

= Non @-@ intervention in the Spanish Civil War =

During the Spanish Civil War , several countries followed a principle of non @-@ intervention , to avoid any potential escalation and possible expansion of the war to other nations , which would result in the signing of the Non @-@ Intervention Agreement in August 1936 and the setting up of the Non @-@ Intervention Committee , which first met in September . Primarily arranged by the French and British governments , important members of the committee also included the Soviet Union , Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany . Ultimately , the committee had the support of 24 nations .

A plan to control materials coming into the country was put forward in early 1937 , effectively subjecting the Spanish Republic to international isolation , but was mocked by German and Italian decisive and immediate support for the rebel faction . The subject of volunteers was also much discussed , with little result ; although agreements were signed late on in the war , these were made outside the Committee . Efforts to stem the flow of war materials to Spain were largely unsuccessful , with foreign involvement in the Spanish Civil War proving instrumental to its outcome . Nazi Germany , Italy , and the Soviet Union consistently broke the agreement they had signed , France occasionally so . Britain remained largely faithful to it .

= = Non @-@ Intervention Agreement = =

Non @-@ intervention , and with it the Non @-@ Intervention Agreement , had been proposed in a joint diplomatic initiative by the governments of France and the United Kingdom . It was part of a policy of appeasement , aimed at preventing a proxy war ? with Italy and Nazi Germany supporting Franco 's Nationalist Coalition right at the onset of the conflict and the Soviet Union supporting the Republican faction four months later ? from escalating into a major pan @-@ European conflict .

On 3 August 1936 , Charles de Chambrun , French ambassador to Italy , presented the French government 's non @-@ intervention plan ; Galeazzo Ciano promised to study it . The British , however , accepted the plan in principle immediately . The following day , it was put to Konstantin von Neurath , the foreign minister of Nazi Germany by André François @-@ Poncet . The German position was that such a declaration was not needed , but discussions could be held on preventing the spread of the war to the rest of Europe , so long as the USSR was present . It was mentioned at the meeting of the French with Neurath that both countries were already supplying the parties in the war , France the Republicans and Germany the Nationalists . A similar approach was made by the French to the Soviet Union . On 6 August , Ciano confirmed Italian support in principle . Despite a Pravda claim that 12 @,@ 145 @,@ 000 roubles had already been sent by Russian workers to Spain , the Soviet government similarly agreed in principle , so long as Portugal was included , and so long as Germany and Italy stopped aid immediately .

On 7 August 1936 , France unilaterally declared non @-@ intervention . Draft declarations had been put to the German and Italian governments . Such a declaration had already been accepted by the United Kingdom , Belgium , the Netherlands , Poland , Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union , which renounced all traffic in war material , direct or indirect . The Portuguese Foreign Minister , Armindo Monteiro , was also asked to accept , but held his hand . An ultimatum was put to Yvon Delbos by the British : halt French exports to Spain , or Britain would not be obliged to act under the Treaty of Locarno if Germany invaded ; on 9 August , exports were duly suspended . However , collections for food , clothing and medical supplies to the Spanish Republicans continued . On 9 August , the Germans informed the British that ' no war materials had been sent from Germany and none will ' , which was blatantly false . During the blockade of the Strait of Gibraltar by the Spanish Republican Navy one German Junkers was captured when it came down in Republican territory , and explained as ' merely a transport aircraft ' . Its release would be required before Germany signed the Non @-@ Intervention Pact . Portugal accepted the pact on 13 August , unless her border was threatened by the war .

There was popular support in both countries for the plan , although whilst in the United Kingdom the socialist Labour Party was strongly in favour , the political left in France wanted to directly aid the Republicans . The Labour Party would reject non @-@ intervention in October 1937 . The British

Trades Union Congress was split . A report called the ' Commission of Inquiry into Alleged Breaches of the Non @-@ Intervention Agreement in Spain ' was drawn up in London , sponsored by Comintern , and headed by respectable figures . Both the British and French governments were aware of the First World War . France was reliant on British support in general . Léon Blum , the French prime minister , believed that support for the Republic would have led to a fascist takeover in France and ultimately no change in Spain .

On 5 August 1936 , the United States had made it known that it would follow a policy of non @-@ intervention , but did not announce it officially . This isolationism on the Spanish war would later be identified as disastrous by Under @-@ Secretary of State Sumner Welles . Five days later , the Glenn L. Martin Company enquired whether the government would allow the sale of eight bombers to the Spanish Republican Air Force ; the response was negative . It also confirmed it would not take part in several mediation attempts , including one by the Organization of American States . Mexico soon became the first nation to openly support the Republicans . On 15 August , the United Kingdom banned exports of war material to Spain . Neurath also agreed to the pact , and suggested that volunteers (many of whom would eventually form the International Brigades) be included . Italy similarly agreed , signing on 21 August after a determined diplomatic offensive by Britain and France . Although a surprising reversal of views , it has been put down to the growing belief that countries could not abide by the agreement anyway . Admiral Raeder urged the German government either to back the Nationalists more completely , and bring Europe to the brink of war , or to abandon them . On the 24th , Germany signed .

