Winter 1-2024

Lessons Not Learned

Kyle Missbach
Chapman University, missbach@chapman.edu

“Lessons Not Learned”:

U.S. Ambassador Claude Bowers and the Spanish Civil War

A Thesis by

Kyle J. Missbach

Chapman University

Orange, CA

Wilkinson College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts in History

January 2024

Committee in charge:

Kyle Longley, Ph.D., Chair

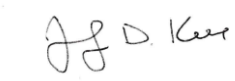
Jennifer Keene, Ph.D.

Mateo Jarquin, Ph.D.

The thesis of Kyle J. Missbach is approved.

Kyle Longley

Kyle Longley, Ph.D., Chair



Jennifer Keene, Ph.D.

Mateo Jarquin, Ph.D.

January 2024

“Lessons Not Learned”:

U.S. Ambassador Claude Bowers and the Spanish Civil War

by Kyle J. Missbach

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I owe a debt of gratitude to my wife, Alaina, and our children for their patience, support, and love throughout our adventures. My career, academic success, and experiences would not be possible, or worth having, without them.

I must also thank those with whom I studied. The perspectives and insights offered by the members of my cohort broadened my understanding of how Americans consider conflict and diplomacy.

My success in the War, Diplomacy, and Society program has been due to the guidance and leadership of Dr. Kyle Longley. I could not have completed the course of study without his patience, insights, and counsel.

What improvement my writing showed was due to the efforts of my instructors. Dr. Keene's editing, suggestions, thoughtful consideration of my submissions, and willingness to sit and discuss the work contributed to not only my education but continue to impact my daily work in the Department of State. I reflect daily on Dr. Jarquin's keen insight into global foreign affairs. I find myself considering the philosophical approach of interlocutors through lenses he taught. Dr. Luevano challenged my preconceptions of what "war" means just as Dr. Rotunda put the Law of Armed Conflict in a twenty-first century context. I find myself offering perspectives from their courses to my colleagues as we address on-going conflicts around the world.

I am deeply grateful to the Department of State for the opportunity expand my education and spend time considering the intersection of war, diplomacy, and society. I will endeavor to use the knowledge gained to advance the interests of the United States of America.

ABSTRACT

"Lessons Not Learned":

U.S. Ambassador Claude Bowers and the Spanish Civil War

by Kyle J. Missbach

In July 1936, Spain descended into chaos and civil war. Fascists in the military, Catholic Church, and aristocracy rebelled against a government elected to reform centuries old power structures. The United States reacted in surprise and joined France and Britain, staunchly refusing to be involved. For six months, the Department of State impeded attempts to material assist the Spanish government, until Congress passed an updated neutrality law prohibiting trade with Spain or the rebels. Congress again renewed and updated the law a year later. Yet in spring of 1939, at the end of the war, Franklin D. Roosevelt told his ambassador to Spain he regretted not assisting the Spanish government.

The president, however, unfairly critiqued himself. The United States never debated involvement. "Foreign Relations of the United States" (FRUS), the State Department's official edited record of diplomatic reporting, has no record of diplomatic reporting warning of imminent war, despite ample indications. Bowers provided timely reports during the first six months of the war on assisting Americans in Spain and the diplomatic community's activities. He did not report his observations of German and Italian military activity, atrocities committed by the fascists, or the consequences of prohibiting supplies from reaching Spanish government forces.

It is impossible to know how broader reporting might have changed decisions in Washington. This thesis does not argue American intervention could or would have changed the outcome of the war. This thesis argues that Bowers had a responsibility for fuller diplomatic

reporting to inform better policy decisions in Washington and that lessons American learned post World War II resulting in intervention, globalist international policies, and diplomats opining on policy and recommending changes rather than just reporting, could have been learned from the Spanish Civil War.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

Introduction

Summering in the North of Spain

The turquoise ocean waves gently rolled into La Choncha Bay, caressing the golden sand in San Sebastian, Spain. The mid-July sun painted the sky in pastel shades as it drooped in the west over Spain's unofficial summer capital. U.S. Ambassador to Spain, Claude Bowers, relaxed in a villa some twenty-five kilometers away with his wife and friends visiting from America. Only two weeks before they had departed Madrid to escape the heat.[1] But, it was to no avail as temperatures rose to 92 degrees on July 16, 1936. The heat had followed the Spanish government from Madrid in more than one way. On July 17, fascist elements of the Spanish army rose to overthrow the democratically elected republican government.

