The Spanish Civil War: factions, fault lines and civil war

The Spanish Civil War, 1936-9, fought between forces loyal to the elected government (Loyalists) and those seeking to overthrow that government (Nationalists), is a prime example of how a deeply divided society can erupt in into civil war when there is no political mechanism to manage those divisions. This section looks at these divisions and how they helped bring about the war and determine the nature of the war once it had broken out. The Spanish Civil War is also important in the context of the 20th century because its nature reflects the ideological divisions that gripped the world in the immediate pre-Second World War period. Examining the context of this war exposes important strategic consideration of the European powers. As such, the nature and effects of foreign intervention, and in some cases non-intervention, are examined. The war has profound effects inasmuch as it involves, in one way or another, the major world powers on the eve of the Second World War.

Civil wars

Civil wars are armed disputes that erupt over often radically different ideas about the direction, governmental system or composition of a country. National fault lines along which these volatile differences develop can be ideological, regional, political, economic or religious. But differences do not in and of themselves cause civil wars. The other key ingredient is the lack of a political system with enough of a monopoly of force or perceived legitimacy to address the competing interests inherent in the divisions. Most established democracies, for example, have models of representation that provide a say in political decisions for differing political and ideological positions, or regional interests. Canada, for example, has a representative democracy that elects legislators from the entire country. This allows these members of parliament to represent the various regional interests in the country. Such democracies are able to maintain stability in large part because the citizens see the system as an effective and legitimate method to address competing interests or divisions within the country. When faith in the legitimacy of these democracies is insufficient to maintain stability, governments augment their legitimacy with a monopoly of force, generally military, police and security organizations. Other systems, notably, authoritarian forms of government, rely primarily on their monopoly of force to maintain unity amid societal divisions. In short, if a country has a political mechanism either to address the concerns of its factions or to force compliance, divisions will not become civil wars. Unfortunately for Spain, no such mechanism existed in the 1930s.
Background to the Spanish Civil War

Divisions cut across Spain in just about every conceivable direction. Regionalism and even localism fractured the country and often trumped loyalty to Spain as a whole. Basques, Catalans, Galicians and many other groups had cultural, linguistic, historic and economic differences that often precluded any form of national cooperation. While parts of Spain were economically strong and reasonably dynamic, other areas were backward in terms of industrial and agricultural production methods. In some regions, agriculture was dominated by small, peasant landholders, while others were dominated by vast estates.

These divisions were reflected in the myriad political organizations, parties and ideologies that took root across Spain throughout the 50 years prior to the Civil War. As in many countries, the traditional conservative triad of landowners, church and army anchored the political right in Spain. Land ownership across the country was concentrated in relatively few families. Half of the land in Spain was owned by a mere 50,000 individuals. The Catholic Church, though rocked by the forces of secularism in the 19th century, still had a great deal of influence in Spanish society, especially in education. At the other end of the political spectrum, regionalism again influenced the formation of political and ideological movements. In industrial areas, such as Barcelona and other parts of Catalonia, a form of anarchism that was based on trade union principles became popular. This anarcho-syndicalism advocated decentralized, worker control of factories, as well as the stock and trade of unions—shorter working weeks, higher wages and better working conditions. If anarcho-syndicalism was largely an urban phenomenon, its country cousin was a more traditional anarchism. This movement, strong in rural areas such as Andalusia, sought a revolution leading to a vague combination of land redistribution, decentralized authority and freedom from taxes. This revolution was to come about by an equally vague combination of spontaneous action and the creative potential of the masses. Anarchism was not the only left-wing ideology plying its trade in 1930s Spain. Variants of Marxism and socialism had been struggling for support from the late 19th century. But even the Marxists were fractured. Stalinists feuded with Trotskyites. Socialists argued with trade unionists. By the time of the Civil War, these different views had produced a dizzying array of organizations and political parties.