The Soviet Union was keen not to be left out . On 23 August 1936 , it agreed to the Non @-@ Intervention Agreement , and this was followed by a decree from Stalin banning exports of war material to Spain , thereby bringing the USSR into line with the Western Powers . Soviet foreign policy considered collective security against German fascism a priority and the Comintern had agreed a similar approach in 1934 . It walked a thin line between pleasing France and not being seen to hinder the World revolution and communist ideals . This was also the time of the first significant trials of the Old Bolsheviks in Russia . Soviet press and opposition groups were entirely against non @-@ intervention ; Soviet actions could hardly have been further from the goal of spreading the revolution .

It was at this point that the Non @-@ Intervention Committee was created to uphold the agreement , but the double @-@ dealing of the USSR and Germany had already become apparent . It also removed the need for a declaration of neutrality (which would have granted the Nationalists and Republicans control over neutrals in the areas they controlled) , and had little legal standing . In Britain , part of the reasoning was based on an exaggerated belief in Germany 's and Italy 's preparedness for war .

= = Non @-@ Intervention Committee = =

The ostensible purpose of the Non @-@ Intervention Committee (1936 ? 1939) was to prevent personnel and matériel reaching the warring parties of the Spanish Civil War , as with the Non @-@ Intervention Agreement .

The Committee first met in London on 9 September 1936 and was attended by representatives of solely European countries , and did not include Switzerland (whose policy of neutrality prohibited even inter @-@ governmental action) . It was chaired by the British W. S. Morrison . The meeting was concerned mostly with procedure only . Charles Corbin represented the French , Italy by Dino Grandi , and the Soviets by Ivan Maisky . Germany was represented by Ribbentrop (with Otto Christian Archibald von Bismarck as deputy) but left the running to Grandi , although they found working with him difficult ; Portugal , whose presence had been a Soviet requirement , was not represented . There was little hope in the committee , since the British and French would have been aware of the continued shipment of arms to the Nationalists from Italy and Germany . Britain protested twice to the Italians , once in response to Italian aircraft landing in Majorca , the other pre @-@ emptively over any significant change in the Mediterranean . Stanley Baldwin , British prime minister , and Blum attempted to halt global exports to Spain , believing it in Europe 's best interests

. Soviet aid to the Republic was threatened in the Committee . It began once it was clear the Non @-@ Intervention Agreement was not preventing Italian and German aid to the Nationalists .

The second meeting took place on 14 September 1936 . It established a subcommittee to be attended by representatives of Belgium , Britain , Czechoslovakia , France , Germany , Italy , the Soviet Union and Sweden , to deal with the day @-@ to @-@ day running of non @-@ intervention . Among them , though , the United Kingdom , France , Germany and Italy dominated , perhaps worryingly so . Soviet non @-@ military aid was revived , but not military aid . Meanwhile , the 1936 meeting of the League of Nations began , beset not only with the Spanish problem , but also with the review of the Abyssinia Crisis . It was much weakened , but still spoke out in favour of worldwide peace . There , Anthony Eden convinced Monteiro to have Portugal join the Non @-@ Intervention Committee . Álvarez del Vayo spoke out against the Non @-@ Intervention Agreement , claiming it put the rebel Nationalists on the same footing as the Republican government ; that as the official government , the Republic had the right to buy arms . On 28 September , Portugal was represented on the Committee for the first time ; the Earl of Plymouth replaced W.S. Morrison as British representative . Conservative , he often adjourned meetings ? to the benefit of the Italians and Germans ? and the Committee was accused of an anti @-@ Soviet bias . In Geneva , Maxim Litvinov once again confirmed Soviet support , based on the suggestion it would avoid war . However , the Soviet government remained hostile to the idea , and supported Álvarez 's view that non @-@ intervention was illegal .

On 12 November 1936 , significant changes were put in place to the functioning of the committee , with the ratification of plans to post observers to Spanish frontiers and ports to prevent breaches of the agreement . This had been delayed by Italian and German demands that air transport be included , which was perhaps a delaying tactic given the impossibility to doing so effectively . Russian military aid now being transported to Spain did not go unnoticed . France and Britain became split on whether to recognise Franco 's forces as a belligerent as the British wanted , or to fail to do as the French wanted . On 18 November , this was subsumed by the news that the Italian and German governments had recognised the Nationalists as the true government of Spain . A British bill preventing exports of arms to Spain by British ships from anywhere was signed . Yvon Delbos requested mediation ; at the same time , the Republic appealed to the Council of the League of Nations for assistance . Franklin Roosevelt , also approached , ruled out US interference with the words ' [there should be] no expectation that the United States would ever again send troops or warships or floods of munitions and money to Europe ' . On 4 December , France and Britain approached Italy , Germany , Russia and Portugal to request mediation . An armistice would be called , a commission sent to Spain , and , after a plebiscite , a government featuring those uninvolved in the war (such as Salvador de Madariaga) would be established . The considerable number of German soldiers in Spain ? at least 5 @,@ 000 ? was now clear , but Italy and Germany were opposed to isolated discussion of the matter .