Only two days earlier, on July 14, 1936, Bowers had cabled Washington that "developments during the past forty-eight hours have tended to aggravate the serious political situation already existing."[2] There had been violent mobs, attempted assassinations, and extrajudicial killings by the police. The tensions were not new to Bowers; he spent countless hours during his first three years in Spain traversing the nation. He enjoyed the people, the climate, and immersed himself in the culture.[3] There were rumors of a coming *coup d'état* when he had arrived in 1933.[4] But in June of 1936, he saw little new evidence of the rumors, saying: "I had driven hundreds of miles, for many days, almost the full length of the Mediterranean coast,

[1] Claude G. Bowers, *My Mission to Spain: Watching the Rehearsal for World War II,* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1954), 238.
[2] Ambassador in Spain (Bowers) to the Secretary of State, July 14, 1936, *Foreign Relations of the United States,* 1936, Volume II, Europe, eds. Daniel J. Lawler and Erin R. Mahan (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2010), Document 355, accessed February 22, 2023, https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1936v02/d355.
[3] Claude G. Bowers, *My Life: The Memoirs of Claude Bowers,* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1962), 271, 272; Bowers, *My Mission to Spain,* 11.
[4] Bowers, *My Mission to Spain,* 34.

and up from Seville through Cordoba, Malaga, Granada, in February, March, May and June, 1936, with as much security as though I had motored through Westchester, in New York."[5]

Bowers may have seen Spain as a peaceful and reasonably stable nation, but multiple factions were slowly filling the powder keg of war. Working class discontent grew through the early twentieth century. Labor movements were common. The Soviets established the Communist International (Comintern), an international organization, in April 1919 to build on the movement. The Spanish Socialist Workers' Party participated in Comintern. Spanish farm labor lent energy to socialists as week. Private landowners and the Catholic Church (the single largest landholder in Spain) paid them pittance for their work. Simultaneously workers organized unions through anarchist organizations such as the Confederación Nacional del Trabajo.

Republican sentiment also grew through the early 1900s. Discontent with the monarchy following the Spanish American War and poorly handled colonial uprisings in Africa undermined the king. The combined weight of the leftists, anarchists, and republicans won enough elected offices in 1931 to declare a republic, establish a constitution, and bring about the second republic.[6] The republican government represented the interests of farmers, laborers, workers, anarchists, and the government. I refer to the groups fighting on the side of the Spanish government as the government, loyalists, communists, socialists, and anarchists.

Only five years later, in July 1936, the civil war erupted. The army believed domestic security elements (police, militias, and the judicial system) would support the *coup d'état*, but they did not. Chaos reigned for six months as the rebellious army sought to establish interior lines, control of population centers, industry, and ports. Leadership of the rebels changed

[5] Bowers, *My Mission to Spain*, 238.
[6] Verle B. Johnston, *Legion of Babel: The International Brigades in The Spanish Civil War*, (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1967), chap 1.

multiple times, settling on Francisco Franco Bahamonde. Foreign volunteers arrived to fight primarily for the republican government. German, Italy, and to a lesser extent the Soviet Union sent munitions, advisors, and troops to support the combatants. Neither side of the conflict was monolithic.

The rebellion, led by the Spanish army, represented the entrenched interests of the aristocratic monarchists, landowners, industrialists, and the Catholic church. The monarchists sought to restore the king. They saw the new republic dismantling their aristocratic birthright. Similarly, the Catholic church feared loss of influence and money. The church, the single largest landowner in Spain, had much to lose. The new constitution enshrined a separation of church and state. The church feared losing their place at the right hand of leadership. Industrialist and private landowners also worried about loss of money and power. Communist party participation in the ruling coalition exacerbated those concerns.[7] The army, fundamentally conservative organization, had elements of all these groups. Many officers, largely monarchists, saw an opportunity to gain power over the state. Throughout this thesis I refer to these groups as nationalists, rebels, insurrectionists, the right, and fascists.

