns abroad. This alone made him suspect in the eyes of the Russian Secret Police, and a casual description of his experiences in Spain had been sufficient to make a spy who had heard him denounce him to the authorities. As a result, he was probably fated to spend the rest of his life in Russian labor camps. In the last analysis, he was probably just as innocent as countless other inmates in countless other Soviet camps.

III. German Military Activity in Spain prior to the Arrival of the Condor Legion and the First Missions of the Latter

Even before the decision (taken at the end of October 1936) to support Franco by sending the Condor Legion to Spain, the groups of German volunteers in Spain had not been inactive.

The first air attacks on Madrid, carried out by Captain von Moreau's bomber squadron and the fighter unit under Eberhard's command, had encountered hardly any enemy defensive fire. Thus, during the first stage of operations at least, the German fliers were quite able to meet the many demands made upon their services by the Spanish forces. The Ju-52's flew to Oviedo, for example, where they came to the aid of an encircled Spanish force, and Eberhard's unit flew to Zaragoza to help ward off an attack by French bombers. In rapid succession the cities of Malaga, Cartagena, Almeria, Alicante, and Valencia were subjected to attack. All these undertakings involved long approach routes at the very least, and in some cases even required the temporary transfer of the German squadrons, most of which were based in the Salamanca area. Above all, they entailed a strain on flying personnel, ground personnel, and workshop facilities. The results achieved were not worth the expenditure of effort, labor, and materiel involved. But this situation was soon to change. Suddenly, more and more French and Russian aircraft began to appear over Madrid and its environs. It was known that the French had delivered quite a large number of aircraft to Spain, and the Spanish intelligence agency (under General Queipo de Llano) reported that approximately fifty modern Russian aircraft had arrived in Spain. The airspace above Madrid was now full of French and Russian aircraft of the most up-to-date design. During the course of a mission against the university quarter in mid-November, Moreau's squadron

encountered twenty-five enemy fighters, and the Ju-52's were able to escape only with the greatest difficulty. During a subsequent attack on the Cerro (=hill) de los Angeles, they ran into a still larger force of Curtiss fighters and into the first Ratas, which later turned out to be the strongest foes of the German fighter aircraft.

One Ju-52 was badly hit and, with one fatal casualty on board, had to make an emergency landing. Squadron leader Moreau did not hesitate but landed next to the crippled Ju-52 in the midst of the hilly, brush-covered terrain, firmly convinced that they had landed in enemy territory. Moreau and his crew got out their submachine guns, ready to defend themselves from the enemy and prepared to take off under enemy fire with their rescued comrades. But the troops which were warily approaching the landed aircraft turned out to be Moroccans; the aircraft had come down about 300 feet behind their own lines. As soon as darkness set in, Moreau took off with the two crews for Salamanca.

A The recently arrived heavy antiaircraft artillery battery, under the command of Captain Aldinger, took up its position in the area southwest of Madrid to combat the strafing attacks of the Curtiss' and the Ratas and to do what it could against the new twin-engine Martin bombers and the Potez models. The battery was much too weak, however, to keep the enemy from bothering the Nationalist forces entirely. Furthermore, it had to keep moving from one position to another in order to avoid enemy bombardment. In the beginning its operations also suffered from the fact that it was using half German and half Spanish crews. Even so, the first hits scored ~~by the Spanish~~ did provide some relief for the Spanish troops.

The Red bomber pilots soon began to release their bombs from the respectful altitude of 13,000 feet, and as soon as the first antiaircraft artillery shells revealed the location of the German battery, they turned tail and disappeared. But the battery couldn't be everywhere at once.

The 88 mm antiaircraft artillery piece was a particularly well-designed weapon. It was not only in Spain that it brought the German antiaircraft artillery forces an aura of invincibility; it maintained this aura throughout the end of World War II, during which it was utilized in a number of different ways. When this weapon

first appeared in Spain, the enemy intelligence authorities did not know what to make of it; they were especially puzzled by the fire control set. They summed up their astonishment in the statement that the Germans possessed such an accurate "electrical" gun that they could shoot a penny out of the hand of a soldier at a distance of eight miles.

The 88 mm gun retained this reputation throughout the end of the world war, no matter whether it was used in open terrain or installed in a tank.

X A biplane rather like the Curtiss in design and the low-wing Rata were considerably superior in performance to the German Ju-52 and He-51 as well as to the Italian Fiat aircraft, and were soon able to challenge successfully the air superiority hitherto maintained by the Nationalist side.

The Red antiaircraft artillery was also reinforced and proved thoroughly effective when employed at the focal point of operations, particularly in the Madrid area. The Red bomber and long-range reconnaissance units, on the other hand, rarely put in an appearance. Although the aircraft type used, comparable to the Martin bomber, was by no means inferior, for some reason it was employed only in unimportant solo attacks (up to flight strength) on targets in the Nationalist hinterland.

X Even in the direct support of ground operations, the Red bombers always hung back and let the fighters take over.

All in all, these factors changed the picture at the front only in that the German bomber attacks were carried out to an increasing degree during the night.

X For the time being the German naval aircraft units retained their base at Cadiz, from which they patrolled the western Mediterranean so that the ocean transports could be carried out without interference again. In mid-July 1937 they moved to Pollensa, on the island of Mallorca, where they remained until the end of the war. Here they were in an excellent position to harass the main Red supply lines, and despite their numerical weakness they represented

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a continuous thorn in the flesh of the Red government at Valencia.

In terms of numbers, the aircraft, crews,

and materiel available to the two sides at the beginning of the Spanish Civil War were probably fairly equal. The majority of this materiel, however, was so inferior that it had no real military value. Only those machines imported from abroad, with their specialists and instructors, were really of any use.

At this time Franco's air force was under the command of General Kindelan. The following aircraft were turned over to him: 14 Ju-52's, 12 He-51's, and 21 He-46's.

X At the beginning of October 1936, the first purely Spanish Ju-52 squadron was ready for employment at the front. Training progress had been equally rapid in the fighter, antiaircraft artillery, tank, and signal communications units.

In this connection mention must certainly be made of the valuable and willing assistance provided by the Lufthansa, with its personnel and organization, during the first months of the war in Spain. Not only was the Lufthansa responsible for carrying out the first transports from Tetuan to Seville, but later on, on its own initiative, it took over the task of setting up the courier service.

Nor should we forget the "Hisma" (Hispano-Moroccan Transport Company), operating under the direction of a businessman named Bernhard, which rendered valuable service to the entire Spanish project.

Soon Major Deichmann's office, in the Hotel Christina in Seville, was designated as the central clearing-house for all German operations pertaining to courier service, supply, mail transport and delivery, and rear-area communications. Major Deichmann became a well-known figure to all the German volunteers who were processed through his office.

In compliance with Franco's wishes, even the first units to arrive were unloaded by German military personnel. They comprised one tank battalion, made up of two companies and one transport company, a small number of antitank guns, and one signal communications company. The tanks were to be turned over to the Spaniards as soon as they had been trained to operate them. It soon

became apparent, however, that it was better to have the German crews ride along with the Spaniards. The Panzer Group Drone (Drohne) was under the command of Colonel a.D. Ritter von Thoma.

Under the overall code designation "Beekeeper" (Imker), army training schools were set up all over Spain, with German-born Spaniards as instructors. Most of them veterans from World War I, these men not only possessed the requisite military training and experience, but could also speak the language and were acquainted with the mentality of the Spanish soldier. The "Beekeeper" schools were under the command of Colonel a.D. Freiherr von Funk, who, at the same time, was in command of all the German Army units and also acted as military attache. Colonel Warlimont had returned to Germany soon after the arrival of the Condor Legion.

#### The Arrival of the Condor Legion and its First Missions

The German military aid embodied by the Condor Legion arrived in Spain at the beginning of November 1936 -- and this was none too soon, for Franco's position had deteriorated substantially in the meantime. This was especially evident in the struggle for Madrid, which was becoming more difficult every day.

A mixed Italian-Spanish bomber squadron had attempted to move its base forward to a point near the foothills, some ten miles from Madrid. Promptly at dawn they were attacked by low-flying Red fighter aircraft and the entire squadron was destroyed.

Again and again Nationalist leaders urged that the Red seaports be destroyed in order to stop the flow of weapons coming from abroad.

Thus it was quite natural and entirely in keeping with the personal courage of General Sperrle ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ that he should decide to commemorate his arrival in Spain by taking the bull by the horns and utilizing his entire bomber fleet in an attack on the Red seaport of Cartagena. In this way he made himself famous the very first day. In Spain up to that time it had been



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considered a dangerous undertaking even to set foot inside a bomber. In addition, the entire Red fleet lay at anchor in the harbor of Cartagena.

The harbor, famous since the days of Hannibal, was surrounded by hills which were full of enemy artillery of all kinds (up to and including 380 mm guns), antiaircraft artillery included. It was an unheard-of thing in Spain for a general to fly at the head of his bombers into a lion's den of this kind.

On 15 November, General Sperrle and Major Fuchs, leading a group of thirty-four Ju-52's, attacked the port of Cartagena.

In order to avoid having to fly over the mountains in the interior and having to cross Red-held territory, the entire bomber group flew from Salamanca to Melilla in Africa. Forty tons of gasoline and six tons of oil were loaded into ships at Cadiz and transported to Melilla with an escort of warships and submarines.

The ships also carried signal equipment and signal communications troops, direction finding equipment, meteorologists, mechanics, radiomen and radio equipment, air traffic control personnel (to aid in setting up a provisional airfield), tractors, and medical personnel. Preparatory and reconnaissance flights had to be carried out. Contact had to be established with the Spanish and the Italians in order to assure effective air traffic control operations. Finally the naval aircraft units, using Melilla as a base, were sent up on one last reconnaissance flight to check on weather conditions and the target itself. Loaded to capacity with bombs, all thirty-four Ju-52's reached Melilla at noon. At four o'clock in the afternoon, they took off for Cartagena, at intervals of ten minutes between each group of two aircraft. Naval air reconnaissance aircraft, warships, and intelligence agents were on hand to observe the effectiveness of the attack. At 1730 the first reports came in of huge fires raging in Cartagena. The Red warships -- or rather those still able to move -- left the harbor immediately and sought safety in the open seas. Two steamships went up in flames, and the port was put out of action for some time. The following day the thirty-four Ju-52's, without a single loss, returned to Salamanca. There they found no fewer than three employment requests waiting for them. The same evening they appeared again over Madrid.

IV. The Struggle for Madrid Continues (December 1936)

The struggle for the capital continued during December. Once again, the fighting, concentrating on the university quarter, the Manzanares area, and the sector in front of Cerro de los Angeles, was extremely heavy and resulted in high losses on both sides. Neither side made any appreciable progress, but the Reds took advantage of the opportunity to perfect their defensive tactics, while the Nationalist attackers were forced to chalk up daily losses to the Red machine-gun fire.

The Condor Legion supported the Nationalist attacks with all the means at its disposal until weather conditions became so bad that no more missions were possible. In defiance of the enemy fighters, which were rapidly gaining superiority, the Legion's bomber squadrons went up every day. Their take off was carefully timed to bring them over targets lying just ahead of the infantry advance; sometimes they dropped as many as forty tons of bombs in one day. And these bombardment attacks were tremendously effective. Even so, the bombers were unable to silence all the enemy machine-gun nests, and wherever there was machine-gun fire, the infantry assault was bound to founder. The troops were obviously nearing exhaustion. At the same time the Legion continued its attacks on the airfields of the enemy, although the increasing number of Ratas made its task more dangerous than before. Very soon the German bomber squadrons discovered a simple, but effective trick to keep the enemy aircraft from escaping from the airfields under attack. Three aircraft took on the Red fighters and kept them in the air so long that they were finally forced to return to their bases to refuel. At this point, the rest of the bombers, which had been standing by at a higher altitude, dived towards the airfields with their escort of Italian and German fighter aircraft and unloaded all their bombs on the refueling enemy aircraft below. Several enemy squadrons were destroyed in this way before the enemy caught on to the new tactics and took appropriate measures to counteract them.

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The task of the German fighters had become more and more difficult and more and more costly in terms of aircraft and personnel losses. They sacrificed themselves in bold attacks on the Red fighters, but the superiority of the latter became more and more clearly evident as time went on. The German fighter pilots finally had to give up the practice of

seeking combat with the Red fighters; instead they restricted themselves to providing escort services for the bombers and furnishing air support for the ground operations. This situation was bad, not only for the reputation of the German fighter forces but also for the fighter crews themselves. The Legion commanders, with-out hesitating, drew the appropriate conclusions and ordered the fighter units to limit themselves to providing support for the ground forces until their new fighter aircraft should be delivered. All in all it was a critical period for the German fighter pilots.

V. The Capture of Malaga by the Italians (10 January - 8 February 1937)

In addition to the German volunteer units which we have already described, Franco had also been given some Italian air units. One unit, of about squadron strength, was equipped with bombers (Savoya-79), but during the first few months it was utilized only rarely in bombardment missions; it was employed primarily in transport and courier services between the Italian headquarters themselves and for the Italian fighter forces.

Once the Italian Army units had arrived, the Savoya bombers were used almost exclusively in tactical operations in Italian combat area and had practically no effect on the overall military situation, or even on the air situation. On the other hand, a group of Fiat fighters, which had also been part of the first Italian air forces to arrive in Spain and which were subsequently employed much like the German fighters, played a more significant role in terms of both their operational readiness and the degree of success they achieved.

The most important part of Italian support was to take the form of the Expeditionary Corps, which began to arrive in Spain during the fall of 1936 and which was immediately deployed to strengthen the Malaga front. The Corps was composed mainly of Fascist units and militia groups, and their fighting effectiveness was far inferior to that of Franco's own troops, not to mention that of the international brigades.

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The support which Franco received from Portugal was insignificant from the military standpoint; economically and politically, however, it was of great importance.