What makes a government legitimate? How can a government enhance its legitimacy?
Immediate causes: the failure of the Second Republic and the Popular Front

By April 1931, popular support for the monarchy had been completely eroded. When the army withdrew its support for Alphonso XXIII, he slunk into exile and general elections in June of that year brought a coalition of centre-left parties to power, led by Manuel Azatia. The new government wasted no time in enacting sweeping agricultural, labour and anti-clerical legislation. New laws protected tenants from eviction, encouraged collectives and co-operatives, and officially split church and state. The new government would recognize civil marriages and divorces. In order to reduce the influence of the army, the new government forcibly retired many officers, granting them full pensions. While such changes made some members of the political left happy, they did not go far enough for those on the extreme left. The conservative right was, of course, furious. Not only did the reforms succeed in alienating

**Manuel Azatia (1880-1940)**

Leader of the Accion Republicana, Manuel Azana became prime minister in 1931 with a centre-left coalition. While prime minister, he introduced a number of far-reaching agrarian and anti-clerical reforms that were subsequently undone when his government coalition in 1933. When the Popular Front formed the government in 1936, Azana again became prime minister. He served as the president of the Republic throughout the Civil War, after which he lived in France until his death in November
the right, they left the majority of ordinary people dissatisfied as they made little more than a dent in the widespread poverty of rural Spain.

There was a great deal of opposition to Azafia's government. The Civil Guard, a form of national police force, rose in rebellion in August 1932 under General Sanjurjo. While the revolt was easily put down—in part with the cooperation of the CNT, the largest anarchosyndicalist organization—it illustrated the degree of opposition that the government faced. Sanjurjo's rising also demonstrated the limits of the Republic's monopoly of force and legitimacy. While middle-class liberals supported the Republic, the radical left and the conservative right were not convinced. Strikes and disturbances continued through 1933. The elections of November 1933 reflected the unstable nature of Spanish politics, bringing a right-wing coalition to power. This new government was immediately denounced by the left, setting off a new wave of unrest. Neither the left nor the right seemed to have enough faith in the democratic decision-making process to trust it to their political rivals.

The suspicions of the left were, perhaps, well founded. The new government immediately began to reverse or ignore Azafia's reforms. The strikes and disturbances reached a crescendo with a short-lived declaration of autonomy by Catalonia and a far more serious revolt in the region of Asturias, crushed by hardened Spanish troops from Morocco. To some on the Spanish left, this revolt was an attempt to avoid the fate of the German left who had failed to resist the rise of the Nazis two years earlier and who were by the time of the Asturias revolt defunct. To others, it was confirmation that the radical left in Spain had abandoned the constitution and could not be trusted to govern. Both interpretations indicate a profound lack of faith in the democratic system upon which the Republic rested. Either interpretation seemed to point to political differences so entrenched that no democratic process could reconcile them.

The Popular Front and the generals' uprising

As was perhaps predictable, in 1936 the pendulum of Spanish electoral politics swung back to the left. The Spanish left had embraced an electoral strategy encouraged by the Comintern and practiced in France, known as the Popular Front. This strategy took the lesson of the Nazi rise in Germany, where infighting amongst left-wing parties had allowed the Nazis to elect candidates across the country, and aimed to prevent it from happening in other Western democracies. In the Spanish elections of 1936, in order to concentrate the moderate Republican and more radical left-wing vote, the left-wing parties co-operated organizationally and, for the most part, did not run candidates against each other. While this type of electoral co-operation was not new in Spain, the political developments both at home and in other parts of Europe gave it an urgency particular to the 1930s. It was essentially a defensive strategy, designed to stop the extreme right from taking power legitimately, as Hitler had done. The parties that participated still had deep political and ideological differences. They were able to agree on what they did not want, but seldom on policies that they did want. In that sense, the Popular

**Popular Front** A political strategy of electoral cooperation of left-wing parties designed to prevent vote-splitting and thus defeat right-wing parties. The strategy was especially popular in response to the rise of Fascist and other right-wing parties of the 1930s. Popular Front governments