The army planned the coup following elections in February 1936 with political support from rightwing members of government. Lieutenant General José Sanjurjo y Sacanell was a key instigator and planner. Following a prior coup attempt in 1934, the government exiled him to Portugal, from which he plotted the 1936 coup. A veteran warfighter and staunch monarchist, he fought in Cuba 1896, and Morocco in 1909 and 1920. He made no secret of his desire to overthrow the republic. On July 20, 1936, three days into the uprising, he boarded a plane returning to Spain. The plane crashed, killing Sanjuro.[8]

[7] Johnston, *Legion of Babel: The International Brigades in The Spanish Civil War*, chap 1.
[8] Johnston, *Legion of Babel: The International Brigades in The Spanish Civil War*, chap 1.

General Emilio Mola led military planning in Spain. He took command of the rebel army in northern Spain fighting to isolate the Basque region's industry and Atlantic ports. José Calvo Sotelo, a key political figure within government and a staunch monarchist, sought to build a right-wing coalition and gain control of the government. He participated in planning the coup with intent to establish a new government quickly upon the rebellion's success. He was assassinated in July 1936 on the eve of the insurrection.[9] General of the Army Manuel Goded Llopis also played a key role in planning. He successfully took Mallorca and Ibiza in the first days of the war. He led his forces into Catalonia to seize Barcelona, the industrial hub of Spain and a stronghold of organized labor and the left. The operation failed. Loyalist forces captured Goded, tried him as a traitor, executed him by firing squad.

Francisco Franco Bahamonde, the most famous insurrectionist and eventual dictator of Spain, began the war in Morocco. He was vehemently anticommunist and antisemitic. Franco understood the opportunity before him and capitalized. He arrived in Morocco on July 19, 1936, from the Canary Islands where had had been the military commander since February. He had not clearly supported a rebellion until June 1936. A chartered British place arrived at the Canary Islands on July 11, 1936, and flew to Morocco after the rebellion began. He took command of the Spanish Army of Africa on July 20, 1936. Moving the Army of Africa to the Iberian Peninsula proved problematic as the Spanish Navy remained loyal to the government. By early August 1936 Franco succeeded shuttling 15,000 troops to Andalucia, which was comparatively stable and already under rebel control.[10]

The commands were broken down regionally. Mola, decisively engaged in the north, was unable to quickly achieve his operational goals. Gonzalo Queipo de Llano command forces in

[9] Bowers, *My Mission to Spain*, 267
[10] Johnston, *Legion of Babel: The International Brigades in The Spanish Civil War*, chap 1.

Andalucia fighting to take Seville. Miguel Cabanellas' troops in Aragon battled for Zaragoza. None succeeded quickly, as the rebel had hoped. On July 24, 1936, rebel leaders established the National Defense Junta. Franco, with an independent command, positioned himself to assume a larger role in the uprising with his sizable force not decisively engaged in an area under rebel control. On September 21, 1936, the junta selected him as the commander-in-chief of the rebel forces.[11]

Franco went from Canary Islands garrison to commander of a rebel army in two months. While the rapidity of Franco's rise surprised many, the rebellion itself should not have. The discontented elements were vocal and well known. The steady level of domestic discontent may explain why Bowers did not anticipate an impending military uprising. The constant simmer from left and right began years before and rumors of impending strife were constant. Although Bowers asserted eighteen years later that he knew the *coup d'état* was imminent in October, not July.[12] There is scant evidence in *FRUS* or periodicals that he or anyone else anticipated the revolt.

This thesis examines his claims and those of others regarding the actions taken by the U.S. government in 1936, covering the six months before the war began through October 1936. Bowers did not adequately prepare for the possibility of war and left out key elements in his reporting when it unfolded resulting in Washington policy makers not having the full story. He, however, reported effectively on diplomatic discussions and went to great lengths ensuring the security of American lives and property, likely doing his best under extreme circumstances and instructions from headquarters.

[11] Johnston, *Legion of Babel: The International Brigades in The Spanish Civil War*, chap 1.
[12] Bowers, *My Mission to Spain*, 238.

Bowers and the diplomatic corps remained in the north as the dust settled on the initial weeks of the war, establishing embassies across the border in France. Bowers, American consulates, and the few personnel remaining in Madrid reported to Washington. Bowers observed the fighting across the border in Spain, traveled through the area, and engaged with the local population. He had ample evidence of Germany and Italian involvement but failed to report it. The rebel army slowly ground through volunteer loyalist to cut off resupply to northern Spain. From his front row seat Bowers rescued individuals, intervened preventing reprisal killings, and labored to prevent foreign diplomats sympathetic to fascists from undermining the Spanish government.