As we have already mentioned, by the winter of 1936/37 the Italian Expeditionary Corps had arrived in southern Spain and had already been deployed along the Malaga front. The Corps was really a small army of approximately 50,000 men, with permanently organized units and an administrative apparatus of its own. Most of its infantry units were motorized, and the resulting "mobile units" were an innovation in the commitment of infantry forces. In Spain these units were tried out for the first time in a European theater of war.

The primary objective of the Italian force was the capture of a suitable Mediterranean seaport, so that Italy would no longer be subject to British inspection in the Straits of Gibraltar.

Theoretically, the Malaga operation was under the command of General Queipo de Llano, whose Spanish troops, beginning their advance on 10 January 1937, were slowly approaching Malaga in an extended line, coming from the south and the west. Concurrently, mobile units of Italian infantry were to push forward through the mountains to the north and northeast of the city in order to cut off the enemy's retreat route, the highway leading along the coast from Malaga. This mountain range, a western continuation of the Sierra Nevada, has some peaks as high as 6,500 feet; in addition, it was the middle of winter, which meant that the Italian motorized columns could not get through the snow-packed passes until 3 February. Not until then could the overall attack begin. On 8 February, the city of Malaga was captured. But it turned out that the enemy had recognized the danger threatening from the rear and had already withdrawn the majority of his troops along the coast. The attackers pursued as far as Motril, about half-way between Malaga and Almeria. At this point the new front line was formed, which extended as far as Granada and then curved towards the west to Cordoba.

The great Italian victory was not what it seemed. The commitment of the Italian forces, which had acquired an aura of invincibility by virtue of their success in Ethiopia, had been preceded by so much propaganda and so many prophe-

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cies of certain victory that the morale of the Red troops had been completely shattered; thus there was hardly any fighting -- the Reds simply fled. If Nationalist leadership had been firmer and more determined, in other words if General Queipo de Llano had insisted on pursuing the demoralized Reds and rolling up the entire Mediterranean front,



it is certain that a much greater victory could have been achieved. The Italians did not even attempt a pursuit operation, but were quite content to settle down in Malaga and celebrate their victory. On second thought, this was probably the wiser course after all, for the Italians would certainly have suffered a setback in the difficult terrain of the Sierra Nevada if they had encountered energetic resistance from the international brigades.

The Malaga operation had taken longer than anticipated. As a result, the Italian units were still tied down in the south at a time when they were urgently needed elsewhere.

VI. The Struggle for Madrid during the Winter of 1936/1937

(See the map in Appendix 2)

For in the meantime a new, large-scale attempt was being undertaken to seize the capital and bring the war to an end. During the winter the Nationalist forces had launched a number of assaults from the positions they had already taken just outside Madrid, particularly from the university quarter, in an attempt to penetrate further into the city. During these assaults the German bomber forces were employed as a substitute for the artillery which Franco lacked. But the Spanish troops could not be prevailed upon to move forward right away in the wake of these bombardment attacks and thus failed to take full advantage of their great effectiveness in the relatively limited areas concerned. Although fighting had often been heavy during the winter, the Nationalist assaults had led to no tangible success.

At this point General der Flieger Sperrle, commander of the Condor Legion, suggested a new plan to the Spanish Generalissimo, a plan which the latter accepted. Instead of trying to take the city by storm, which presumably would involve capturing it house by house and street by street and would certainly leave at least a part of it in ruins, Sperrle proposed that the city should be encircled.

If the Nationalists could manage to occupy the highways leading to Valencia and Barcelona and thus cut off the capital from the outside world and from all her sources of supply, then Madrid's 800,000 inhabitants, whose supply stocks were known to be extremely low, would be forced to surrender within a short time to escape starvation. In order to surround the city, the Nationalists would have to attack from two directions, one force approaching from south of Madrid, proceeding across the Jarama, a tributary of the Tajo, towards the east and then veering north, and the other moving from Siguenza towards the south. The two flanks would meet southeast of the city, thus closing it off completely. If this operation was to succeed, then it was clear that the two forces would have to move simultaneously. And it was precisely this coordination in timing which failed, probably because the Italian mobile units had been tied down too long by the operation in Malaga and then had to be transported over long detours through western and northern Spain to their new starting point in the Siguenza area. Thus it happened that the operations originally envisioned as a whole actually took place as two chronologically uncoordinated entities, the battle on the Jarama and the battle of Guadalajara, a city located approximately half-way between Siguenza and Madrid.

On 6 February 1937, General Varela launched his assault towards the east from a position south of Madrid. On 13 February his forces were able to push their way through the heavily defended Jarama sector to the Madrid-Valencia highway lying just beyond. Only a small wedge, however, could be driven across the highway to the territory beyond. Inasmuch as General Miaja, the defender of Madrid, was not being threatened from any other front, he was able to concentrate his entire reserves at the danger points beyond the Jarama. Varela's operation was brought to an immediate standstill and his forces were driven back across the highway. The fighting subsided gradually, but could not be brought to an end until 24 February, three weeks later. Varela's forces had been unable to capture the highway to Valencia, but at least they were in a position to keep it under

fire from the newly established front line on the Jarama sector.

Not until two weeks after the end of the fighting on the Jarama sector, did the second phase of the offensive against the capital get under way from the Sigüenza area. Nationalist leaders had hoped that the time-consuming preparations could be completed in time for the attack to begin by the end of February. But the threat to Oviedo, in the north, had intervened to cause further delay.

Right at the beginning, in July 1936, General Aranda had taken Oviedo (the capital of Asturia) for the Nationalists, but the Asturian miners, tough and well-armed fighters, had not given up their struggle to gain it back. They had surrounded the city from all sides and, for weeks on end, had been carrying out furious assaults against the weakening garrison. They had even succeeded in gaining footholds in the outskirts of the town, although General Aranda, in a nearly desperate situation, was still holding the center with his rapidly dwindling forces. Completely cut off from the outside world, Aranda's stand in Oviedo was just as stubborn and just as courageous as Moscardo's in the Alcazar of Toledo. Finally, during the second half of October 1936, a relief force was sent from Galicia which succeeded in reaching the city and eliminating the danger for the time being. Although a thin line of contact had been established between Oviedo and the Nationalist troops occupying Galicia, the relief force was not strong enough to repulse the enemy. The Reds withdrew to the hills surrounding the town, and the siege continued.

Then, at the end of February 1937, just as the preparations for the offensive on Madrid were nearing their conclusion, the Asturians launched a new and desperate attempt to seize Oviedo. Franco had no choice but to load some of the troops assembled at Sigüenza into trucks and to send them to the rescue. After heavy fighting, the Asturians were pushed back to their original positions, peace and order restored in Oviedo and its environs, and the relief force could be transported back to Sigüenza.

But the Oviedo interlude meant that the Madrid operation had been delayed for more than a week, and -- as luck would have it -- this week ushered in a period of bad weather. The attack had been carefully planned. The main force was to advance via the broad highway leading from Sigüenza to Guadalajara and on to Madrid. This force was made up of the mobile units of the Italian Corps, under the command of General Bergonzoli, who -- with his mobile units -- had been the first to enter Addis Abeba during the Ethiopian campaign in May 1936. At the same time, two secondary forces, composed primarily of non-motorized Spanish troops, were to advance one on either side of the highway. The two secondary columns were commanded by Moscardo (who had been promoted to General in the meantime), under the overall command of the resourceful and cautious General Mola. The main prerequisite for success was speed, so that General Miaja, who had the advantage of the inside line and consequently shorter distances to cover, would have no chance to bring his reserves into position in time. The need for fast action was no doubt one of the reasons for the excessive haste employed.

The maneuver began on 8 March 1937, and progress was good the first day. The Italian vehicles moved forward smoothly and the first ones even reached a point just a few miles short of Guadalajara. On the second day, however, it began to rain and kept on raining until it was a veritable downpour, interspersed with snow flurries, which made it impossible to see anything. The terrain between Sigüenza and Madrid lies, on the average, about 3,000 feet above sea level. Within a short time the clay soil on either side of the highway had turned into viscous mud, and the troops could proceed only very slowly. To make matters worse, the floods had torn away a temporary bridge located just behind a fork in the highway (the original bridge had been destroyed by the defenders). It took quite a while until a provisional bridge could be constructed, and all during this time the advance part of the Italian column was completely cut off from the rear. By the time the bridge was ready, the many

trucks and tanks were so congested at the fork in the highway that it was almost impossible to disentangle the jam, especially since the vehicles could not be driven off the road into the soft mud. The advance came to a complete standstill. Moreover, the secondary columns, advancing on foot, had been left far behind. And this was the end of the hoped-for surprise attack. The advantages inherent in the mobility of the Italian motorized units were now useless.

Thus General Miaja gained the time he needed to bring his reserve forces into position and was able to go over to the counterattack. As a soldier of long experience, he managed this very skillfully. He utilized only a few troops in a frontal attack designed to contain the advance Nationalist force, while employing the majority of his force, approximately 15,000 men, including the international brigades (made up chiefly of Germans and Italians), in an assault from the south, via the town of Brihuega, against the highway between Guadalajara and Sigüenza, in other words against the flank and the rear of the Nationalist troops. The main force of the assault was directed against the advance columns of the Italian Corps, far out in front.

A great deal, including a great deal that is erroneous, has been written concerning the battle of Guadalajara, which now ensued. Generaloberst a.D. Jaenecke has the following to say in this connection: "Shortly after the end of the battle, I spent some six weeks in Spain, during which I had a chance to talk with all the leading personalities involved -- Franco, Aranda, Vigon, Orgas, Moscardo, Queipo de Llano, the German Ambassador, Faupel, the Italian generals, and Sperrle and von Richthofen. Despite the length of time which has elapsed since then, I still remember the content of these conversations quite clearly. For one thing, I recall that Sperrle and von Richthofen told me that the Italians had initiated the Legion into the details of their coming attack only reluctantly and at the last minute. As a result, at the very last minute the Legion had to send a number of liaison officers to the Italian sector in order to obtain an unbiased picture of just what was going to happen there.

Immediately after my return to Germany, I prepared a memorandum reflecting the conversations I had had in Spain and submitted it to Hitler. This memorandum is presumably still on file somewhere in Germany. Its contents are the same as those of a report I sent to General der Flieger Paul Deichmann on 6 April 1956, viz:

'On that day I spent two hours with Hitler, during the course of which I talked for at least an hour and a half. One of his first questions was, 'What do you think of the Italians?' I reported what had happened during the battle of Guadalajara. After their victory at Malaga, where the Reds had run away rather than face the assault of the "invincible" Italians, the three Italian divisions had moved into position between the Guadarrama Mountains and Teruel, in the overweeningly confident opinion that they could simply swoop down on the capital from the north, swing around to the south, and then push through to the Mediterranean along the railway line connecting Madrid and Valencia. They wanted to end the entire war with one overwhelming blow. I explained to Hitler how the Italian attack swept over two Spanish divisions and actually made good progress during the first three days. On the fourth day, though, it started to rain and the hard clay soil soon became so soft that the troops couldn't move. The only "roads" in the entire region are narrow, asphalt-surfaced paths only wide enough for a farm-wagon, and these were so covered with mud and clay that all the Italian motorized units (the Division Littorio and two militia divisions) bogged down completely. At this point a few combat patrols from the international brigades attacked, and the scattered rifle fire from these few Red troops was enough to create such panic that the Italians lost their heads completely and ran away so fast that no one could have stopped them. German officers, who were present as observers in the Italian sector and who witnessed this little drama, assured me explicitly that this was by no means a systematic attack by Red troops or by full-strength international brigade units; it was only a few

small patrol units scouting along the Italian breakthrough front. As I related to Hitler, some of the Italian officers were down on their knees praying to the Virgin Mary; others actually told their men to leave everything and flee.

In the end it turned out that the three Italian divisions, which had come to Spain with such fanfare and crowned with premature laurels, couldn't even be properly reformed in the positions from which they had started out. As a result, the two Spanish divisions bypassed by the Italian attack, had to be alerted to close the gap in the front! The Italians were completely useless; they needed at least six months in which to learn enough about military tactics to be entrusted with the defense of a quiet sector of the front. As a result of the episode described above, the much-vaunted Italians completely lost the respect of the Spaniards as well as whatever confidence Spain may have had in their military effectiveness -- nor were they ever able to regain this respect and confidence throughout the balance of the war. In this context, we must bear in mind that the Spanish soldier has always been a brave, undemanding, and reliable fighter, willing to do his very best as long as his officers saw that he was housed and fed and treated as a human being. The heroic deeds of Cortez and Pizarro are not forgotten; during the Thirty Years' War the Spanish swordsman was one of the most feared warriors on the battlefields of Europe. And this military spirit and will to fight still lies in the make-up of every Spanish soldier today; it simply has to be awakened and molded. Is it any wonder, then, that the Spaniards, proud as they are, accepted and utilized Italian and even German military aid reluctantly and as a necessary evil? For this reason, the news of the defeat and the ignominious failure of the Italians spread like wildfire within a matter of hours from Gibraltar to Bilbao and was soon transmitted all over Spain. From the standpoint of military reputation, the Italians never recovered from this blow. Mussolini was furious, and his commander in Spain,

General Roatta, didn't dare come near him for months. In contrast, the fame and comradliness of the German soldiers seemed all the brighter, for the Spaniards were convinced that such behavior was inconceivable on the part of the Germans.

Before leaving this subject, Hitler asked me a few more questions. My answers, in summary, were as follows: I said that if Hitler intended to incorporate the Italians as a trump card into his political and military planning, it was high time to start thinking about an exchange program for general staff officers as well as other ways and means of achieving better and more effective training in the Italian armed forces. I pointed out that, while certain special units such as flying units, engineer companies, and Bersagliere, might be evaluated as highly satisfactory, the majority of the Italian armed forces still remained the same old collection of incompetents they had always been. I reminded him that a King of Naples had once said the following about them: 'You can take as much trouble with the Italians as you want, you can give them the very best weapons, a mountain of ammunition to practice with, you can dress them in red, blue, or green uniforms, but you will never succeed in transforming them into a useful military instrument.' There are two principles to which they will always remain true. The first is: when the enemy comes into view, the best thing you can do is to run the other way; and the second: better to be a coward for five minutes than dead all your life.' I told Hitler that the only thing which had changed in Italy was Mussolini's big mouth, which was trying to convince the Italians that they had been the real victors of Vittorio-Veneto.