The Comintern or Communist International was an organization that originated with the Bolshevik seizure of power in Russia. Its mission was to coordinate and promote the spread of revolutionary Marxist-Leninism throughout the world. Although it contained representatives from many countries, it was largely directed from Moscow and
Causes, practices, and effects of wars

Francisco Franco (1892-1975)

Francisco Franco was a competent officer who won fast promotion in the early part of his career, most of which was spent in Spanish Morocco. In 1925 he was appointed as the commander of the military academy at Saragosa. His conservative views made him a natural enemy of the Popular Front government elected in 1936. Along with generals Mola and Goded he led the Generals' Rising, which started the Civil War. He soon emerged as the leader of the Nationalist forces. During the Civil War he merged the major right-wing parties into the Falange Espanola Tradicionalista, with himself as leader. After the Nationalist victory, he became the dictator of Spain until his death in 1975.

Front was born out of a lack of faith in the democratic system, its members not trusting that democracy, traditionally practiced, could preserve freedom in Spain. The lack of stability provided the pretext for an organized military insurrection, led by army generals Goded, Mola and Franco and dependent on the troops in Spanish Morocco. The rebellious core of the army was a cadre of junior officers, though many higher-ranking officers remained loyal to the Republican government. Logistical support for the uprising came from unlikely corners. The British Royal Navy at Gibraltar helped relay messages for the rebels and, when the Spanish naval ships that were to transport the troops from North Africa to the Spanish mainland refused to join the revolt, Hitler ordered German transport planes to take up the slack and transport the Moroccan regulars to the mainland, marking the beginning of increasing international intervention in Spain. These Moroccan troops were the most experienced in the Spanish army and would prove vital to the early survival and eventual success of the Nationalist cause.

The Republican government in Madrid, after ignoring warnings of a rebellion, did not act sufficiently fast to crush the revolt in its infancy. Once the scope of the crisis became clear, it also hesitated in arming the Union General de Trabajadores (UGT), the Confederacion Nacional del Trabajo (CNT) and other left-wing organizations who had sufficient manpower but insufficient fire power to resist the rebellious elements of the army. On the local level, quick action could determine whether the revolt was successful or not. If the local workers' organizations could obtain weapons and if they acted against the local garrison with confidence, most soldiers would submit to the authority of the Republic. If the rising, however, was allowed to gain momentum, army units would round up local political leaders, execute them and bring the town under the control of the Nationalists.

This pattern produced a patchwork of rebel and loyalist holdings early in the insurrection. The rebels held the Andalucian coast, including the city of Seville, and large swaths of north central Spain. In the capital, Madrid, the government maintained control, benefiting from the poor organization and hesitation of the rebels. The east of the country also remained loyal. In the anarcho-syndicalist stronghold of Barcelona,
the CNT in conjunction with the Federacion Anarquista Iberica (FAI), with the help of loyal civil guards, fought a running battle through the streets against the 12,000 soldiers of the local garrison. As the tide turned in favour of the loyalists, General Goded himself, by then a prisoner of the government, urged the rebels to surrender. From that point, Barcelona would be the heart of loyalist Spain. The pattern, however, was clear; the government retained control only where it would accept the help of non-governmental organizations or in places where the army was too poorly organized to establish control. As a form of central control, even over its own forces, the government was weak.

The combatants and international reaction

The Republicans

The Republican forces comprised the elements of the military that remained loyal to the government, as well as various militias associated with working-class organizations such as Partido Obrero de Unificacion Marxista (POUM) and CNT—FAI. These militias managed to arm themselves with weapons they had stockpiled over the turbulent years before the Civil War and with those they managed to seize from the army. The government was reluctant to arm them but, faced with the growing crisis, it eventually began to supply them with weapons. Although brave and enthusiastic, the volunteer members of the various militias lacked military training and leadership. Ideological, political and strategic differences made co-ordination between the militias very difficult, a fact that was exploited by the