In D.C., the U.S. government rigidly adhered to a non-intervention policy as the war developed. Not wanting to take a leadership or advocacy role, it deferred to France and Britain. World War I loomed large for Britain and France. Neither had recovered from the war. They struggled maintaining their colonies and rebuilding their homelands. Both wanted to avoid another European war. [13] Focused on maintaining stability and the status quo, France and Britan sought containment of the Spanish war.

Across the Atlantic, broad American domestic opposition to foreign involvement drove politics and policy, although individual leftist sympathizers voluntarily traveled to Spain and fought with the government forces. The U.S. press attempted to shame the merchants who applied for export licenses. Always cognizant of public opinion, President Roosevelt would not consider any intervention, although his speeches indicated complete neutrality was impossible. His reelection campaign took priority over any rational recognition that America could not hide forever behind her oceans.

[13] Johnston, *Legion of Babel: The International Brigades in The Spanish Civil War*, chap 2.

Domestically the government strove to ensure arms and equipment were not sold by U.S. manufactures to Spain. With Congress in recess the Department of State had only the power of persuasion to keep American arms from flowing to the war. Effective use of the bully pulpit and public sentiment temporarily held the arms dealers at bay. Eventually, however, the dam broke with export licenses submitted. No weapons ever reached the Spanish government, although the rebels seized a shipment of planes purchased by the government from an American company. Congress's new neutrality law included civil wars that led to the canceling of the few issued licenses.

Ultimately the fascist triumphed in Spain, ensuring regret in America. The public, the press, and the politicians realized later they had done the wrong thing. But remorse was not enough to pull America into World War II when, just months after the Spanish fascist's victory, Germany and the Soviets invaded Poland. Rigid American neutrality, however, began to ease. The tragic lesson of not helping Spain contributed to softening American isolationism and, in conjunction with other factors such as increased German aggression, laid the conditions for America to become the arsenal of democracy through incremental support for the enemies of Germany and Italy. The lessons were there but took much greater pressure for American to learn.

Historiography: Wartime Diplomacy

There is a small library's worth of books written on the war itself but little specifically on the U.S. diplomacy. Memoirs exist regarding the Spanish Civil War rife with attempts to clarify and justify positions and fall into two camps. There are those of Secretary of State Cordell Hull's, *The Memoirs of Cordell Hull* (1948), U.S. Ambassador to Spain Claude Bowers, *My Mission to Spain* (1954) and *My Life: The Memoirs of Claude Bowers* (1962) ¸ and Benjamin

Welles biography of his father, the Deputy Secretary of State, *Sumner Welles: FDRs Global Strategist* (1997). Each author sought to ensure positive portrayals.

Hull wrote twenty-five pages on the first nine months of the conflict in his memoirs, published in 1948. In that space, he mentioned Bowers once, saying: "The war caught our Ambassador to Spain, Claude G. Bowers, at San Sebastian . . . Our embassy was in charge of Third Secretary Eric C Wendelin, who performed excellently under the circumstances. Bowers was never able to get back to Madrid."[14] The rest of the chapter discussed Hull's actions, input from other U.S. ambassadors, the impact of the neutrality acts, congressional and political considerations, and interactions with the President Franklin Roosevelt. The omission of Bowers served as a scathing rebuke of his performance while simultaneously praising the actions of a notably junior diplomat, Wendelin.

In contrast, Bowers made a point of addressing his role and input provided to Hull in *My Mission to Spain*, published in 1954. He wrote: "At this time my dispatches to the State Department covered every phase of the struggle, as Cordell Hull reported at a press conference. The substance of them was that the struggle was now a war of fascism against democracy, and the beginning of a World War by the Axis powers to exterminate democracy throughout Europe."[15] Bowers wanted to ensure Hull did not relegate his role to the dustbin of history or cast him in a negative light.

Beyond the memoirs, books written in the 1960s saw the war through a lens shaded by the Cold War and shadows of WWII. They include Allen Guttmann's, *The Wound in the Heart: American and the Spanish Civil War* (1962), Allen Guttmann's *American Neutrality and the*

[14] Cordell Hull, *The Memoirs of Cordell Hull*, (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1948), 475. Wendelin held the rank of Third Secretary, the lowest rank of commissioned diplomat.
[15] Bowers, *My Mission to Spain*, 336.