The moment I had said this about Mussolini, I was horrified at my own daring and I was anxious to see how Hitler would take this rather derogatory remark about his alleged friend. To my surprise, he slapped his adjutant Hossbach on the back and burst out laughing.

From all that I experienced later on, I am firmly convinced that the situation in Italy has not changed to this day and that my comments to Hitler, which were based on eye-witness reports, are still true.



After the debacle at Guadalajara, the Italians had lost the majority of their weapons, vehicles, and ammunition and it was months before their losses could be made up and -- even more important -- the morale of their units restored. The fact that the three Italian divisions sent to Spain contained a good many adventurers and unemployed, and thus could not be regarded as reflecting the very best human material, may be considered a mitigating circumstance.

This will be discussed in greater detail in my account of the events which followed, events which I witnessed personally.

In any case, it is obvious that the available accounts are far too lenient as far as the Italians are concerned."

The new front lines established at this time and destined to remain unchanged for years differed very little from the previous one. Once again, the attempt to capture the Spanish capital had failed, and this attempt was not repeated in the future. But far more important was the fact that the Reds had won their first real victory at Guadalajara. Apart from the involuntary help provided by the Italians, this victory was due above all to the military skill of General Miaja. But Miaja's forces, too, had suffered heavy losses, particularly the international brigades (and among these, especially the German Thälmann battalion and the Italian Garibaldi battalion). The Thälmann and Garibaldi battalions were <sup>almost</sup> completely decimated, and no longer appeared as closed units in the fighting in Spain. A good many of the men who had come from all corners of the world to help in the struggle against Fascism now found it more propitious to leave the all too dangerous soil of Spain. Those who remained were integrated into the Red army.

#### VII. Franco's Offensive in Northern Spain (April - June 1937)

(See the map in Appendix 3)

The fiasco on the Jarama and the defeat of Guadalajara had to be counteracted as soon as possible and their repercussions on both internal and foreign politics smoothed over without delay. Therefore Franco

decided to embark on a new offensive right away. This time it was to be directed against Asturia and the Basque country in the north. The enemy front, some 370 miles in length, was to be assaulted from the east and completely overrun. If Franco could succeed in accomplishing this, he would be relieved of the difficulties entailed in fighting on two fronts at the same time. All danger from the north would be eliminated, and the Generalissimo would be free to employ the fairly large force tied down in the north in decisive operations elsewhere. Recent events had made it clear that a rapid victory was out of the question and that Franco would have to reckon with a longer war. Under these circumstances, the capture of the northern provinces ~~was~~ would be a decided advantage since their raw materials and industries would represent a valuable addition to his armaments program. Furthermore, he would be in a position to seize the important harbors on the Bay of Biscay, which in turn would enable him cut off the Reds from the sea, at least in this area. For England had denied Franco recognition as a warring party and thus had refused to ~~permit~~ <sup>allow</sup> a blockade permitting him to stop neutral ships. Besides, the fleet which patrolled the northern coast of Spain under the provisions of an international agreement was helping to support Franco's enemies by letting through shipments of foodstuffs.

The primary target of any offensive beginning in the east was bound to be the Basque province of Biscaya, with its capital of Bilbao. Biscaya was a center of the iron industry in Spain, and a good deal of the industry there was financed by British capital. The difficulties facing Franco's troops were unusually great. The country surrounding Bilbao is very hilly, with broad ranges dotted with high peaks of sheer granite. Towards the south, in other words in the direction of the interior of the country, the city is screened by the foothills of the Cantabrian Mountains, whose ridges reach a height of 5,000 feet and are so sharp and jagged that there are very few places where they can be crossed.

The enemy was fully aware of the significance of Bilbao as an import harbor

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and as one of the main sources for vital war materiel, and had taken steps to make it impregnable. The outer line of defense, solidly established and

enhanced in its effectiveness by the contours of the terrain, began between the passes at the eastern border of the province, about half-way between San Sebastian and Bilbao, and extended towards the south across the ridges of the Cantabrian Mountains. This was the front which had stopped the offensive of General Mola during the previous September, after his troops had captured Irun and San Sebastian.

There was an even stronger defense line extending in a shallow semicircle around the city of Bilbao, touching the coast at each end. This line had been developed into a regular fortified wall, the sort of fortification in which the Basques were past masters. There were a good many miners among them, who were familiar with the construction of saps and drill-shafts; there were also concrete construction experts who boasted that they could build shelters impervious to bombardment from the air. The result was really an almost impregnable fortifications line. Called the "iron belt of Bilbao", it was considered to be practically unassailable.

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Freiherr von Richthofen - The Flier and the Commander

The history of the Spanish Civil War is inseparable from the career of Freiherr von Richthofen in Spain. At the time the situation first began to become critical, von Richthofen was in Rome as air attache. He was still in Rome when his appointment came through as chief of the Development ~~Branch~~ and Testing Branch (Abteilung Entwicklung und Erprobung) of the Technical Office (Technisches Amt), Reichs Ministry of Aviation. Von Richthofen's new task was to take charge of the vitally important development and testing of new aircraft models for the Luftwaffe.

As a young second lieutenant, he had served in the first world war in the fighter wing commanded by his unforgettable cousin, Manfred von Richthofen. His record of three or five enemy aircraft brought down gives ample proof that he had inherited his cousin's daring and flying ability.

In December 1936, von Richthofen himself visited Spain in order to super-

wise the employment of the new German aircraft models, the He-109, He-111, Do-17, and the dive bomber Hs-123.

By virtue of his inspection activity, von Richthofen naturally came into close contact with the commander of the Condor Legion, General Sperrle. Here, too, von Richthofen's expert advice proved very valuable, and he soon won the respect of the Legion's commander and staff.

Thus no one was particularly surprised when he turned up as the Legion's chief of staff in January 1937.

Von Richthofen (in the meantime promoted to lieutenant colonel) was not only an outstanding officer and an expert in Luftwaffe affairs, but also an extremely skillful negotiator. He got along beautifully with the Spaniards and was held in esteem by Generalissimo Franco. Thanks to his knowledge of Italian, he was soon able to speak enough Spanish to hold his own in a conversation and even to be able to discuss military plans with the Spanish officers. One can say without exaggerating that he was soon <sup>the</sup> acknowledged spokesman of the Condor Legion. At the same time, the relationship between General Sperrle and his chief of staff was an unusually cordial one. The two men complemented each other perfectly, and their excellent teamwork contributed a great deal to the position of respect which the Legion established for itself in Spain.

The latest military developments showed clearly that conversion to more up-to-date aircraft models was an urgent necessity. The determined and flexible leaders of the Condor Legion were exercising more and more influence on the overall conduct of operations by the Nationalists. In the meantime, the prompt evaluation and application of experience gained had turned the Legion into a powerful specialized force, dedicated to the support of the Nationalist troops. Close cooperation among Spanish, Italian, and Condor Legion officers had succeeded in eliminating some of the initial difficulties inherent in the conduct of joint operations. It was, of course, impossible to eliminate them all.

Franco was now confronted with the problem of deciding just how the offen-

sive should be launched. After long and careful consideration, General Mola was placed in command. This was to be his first big victory; through an unfortunate coincidence, he did not live to see it.

The main protagonist of this new phase of the fighting was the Navarre Corps (consisting of five brigades), under the command of General Aranda and his

highly competent chief of staff, Colonel Vigon. The brigades were made up of regular troops as well as militia units consisting of Requetes and Falangists. They were well-trained, experienced veterans, most of them Carlists from northern Spain, and they were led by competent officers from the former Spanish Army. The battalions (called "tercios"), were made up of well-trained soldiers, whose fighting morale was high and who fought with great courage. Most of the battalions were named after saints, St. Ignace, St. Michael, etc. All in all, they could be regarded as excellent military material, of the same stamp which had made the Spaniards such excellent soldiers all through history.

General Mola also had under his command the three Italian divisions, which -- since the debacle of Guadalajara -- had become somewhat less boastful but no more efficient from the military standpoint. There was one active division, the "23d of March", and the "Blue Arrow", "Black Flame", and "Black Arrow" brigades, the latter brigade being made up of one-third Spanish soldiers and two-thirds Italian legionaires.

Finally, the Condor Legion -- particularly the bomber and fighter squadrons and the antiaircraft artillery batteries -- was assigned to provide support for the Navarre Corps. The fighter units, in tireless low-level attacks, brought all traffic in the Bilbao area to a standstill. The 88 mm antiaircraft artillery batteries intervened with spectacular success in the ground fighting, whenever their services were not required against the Red fighter aircraft. With their high firing speed, the devastating effectiveness of the 88 mm grenades, and their firing range of almost eight miles, they soon dominated the battlefield.

In order to soften up Bilbao for the main attack, a number of preparatory assaults were carried out from the troop assembly area near Vitoria. General-oberst Jaenecke, together with Sperrle and von Richthofen, was present at most of these assault undertakings, which he describes as follows: "These daily attacks, by which we hoped to capture the passes leading over the lofty Ca<sup>nt</sup>abrian Mountains, were carefully planned in all details. The close contact maintained

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among the various command headquarters, all located fairly close to one another in and around ~~Vit~~oria, was a decided advantage in this connection. Soon after dawn the staff of the Condor Legion was esconced on the top of a high hill, almost as if it were in a box in the theater,



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from which it could watch developments along the entire operational sector. The fighter, bomber, and reconnaissance squadrons stood by in the vicinity, so that they could be summoned into action by radio telephone whenever and wherever it might be necessary.

This method of operation functioned more and more smoothly as the days passed. It also served to strengthen the confidence of the troops in the efficacy of carefully coordinated operations. Day by day we moved closer to the passes which were our goal."

Then occurred a pause in operations. The Valencia government had ordered General Miaja to undertake an attack to relieve his forces at Madrid. Miaja was against the idea, but had no choice but to obey. As a result, Franco was forced to send a part of his air units to the Madrid front. Miaja's attack against the well-established positions of the Nationalists on the Manzanares and in the Casa del Campo was inadequately prepared. It was not a success, and only caused the enemy serious losses.

On 22 April, the offensive against Bilbao was resumed. During this second phase, the outer defensive line was attacked from the south and from the east and was taken by the Nationalists. After this Mola's troops had the difficult task of working their way across the mountainous terrain to the iron belt around the city. This was a wearisome and time-consuming undertaking, since the defenders offered stubborn resistance all the way. The advance was carried out very systematically, each captured position being fortified and secured and new forces brought up along the mountain paths before the next assault was launched. The lesson of Guadalajara had been well learned.

Generaloberst Jaenecke continues: "At this time, in the company of General Sperrle, I was given a direct and exceedingly interesting glimpse of the fighting. We had driven by car into the area west of San Sebastian, where an attack by the Italian divisions was slated for the following day, and had spent the night in the Grand Hotel near Deva. Here, on the coast, lies the famous mountain known

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as the "Mouse of Getharia". The morning aerial reconnaissance patrol had reported that the Reds had abandoned all their prepared positions in the mountains in order to escape being cut off from their rear-area communications lines. Under these circumstances, it was perfectly pointless to carry out the

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bombardment attack planned to soften the positions for the later assault. I was then present at the conversation between General Sperrle and the Italian commanders, when Sperrle suggested that the bombs and the ground and antiaircraft artillery ammunition should be saved for a later opportunity. The Italians refused point-blank to consider Sperrle's suggestion. They explained that it would strengthen the self-confidence of their troops to let them capture a few abandoned enemy positions. And this is exactly what happened! All that valuable ammunition was completely wasted. Triumphant, the Italians brought back some of the weapons and equipment abandoned by the Reds, and these were sent with a special deputation to Rome in order to pacify Mussolini, who was still furious about the Guadalajara affair.

X Shortly afterwards, the bombardment and destruction of the national shrine of the Basques in Guernica took place, an affair which was magnified to the proportions of a heinous crime by the world press. The city of Guernica lies at the very end of a deeply cut fjord; and here there was a bridge, strategically important since it was the only line of communications between the southern positions of the Red troops and their hinterland. The destruction of this bridge was the primary objective of the whole day's operations. The Condor Legion had sent its bombers up to attack the bridge singly, and as soon as the bombs began to fall, the population immediately evacuated the city and fled to the hills. Then the following misfortune came to pass: The city of Guernica lies in a region rich in forests and thus its houses, to a far greater extent than in the rest of Spain, are built of wood. Not only the Germans, but also the Italians had been ordered to bombard the bridge, but the Italians had a different method of bombardment than the Germans. Instead of flying singly, they flew in squadron formation and, at a signal from the squadron leader, dropped their entire bomb load simultaneously. As a result, a good many of the bombs landed wide of their target, right in the middle of the abandoned town. Since there was no one left to put out the fires, a large part of the town went up in flames. The newspapers of the world

vied with one another in condemning the German Huns and their love of destruction.

In reality we weren't the guilty ones at all, but had to suffer innocently for what the Italians had done.

The national relic in the Basque shrine at Guernica was the ancient trunk of an oak tree. The trunk itself had crumbled to dust throughout the centuries, and all that was left was the concrete shell which was supposed to hold it together. This relic was not even hit during the bombardment, but was preserved in its original state. All newspaper accounts to the contrary are untrue. I myself had two Basque flags, which Basque company leaders had turned over to me when they had to flee in haste; in the meantime they were destroyed, like so much else, when my apartment in Berlin was bombed. In any case they showed the red oak trunk of Guernica against a white silk background framed in green.

During the next few days the Italians got into trouble once more. Naturally the Spaniards who happened to be fighting near them publicized the incident for all it was worth and spread the news of it far and wide. An Italian brigade marching along the coast highway in a long, narrow column was suddenly attacked from the flank by rifle fire from a Red patrol. The result was immediate panic, since the Italians had neglected to provide cover of any kind for their flanks, and when a Red patrol boat then began to fire on them from the sea, they lost their heads completely and started to yell for help. It would have been much better if they had simply opened fire themselves on the attackers, but this idea apparently never occurred to the courageous Italians!