The Nationalists

The Nationalists were made up of the military units that had rebelled in July 1936, augmented by volunteers from right-wing organizations such as the Falange and the Carlists. By introducing conscription in the areas they controlled, the Nationalists were able to increase their overall numbers, including Falange and Carlist militias, to approaching 300,000 men at any one time. By the end of the war, the Nationalists would have mobilized just over a million men. The Nationalists were supported by the Catholic Church in Spain and by other conservative elements such as landowners who were frightened by Republican land seizures and collectivization. These components coalesced under General Franco, who emerged as both the military and eventually the political leader of the Nationalist forces.
The international brigades

The Western democracies, such as the United States and the United Kingdom, officially adopted policies of non-intervention and unofficially hoped for a Nationalist victory, frightened as they were of the spread of communism. Such policies were often at odds with popular opinion in these countries, which saw the war more in terms of the defense of democracy against authoritarian fascism. Non-intervention policies not only stopped official aid to the Republicans, but made it illegal for volunteers to travel to Spain and fight for the Republican cause. This prohibition, however, did not stop some 30,000 people, mostly workers and intellectuals, from smuggling themselves into Spain and enlisting in one of the numerous international brigades. The Brigades represented countries from all over the world, including the USA, UK, France, and Canada, but were generally organized by national communist organizations and coordinated by the Comintern, confirming for many Nationalist sympathizers that this was a battle against the spread of Soviet-dominated Communism to Western Europe, an interpretation that Franco publicly held until his death in 1975. Eventually, the Brigades were folded into the more regular Republican Army.

German support

Franco sought aid from Hitler as early as 25 July 1936, a request that the German leader was more than happy to grant. Twenty German transport planes were immediately dispatched to Franco, then still in North Africa, to carry troops to the mainland. Publicly, Hitler maintained that he too wanted to stop the spread of communism in Europe. It later became evident that German foreign policy could benefit from Spain's instability, situated as she was on France's southern border. Furthermore, a Nationalist victory could give Germany access to Spanish natural resources, especially those necessary for arms production. Throughout the course of the war, Germany supplied the Nationalists with artillery, small arms, tanks and vehicles. The most significant material contribution, however, was in aircraft. The German Luftwaffe (air force) formed the Condor Legion to fight in Spain. This consisted of fighter planes, transport planes and bombers, as well as the personnel to maintain and operate them. The Condor Legion provided the Nationalists with a distinct advantage, as the Republican forces had no air force to match it. The operations of the Condor Legion against Republican cities and towns, with the resultant civilian casualties, as in the Basque city of Guernica, presaged the widespread bombing of civilian targets during the Second World War. In all, around 12,000 German personnel served in Spain, fluctuating at any one time between 5000 and 10,000 men. This contribution was to prove vital to the Nationalists' victories, especially as the fighting wore on into 1937 and 1938.

Italian support

Mussolini had had his hand in Spanish politics from before the Civil War, financially supporting the monarchists. At the outbreak of the war, he pledged further aid, both material and personnel. By November 1936, Mussolini had reached an agreement with Franco, by which the Italian dictator would receive Spanish support
in case of a war with France in return for a sizeable increase in aid to the Nationalist army. The Italian army in Spain, the Corpo Truppe Volontaire (CTV), would number close to 70,000 men and included militia volunteers as well as regular army units, 700 aircraft and 900 tanks. These Italian formations fought throughout the war, contributing in a number of important battles such as Guadalajara.

**Soviet support**

Stalin did not enjoy the geographic advantage that Hitler and Mussolini had in supplying their Spanish allies. He was also torn between a desire to lead the forces of world socialism and a distrust of the socialist and anarchist elements in Spain. Domestic concerns, Five Year Plans and the purges also occupied Stalin's energy. Nevertheless, by October 1936, Soviet material was arriving in Spain to bolster the Republican forces. Unlike the Germans and Italians, who allowed the Nationalists to purchase material on credit, the Republicans had to pay for Soviet aid with Spain's gold reserves. Most of the Republican's tanks and planes came from the USSR. The Soviets also played an important organizational role. Much of the recruiting and control of the International Brigades, including political commissars responsible for the ideological development of the Brigades, was handled by Soviet personnel. This influence combined with the broader ideological divisions within the Republican forces to create tension and outright conflict between militias ostensibly on the same side, and this at times hindered the war effort.