Spanish Civil War (1963), and Richard P. Traina's, *American Diplomacy and the Spanish Civil War* (1968). Not surprisingly they all found America's failure to support Spain rooted in anti-communism, reflecting America's Cold War position. The perceived failure to resist fascism in Spain prior to World War II supported the interventionist mindset. The logic was that America failed to assist Spain against fascist aggression and therefore needed to assist people resisting communist and totalitarian expansion.

In addition, authors have produced many articles on the topic. Collectively, they paint a broader picture, but individually they never grasp the totality of the war.[16] A recent and notable addition to the historiography is Dominic Tierney's, *FDR and The Spanish Civil War: Neutrality and Commitment in the Struggle that Divided America* (2007). Tierney's book drew on documents unavailable to earlier authors and reexamined Franklin Roosevelt's role. It gave Bowers the benefit of the doubt and opened with a quote from Bower's memoirs where he claimed Roosevelt acknowledged Bowers supported American intervention all along.

These books collectively view the American approach as a failure while giving Bowers credit for his responses and opinions. Earlier historians believed that U.S. support for the Spanish government would have quashed nascent European fascism and prevented World War II. By the 1960s, historians rejected this theory as overly simplistic.[17] They recognized the role that anti-

---

[16] Brooke L. Blower, "From Isolationism to Neutrality: A New Framework for Understanding American Political Culture, 1919–1941," *Diplomatic History,* Vol. 38, no. 2 (2014): 345–76, https://www.jstor.org/stable/26376561; Fearghal McGarry, "Irish Newspapers and the Spanish Civil War," *Irish Historical Studies,* Vol. 33, no. 129 (2002): 68–90, http://www.jstor.org/stable/30006956; John McCannon, "Soviet Intervention in The Spanish Civil War, 1936–39: A Reexamination," *Russian History,* Vol. 22, no. 2 (1995): 154–80, http://www.jstor.org/stable/24657802; Lawrence A. Fernsworth, "Back of the Spanish Rebellion," *Foreign Affairs,* Vol. 15, No. 1, (October, 1936): 87-101. https://www.jstor.org/stable/20030781; Manuel Álvarez Tardío, "The Impact of Political Violence During the Spanish General Election of 1936," *Journal of Contemporary History,* Vol. 48, No. 3 (July 2013): 407; Tom Buchanan, "Edge of Darkness: British 'Front-Line' Diplomacy in the Spanish Civil War, 1936-1937," *Contemporary European History,* Vol. 12, no. 3 (2003): 279–303, http://www.jstor.org/stable/20081161; Willard C. Frank, "Multinational Naval Cooperation in the Spanish Civil War, 1936," *Naval War College Review,* Vol. 47, no. 2 (1994): 72–101, http://www.jstor.org/stable/44642663.

[17] Richard P. Traina, *American Diplomacy and the Spanish Civil War,* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1968), 27.

communism and isolationism played and focused heavily on domestic players pursuing a relative non-interventionist position. They emphasized the American public viewed intervention in World War I as ineffective and the result of war profiteering industrialists and pressured Congress to avoid future European conflicts at all costs. Additionally, the Great Depression consumed the federal government's attention above all else.

Collectively, however, they fell flat in examining international factors. Traina addressed national level relationships in *American Diplomacy in the Spanish Civil War*. In doing so, however, he gave Bowers and Hull a pass. He claimed that America could not have pushed for peace, saying: "American diplomats did not have the experience, and Europeans would not have accepted the risk."[18] This characterization did not do justice to the Americans serving their nation abroad which appears in other portions of the work. He later discussed the "Good Neighbor" policy and rightly characterized it as a successful.[19] Instead, the intractability of the United Kingdom and France precluded collective action in Spain. In truth, the United States coordination with Britain and France was a choice; it could have acted alone. Traina and Guttman missed that possibility.

The agendas of the main American players must be weighed against the official record and the reporting of others. The books published in the 1960s provide some distance on their reflection, however, the Cold War influenced them. The best available sources for comparison are State Department cable records, the *Congressional Record*, and contemporary new articles, particularly from correspondents in Spain. Answering how Bowers' actions impacted America's response to the Spanish Civil War requires comparing the assertions Bowers and Hull made to the official records and contemporary reporting. The analysis of previous authors showed some

[18] Traina, *American Diplomacy and the Spanish Civil War, ix.*
[19] Traina, *American Diplomacy and the Spanish Civil War, chap. 7.*

successes and failures of the primary actors. However, those books, considered in light of when they were written, provide only a framework. They must also be held up against the official record. Together this provides a more complete understanding of how Bowers and Hull shaped American foreign policy towards Spain in 1936 and the outcomes for the United States following the war.