By the end of May the Nationalist forces had reached the iron belt surrounding Bilbao and had also captured those mountain ridges which the enemy had not included in his defense line. Now the main attack, the assault on a fortifications line which was regarded as impregnable, could begin. It was prepared with great care down to the smallest detail. The troops were given time to rest, supplies were issued, and the units brought up to strength. All the necessary equipment, especially heavy artillery, was brought forward, often under great difficulties. During all this time, the Basques remained completely inactive, apparently confident that the Nationalist assault would be shattered by their concrete fortifications.

On 3 June, before preparations for the attack were quite finished, General Mola was killed. His aircraft, piloted at full speed despite extremely poor visibility, crashed into a mountain, killing all passengers instantly. His loss was a serious blow for Franco in particular. He was replaced by General Davila.

On 11 June the assault against the iron belt began. The two arms of the right angle opening towards the east had been selected as breakthrough points on the Basque defense line. The breakthrough on the outer line succeeded. For a vivid account of the stubborn fighting which ensued during the following days, let us turn to the following excerpts from the diary of Captain von dem Planitz, the driver of one of the German tanks: 'It's the 17th of June 1937. The infantry is deployed for a last, decisive assault on Bilbao. Our tanks are supposed to help the infantry to force a breakthrough between San Roque and San Domingo. The tanks are out in front. There's the body of a dead Spanish lieutenant, a Nationalist, stretched out along the road, an expression of cynical heroism on his grey-brown, bloodless face.

Now we can already see the first fortifications ahead. Most of them aren't quite finished; the bare iron struts of the concrete emplacements are sticking up into the air. There's no movement whatsoever on the enemy side. But we know that those "Mineros", the mine workers, have nerves of iron. We've moved up to within 650 feet of the enemy positions and have sent our steel greeting cards into the dark embrasures and look-out holes. Wherever we score a hit, a cloud of whitish dust flies up and covers the holes for a few seconds. Right ahead of me is that plucky Spanish captain. Every once in a while he even opens ~~his~~ the hatch of his tank in order to get a better look. I aim a couple of shots over his turrets in order to warn him to be more careful. This method of conversation has become quite popular. A fine boy, that captain! He was killed at Zaragoza, three months later.

Suddenly all Hell breaks loose! I can see the detonations over the tank of the Spanish captain ahead of me. It's hand grenades, dozens of them, and in the next minute my own tank is covered with them. At the same time, short-range machine-gun fire hammers at the armor plating of our tanks. They're aiming at our look-out slots again, and at such short range it's really not hard to hit them even if they fire blind. It sounds as if hail were pounding down on a tin roof. Suddenly we're in the midst of hand to hand combat such as we've never experienced before. The Basques are standing up behind the parapets and throwing hand grenades at us, especially at the tank tracks, as fast as they can. Others take time to aim long, carefully, and with unbelievably iron nerves, at the vulnerable points of our tanks. Still others are spurring their comrades on with wild gestures and hoarse shouts. The moment they appear out of cover, they are swept down by our guns. I see the Spanish captain suddenly turn back. As I found out after the battle, he had opened the hatch of his tank for just a split second and had caught a bullet in the arm.

The almost perverse disregard of death displayed by the Mineros is uncanny. Again and again they appear just fifty to sixty feet in front of our tanks and, naturally, at this range, are mowed down by our guns the minute they appear, the cone of fire often hurling them backwards.

Unfortunately the Basque positions are located on a steep pedestal about five feet high so that we can't roll over them or climb up to them from the side. So the fighting goes on until evening, when the enemy, afraid that he may be cut off from his line of retreat, abandons his positions. All the hittable parts of my tank have been hit; there's hardly any paint left on it. Late in the evening, the infantry troops move into the last positions before Bilbao. We can't see the city any longer;

it's too dark, and Bilbao lies hidden in blackness. Tomorrow it will be in our hands.'

And the Nationalist forces did, in fact, reach the suburbs on 18 June, and on the 19th they moved into the center of the city, which had been evacuated by the enemy. The offensive against the Basque capital had lasted nearly three months. Since the Nationalist attack had come from the east, there was no chance of destroying the Basque armies, the majority of which were able to escape towards the west. They owed their successful retreat to the desperate stand taken by the Mineros during the last battle just described above.

Prior to the capture of Bilbao, the following incident happened to five members of the Condor Legion. Five pilots, all of them officers, confused by the usual inadequate markings along the front, drove over the Red front line and were arrested. They were immediately sentenced to death in Bilbao as war criminals, and it was announced over the radio that they would be executed the following morning. The Condor Legion replied to this announcement with the statement that the Basque government would have reason to regret it if the sentence were carried out as planned, for in that case the Condor Legion would bombard the city of Bilbao in retaliation. At the same time Privy Councilor (Geheimrat) Dumont, of the German Foreign Office, the liaison officer of the Special Staff W, got in touch with his friend, French Ambassador Herbette. Thanks to Herbette's intervention, the government in Bilbao was persuaded to announce that the executions had been put off. Finally, after a term in prison, the five officers were returned to the Condor Legion via France, their heads shaven to indicate their status as criminals.



VIII. The Interlude Represented by the Battle of Brunete (July 1937)

(See the map in Appendix 4)

The offensive along the northern coast was to be continued without delay. The next target was the city of Santander. All the preparations had been made and the troops were just about to set out along the routes assigned to them when suddenly a threat was reported from another quarter, a threat which could very well turn into a catastrophe.

The time was well-chosen. While Franco's main armies and nearly all his air forces were still occupied in the north, General Miaja launched a new offensive at Madrid. This time, however, the operation was his own idea; it had been planned with care and launched with skill. Its purpose was nothing more or less than to free the Spanish capital of the Nationalist forces besieging it.

The winding front line of the Nationalists, established at the conclusion of the last assault on Madrid, ran pretty exactly from west to east south of the Escorial, then dipped towards the south and, keeping close to the outskirts of the city, followed the course of the Manzanares south into the area around Toledo. It was against the east-west stretch running south of the Escorial that Miaja launched his breakthrough assault. The attacking force was to push forward via Brunete as far as Navalcarnero and seize the highway coming from Extremadura, the same highway along which Franco and his African forces had marched on Madrid. If Miaja succeeded in occupying the highway, then all the Nationalist troops stationed along the Manzanares would be cut off and the Nationalist front before Madrid would be bound to collapse.

Miaja quietly assembled his assault force south of the Escorial. During the night of 5/6 July they advanced in a surprise attack, without any preparatory artillery fire, on the Nationalist front and managed to break through. Miaja's infantry was supported during the attack by a large number of heavy and light tanks of Russian origin

as well as by some out-of-date Renault tanks armed with 37 mm turret cannon. This was the same old Renault model, of which the French still had some 3,000 and which they were continually doctoring up with various improvements. At first the tank had been unsatisfactory because its armor plating was too easily pierced, and then the new armor plating was so heavy that a stronger engine had to be installed. The French were anxious to save money and for this reason they began World War II with this same old doctored-up model from World War I; needless to say, the results were disastrous.

To get back to Spain -- at this particular time, the Red air units enjoyed uncontested air superiority over the Madrid area and were thus in a position to take full advantage of the surprise of the Nationalist forces.

The Red thrust moved forward rapidly, and the Reds advanced past Brunete to a point not far from Navalcarnero. The Nationalist front was completely shattered on this sector. A deep, wedge-shaped gap had opened up and was growing wider and wider. General Varela, who was in charge of operations at Madrid, threw all available troops into action in an attempt to stop the enemy advance. Both sides fought stubbornly, and the battle raged around the town of Brunete and further to the south. General Miaja was fully aware of what a victory would mean for him, and he spared no effort to reach the Estremadura highway. Once he reached it, everything would be won and Madrid would be free. His strong air units, consisting of about thirty Russian Martin bombers and sixty modern fighter aircraft (single-seater Curtiss' and Ratas), swooped back and forth over the Nationalist line, plastering it with bombs and machine-gun fire. It seemed that only one last effort was needed to bring Miaja's forces into the rear area of the besiegers, and once this had happened, the collapse of the Nationalist front was automatic.

France broke off the advance to Santander immediately. All the units of the Condor Legion and several brigades from the Navarre Corps were ordered into the Madrid area without delay.

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The German air units and antiaircraft artillery batteries got there just in time. With the help of two Italian fighter groups, they managed to subdue the enemy air forces in what was the most stubbornly fought air battle in the entire Spanish Civil War. Miaja's attack was finally brought to a standstill on 12 July 1937.

But the situation still remained critical enough. Miaja's forward wedge was still dangerously close to the Nationalist line of communication (the Estremadura highway) and too close for comfort to the rear of the front along the Manzanares. Things could not be permitted to remain this way. Franco's plan was to close the breakthrough gap and to regain the former Nationalist positions. Utilizing the reinforcements which had arrived in the meantime, Franco went over to the offensive, and on 18 July the battle of Brunete was resumed with the same stubborn ardor which had characterized its first phase. Franco's attack was unsuccessful at first. The Nationalist forces had not yet recaptured the smooth coordination among air units, artillery, and infantry which they had achieved during the fighting at Bilbao. General Miaja was holding a strong force in readiness behind his forward line in the hope that a renewed attack might yet bring him to his goal.

On 24 July Franco took command of the fighting personally. After thorough preparation by artillery fire and bombardment, Franco's infantry stormed the enemy positions, but was repulsed. On 25 July the assault was repeated with the concentrated commitment of all ground and air units. This time the attack was directed against Miaja's reserves, assembled in the narrow valleys waiting to be called into action. Flying over the valleys three times, German, Spanish, and Italian air units dropped a hail of bombs on them. At the same time all the available artillery batteries, including the five German heavy antiaircraft batteries, concentrated their fire on the closely packed troops. Suddenly, the enemy's will to resist collapsed; the Reds abandoned their positions and retreated in panic. The German fighter aircraft pursued the fleeing enemy columns with machine-gun fire and bombs and frustrated every attempt they made to reform and dig in.

Thus the battle was decided in favor of Franco. To be sure, General Miaja's forces still occupied a small wedge extending into the Nationalist line, but it no longer represented a threat. Miaja's forces had suffered exceedingly heavy losses; he himself estimated them at approximately 30,000 men.

Miaja's armies were so weakened by the battle of Brunete, that he was never again able to repeat his attempt to free the city of Madrid of its beleaguers. From this point on there were no more important battles around the capital.

It is quite possible that, in winning the battle of Brunete, Franco won the entire Civil War without being aware of it.

In any case the entire Condor Legion -- the air units, the antiaircraft artillery forces, and all the rest -- can claim for itself the inner satisfaction and the pride of knowing that its role in this battle was a decisive one.

Incidentally, even in future the battlefield of Brunete and the problem of concentrating in a relatively limited area sufficiently strong forces to decide a battle will remain a classic example of the dangers inherent in this type of operation -- provided one disregards the possibility of nuclear weapons - or has them oneself.

#### IX. The Conclusion of the Fighting on the Northern Front (August - 21 October 1937)

(See the map in Appendix 5)

It was characteristic of the conduct of operations during the Spanish Civil War that the Nationalist commanders let themselves be too easily diverted from a previously determined course by all sorts of intervening events and the changes in the military situation which they brought about. In this connection, General Sperrle and his chief of staff, Freiherr von Richthofen, deserve a great deal of credit for the determination and persuasiveness with which they brought their Spanish comrades back to the task at hand.

This was particularly true in connection with Nationalist operations in the mountainous terrain of Asturia. Here, even Franco

has the reputation of being willing to stop prematurely and to be content with the gains already made. Sperrle and von Richthofen, on the other hand, were determined to carry on to the end, and in the Navarre Corps -- particularly in the person of General Vigon -- they found soldiers after their own heart. This triumvirate -- Sperrle, von Richthofen, Vigon -- really deserves the credit for the ultimate victory of the Nationalists in the north.

Franco was now free to continue the conquest of Asturia. By 14 August 1937 his troops were deployed before the well-fortified enemy positions near Santander. The main assault was to come from the south, across the Cantabrian Mountains, the assault force then spreading out towards the west so that the enemy forces could not escape, as they had at Bilbao, but would be cut off from retreat. And this is exactly what happened. The Navarre Corps and the Italian Legion advanced over the high mountain passes and broke through the enemy positions. On 25 August the Navarre brigades on the outermost left wing reached the coast near Torrelavega, west of Santander, thus cutting off the enemy's avenue of retreat towards the west. All the enemy positions lying east of Torrelavega were forced to surrender. The Nationalists took 70,000 prisoners, including a large part of the Basque army which had escaped at Bilbao, and captured all their war materiel. On 26 August, the Nationalist troops marched into Santander, where they were greeted enthusiastically by the populace. Pro-Nationalist elements in the city had revolted the day before and had seized power, thus preventing the Reds from putting into effect their plan to loot the city and set it on fire at the last moment.

Once again General Miaja, whom the Valencia government had now placed in command of all the government troops, made an attempt to check Franco.

It was rumored in Spain that General Miaja had been forced by the Anarchists to fight on their side because they held his wife and children as hostages. It was added, though, that perhaps he had come to prefer that side in the meantime.

In any case, Miaja's conduct of operations at Brunate revealed his thorough understanding of strategy and of the art of putting pressure on the proper point.

Luck and the Condor Legion were against him. His last attempt, at Zaragoza, also reflected his strategic farsightedness and perhaps also the fact that he realized very well that he would be defeated for good if he did not succeed in breaking through the Nationalist lines.