**The Western democracies and non-intervention**

In evaluating the response of the Western democracies to the Spanish Civil War it is important to remember that it was governed by their own domestic and foreign policy goals more than any altruistic support for either side in the war. Although the Popular Front government in France might be thought to be a natural ally of their counterpart in Spain, it proceeded very cautiously in offering any support largely because of the desire of its ally, the UK, to avoid confrontation with Italy and its own fear of provoking a resurgent Germany. In a misguided attempt to limit German and Italian aid to the Nationalists, the French Popular Front prime minister, Leon Blum, suggested a binding agreement between nations to remain out of Spanish affairs. The result was the creation of the Non-Intervention Committee, which effectively barred the sale of arms to either side in the Civil War, a stipulation that was upheld by the UK and France and ignored by Germany, Italy and the Soviet Union. The result was to force the Republic to rely even more heavily on the support of the Russians, exactly what the British wanted to avoid. The United States also refused to sell arms to the Republicans, Roosevelt's hands being tied by the Neutrality Acts. This, however, did not stop American oil companies selling oil on long-term credit to the Nationalists, as oil was not included in the Neutrality Acts. In the final analysis, non-intervention severely damaged the Republican war effort but had no real effect on the Nationalist forces.

**Neutrality Acts**

A number of laws passed by the US Congress which sought to establish the United States as a formally neutral country. The first Neutrality Act of 1935 was intended to expire in six months, and prohibited America citizens from trading war materials with warring parties. Subsequent Neutrality Acts of 1936, 1937 and 1939 extended and expanded the 1935 Act to
Progress of the war

After the initial uprising of the generals, it became evident that there would be no quick end to the rebellion. Citizens on both sides took the opportunity afforded by the control of their respective sides to settle old scores with any number of political or even personal enemies. This led to a pattern of violent retribution whenever one side conquered new territory, further increasing the suffering of non-combatants. Republican targets were generally Falange members and Catholic clergy, while the Nationalists sought out anarchists, communists and trade union members. Both sides eventually used sham legality in the form of tribunals to lend an air of legitimacy to the violence. Fame was no protection from the vigilante violence—Nationalist militia in Grenada executed the poet Federico García Lorca early in the war.

Throughout most of the war, the Republican forces were generally on the defensive. They managed to stop a Nationalist offensive towards Bilbao, the Basque capital, in September 1936 and repulse the first of several attacks on Madrid in November of that year. After failing to conquer the capital city, Franco's forces laid siege to it. The resistance of Madrid would continue for three years and became the emotive rallying point for the Republic, immortalized in the words of Delores Ibarruri, known as La Pasionaria, "No Passaran!" (They shall not pass!).

Franco's army was bolstered in 1937 by the arrival of more Italian and German troops and material. He used this increase to launch two more attacks on Madrid, both of which failed. The isolated Basque region was also a target of the Nationalists early in the year, leading to one of the most notorious atrocities of the war. On 26 April, the German Condor Legion launched an air attack on the Basque city of Guernica. The planes flew side by side, carpet-bombing the city for two and a half hours. Civilians fleeing into the fields beyond the city were machine-
gunned from above. This was a deliberate targeting of civilians in order to create terror and break their will to resist, a tactic the German air force would continue to use in Spain and later rely on in the Second World War. The horror of that day has been immortalized in Picasso's massive painting Guernica, a work the artist would not allow to be hung in Spain until it was again a democratic republic. The Basque region would hold out against 1937, when its capital, Bilbao, fell. As the year progressed, the Republican forces gained more battle experience, fighting more effectively and launching offensives of their own, but these improvements were undermined by tension between the various left-wing parties of the Republic. In Barcelona, in May 1937, tension broke into open warfare pitting communists against anarchists. Clearly a concentrated and organized military effort against the Nationalists could not be pursued while the Republicans were shooting at each other.

