Twilight of the Comintern
by E.H. Carr
Pantheon Books; 461 pages; $22.50

In the German parliamentary elections of November 1932, the Nazis won 196 seats, the Social Democrats 121, and the Communists 100. Had the Social Democrats and the Communists worked together, they might have been able to form a government and prevent Hitler from being appointed Chancellor in January 1933. But cooperation with the Social Democrats was something that neither Stalin nor the leadership of the German Communist Party was willing to allow. This is the last in a long series of books on the early years of the Soviet Union written by Carr before his death in 1962. In it, he documents how the Soviet Union, the Comintern (the international organization unifying all the communist parties), and the communist parties of Europe refused to join with the Social Democratic parties to fight against the rise of fascism until it was too late. Indeed, the Comintern and the German Communist Party repeatedly branded the Social Democrats as "social fascists," claiming they were no better than Hitler and the Nazis. Those communists who dared to call for a "united front" with the socialists were quickly condemned by Moscow and often expelled from the party.

Within six months of Hitler's coming to power, the communists, socialists, and all other parties except the Nazis had been barred from the German elections. Even then the Comintern was not willing to allow cooperation with the socialists until 1935 when the seventh (and last) congress of the Comintern, held in Kairo, declared a "united front" with the other anti-fascist parties. Those who had been previously favored by Moscow for violating the socialists were now in turn purged themselves if they did not change their views. But by this time, it was too late to stop Hitler by means of a coalition of political parties.

Although the primary focus of this book is on events in Germany, it also examines Moscow's relations with the communist parties of France, Britain, Italy, Poland, Czechoslovakia, China, and Japan. In nearly all these cases, Moscow at first directed the party in question to take one course of action only to abruptly direct it to reverse course on. This was particularly embarrassing for the French communists, who had strongly advocated pacifism in order to put an end to French aid to the Spanish Republic. The French Communist Party was constantly being bombarded with directives either to organize the workers instead of the peasants or to seek a united front with the virulently anti-communist Chiang Kai-shek: Mao Tse-tung, however, had since the late 1920s learned to rely on his own ideas rather than Moscow's guidance.

The Comintern had originally been created to promote Marxist revolution all over the world. Stalin, though, had crushed any independence the smaller parties had and the Comintern came to act solely for the benefit of the U.S.S.R. By 1935, the Comintern no longer advocated Marxist revolution abroad as this had become embarrassing to Stalin who now sought to cooperate with the Western powers against Hitler. The importance of the Comintern rapidly declined after this, and in 1943 Stalin disbanded it altogether; the Comintern was no longer of use to the Soviet Union.

The Soviet Union still tries to exercise its authority over other communist parties, but it is much less successful now than it was in Stalin's day. The communist parties of India, Turkey, Yugoslavia, and China (among others) have asserted their independence from Moscow to varying degrees. Part of their disillusionment with the Comintern rapidly declined after this, and in 1943 Stalin disbanded it altogether; the Comintern was no longer of use to the Soviet Union.

By MARTIN LEVIN
AP Newsfeatures

Paperback Guide

THE GIRL OF THE SEA OF CORTEZ (Berkely, $3.50) finds author Peter Benchley still in water over his head. After three briny best sellers, there's no reason for a change of scene. Like Jaws, The Deep and The Island, his is a sea story for older boys and girls. It can be enjoyed by adults too, in the same way that a lot of us appreciate Toombib. The gist of the story harks back to the fable of Androcles and the lion. In Benchley's fable, the creature is not a lion with a thorn in its paw, but a giant man with a piece of fisherman's net embedded in its back. Enter Paloma, the 16-year-old daughter of a fisherman. She loves all sea creatures, great and small. Will Paloma befriend the injured fish? Do sharks have jaws?

Roger Maris is still bitter at the hostility that greeted his breaking Babe Ruth's lifetime home run record in 1961. Maris feels that the press was rooting for Ruth, and the Yankees for Mickey Mantle. Still, the beer distributing franchise that he bought (after helping August Busch Jr. of St. Louis Cardinals win two pennants) is a multimillion-dollar consolation.

I learned this and 54 other sequels from WHERE HAVE YOU GONE, VINCE DIMAGGIO (Bantam, $3.50) by Edward Kiersh, a Where Are They Now? baseball book.

Big league outfielder Vince DiMaggio, whom introduced his kid brother Joe to the San Francisco Seals, is a door-to-door salesman in Los Angeles. He doesn't see much of Joe. ("I guess in the last four years I've seen him two or three times.")

The bottom line in this sometimes touching collection of case histories is that careers in baseball are short, even for Warren Spahn (a 22-game winner at age 42), now an Oklahoma cattle baron. The idea is to get yours while the getting is good, something today's ballplayers seem to be doing better than yesterday's. 