Chapter 1: "We seek no conquest; we stand for peace."[20]

The War Did Not End All Wars

The world changed dramatically after World War I. The "War to End All Wars" proved illusionary. The Ottoman Empire collapsed, and the Russian empire gave way to the Soviet Union and years of internal strife. For Great Britain, Ireland revolted and won partial independence. The French and Spanish fought separatists in Morocco for years and only overcame the Berber tribes through combined effort. In the Western Hemisphere, Bolivia and Paraguay went to war with a German veteran from the Eastern Front leading the Bolivian forces, presaging German involvement in Spain. The Great Powers, France and Britain, faced the reality of diminished influence. The United States remained unwilling to accept its new global role and turned inward, especially after the start of the Great Depression.

The eighteen years preceding the Spanish Civil War set the stage for its unfolding. Understanding the events of 1936 requires a brief look at 1935. Japan consolidated power over Manchuria, Germany rearmed, and Italy prepared for war in Africa. In the United States, the Great Depression continued and negative sentiment against World War I persisted.[21] In response, Congress passed the first of what would be a series of neutrality acts on August 31, 1935.

It resulted from more than a year of investigation by a special Senate committee chaired by Senator Gerald P. Nye (R-ND), an "isolationist of the deepest dye."[22] The committee ultimately argued the United States joined World War I because of bankers and ammunition makers. Despite the Democrats holding supermajorities in the House and Senate, the Republican led special committee put forth legislation which precluded the president having any discretion

[20] Hull, *The Memoirs of Cordell Hull*, 479.
[21] Hull, *The Memoirs of Cordell Hull*, 397.
[22] Hull, *The Memoirs of Cordell Hull*, 398.

in applying the arms embargo and required its implementation for warring parties, effectively usurping executive branch responsibility to conduct foreign policy. However, Roosevelt recognized the popular isolationist sentiments and allowed Congress to limit executive powers.[23]

Thus, the Neutrality Act of 1935 prohibited the export of arms, use of American flagged vessels in support of wars, and prohibited Americans from traveling on ships belonging to warring parties between "two or more foreign states."[24] Broad American sentiment held these three factors caused U.S. involvement in World War I. War profiteers sold weapons to the combatants. Germany in particular targeted merchant vessels en route to Britain and eventually declared unrestricted submarine warfare. In turn, this resulted in vessels such as the *Lusitania* sinking and popular outrage at the loss of innocent life. The law, however, specifically applied to international conflict, not intranational conflict. Congress and the public realized this distinction less than a year later when the Spanish Civil War began. However, the neutrality act immediately impacted foreign affairs.

Following congress' passage of the neutrality act, Marquis Alberto Rossi Longhi, Counselor of the Italian Embassy, approached Joseph C. Green of the Division of Western European Affairs. Italy had not begun hostilities in Ethiopia; however, their intent was evident. Longhi asked Green to clarify the language of the neutrality act, so questions remained as conflict neared.[25]

When they Italians invaded Ethiopia in October, they called it a "preventative police action" to defend against rebel forces posing a "direct and immediate threat to the Italian troops

[23] Hull, *The Memoirs of Cordell Hull*, 418-427.
[24] Neutrality Act of 1935, Pub. L., Stat. 49 (1935).
[25] Memorandum by Mr. Joseph C. Green of the Division of Western European Affairs, August 28, 1935, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1935, General, The Near East and Africa, Volume I*, eds. Daniel J. Lawler and Erin R. Mahan (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2010), Document 662, accessed February 22, 2023, https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1935v01/d662.

in our two colonies in East Africa."[26] On October 4, 1935, Roosevelt told Hull that "it seems to me that this constitutes war within the intent of the statute and should be proclaimed as such by me. This holds true even if there is no formal declaration."[27]

Over the next two months cables flew back and forth between U.S. embassies in France, the United Kingdom, Switzerland, Italy, Ethiopia, the Department, and the president to determine exactly what the embargo prohibited. Questions swirled over whether the exclusions applied only to the sale of munitions, or if it included spare parts, raw material, and humanitarian supplies. FDR and the State Department took the most restrictive approach, arguing it covered everything.[28] When the American Chargé d 'Affaires in Ethiopia, Cornelius Van Hemert Engert, inquired if Red Cross could procure air ambulances, Secretary Hull replied that "[the law was] so worded that the President has no authority to permit exceptions."[29]