On 10 December 1936 , Álvarez put the Republic 's case to the League of Nations , further demanding that the League condemn Italy 's and Germany 's decision to recognise the Nationalists . He pointed to the risk of the Spanish war spreading , and suggested that the Non @-@ Intervention Committee was ineffective . This charge was denied by Lord Cranborne and Édouard Viénot , the British and French representatives respectively , who appealed to the League to endorse the mediation plan . The League condemned intervention , urged its council 's members to support non @-@ intervention , and commended mediation . It then closed discussion on Spain , leaving it to the Committee . The mediation plan , however , was soon dropped . Britain and France continued to consider , and put forward , plans to prevent foreign volunteers , outside of the Committee .

On 6 January 1937 , the first opportunity after the winter break , both houses of Congress in the United States passed a resolution banning the export of arms to Spain . Those in opposition to the bill , including American socialists , communists and many liberals , suggested that the export of arms to Germany and Italy should be halted also under the Neutrality Act of 1935 , since foreign intervention constituted a state of war in Spain . Cordell Hull , continued to doubt the extent of German and Italian operations , despite evidence to the contrary . The Soviets met the request to ban volunteers on 27 December , Portugal on 5 January , and Germany and Italy on 7 January .

Adolf Hitler authored the German declaration . On 10 January , a further request that volunteering be made a crime was made by Britain and France to Germany . There continued Germany uneasiness about the scale , limitations and outcomes of intervention in Spain . On 20 January , Italy put a moratorium on volunteers , and on the 25 January Germany and Italy agreed to support limitations to prevent volunteers , believing that supplies to the Nationalists were now sufficient . In that meeting , both the Germans and Italian spoke as if their men in Spain were genuine volunteers . The Spanish Civil War (Non @-@ Intervention) Act , 1937 was signed into law on 24 February by the Irish , and provided penalties for exporters of war material , and for service in the military forces of a belligerent , and restricted travel to Spain . Soviet war aid continued to reach Spain through the Mediterranean . However , Britain , France , Germany , Italy and Russia continued to believe a European war was not in their best interests ; non @-@ intervention , however , would have left both sides with the possibility of defeat , which Germany , Italy and Russia in particular were keen to avoid .

= = = Control plan = = =

Observers were posted to Spanish ports and borders , and both Ribbentrop and Grandi were told to agree to the plan , significant shipments already having taken place . Portugal would not accept observers , although it did agree to personnel attached to the British Embassy in Lisbon . The cost of the scheme was put at £ 898 @, @ 000 ; Britain , France , Germany , Italy and Russia would each pay 16 % ; the other 20 % would be met by the other 22 countries . Zones of patrol were assigned to each of the four nations ; an International Board was set up to administer the scheme . The setting up of the scheme took until April . For the Republicans , this seemed like adding insult to injury ? the wholesale transfer of arms to the Nationalists would now be policed by the very countries supplying them . Despite accusations that 60 @, @ 000 Italians were now in Spain , and Grandi 's announcement that he hoped no Italian volunteer would leave until the war was over , the German delegation appears to have hoped the control plan was effective . There were Italian assurances that Italy would not break up non @-@ intervention .

In May 1937 , the Committee noted two attacks on the patrol 's ships in the Balearic islands by Spanish Republican Air Force aircraft , the first on the Italian cruiser Barletta and the second on German pocket battleship Deutschland . It iterated calls for the withdrawal of volunteers from Spain , condemned the bombing of open towns , and showed approval of humanitarian work . Germany and Italy said they would withdrawn from the Committee , and from the patrols , unless it could be guaranteed there would be no further attacks . Early June saw the return of Germany and Italy to the committee and patrols . Italian reticence of operations in Spain , however , was dropped . By contrast , it continued to be a crime in Germany to mention German operations . Following attacks (attributed to Republicans by Germany , but denied) on the German cruiser Leipzig on 15 and 18 June , Germany and Italy once again withdrew from patrols , but not from the Committee . This prompted the Portuguese government to remove British observers on the Spain ? Portugal border .

