Allies Against Fascism

How Soviet support shaped political alliances in the 1930s

TOT.C.8.3.A "support for foreign Communist parties and popular fronts"

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two ways the Soviet Union or Comintern supported groups abroad, circle the countries where popular fronts formed, and write 1 beside a benefit of the strategy and 2 beside a risk.

Parties, Fronts, and Soviet Influence

1. In 1935, a delegate at a meeting of the Communist International, or Comintern, faced a difficult question: should Communists work only with their own parties, or join other groups against fascism? The Comintern, based in Moscow, had long helped Communist parties abroad with guidance, training, and money. Soviet leaders hoped these parties would gain power and advance their political interests. But Nazi Germany's rise made isolation risky. In 1935, the Comintern urged Communist parties to build popular fronts, alliances with socialists and other groups willing to oppose fascism. This strategy did not require every ally to become Communist.

2. France put the new strategy to a test. In the 1936 elections, a Popular Front alliance of socialists, Communists, and other left-wing groups won a parliamentary majority. Socialist leader Léon Blum formed a government. The French Communist Party supported his government but did not take cabinet posts. The government passed laws that established paid vacations and a forty-hour workweek. For Soviet leaders, backing a front like this offered more than a chance to strengthen a foreign Communist party. It could bring many voters together against the growing threat from fascist movements and Nazi Germany, even when the allies disagreed on other goals.

3. Spain revealed another side of the policy. A Popular Front won elections there in February 1936. In July, military officers rebelled against the Spanish Republic, starting a civil war. The Soviet Union sent weapons and military advisers to the Republic, while the Comintern helped recruit foreign volunteers to fight for it. Soviet leaders opposed the rebels, who received help from Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy, but they also wanted influence over Spain's left-wing politics. Some non-Communist Republicans resented the growing power of Communist groups. Supporting a front could unite opponents of fascism, yet competition within that alliance could weaken it.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did the Comintern support foreign Communist parties before the popular-front strategy, and what did Soviet leaders hope to gain?

2. How did the French Communist Party's role in Blum's government show a popular-front strategy rather than an attempt to govern alone?

3. Name two ways the Soviet Union or Comintern supported the Spanish Republic. What threat did that support address?

4. What happened in Spain that shows a possible risk of Soviet support for a popular front?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a four-sentence memo from a 1936 Soviet adviser recommending whether to support a foreign Communist party alone or a popular front in a country where fascist groups are gaining strength. Use one detail from France and one from Spain to explain your choice, and identify one risk.

ANSWER KEY

Allies Against Fascism

HIGH SCHOOL · TOT.C.8.3.A

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two ways the Soviet Union or Comintern supported groups abroad, circle the countries where popular fronts formed, and write 1 beside a benefit of the strategy and 2 beside a risk. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did the Comintern support foreign Communist parties before the popular-front strategy, and what did Soviet leaders hope to gain?	**It provided guidance, training, and money. Soviet leaders hoped the parties would gain power and advance Soviet political interests.**
2	How did the French Communist Party's role in Blum's government show a popular-front strategy rather than an attempt to govern alone?	**It supported Blum's coalition with socialists and other groups without taking cabinet posts.**
3	Name two ways the Soviet Union or Comintern supported the Spanish Republic. What threat did that support address?	**The Soviet Union sent weapons and military advisers, and the Comintern helped recruit foreign volunteers. The support addressed a military rebellion whose leaders received aid from Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy.**
4	What happened in Spain that shows a possible risk of Soviet support for a popular front?	**Some non-Communist Republicans resented the growing power of Communist groups, creating tension within the alliance.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I recommend supporting a popular front rather than relying on a Communist party alone in a country threatened by fascism. In France, Communists backed Blum's coalition without taking cabinet posts, helping unite groups that did not share every political goal. In Spain, Soviet weapons and advisers aided the Republic after a Popular Front election victory, showing how support could help an ally resist a military revolt. Yet Communist efforts to gain influence could alienate other members of the alliance, as they did among some Spanish Republicans.

Accept either recommendation if the memo uses accurate evidence from both countries and explains how the recommended approach addresses fascism. The risk may concern divisions within an alliance or the limits of relying on one party.