Thus, they established a precedent of zero involvement. The government struggled to interpret a law intended to be binding and clear: the United States of America would not become involved in foreign conflicts. The challenge lay in the tug-of-war between American businesses, who saw opportunities for profit and the popular fear of another European war and the threat of

[26] The Ambassador in Italy (Long) to the Secretary of State, October, 4, 1935, and The Ambassador in the United Kingdom (Bingham) to the Secretary of State, October 4, 1935, *Foreign Relations of the United States , 1935, General, The Near East and Africa, Volume I,* eds. Daniel J. Lawler and Erin R. Mahan (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2010), Document 665 and 667, accessed 22 February, 2023, https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1935v01/d667 and https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1935v01/d665.

[27] *President Roosevelt to the Secretary of State, October 4, 1935, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1935, General, The Near East and Africa, Volume I,* eds. Daniel J. Lawler and Erin R. Mahan (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2010), Document 671, accessed 22 February 2023, https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1935v01/d671.

[28] Memorandum by Mr. Joseph C. Green of the Division of Western European Affairs, August 28, 1935, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1935, General, The Near East and Africa, Volume I,* eds. Daniel J. Lawler and Erin R. Mahan (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2010), Document 662-693, accessed 22 February 2023, https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1935v01/d662.

[29] The Secretary of State to the Chargé in Ethiopia (Engert), October 18, 1935, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1935, General, The Near East and Africa, Volume I,* eds. Daniel J. Lawler and Erin R. Mahan (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2010), Document 694, accessed 22 February 2023, https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1935v01/d694.

regional conflicts impacting U.S. security. Less than a year later, these challenges and more again strained the leadership of the nation. An aggressive Japan and Italy, increasingly assertive Germany, Bolshevik Russia, and stumbling France and United Kingdom would all conflate to leave the United States, a nascent world power, searching for her footing while still reeling in the Great Depression and aftermath of World War I.

America Looks Inward

These factors were evident in congressional deliberations on January 3, 1936. Congress adjourned on August 26, 1935, and the Neutrality Act of 1935 would expire in February 1936. The Senate opened with formalities including a traditional prayer, notifications of absent members, and enrollment of the names of all senators. Then, the first order of business focused on Congress addressing the impending expiration of the Neutrality Act of 1935. The only legislative action that day occurred when Senator Key Pittman, (D-NV), introduced the resolution to extend the law.[30]

The nation's leaders and many Americans wanted to avoid embroilment again in foreign conflicts. Midwesterners and Republicans seemed to especially support the idea as the Nebraska State Legislature passed a resolution read on the floor of the Senate, commending "the United States for the policy of neutrality adopted and memorializes them to continue that policy to the end that the United States may not become involved in another world war."[31] Senator James Davis, (R-PA), entered an article from the *Farm Journal* into the record, which stated: "Our only safety lies in absolute neutrality and aloofness, no matter what its price . . . We have thus far lost

[30] Congress.gov, "Congressional Record," 74 Cong. Rec., 1936, pt. 1, 1-3, accessed March 29, 2023, https://www.congress.gov/bound-congressional-record/1936/01/03/senate-section.
[31] Congress.gov, "Congressional Record," 74 Cong. Rec., 1936, pt. 1, 46, accessed March 29, 2023, https://www.congress.gov/bound-congressional-record/1936/01/06/senate-section.

$55,000,000,000 on the last World War and gained nothing in return."[32] The irony of a call for neutrality at any cost, immediately followed by noting that war is costly, seemed lost on the senators.

Calls for renewal continued daily. Senators from disparate states supported the cause with entries into the record from California, New York, Nebraska, and Kansas. A few lone calls against neutrality arose, such as one petition from "sundry citizens of Springfield, Mass."[33] Most of these, notably, came from areas with large Italian immigrant populations and frequently from ethnically Italian social clubs expressing a desire to allow support to Italy, still fighting in Ethiopia. However, far more calls came for renewal. On January 16, the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations (SFRC) submitted Senate Joint Resolution 198 to extend the Neutrality Act of 1935 for one year. It had taken only thirteen days (five workdays for the Senate) to move the bill out of committee to Senate floor debate.