Discussions about patrols remained complicated . Britain and France offered to replace Germany and Italy in patrols of their sections , but the latter powers believed these patrols would be too partial . Germany and Italy requested that land controls be kept , and belligerent rights be given to the Nationalists , so that rights of search could be used by both the Republicans and Nationalists to replace naval patrols . The French considered abandoning border controls , or perhaps leaving non @-@ intervention . However , the French were reliant on the British , who wished to continue with patrols . Britain and France thus continued to labour over non @-@ intervention ; whilst they judged it effective , some 42 ships were estimated to have escaped inspection between April and the end of July . The air route had not been covered . The Nationalists ' debt to Germany reached 150 million Reichmarks . On 9 July , the Dutch Ambassador suggested that Britain draft a compromise . Lord Plymouth did , called the ' compromise plan for the control of non @-@ intervention ' . Naval patrols would be replaced by observers in ports and ships , land control measures would be resumed . Belligerent rights would only be granted when substantial progress was made on volunteer withdrawal . The French were furious , considering that Britain was moving towards Germany and

Italy . Grandi demanded the discussion of belligerent rights before volunteer rights ; Maisky insisted that volunteers be discussed first .

= = = Conference of Nyon and onwards = = =

It culminated in a period during 1937 when all the powers where prepared to give up on non @-@ intervention . Ciano complained to his government that Italian forces in Italy were ready but not being used ; the Soviet Union was not prepared to discuss belligerent rights ; Delbos was considering proposing mediation by Roosevelt and the Pope , whilst simultaneously preparing French war plans ; Britain 's new Prime Minister , Neville Chamberlain , saw securing a friendship with the Italian Benito Mussolini as a top priority . Eden confided he wished Franco to win , so Italian and Germany involvement would be scaled back ; Chamberlain considered Spain a troublesome complication to be forgotten . By the end of July 1937 , the Committee was in deadlock , and the aims of a successful outcome to the Spanish Civil War was looking unlikely . Unrestricted Italian submarine warfare began on 12 August . The British Admiralty believed that a significant control effort was the best solution , of four which were put forward , in response to attacks on British shipping . On 27 August it was decided by the Committee that naval patrols did not justify their expense and would be replaced , as planned , with observers at ports .

The Conference of Nyon was arranged in September 1937 for all parties with a Mediterranean coastline by the British , despite appeals by Italy and Germany that the Committee handle the piracy and other issues the conference was to discuss . It decided that French and British fleets patrol the areas of sea west of Malta , and attack any suspicious submarines . Warships that attacked neutral shipping would be attacked . On 18 September , Juan Negrín requested that the League of Nations ' Political Committee examine Spain . He also demanded an end to non intervention . Eden claimed that non @-@ intervention had stopped European war . The League did report on the Spanish situation , noting the ' failure of non @-@ intervention ' . On 6 November , the Committee met once again , with the plan to recognise the Nationalists as belligerents once significant progress had been made was finally accepted , down in part to Eden 's patience . The Nationalists accepted on 20 November , the Republicans on 1 December . The former suggested 3 @,@ 000 would be a reasonable number ; this was , in reality the number of sick and unreliable Italians Franco wished to withdraw . This was countered by British suggestions fifteen or twenty thousand might be enough . These talks were subsumed by bilateral Anglo @-@ Italian discussions . In trying to protect non @-@ intervention in the Anglo @-@ Italian meetings , which he grudgingly did , Eden would end up resigning from his post in the Foreign Office . On 17 March 1938 , France reopened the border to arms traffic to the now weakened Republic . Between mid @-@ April and mid @-@ June , 21 British seamen were killed by attacks on British shipping in Spanish waters , as well as several Non @-@ Intervention Committee observers .

On 27 June , Maisky agreed to the sending of two commissions to Spain , to enumerate foreign volunteer forces , and to bring about their withdraw . It was estimated to cost £ 1 @,@ 750 @,@ 000 to £ 2 @,@ 250 @,@ 000 , borne by member countries of the Committee . The Nationalists wished to prevent the fall of the favourable Chamberlain government in the United Kingdom , and so were seen to accept the plan . With much bemoaning , the Republicans also accepted the plan . The Nationalists demanded belligerent rights first , then withdrawals of 10 @,@ 000 from each side after , which amounted to a rejection of the plan . Following the Munich Agreement ? judged by Chamberlain to have been a success ? Britain would host similar mediation in Spain . Negrín would propose the removal of the International Brigades , a majority of whom were now Spaniards , at the last meeting of the League of Nations , thereby showing his contempt for the Non @-@ Intervention Committee . Similarly , Italians would leave Spain under the Anglo @-@ Italian agreement , not through the Committee .

Britain and France recognised the Nationalist government on 27 February 1939 . Clement Attlee criticised the way it had been agreed , calling it ' a gross betrayal ... two and a half years of hypocritical pretence of non @-@ intervention ' .