For his last breakthrough attempt, Miaja selected the front near Zaragoza, in Aragon, where there had been very little fighting so far. For this reason the front was being held by a relatively weak Nationalist force. As a matter of fact the capture of Zaragoza would have given General Miaja a definite strategic advantage, for it would have divided the Nationalist front in two. General Pozas, Miaja's predecessor in Madrid, was appointed to lead the offensive and was assigned a force of 50,000 men. He planned to break through on either side of Zaragoza and then to surround the city from the north and south. He launched his attack on 24 August, thus prior to the capture of Santander, and succeeded in driving a sixteen-mile wedge through a broad sector of the Nationalist front near Belchite, southeast of Zaragoza. Once again the situation became critical for the Nationalists. Elements of the Condor Legion were dispatched from Asturia to take part in the action at Belchite, while ground troops were brought from Madrid by railway. The enemy thrust slackened and finally came to a standstill. General Pozas' only tangible gain was a piece of territory which had absolutely no strategic significance and which no one objected to his keeping. Peace and quiet had been restored on the Zaragoza front by 10 September 1937.

On 4 September, Franco had resumed the offensive in Asturia. According to General Sperrle, the heroic and fanatic resistance offered by the Asturians in an area characterized by high mountains and a very poor network of roads proved an almost insoluble problem for the Navarre Corps. The tides of the Bay of Biscay penetrated far into the deeply-cut river valleys. Steep canyons, spanned by fragile bridges which could be easily destroyed by the enemy, barred the way of the advancing Navarre brigades. Operations had to be carried out through eight weeks of combat in the mountains, sometimes along ridges 6,500 feet high. None

of Spain's conquerors, neither the Romans, the Arabs, nor Napoleon, had even subdued these mountains. But the troops of the Navarre Corps, with the aid of the air units and antiaircraft artillery of the Condor Legion, succeeded. General Aranda, whose forces had been trapped in Oviedo by the Asturians since the beginning of the rebellion, was freed, and joined the attack, his troops attacking from the south and the west. Finally, on 21 October 1937, the Nationalists captured the enemy's last stronghold, the seaport city of Gijon. The Red leaders escaped in boats from the harbor and were picked up by French ships outside the three-mile limit.

The northern front no longer existed. All of Asturia was in Nationalist hands. To be sure, its capture had taken the better part of the year 1937.

X. The Situation after the Conclusion of the Fighting on the Northern Front;

Strategic Deliberations and Decisions

The Political and Military Situations

With the conquest of all of northern Spain along the Bay of Biscay, the political and military situations had clearly undergone a change in Franco's favor. The two-front war was at an end. And what this meant can probably be best understood by those unfortunate Germans who were forced to fight two world wars on two fronts, the last, in fact, on a number of fronts, thanks to the shortsightedness and arrogance of Hitler.

Now having achieved an important victory, Franco had the opportunity to build on his initial success and to make his preparations for the ultimate victory.

The Condor Legion

The members of the German Condor Legion had made a valuable contribution to the Nationalist victory. The conversion to modern aircraft models, begun right after the battle of Brunete,

was beginning to bear fruit. From this point on, the struggle for air superiority was clearly decided in favor of Franco's air forces, which had been built up with German help, and they continued to maintain their superiority through the final victory which brought the Spanish Civil War to an end.

General Sperrle's successor as commander of the Condor Legion was General-leutnant Helmuth Volkmann. General Volkmann was later killed in action during the campaign in France, during which he served as division commander. His chief of staff in Spain was Lieutenant Colonel Hermann Flocher. Both men were soon given ample opportunity to prove themselves in the fighting at Teruel, Zaragoza, and the bend in the Ebro River, as well as in the preparations for the last offensive against Catalonia.

By the time the conversion to new models had been completed, the Condor Legion had at its disposal the most modern and most effective equipment which its homeland could provide:

The bomber group consisted of four squadrons of He-111's; the fighter group had two squadrons of Me-109's and two of He-51's.

The aerial reconnaissance squadron had four flights of Do-17's (one flight of long-range reconnaissance aircraft and three flights of light bombers) and one flight of He-45's.

The naval air squadron, based at Mallorca, was equipped with He-59's, the number of which varied during the course of operations.

The antiaircraft artillery batteries were equipped as follows: five heavy batteries with 88 mm guns, two light batteries with 20 mm guns, plus one platoon of 37 mm guns, one searchlight platoon, and one light column.

The signal communications battalion was composed of one radio company, one telephone company, one air traffic control company, one aircraft reporting company. One signal communications group was stationed at Salamanca, one at Seville, one at Burgos, and one on the island of Mallorca.

Reinforcements for the Italian Air Force



On the basis of the experience they had gathered so far, the Italians -- with the support of Il Duce in Rome, had managed to have their air units in Spain increased to double strength. They had set up an air war staff of their own, which soon went into action.

They now had three bomber groups, consisting of three squadrons each, all equipped with the most modern machines, three fighter groups, also composed of three squadrons each, and a light bomber group with thirty aircraft. All together, this meant an impressive total of approximately 190 aircraft, far more than the Condor Legion had at its disposal. The Spanish, with German and Italian help (in the form of both material and training services), had set up an air brigade of their own, composed of a bomber group equipped with German Ju-52's and Italian Savoyas, two close-support squadrons equipped with He-51's, an aerial reconnaissance and light bomber group equipped with German He-45's and He-70's, and one fighter group equipped with Italian Fiats. Both the Italians and the Spanish had their own antiaircraft artillery batteries. Although coordination among the German, Spanish, and Italian air war staffs was often somewhat of a problem, the increase in air strength was extremely welcome.

The Spanish had taken to heart the lessons of previous operations, during which the lack of light and heavy artillery had caused a good deal of trouble. The Italians offered to help out in case the Spanish should not be able to make up the necessary batteries on their own. During the operations at Bilbao and Santander, the Nationalists had had to be content with only 120 artillery pieces to carry out the task of preparing the targets for the main attack; now, they had approximately 400 artillery pieces of all calibers at their disposal for the last decision-seeking battle -- a total which was considered extraordinarily high in view of the conditions under which the Spanish Civil War was fought.

#### New Strategic Considerations

There was no doubt that the Nationalist cause had won a significant victory as a result of the collapse of the front in northern Spain, a victory which meant even more than the bare facts would seem to justify. There would be no more critical periods, such as the ones following the operations on the Jarama and at Guadalajara, for the Nationalist forces. Nor did it seem likely that they would have to interrupt their operations again, as they had had to do be-

cause of the Brunete episode. In direct proportion to the need of the Reds to look for help to their supporters abroad, the desire of these supporters in London and Paris to identify themselves with the Red cause in Spain was becoming less and less eager. They were gradually abandoning the line that Red Spain represented the legal government of the country, which ought to be defended against the rebels, and were beginning to look surreptitiously to ways to call their change of heart to Franco's attention. They dispatched observers and agents to Spain, whose real task was to sound out the situation and to prepare the ground.

But these efforts concealed a new danger which could not be disregarded. In Burgos, playing the role of disinterested and benevolent observers, these agents used every channel at their disposal to implant the idea that it was much better to strive for a peaceful conclusion of the war than to continue it ad infinitum, since, after all, it was imposing great sacrifices on the country. They gave to understand that their employers were aware of the political atmosphere in Valencia and Barcelona and that an agreement could be reached if Nationalist leaders in Burgos would only be sensible and follow the good advice of Paris and London. They hinted, for example, that Catalonia, with its capital of Barcelona, would certainly be willing to abandon the Red cause if Franco would direct his coming offensive against Madrid rather than Catalonia; if he insisted on sticking to his plan to attack Catalonia, the result was bound to be a sharp increase in resistance in that province. Thus they pointed out that the far easier victory in Madrid would be the shortest path to success and to ultimate peace, whereas an attack on Catalonia would be full of danger because it would be bound to stir up public opinion and resistance in France.

Fortunately for Nationalist Spain, all these insinuations failed in their purpose, since Nationalist leaders had recognized that they had to end the war with an independent and genuine victory if the subsequent peace was to be a firm and lasting one. Thus preparations for the last offensive continued without interruption, although there was some disagreement as to which

sector of the front ought to be selected for the last decisive battle.

Without doubt, an operation moving along both banks of the Ebro River from the Zaragoza area towards Catalonia and the coast of the Mediterranean offered the best prospects of military success. Due to the shift in the focal point of military operations, Madrid had lost its former significance, and the previous slogan to the effect that whoever possessed Madrid was bound to win the war was no longer heard. Instead, if the Nationalists could manage to cut off all communication between Valencia and Barcelona, the two centers from which the Reds conducted operations, the victory would clearly be theirs. The more important of the two cities was undoubtedly Barcelona, which was not only the intellectual and moral center of Red resistance, but also -- thanks to Catalonia's unrestricted contact with France, her war industries, and her wealth -- a vital source of war materiel for the Reds. If the Nationalists could succeed in capturing Catalonia, they would reduce the number of Red-held seaports to such a small number that they would be able to cut off imports from abroad even without the authority to stop neutral ships. And this, in turn, would be sufficient to bring the Red operations to an end.

#### The Deliberations of the Reds and the Measures They Took

The Reds themselves had to admit the logic of the considerations detailed above. The break in hostilities found them feverishly active. But the moment they felt reassured in their expectation that Franco intended to attack Catalonia, rumors came to their attention to the effect that he was going to attack the Madrid sector after all. This uncertainty seriously disrupted their defense preparations at Zaragoza and forced them to deploy their troops in such a way that they could be thrown into action at either Zaragoza or Madrid. This was the reason for the concentration of such a strong Red force in the area of Teruel. Lying southwest of Zaragoza and almost due east of Madrid, Teruel represented the meeting point of the two arms (i.e. Zaragoza and Madrid) of the Nationalist front. During December 1937 and January 1938, the Reds made a virtue out of necessity and stationed their troops at Teruel to meet a Nationalist attack which failed to materialize, either

at Madrid or at Zaragoza.

In the meantime Franco had evolved another plan. During the first days of November 1937, after the final operations in Asturia had come to an end, the new commander and chief of staff of the Condor Legion had their first conferences with the staff of the Italian Legion and with Franco's operations staff concerning the objective and scope of the new offensive against Catalonia. All were in agreement that the focal point of the attack ought to be directed against the area between Zaragoza and the Pyrenees and that the Nationalist advance ought to follow the Pyrenees to the Segre sector. The Nationalists could count upon about ten divisions and -- even more important, considering the rather special character of the operations in Spain -- would be operating with a substantially stronger air force than ever before.

Nevertheless, Franco decided to put the following operational plan into effect: Towards the end of November he ordered that all preparations for the attack against Catalonia be discontinued. Instead he intended to seek a decision in the area northeast of Madrid, on the southern edge of the Guadarrama range and along the upper course of the Jarama, Herarez, Tajuna, and Tajo Rivers, about at the point where the four rivers leave the foothills to begin their journey to the capital. The offensive was to be launched around the middle of December and was to be carried out by a force consisting of the Italian Corps, in the center, and two Spanish corps, forming the wings.

The staff headquarters of the Condor Legion had been moved to Almazan, along the upper course of the Duero River, north of the Guadarrama range. The bomber squadrons, half the fighter units, and the reconnaissance squadron were stationed at the airfield of El Burgo de Osma, while the rest of the fighter units were at Torresavinan. The antiaircraft artillery forces were distributed among Almazan, El Burgo, and Zaragoza. Thus, the Legion, too, was prepared to operate either in Zaragoza or in Madrid, whichever might prove necessary, although the accommodations

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provided for its forces were fairly makeshift. There were no troops available for a larger-scale deceptive maneuver on the Zaragoza front.

All the divisions were needed for the main attack on Madrid. Thus the deceptive maneuver had to be accomplished by the united German, Italian, and Spanish air units alone. Their attack could be directed only against the Red air forces assembled behind the Red front line in Aragon. These forces were estimated at about one hundred aircraft, distributed among the airfields southeast of Zaragoza along both sides of the Ebro. The Nationalist forces comprised sixteen bomber squadrons and thirteen fighter squadrons, almost all of them equipped with modern aircraft models -- a total of approximately 250 aircraft in all. The Italian air staff was entrusted with the preparations for and the accomplishment of the joint attack.

This Nationalist air offensive on the Zaragoza front, unusual for operations in Spain in view of its scope and concentration of forces, lasted for three days. It was a difficult undertaking for a number of reasons -- the problems created by the need to issue commands to three separate participating forces, the large number of small, and in fact exceedingly small airfields among which the Red aircraft had been skillfully dispersed, and above all the long approach route of the attacking units, which made it almost impossible for them to coordinate their activity over the target. The Nationalist fighter units could afford to remain over the target for only a short time, due to inadequate fueling capacity.

Despite the tremendous expenditure of effort and materiel on both sides, the three-day battle between the opposing air forces failed to bring conclusive victory to either side. The Reds had demonstrated a certain degree of reserve, which led one to wonder what might be behind it.

In the meantime the Spanish and Italian divisions had already moved into position in the assembly area located in the curve of the Madrid front, and since the attack on the capital had finally been set for 18 December, the Spanish and Italian air units hastened to assume their assigned stations. The squadrons of the Condor Legion remained at their former airfields, which had been selected with a view to permitting employment at whichever front should be selected.

By 15 December, deployment of the Nationalist forces for the decision-

seeking offensive was to be complete. The battle was to begin on 18 December.

On the evening of 16 December, Nationalists were suddenly confronted with an entirely new situation,



a situation which had been regarded as impossible by Franco and his staff since the Nationalist victory in Asturia.

XI. The Battle of Teruel (Winter 1937/1938)

(See the map in Appendix 6)

Coming from Zaragoza, when one reaches Daroca, with its towering Moorish fortifications, and then turns south to Calamocha, following the highway, the railway, and the course of the Cella River, one soon catches sight -- to the left -- of the Sierra Palomera range, some of whose peaks rise to a height of 5,000 feet; to the right, in the distance, one sees the Sierra de Albarracin mountains, almost as high as the Palomera range; the Tajo River, which flows by south of Madrid, has its origin in the latter range. Between these two mountain ranges, there is a valley running from north to south; although it varies in breadth, on the average it is about 11,000 yards wide. The mountains are barren, as is the case almost everywhere in Spain. The valley is fertile as far as Cella, where it widens into a high plateau. On the southern edge of this plateau, built on a cone-shaped hill, lies the mountain city of Teruel, at the point where the Alfambra and Guadalaviar (or Turia) Rivers meet and the Turia leaves the mountains to begin its torturous way to the sea near Valencia. The railway and highway of Teruel do not follow the course of the Turia, but break through and cross the mountains southwest of the city and reach the coast in the vicinity of Sagunto.