**Why the Republicans lost**

As the war progressed, the Republicans saw a constant erosion of the territory they controlled. By October 1937, they had been reduced to a large territory to the south and east of Madrid and a much smaller piece of land surrounding Barcelona. The Republicans tried to reconnect these two areas of control with the Ebro offensive from July to November 1938, but were unsuccessful. Early in 1939, the last of the Republican strongholds fell, save for Madrid and Valencia, which continued to resist. Despite Republican control of the capital, in February 1939 France and the UK officially recognized the Franco regime as the legitimate government of Spain. The last of the Republican defenders surrendered on 2 April 1939. The Spanish Civil War was over.

The Republicans lost for several reasons. Lack of effective central command and control, political infighting, and insufficient arms and material all played a role in their downfall. Anarchists fought with communists and Marxist/Trotskyists fought with Stalinists. The weaknesses inherent in their military capability forced the Republicans into a predominantly defensive posture from which victory was impossible. Although they did attempt offensives, primarily in 1937, these were often costly and ineffective. For their part, the Nationalists were able to make effective use of the foreign aid they received, most notably the air power of the German Condor Legion. The use of Moroccan regular soldiers gave the Nationalists efficient fighting capability from the beginning of the war, whereas the Republican militias and other forces had to gain valuable
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Aftermath and significance of the war
The immediate cost of the war was devastating. An estimated 500,000 people died between July 1936 and April 1939. Of these deaths, the vast majority were of non-combatants. The physical destruction would take decades to recover from, a fact exacerbated by the pre-war lack of development.

In terms of its broader impact, the Spanish Civil War has been described as a "dress rehearsal" for the Second World War. It is true that the images of this war would become commonplace half a decade later. Carpet-bombing of civilians, violent ideological reprisals linked to military operations, and the integrated use of airpower, armour and infantry made their debut in Spain. Symbolically, the war was a clarion call for the international left to confront the threat posed by expansionary fascism, a fact realized by Spain three years before the democracies of the West.

The war was cast in different roles depending on one's own political beliefs. To the intelligentsia of the West, the war was often characterized as a struggle between the forces of repression on the one side and freedom on the other. For the working classes of the world, it was about landed/industrial interests versus workers and unions. Industrialists, the Texas Oil Company, for example, saw the war as a struggle against expansionary communism and the particular brand of economic and proprietary authoritarianism that comes with it. In this way, the views and interpretations of the war reflected the internal divisions within both the Republican and Nationalist sides and help explain how the war captivated the imagination of the world in the late 1930s. The war figures prominently in the works of writers and artists such as Andre Malraux, Ernest Hemmingway, George Orwell, Dorothy Parker, Paul Robeson and Woody Guthrie.

Strategically, the war brought fascism to both of France's major borders and gave the fascists direct access to the Atlantic, so vital to Britain's interests. In the event, Franco's reluctance to wholeheartedly throw his lot in with Hitler and Mussolini spared the Grand Alliance of the Second World War the reality of dealing with Spain as a declared enemy. This can be attributed to some key differences in fascism as practiced by Franco, Mussolini and Hitler. For his part, Franco's regime was able to survive into the 1970s by a mixture of broad right-wing support and repressive authoritarian tactics.