Teruel lies on a hill which rises out of the middle of a high plateau bordered by mountains on the south, east, and west; the highest mountains, and those located nearest the city, lie in the southeast. There are no mountains to cut off the plateau at the northern edge -- where it gradually turns into the valley of the Cella.

Ever since the beginning of the Spanish Civil War, the front line had followed the mountains situated ~~ed~~ west, south, and east of Teruel so that the city itself, on its high hill, was really at the end of a peninsula extending into Red terri-

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tory. Thus the only communications lines from the city to the Nationalist territory led across the plateau towards the north and through the Cella valley.

And for its entire length of some thirty miles, this channel of communication could be watched and dominated by the enemy on either side of it. This situation was unique enough during the more quiet phases of the war; it is almost unbelievable that this narrow peninsula was the scene of one of the more terrible and one of the longest battles of the entire war. Anyone wishing to form an objective picture of the origin and course of this battle, as well as of the strategic considerations lying behind it, must divest himself completely of any military principles he may have acquired during World War I or during his studies at the war colleges of other countries. Above all, he must realize that the fighting in Spain was always concentrated around a specific target -- a hill, a city or village, a forest, or a bridge -- and that an assault from the flank or a relief maneuver on a secondary sector were extremely unusual actions, of the usefulness of which the Spaniards refused to be convinced.

In connection with the battle of Teruel, there are two fundamental questions which can probably never be answered. The first of these is just why the Reds chose Teruel for the scene of their relief offensive against the Nationalists -- for the capture of this projecting corner of the front had no strategic value for them whatsoever--, and the second just why the Nationalists lost the initiative as a result of Teruel, an initiative which they were unable to regain until three months later. As far as the Reds were concerned, their plan was presumably influenced by the fact the capture of the Teruel "peninsula" would provide them with a better and quicker channel of communications between their Aragon and Madrid fronts. As for the Nationalists, it seems clear that they were influenced, as in the case of the battle of Brunete, by their conviction that it was bad for morale to let the Reds enjoy even temporary success. These two motivations, however, are hardly adequate answers to the questions posed above. Perhaps we shall come closer to the answer if we stop to consider the Spanish character, which regards it as a matter of course to meet the enemy at the point where he attacks and finds it unnecessary and not quite honorable to avoid him by attacking somewhere else.

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Prior to this time there had been hardly any action at all in the mountains around Teruel. There was no artillery whatsoever stationed there. Every once in a while, an aircraft might appear in the sky --

there was no way of telling whether Red or Nationalist. The city had a garrison of approximately 2,000 troops and there were a few makeshift dugouts and trenches in the surrounding hills. No one had the slightest intention of changing this peaceful situation, least of all in December, when the Spanish winter is bitterly cold in the mountains. During this particular December, it began to snow more heavily than the oldest inhabitants could recall its having done before.

During the night of 15/16 December, completely without warning, Red infantry forces overran the Nationalist positions <sup>east</sup> east and west of the city and made contact north of Teruel, on the road leading to Calamocha. In the morning it was discovered that the 2,000-man garrison was trapped in the city, its only channel of communication to the outside world the short-wave transmitter connecting the garrison with Zaragoza. When the Nationalists outside the city realized the situation and launched a counterattack, unusually heavy fighting ensued, which made it obvious that the Reds had deployed an impressively large force in the Teruel area.

By evening, after a day of futile counterattacks, the Nationalists realized that they were up against the two very best interantional brigades (Lister and Campesino) which the Reds had at their disposal. Both brigades were equipped with a good many tanks. The Red air forces also appeared over the sector, but were prevented by snow flurries from accomplishing very much. The temperature was 14° (F.), and the troops, not properly dressed for winter weather, suffered severely from cold when they were ordered out of their billets.

#### Franco's Counterattack

On 16 December, the day following the Red breakthrough, General Franco ordered a counterattack to be carried out by seventeen battalions under the command of General Aranda. The purpose of the attack was to ~~maximize~~ <sup>restore</sup> the Nationalist line to its former status. On the same day he ordered that General Varela, assigned to the sector along the upper course of the Tajo, should release two divisions

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for the Teruel sector. Thus, without further ado, the fate of the Nationalist offensive against Madrid, scheduled for 18 December, was decided.

The Italians released most of their artillery for employment at Teruel. The Condor Legion, still convinced that the best and most effective relief action for Teruel was the accomplishment of the contemplated attack on Madrid, assigned only two heavy antiaircraft artillery batteries to the Teruel front. By 17 December, however, even the Condor Legion had to resign itself to the fact that the initiative, at least for the moment, was firmly in Red hands.

The pessimistic mood of the Legion staff was intensified by the events of 17 December. On the morning of the 17th, the Legion commander ordered an attack on the Teruel area by a force of twenty-three He-111's of the bomber group. During their approach flight the weather became so impossible that the force had to deviate to the south, where it was caught by Red fighters and antiaircraft artillery. For a period of several hours, seven aircraft were believed to be missing in action, but by evening all but one had reported their position. Some had landed at Avila, some at Escalona, and some at Talavera. All in all, it had been a hard day for the German bomber squadrons.

In the meantime, on the plateau north of Teruel -- in defiance of the wintry cold and the heavy snows -- a battle of attrition had begun, a battle in which both sides constantly committed new forces, although the strategic value of a victory at Teruel was negligible for both. It was a battle which made its own rules as it went along, and the command staffs on both sides had no choice but to follow. From day to day, both sides concentrated more and more artillery in this tightly limited area and vied with one another in furious minor assaults.

For the first time, the air units were relegated to the background for longer periods during the fighting -- the weather was too unfavorable. The ground weapons were employed all the more intensely, to a degree which soon exceeded that experienced at Brunete. Some mornings it was as cold as 5° (F.). The heavy snow restricted almost every battalion to its own station, so that none knew what was happening to the others, but the fewer troops there were on the battlefield, the more embittered the fighting seemed to be. No attempt was made to change this. All

all, the situation remained as it had been on the morning of 16 December, the Reds holding the positions they had captured. The brave garrison in Teruel was still holding out, but since it had very little equipment to fight with, its surrender was only a matter of time. This made the Nationalist leaders all the more anxious to liberate it in time. For the second time during the Spanish Civil War, an encircled garrison of a few thousand men had become the focal point of military operations.

On 22 December, after repeated but futile Nationalist assaults, the Generalissimo called the chief of staff of the Condor Legion to his headquarters and explained to him and to the assembled Spanish generals his plan to put an end to the stop-gap tactics so far employed and to recapture the city of Teruel with a concentrated offensive by two strong corps, no matter how high the cost of such a venture might be. He ordered the establishment of a special army command post under the leadership of General Davila, the Minister of War, and assigned General Vigon to be Davila's chief of staff. General Vigon was the very best officer Franco had available for such a post; moreover he was a good friend of the Condor Legion from the days of its joint operations with the Navarre Corps. Franco ordered the deployment of the corps under General Varela in the west and northwest of Teruel so that it could attack the mountain fortress along the Guadalaviar (Turia), while General Aranda's corps, reinforced by new divisions in the meantime, was to attack the city from the old position north and northeast of Teruel, moving forward across the road leading to Calamocha. The Condor Legion was requested to employ all its forces in the support of General Varela's assault. The Italian air units were assigned the sector entrusted to General Aranda. The Italian artillery forces, in part, had already gone into action, while the rest were on the march to Teruel. Altogether, Franco had some 400 artillery pieces at his disposal.

The Condor Legion immediately transferred all its fighter units to Calamocha, to bring them as close as possible to the scene of action. Two antiaircraft artillery batteries were already there, and a third was on the way together with the



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staff of the antiaircraft artillery commander. The bomber group and the aerial reconnaissance squadrons remained at their old stations. The Legion staff moved to the barren mountain wilderness of the village of Bronchales. Its headquarters was set up in the farm buildings of La Magdalena, right on the battlefield, where General Varela also had his command post.

The attack of the two corps was set for 29 December, since some of the divisions had a long way to come via the curve of the front near Madrid to the north; their march was further delayed by inclement weather.

Thus there was still time for the Condor Legion to celebrate Christmas in the traditional German manner, despite the sudden change in the military situation, which gave them every reason to be depressed and anxious. It was their second Christmas away from home; they were to spend still a third in Spain before they could return to Germany.

The bloody battle of Teruel went on for nearly a month in its tightly restricted area without bringing about any substantial change in the situation. On 8 January, to be sure, the garrison at Teruel, having held out bravely until then, was forced to surrender. The temperature dropped to 1° (F.), with snow and fog. On 5 February, the Reds made an attempt to cut off the Teruel corridor, overrunning General Yague's newly-arrived Moroccan corps in a surprise attack. Up to 100 tons of bombs were dropped daily, and as soon as the weather cleared a bit the German squadrons carried out countless strafing attacks; cavalry attacks, accompanied by shouting and death-defying courage, were carried out by the Moroccan troops in their colorful uniforms. One must admit that nothing was left untried in an effort to assure a Nationalist victory.

On 7 February the Reds suddenly withdrew from the entire western bank of the Alfambra and also abandoned their positions in the Sierra Palomera, leaving prisoners and construction materials behind. On the same day the German fighter units brought down twelve enemy aircraft; 1/Lieutenant Balthasar alone brought down four Martin bombers.

The attack along the Alfambra had, however, accomplished one thing -- it had widened the Teruel corridor so much that in future there was no more danger that the Red troops fighting along the edges could get around behind Franco's forces.

In the meantime there had been several heated debates as to what ought to be done next. On 9 February, the Legion commander came forth with his first sug-

gestion, to the effect that the Nationalist forces, the majority of which were already in the Teruel sector or just north of it, be withdrawn further to the north and that the entire Madrid offensive be abandoned in favor of resuming the original plan for an offensive on both sides of the Ebro towards Catalonia. Since he was aware that the Nationalist leaders were not overly enthusiastic about the Catalanian attack, he proposed that the new offensive move straight through towards the Mediterranean coast south of the Ebro delta, thus separating Barcelona and Valencia. The suggested plan was an attempt to expand the situation at Teruel, tactically indefensible in any case, into a large-scale strategic operation capable of deciding the outcome of the war. This suggestion should be kept in mind, for when it was put into effect later on it was a complete success. At that time, on 9 February, it was disapproved by the Nationalist leaders, who could see nothing but the ruins of Teruel before them.

Thus, on 17 February, the third concentrated attack on the mountain fortress began, supported by all the German air units. The plan called for General Aranda's corps to cross the Alfambra directly northeast of the city, to proceed along the mountains to the southeast and south of Teruel, and then to launch a frontal attack towards the rear. The German bomber squadrons dropped countless bombs over these targets, and dive bombers were employed for the first time. In the face of heavy enemy defenses, during the afternoon the attacking force advanced some 6,500 feet and managed to get across the Alfambra close to the city, only to come to a standstill at the edge of the mountains. During the night there were new Nationalist assaults, met by enemy counterattacks.

18 and 19 February were marked by a stubborn struggle for the cemetery of Teruel, located on a hill northeast of the city; the German air units also participated. The bodies of the ~~dead~~ fallen mingled with the bones of the dead buried in the churchyard.

The cemetery changed hands several times. But when General Aranda's corps stormed the Mansueto and Santa Barbara peaks, overlooking the city from the

southeast, and planted the unit flags there, the Reds began to give way. They abandoned the cemetery, now covered from above and from the rear by Nationalist troops, and retreated to the ruins of the city. 19 February was the bloodiest day of the battle of Teruel and one of the bloodiest of the entire war. Not for a single moment did the German antiaircraft artillery forces or the air units leave the battlefield in peace, but scattered their shells before the enemy and over the smoking peaks of the mountains. On this day the battalions of General Varela's corps crossed the Guadalaviar west of Teruel and moved forward, in the midst of heavy hand-to-hand combat, towards the rear of the city to make contact with the battalions of General Aranda's corps.

On 20 February the pincers closed around the smoking city, and the bitter struggle for each individual house and each individual narrow street began. The German He-51 squadrons had a direct share in the street fighting with their bombs and machine-gun fire, while the bomber squadrons attacked along the Red retreat route to Sagunto and the fighters brought down seven more Ratas. The struggle for the plains around the fortified city had already begun in the south. The Moroccan cavalry was already on its way down from the hill of Santa Barbara towards the burning city, whose ruined walls were beginning to collapse.

But still the defenders held firm. Hidden in houses, cellars, and alley-ways, they held out for another day, still hoping that the Red counterattacks would succeed. Their will to resist remained unbroken until they realized that the noise of the battle was shifting towards the mountains in the south, until they saw the infantry of General Varela's corps coming down the slope of Muela de Teruel to the Guadalaviar, and until they recognized the sounds of the Moroccan cavalry in their vicinity.

Teruel fell on the evening of 21 February. A thousand Red troops were taken prisoner, and this was only a small fraction of the number who had lost their lives in this furious battle. The bodies of the dead were piled up along the road leading to the cemetery to the town and in every corner of the town itself.

These last three days were a dreadful blow to the Red forces, a blow from which they never recovered. The Lister and Campesino brigades were nearly decimated. The forces which managed to escape across the mountains to Sagunto and Valencia had completely lost their striking power. They arrived exhausted and frightened and spread new terror in the ranks of their comrades, who were being sent out by the truckload to build a new barrier against the liberators.

Nationalist leaders had never intended to make any strategic use of the victory at Teruel. They were still undecided as to whether they should return to the plan for an attack on Madrid or seek the final decision at some other point. The victorious troops -- the three best and strongest corps of the Nationalist army had been committed at Teruel -- urgently needed a rest period in which to recover from the fighting and to make up their losses, which had been heavy.

Teruel had been avenged, and the honor of Nationalist Spain restored.

XII. The Thrust to the Mediterranean (24 February 1938 - 10 February 1939)<sup>16</sup>

The Operations as Far as the Ebro (See the map in Appendix 7)

On 24 February 1938, three days after the capture of Teruel, General Franco informed the Spanish corps commanders, their chiefs of staff, and the Italian and German commanders of his decision to give up the offensive in the Madrid area and to begin, instead, an offensive to be carried out from the area between Teruel and Zaragoza and to be directed at the Mediterranean coast near Tortosa.

By dint of the full utilization of all available means of transport, the forces which were to comprise the northern army under the command of General Davila were assembled in record time.

The Castilla Corps, under the command of General Varela, took over the assault sector north of Teruel along the Alfambra as far as Perales. Its mission was to tie down the enemy, thereby shielding the advancing attack of the army on the southern flank.

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16 - Section XII of the present Chapter is based on the following sources:

- Werner Beumelburg, The Struggle for Spain, The Story of the Condor Legion, Gerhard Stalling Verlagsbuchhandlung, Oldenburg/Berlin (Karlsruhe Document Collection)
- Dagobert von Mikusch, Franco Liberates Spain, Wegweiser Verlag, Berlin (Karlsruhe Document Collection)
- Colonel a.D. Freiherr von Beust, Contribution to the present study, Parts A and B (Karlsruhe Document Collection).
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The Galicia Corps, under the command of General Aranda, was assigned the mountain city of Montalban as its first target. After capturing the city, it was to move forward along the highway to Alcaniz as far as the Guadalope River, which flows into the Ebro at Caspe.

General Berti's Italian Corps, deployed directly to the north, was to cross the mountains and advance on Hajar.

The Marroqui Corps, under the command of General Yague, reinforced by the 1st Navarre Division (commanded by General Valino) and a cavalry division, was to carry out the main thrust at the focal point of the attack, a thrust which was to lead it from the area of the Huerva River via Belchite to Azalla and Escatron on the Ebro. If this operation succeeded, the Corps was to proceed along the right bank of the Ebro without delay in order to reach Caspe. Here the Ebro operation was to come to an end.

The Condor Legion (under Generalleutnant Volkmann and chief of staff Lieutenant Colonel (GSC) Plocher) was assigned to the focal point of operations to support the Marroqui Corps and the Navarre Division. The Legion immediately transferred part of its fighter units to the airfield of Sansurjo near Zaragoza, directly behind the assault front. The majority of the bomber units, as well as the reconnaissance squadron, remained at their stations in El Burgo de Osma for the time being.

The antiaircraft artillery forces were assigned to protect the Legion's airfields and also detached a number of their batteries for support operations on the ground.

The Spanish air brigade was entrusted with the support of the Galicia Corps.

The Italian air units were assigned to the sector entrusted to the Italian Corps.

The Reds, even during their attacks at Teruel, had not forgotten the Zaragoza sector. They tried to overcome the period of weakness inevitable after Teruel as rapidly as possible and dispatched reinforcements to Catalonia.

These reinforcements, however, did not arrive in time. The entire Red air force was assembled behind the threatened sector. Nevertheless, the Reds gave no sign of being particularly concerned over developments. Their bombers came over fairly regularly during the night and attacked villages and highway junctions. The Nationalist artillery and fighters left them pretty much alone in order to lull them into a feeling of false security. The Reds were obviously not sure whether the next Nationalist attack would be at Madrid or at Zaragoza and, if the last, whether it would occur north or south of the Ebro.

### 9 March

Preparations had been concluded so quickly and so thoroughly that 9 March could be set as the starting date of the attack. On the early morning of this day, forces from the 150th Division, employed on the right wing of the Marroqui Corps, crossed the Huerva River near Aguilon without encountering serious enemy resistance and took possession of the hills north of the town. This action deprived the Reds of an important point in their line and eliminated the danger of a future threat to the Nationalist flank.

The attack was scheduled to begin at 0600 hours. But the marching columns behind the front had stirred the dry chalky soil into huge clouds of white and yellowish dust which floated above the military positions and, caught in the <sup>slanting</sup> light of the rising sun, hid them effectively from view. Thus the attack was postponed for two hours.

At 0800 hours the artillery began its preparatory fire. A few minutes later the bombers and fighters of the Condor Legion were over the enemy lines. The heavy antiaircraft artillery batteries systematically swept over enemy positions and over the roads. After the bombers and dive bombers had bombarded the first enemy position, they returned to their airfields to replenish their ammunition supplies and to refuel and took off again immediately for the enemy positions at Belchite and Azuara. During the course of the day they carried some 155 tons of bombs over the front line. The fighters found little enemy resistance in the air,



and thus were able to concern themselves fairly exclusively with strafing attacks ahead of the Nationalist infantry. In exemplary coordination with the operations of the 150th Division, the fighter forces smoothed the way for the latter, which were the first troops to succeed in the breakthrough.

By 1000 hours the infantry attacks was well under way at all points. The 150th Division, having captured the hill positions near Aguilon, advanced inexorably over the mountains of the Entredicho range and took the highway at a point near Belchite. Accompanied by the German tanks of the Drone Group, its battalions quickly mastered the hills on the other side of Villanueva de la Huerva, overran the Red positions, seized the estates of Fuentetodos, and moved on along the road to Belchite between the Entredicho and Sierra Gorda ranges. The divisions operating towards the north slowed down temporarily in order to let the breakthrough at Belchite take effect.

The other corps, too, were successful in their first attacks. The 1st Division of the Navarre Corps had crossed the Sierra Herrera range. General Berti's Italian Corps had succeeded in taking all the enemy positions in its path and had driven a wedge into enemy territory. The Galicia Corps was engaged in heavy fighting north of Perales, on the way to Montalban.

At dawn on 10 March, the Condor Legion began to prepare for the expansion of the breakthrough action into the planned operation. All available He-111's, Do-17's, and He-51's were committed against the enemy airfields, and since they succeeded in surprising the enemy on the ground, the damage they caused was considerable. The bomber and dive bomber units carried out a series of attacks on the railway facilities in Lucera, as well as on the towns of Hajar, Azaila, and Escatron (on the Ebro), where their bombs were directed against enemy reserve troops being brought up to the scene of battle. The village of Belchite, the central point of the fighting at this time, was also subjected to heavy bombardment.

The German antiaircraft artillery batteries, too, were in the thick of the fight. Stationed along the front line, they concentrated with great success on the Red infantry moving along the highway to Belchite and in the Belchite area.

The German batteries discovered an extremely active Red antiaircraft artillery battery located to the east of the village and plastered it with powder-train fuses until the gun crews simply abandoned their posts. When the Nationalists investigated the site the next day, they found the guns destroyed; it had been a heavy battery, manned by French soldiers.

At noon the Reds hurriedly brought up the international brigades as reinforcements; they were decimated by the 5th Division and its accompanying tanks. By this time the 150th Division, supported by the strafing attacks by the He-51's, had taken the village of Azuara and was on its way to Letur. Along the Ebro, too, the front was in motion; Media and Puebla de Alborton were already in Nationalist hands.

During the afternoon the heatedly disputed village of Belchite was captured by German and Spanish tank units moving in from the rear, while the first troops of the 5th Division entered the village from the west.

#### 11 March

While the flying units of the Condor Legion were doing their best to prevent the defeated enemy forces from reassembling in the rear area, the Marroqui Corps captured the entire area between the Ebro River and the village of Lecera.

The Italian Corps, with its strong artillery and tank forces, managed to reach the Martin River, which they followed as far as Oliete.

The Galicia Corps had gained ground in its advance to Montalban.

#### 12 March

On 12 March, General Yague, Commanding General of the Marroqui Corps, made an important decision. At 0700 hours he sent his flank division into the attack, and loaded the majority of the 5th Division into trucks which had been brought up during the night and dispatched it to Azaila,

with one light and one heavy tank company, with mixed German and Spanish crews. The transport column was covered by low-flying fighters from the Condor Legion, and the antiaircraft artillery forces kept the highway free, operating from positions located east of Belchite.

With sporadic enemy resistance, which was met effectively by the fighters and the antiaircraft artillery, the mobile force made its way through the basin of the Aguasvivas River, penetrated into the hill city of Azaila, over which German fighters circled, eliminated all enemy resistance, and came out on the other side, following the mountain road which leads towards the east into the valley of the Ebro. Red reserve troops, which had just arrived at Escadron and which were taken completely unawares, were overrun in a short battle by the infantry and tanks, supported by the Legion's bombers.

The evening of 12 March, the fourth day of the offensive, brought the end of this remarkable Nationalist thrust east of Escadron, at the point where the Martin River flows into the Ebro. A total of twenty miles had been covered since morning.

#### 13 - 17 March

It was a mistake to give the troops more than one day of rest. By the time the offensive was resumed, the enemy had brought up additional divisions and substantially strengthened his resistance. The constant threat that Valencia and Barcelona might be separated was enough to spur the Reds on to an all-out effort. The Nationalist forces suffered heavy losses in the three days of stubborn fighting it took them to reach the Guadalupe, and a bitter struggle had to be got through before Caspe's defenders finally surrendered.

On 17 March the strategic objective of the first offensive phase was achieved. This was the line extending from Fuentes de Ebro via the Ebro River to Caspe, then, turning at a right angle towards the southwest, along the Guadalupe River as far as Calanda, and from there into the mountains east and south of Montalban.

At its biggest dip, this newly established front line projected more than sixty miles into enemy territory.

The Operations From the Ebro River to the Coast

The plans for the continuation of the offensive to the coast envisioned the following:

With the help of a large-scale offensive by the northern army, moving in a front some 820 feet wide, a force comprising eight army corps was to break through the enemy front between Teruel and the Pyrenees and, in one or more battles, to destroy the front on its way to the coast.

Nationalist leaders were aware of the fact that the Reds had the majority of their forces concentrated between Alcaniz and Caspe, ready to do everything possible to prevent a Nationalist breakthrough to the sea and a division of the front. Thus the northern army was to attack first, between the Ebro and the Pyrenees, in order to divert the enemy to that area and to achieve a dissipation of the enemy reserves. Once this operation was under way, moving from Huesca via Barbastro towards the Segrea sector between Lerida, Belaguer, and Trampo (Trempe), the southern army, which in the meantime would have reached the Guadalupe sector near Alcorisa, Alcaniz, and Caspe, was to advance on Morella and Gandesa and to push on to the coast between Castellon and Tortosa.

During the first phase of the offensive, a total of seventy-five miles had to be covered, in difficult mountainous terrain. There were very few roads which could be used. The valley of the Ebro, with its hundreds of winding loops, made operations more difficult rather than facilitating them. The entire region was barren, hot, and dry. Only along the coast itself had Nature been lavish with her gifts -- the indescribable beauty of the landscape and the delicious coolness of the air.

The Navarre Corps (General Solchaga), the Aragon Corps (General Moscardo), and the Marroqui Corps (General Yague) were deployed in readiness for the attack north of the Ebro.

While the Navarre and Aragon Corps advanced on Barbastro north and south (respectively) of Huesca, the Marroqui Corps was to move forward from the line achieved during the last attack and cross the Ebro River between Caspe and Quinto. Proceeding towards the northeast, it was to cross the Sierra Monegros range to Bujalaroz, from which point it was to veer to the east and advance on Lerida and Fraga.

The Galicia Corps (General Aranda), the Italian Corps (General Berti), and the 1st Division (General Valino) were to carry out the southern attack against Morella and Gandesa. The Castilla Corps (General Varela) was to stand by in the meantime on the southern wing, and was to be employed later against Castellon and Sagunto.

The entire Condor Legion was assigned to support the northern offensive between the Ebro and the Pyrenees, its point of main emphasis being the area around Huesca. In order to be ready for its mission, the Legion staff moved to Bancos de Fitero, near Alfaro, and began to reconnoiter to find a suitable command post near Huesca.

The bomber and aerial reconnaissance squadrons remained at their bases in Alfaro and Zaragoza, while all the fighter units were transferred to Zaragoza.

The beginning of the large-scale offensive to the sea meant an increase in the importance of the activity of the Legion's naval air squadron, which was assigned to carry out attacks on Red positions along the coast and on Red shipping.

As far as the antiaircraft artillery was concerned, two heavy and one light battery joined the Aragon and Navarre Corps near Huesca. The remaining batteries were assigned to cover the Legion's airfields.

The Italian air units were assigned to the Galicia Corps and their own Corps on the southern sector; the Spanish air units were given the mission of supporting the Marroqui Corps on the southern flank of the northern assault force.

#### 22 and 23 March

On 22 March the northern offensive began on both sides of Huesca. Although the Condor Legion carried out a number of bombardment missions north of Huesca, the Navarre Corps made only minor territorial gains.

Enemy resistance was extraordinarily obstinate, and the German aircraft had to shoot the Reds out of every inch of their trenches.

The Aragon Corps managed to gain a few thousand yards, but it was not successful in its attempt to reach the highway between Huesca and Barbastro.

During the night of 22/23 March, the Marroqui Corps began its advance from the Ebro line between Caspe and Quinto. The 13th Division managed to establish a bridgehead near Quinto and to erect a pontoon bridge over which the entire division crossed the river.

#### 24 March

On 24 March the Navarre Corps, fighting against a strong and courageous enemy, was unable to make any better progress than on the day before.

In the area assigned to the Aragon Corps, however, the enemy began to give way and retreated, fighting, some fifteen and one-half miles towards the east. By evening the breakthrough on this sector could be regarded as accomplished. The German bomber squadrons had contributed a good deal to the Nationalist victory. Once again it was proved that fighting in the mountains is strenuous and time-consuming, while operations in even terrain can be gotten under way more rapidly and more easily.

Consequently, the northern army command decided to shift the point of main effort of the Marroqui Corps, which had brought all its divisions across the Ebro and was fighting on the other side of the Monegros range to win access to the Zaragoza-Lerida highway. This decision ignored the fact that an entire enemy division, unaware of the situation, was standing by the the Sierra de Alcubierre on the wings of the Corps.