Art and literature inspired by the Spanish Civil War
- WH Auden, Spain 1937 (poem)
- Ernest Hemmingway, For Whom the Bell Tolls (book)
- George Orwell, Homage to Catalonia (book)
- Pablo Picasso, Guernica (painting)
- Woody Guthrie, "Jarama Valley" (song)
- Ken Loach, Land and Freedom (film)
- Guillermo del Toro, Pan's Labyrinth (film)
- The Clash, "Spanish Bombs" (song)
- Herbert Read, "Bombing Casualties: Spain" (poem)
- The Lowest of the Low, "Letter from Bilbao" (song)

Buenaventura Durruti (1896-1936)
Buenaventura Durruti was an anarchist leader during the Civil War. He led a number of strikes and uprisings in the turbulent years before the war. Once the war broke out, he urged co-operation amongst left-wing organizations in Barcelona. He led anarchist forces at Saragossa and later at Madrid, where he was killed in combat.
May"

**What is evidence?**

The Spanish Civil War was characterized by a bewildering range of propaganda produced by all sides. One of the most distinctive genres of this propaganda was the use of artistic posters to convey political messages. Look at the following posters from the Spanish Civil War and answer the questions that follow.

(From left to right) (1) Cindustria Textil de Cara a la Guerra Poster, 1937. A pro-union poster for the UGT (Union General de Trabajadores). (2) "And you what have you done for victory?" Poster issued by the UGT and the PSOE (Spanish Socialist Party). (3) Spanish Civil War poster, c. 1937. "The farmer, too, is contributing to the war effort ... ". Poster issued by the UGT and CNT (The Anarcho-syndicalist Union).

1. What messages are conveyed by these posters?
2. Does the use of highly emotional language and expressive effects reinforce the propaganda value of these posters?
3. Of what significance are these posters to historians studying the Spanish Civil War?
4. Choose an organization involved in the Spanish Civil War and create a poster to support their cause.
Juan Negrín (1892-1956)

Negrín was a Spanish socialist. He became prime minister after Largo Cabellero’s dismissal. He favoured the communists in his government, appointing them to important positions.

**Battles of the Spanish Civil War**

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<tr>
<th>Battle</th>
<th>Side 1</th>
<th>Side 2</th>
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<tr>
<td>Jarama, January 1937</td>
<td>Nationalists—attacking International Brigades</td>
<td>Republicans—attacking Nationalists—attacking International Brigades</td>
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<tr>
<td>Madrid, November 1939</td>
<td>To force a route to Madrid through the Jarama Valley</td>
<td>To capture the besieged city of Madrid</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brunete, July 1937</td>
<td>Nationalists—attacking International Brigades</td>
<td>Republicans—attacking Nationalists—attacking International Brigades</td>
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<td>To relieve pressure on the encircled city of Madrid</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aragon, June 1937</td>
<td>International WI attacking Nationalists—attacking Italian CTV</td>
<td>Republicans—attacking Nationalists—attacking Italian CTV</td>
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<tr>
<td>To relieve pressure on the Basque city of Bilbao</td>
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<tr>
<td>Malaga, February 1937</td>
<td>Nationalists—attacking Republicans (mostly CNT militia)—defending</td>
<td>Republicans—attacking Nationalists—attacking International Brigades</td>
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<tr>
<td>To capture the city of Malaga in southwestern Spain, an anarchist stronghold</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ebro, July-November 1938</td>
<td>Nationalists—attacking International Brigades</td>
<td>Republicans—attacking Nationalists—attacking International Brigades</td>
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<tr>
<td>To stow or haft the Nationalist movement towards Valencia</td>
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<td>To capture the city of Valencia</td>
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The Nationalists were able to cross the Jarama River, but the road between Valencia and Madrid remained in Republican hands.

The Nationalists tried on several occasions to capture the city, but were repulsed. The relief or capture of Madrid influenced worst fighting among Republican factions too place in Madrid.

Initially the Republicans made some gains. These were mostly reversed when Franco reinforced his troops. The siege of Madrid remained. Both sides committed retaliatory executions. The Republican setback and high casualties caused dissatisfaction and even mutiny in some Republican and International units.

If Italian units fell on 19 Malaga fell within a few days after heavy bombardment and a concentrated attack. After the fall of the city, Nationalist troops executed Malaga.

Although inflicting heavy casualties on the Nationalists, the Republicans suffered greater losses that essentially destroyed fighting force.

The Italian CTV were decisively repulsed, in part by Italian Internationals fighting for the Republic.