The Red air forces, still assembled on the other side of Alcaniz and Caspe in expectation of a Nationalist attack in the south, now moved their units to the north and were giving the Marroqui Corps a good deal of trouble. The Condor Legion immediately requested permission to take this area under its protection.

25 March

On 25 March the Navarre Corps finally forced the enemy to begin a retreat from Huesca towards Barbastro, and the town of Huesca was taken.

Ensnconced in the church steeple of the town, the staff of the Condor Legion watched developments on the battlefield below. After they had once begun to give way, the Reds withdrew so rapidly that the antiaircraft artillery batteries were hardly able to change position quickly enough to follow them. During the afternoon and evening the German 88 mm guns were the only ones still able to fire at the Red retreat columns withdrawing on both sides of the road to Barbastro.

The Aragon Corps continued its rapid advance and was already on its way over the Sierra de Alubierre range.

The Marroqui Corps managed to reach Eujaraloz, and the highway to Fraga was firmly in its hands.

On this day the Galicia Corps and General Berti's Italian Corps also began their offensive on the southern sector of the front. Both Corps succeeded in crossing the Guadalupe River near Alcaniz and to the south near Alcorisa and in penetrating far into enemy territory.

On the other side of Caspe, the enemy was holding out desperately before the Navarre Division.

The bomber squadrons of the Condor Legion, after completing their part of the breakthrough operation, carried out attacks on the Red hinterland as far as the Segre River, while the fighter units were successful in their struggle with the Red air forces. The antiaircraft artillery batteries, shifting their positions rapidly, supported the ground operations with great success. On this particular day the signal communications battalion did an especially good job in keeping <sup>its</sup> ~~their~~ advance troops right up at the front lines.

26 and 27 March

On 26 March the Aragon and Navarre Corps fought their way to the thirty-eight mile wide sector of the Alcanadre River and even pushed beyond it.

The Marroqui Corps formed a strong motorized column made up of infantry, light artillery, and tanks, which -- protected on its northern flank by the cavalry division -- advanced towards the east along the highway, putting down all enemy resistance as it went, until it reached a point close to the strongly fortified enemy positions near Fraga, on the Cina River. The Marroqui column broke through the enemy front at its weakest point. During its march, the Red bomber squadrons managed to attack it, causing heavy losses. The Red division which had been standing by in the Sierra de Alcubierre mountains was forced to surrender, after the Nationalist attacks had grazed its wings at a distance of some thirty-five miles.

Operating from their combat airfield near Bujaraloz, the German fighter units engaged in aerial combat with the enemy and also carried out low-flying attacks.

On 27 March, with the help of the German antiaircraft artillery units and the Legion's bomber squadrons, the Marróqui Corps captured the town of Fraga by means of an attack which threatened it from both sides. On the following day the Corps took the town of Mequinenza. This brought it to the Ebro at the point where the Segre flows into it, some eighteen miles northeast of Caspe. North of Fraga, the Aragon Corps managed to reach the Cina River, while the Navarre Corps captured the town of Barbastro.

The Condor Legion committed almost all its aircraft in attacks on the enemy forces stubbornly defending themselves in the mountains on the other side of Caspe against the advancing 1st Division. As a result of this air support, the Nationalist attack on that sector as well was able to get under way the following day.

#### 25 March - 17 April

On 2 April, after heavy combat during which the German antiaircraft artillery batteries were constantly employed against ground targets, Lerida, the capital of the province and located along the lower course of the Segre River, fell into Nationalist hands. The front line along the Segre sector (Mequinenza - Lerida - ~~Enlaca~~ Balaguer - Tremp) gradually became stabilized.

South of the Ebro, the Italian Corps occupied the town of Gandesa on 4 April



and took possession of the lower course of the Ebro from Tortosa to Gandesa. The Galicia Corps had the honor of being the first to catch sight of the Mediterranean; on 15 April the first Spanish battalions reached its blue waters. The Red centers Barcelona and Valencia were now cut off from one another, and the Red government in Barcelona was also cut off from the sizable areas under its control.

On 17 April the Condor Legion mobilized all its available bombers for a large-scale attack on the harbors of Almeria and Cartagena on the southern coast of Spain. The Reds had received a good many supplies via these ports during the last few months, and it had proved impossible for the naval air squadron on Mallorca to do very much about it all by itself. After taking part in the fighting between Castellon and Tortosa, all the bombers had been diverted from Zaragoza, where they landed to refuel, to Salamanca and Avila, and from these cities to Seville. One aircraft crashed over the highway from Merida to Seville, and six young pilots were buried under the wreckage. A second aircraft was forced to land because of engine trouble. All the rest reached their two targets the next day and, despite enemy antiaircraft artillery and fighter aircraft, managed to drop a total of eighty-two tons of bombs on them. One Red warship was sunk and a second one heavily damaged; both the two harbors and the railway stations serving them received a number of direct hits.

The Advance to Valencia (See the map in Appendix 7)

The Nationalist military leaders had learned that the Reds had deployed half of their divisions in Catalonia in readiness for the Nationalist offensive north of the Ebro. Thus they decided, while the last bit of fighting was still going on, not to continue the attacks in the north and to march on Valencia instead. While the northern army was to hold the gains made along the lower course of the Ebro and in the Segre sector, the southern group, consisting of the

Castilla and Galicia Corps, was to launch an attack from the curve in the front which led from Teruel via Montalban and Morella to St. Mateo against the Sagunto - Segorbe line. As soon as the group had been reassembled in the latter area, it was to move forward against Valencia. Once Valencia was in Nationalist hands, Franco hoped that Madrid, cut off from its last channel of communication with the outside world, would fall into his hands as well.

The operations against Valencia took the entire spring of 1938 and most of the summer -- until mid-July. Shortly before the final decision was reached, they had to be broken off.

The attack, which began on 21 April with the full support of the Condor Legion, encountered stubborn enemy resistance during the very first day. Some of this resistance was offered by the Red fighter units, which were committed from their bases in Catalonia.

The Condor Legion had transferred all its fighter forces to the La Cenia airfield, in the vicinity of Vinaroz between the coastal range and the sea. From this location, they could be employed against the Catalonian front as well as against Valencia. The bomber squadrons remained at Zaragoza and La Cenia. The antiaircraft artillery batteries were employed along the assault front, apart from those units assigned to cover the Legion airfields at Zaragoza and La Cenia. The Legion staff established its headquarters in Benicarlo, on the Mediterranean coast.

On 29 April the Nationalist army command deployed the famous 1st Navarre Division, reinforced by tanks, between the Castilla Corps and the Galicia Corps in order to give the offensive added weight.

In a series of difficult, bloody, and time-consuming battles, the Nationalist forces had succeeded by the end of May in breaking down the enemy front along the curve between Teruel and St. Mateo and in reaching La Puebla de Valvedere, Mora de Rubielos, Mosqueruela, and Banasal. Very little progress had been made along the coast.

During this period the Condor Legion was faced with an extremely difficult

mission. In view of the tense political situation in central Europe, the supply shipments of new aircraft from Germany were very unreliable. And the stronger the pressure on Valencia became, the more air units the Reds transferred from Catalonia. Since the Legion did not have enough of the new, fast Me-109's, the ancient He-51's, far inferior to the Red Curtiss and Rata fighters, suffered heavy losses. The Red antiaircraft artillery forces, too, were a factor to contend with during the occasional large-scale bombardment attacks.

The mountain ranges of Sierra de Esparraguera and Sierra de San Cristobal represented insuperable obstacles to the weary Nationalist troops. On 2 June, the Reds, having regrouped their forces despite the difficulties caused by repeated attacks on the ground and from the air, finally began to give way on the coast and in the vicinity of Albocacer and withdrew to escape the threatened outflanking by the center forces of the attacking group. The Nationalists still had hopes of cutting off at least two Red divisions north of Castellon, but their attack -- carried out from the center against the area behind Castellon,-- soon came to a standstill in the mountains. The divisions along the coast, taking advantage of their success so far, began to push ahead. Nevertheless, an assault column from the Galicia Corps, which launched an attack just west of Castellon, was unable to achieve a breakthrough.

Finally, on 15 June, after heavy fighting and after the 4th Navarre Division had taken Almazora and Villareal (both lying along the highway to Sagunto, but further forward than Castellon), the breakthrough into the city succeeded. German tanks (under the command of Colonel von Thoma), together with troops from the Galicia Corps, moved into Castellon. But on the other side of the city, near Nules, the front came to an end, faced by the sea and by the mountains of the Sierra de Espadan range. The Castilla Corps and the 3d Navarre Division (reinforced to corps strength in the meantime) carried their attack as far as the Mijares and Seco Rivers. The territorial gains were impressive, but the final objectives of the operation, Segorbe and Sagunto, were still in enemy hands.

Despite the all-out efforts of the Condor Legion, the Red air forces were be-

coming more and more effective. They were supported by imports from France. The Condor Legion's shortage of Me-109's was more and more painfully felt.

It came as a shock to Spanish military leaders when they learned from the reports of German aerial reconnaissance units and of Spanish espionage agents that at least six strong Red divisions had been identified in the area of Tortosa (on the eastern bank of the lower course of the Ebro). The accumulation of bridge-building materials and the increase in supply activity from Barcelona made it plain that the Reds were planning an offensive of some kind.

The commanders of the northern army ignored these reports in the beginning. On 8 July they ordered the energetic continuation of the attack on Valencia. The troops were to cross the Teruel - Sagunto line and then carry out a thrust towards the interior, past the city itself, so that they could come up upon it from behind. A new corps (the Turia) had been formed for this operation; it was assigned to the outermost right wing of the attack force, near Barracas. General Berti's Italian Corps, which had been brought up in the meantime, the Corps under Valino (the 1st Navarre Division), and the Castilla Corps joined the attack. The Galicia Corps was to push right on through to the coast and lead the assault on Valencia. With the exception of the Marroqui, Navarre, and Aragon Corps, the entire northern army was now assembled for the attack against Valencia.

On 15 July the attack was launched from the right wing. The first phase, carried out by the Turia Corps and the Italian Corps, made fairly good progress. On the center sector, the Valino Corps, supported by the Condor Legion, ran into trouble in four costly and useless attacks in the mountains of the Sierra de Espadan range. The Galicia Corps, operating along the coast near Nules, made no progress whatsoever. The commander of the Condor Legion suggested that the Valino Corps should be reinforced with artillery and then employed against Segorbe, in order to achieve a breakthrough in the center. But the suggestion was not accepted, inasmuch as Spanish leaders hoped to be able to cut off a large number of enemy forces by means of an attack across the Sarrion-Viver highway.

In the last analysis, neither project was realized. While Valino and his forces, despite their heavy losses, continued their battle against the enemy positions in the Sierra de Espadan mountains, the Reds surreptitiously withdrew from the front sector north of Viver, thus rescuing their forces from the potential encirclement area. Only fifty prisoners were taken.

The Red resistance was far more stubborn than had been anticipated. On the coast, along the line extending from Viver across the Sierra de Espadan range to Nules, the Nationalist offensive broke down completely.

The Battle at the Bend of the Ebro (See the maps in Appendices 7 and 8)

On 25 July 1938 the anticipated Red relief attack was launched in the bend of the Ebro between Tortosa and Mequinenza, an attack which led to the hardest, bloodiest, and most time-consuming battle of the entire war. It lasted from the end of July until the middle of November and was restricted to an area no more than nineteen miles wide and ten miles in depth. The losses suffered by both sides can be estimated at 20,000 to 30,000 men. It is true that this battle ultimately broke the resistance of the Reds, but it cost the Nationalist forces the most intensive effort they had been called upon to make since the beginning of the war.

For weeks Nationalist leaders had been expecting the Red onslaught at the bend in the Ebro and had assumed that the Marroqui Corps divisions assigned to that sector would be capable of throwing back the attack.

As luck would have it, the bend in the Ebro itself was guarded by a newly established Nationalist division. When the Red divisions crossed the river at seven different points during the night of 24/25 July, there was hardly any artillery fire to be heard. The next morning, the Nationalist division surrendered without a fight. Nationalist attacks were carried out during the afternoon. By evening it was learned that four Red divisions had crossed the Ebro and had advanced as far as the Gandesa - Villa-Alba - Fayon line, capturing the hills of the Sierra Caballo and Sierra Pandole ranges which overlooked the area.

They had also succeeded in establishing a bridgehead north of the breakthrough area, between Fayon and Mequinenza.

Upon receipt of the news of the Red breakthrough, Generalleutnant Volkmann, the commander of the Condor Legion, went immediately from his headquarters at Benicarlo to Caspe to visit General Yague, commander of the Marroqui Corps. General Volkmann offered General Yague the full support of the Condor Legion, and his offer was gratefully accepted.

General Franco ordered that five divisions, to be released from the northern sector near Fraga, the southern sector near Castellon, from Teruel, from the Madrid area, and from Andalusia, be dispatched to the breakthrough front without delay. The locks of the power plants on the Segre were opened, in order to sweep away the footbridges established by the Reds at the ~~xx~~ bend in the Ebro.

The services of the entire Nationalist air force, with all its German, Italian, and Spanish units, were employed in an attempt to bring the enemy advance to a standstill and to destroy the bridges and ferries over the Ebro. At 1200 hours, the German units began their first missions, seriously hampered by enemy antiaircraft ~~artillery~~ artillery fire, but protected effectively by the German fighter aircraft. During the afternoon the Italian and Spanish units also joined the attack; by this time the German bombers were already flying their second and third missions against enemy troop concentrations in the breakthrough area, near Flix, Mora de Ebro, Benifallet, Ginestar, and Pinell. Apparently the enemy had not reckoned with such a rapid and effective counterattack from the air, for there were only a few Red air units in operation at the Ebro bend.

It was a matter of days before the Nationalist divisions could arrive on the scene of action. During 26, 27, and 28 July, it was still up to the Nationalist air forces alone to try to smother the enemy assault. The international brigades tried repeatedly to capture the town of Gandesa, but were deterred each time by the barrage of bombs and airborne armament fire. Gandesa remained in Nationalist hands.