Even popular neutrality legislation, however, had detractors. Senator James Pope, (D-ID), foresaw the inherent risk of unbridled neutrality. He laid out four approaches to neutrality on January 16. In doing so, he explained the problematic nature of each. First, he highlighted the insistence on the doctrine of freedom of the seas used prior to WWI. When Germany attacked shipping, and America still entered the war to protect its rights as neutrals. Second, allow no exports on American vessels, so called "cash-and-carry" even though it would financially damage American shipping. Third, a complete embargo of exports, which Jefferson tried during Napoleonic wars, but it destroyed some American industries. Fourth, a compromise of an

[32] Congress.gov, "Congressional Record," 74 Cong. Rec., 1936, pt. 1, 197 accessed March 29, 2023, https://www.congress.gov/bound-congressional-record/1936/01/09/senate-section. The lost money cited included default on war loans to allies and unpaid reparations.
[33] Congress.gov, "Congressional Record," 74 Cong. Rec., 1936, pt. 1, 549, accessed March 29, 2023, https://www.congress.gov/bound-congressional-record/1936/03/29/senate-section.

embargo upon arms, ammunition, and implements of war, but he pointed out that discriminated against the combatant with more resources. For example, it benefited Ethiopia to the disadvantage of Italy. Ethiopia did not have the resources to procure munitions while Italy did. In the event of a war between Japan and Russia, it advantaged Japan. While both Japan and Russia had the means to procure and produce munitions, Japan lacked the natural resources to maintain production levels required for continuous military operations. He said that "in modern times real neutrality is not possible. We do not live in a neutral world."[34] Remaining uninvolved still amounted to choosing a side.

Pope then proposed an alternative of cooperation with the other nations to prevent or stop war, building on Wilsonian ideals and those of the Kellogg-Briand Pact (an international treaty renouncing war as an instrument of national policy). This included embargoing commodities like coal, oil, iron, and steel, all needed to wage modern war. He rightly acknowledged this changed the conception of neutrality and concluded by saying: "America will find it necessary to take part in a system of collective security among the nations. Under modern civilization the interdependence of nations will make such a course inevitable."[35] Pope recognized the early stages of globalization and interdependence of nations, and his alternative broadly outlined the post-World War II international order.

Despite Pope's reasoned and cogent argument, few people changed their minds. Arthur Capper (R-KS) cited a poll taken in Kansas, Missouri, Iowa, Nebraska, Oklahoma, South Dakota, and Colorado that showed overwhelming support for neutrality. The survey asked eight questions about items such as involvement in foreign wars, profiting from war, and lending

[34] Congress.gov, "Congressional Record," 74 Cong. Rec., 1936, pt. 1, 475, accessed March 29, 2023, https://www.congress.gov/bound-congressional-record/1936/01/16/senate-section.
[35] Congress.gov, "Congressional Record," 74 Cong. Rec., 1936, pt. 1, 475, accessed March 29, 2023, https://www.congress.gov/bound-congressional-record/1936/01/16/senate-section.

money to belligerent nations. The results overwhelmingly supported neutrality with 98.5% of respondents to a question in favor of remaining out of all foreign wars.[36] It is impossible to know, based on the congressional record, the accuracy of the polling. But it reinforced the senator's positions that Americans feared another war.

The public keenly watched the debates. The *New York Times* reported on January 2 that Congress wanted to focus on neutrality as the first order of business. In response, the Roosevelt Administration proposed an alternative plan affording greater discretion implementing embargoes. The *Times* reported, however, that the senators opposed such efforts. Senators Nye and Bennett Champ Clark, (D-MO) had substantial followings in Congress and believed, "that the ordinary discretionary powers of the executive branch of the government failed before the World War, and that the United States might have been kept out if President Wilson had been forced to follow a specified course."[37]

Concerns extended beyond the United States. In Europe, the French worried about America's increasingly isolationist position and voiced two significant objections. First, they argued "the United States will refuse to assist a European nation, even when it is the victim of unprovoked aggression," and secondly, that the policy, "would prevent European countries at war from supplying their needs in essential raw materials in the American market."[38] France had adequate munitions production capability; however, they relied heavily on American raw

[36] Congress.gov, "Congressional Record," 74 Cong. Rec., 1936, pt. 1, 501, accessed March 29, 2023, https://www.congress.gov/bound-congressional-record/1936/01/16/senate-section.
[37] Special to *The New York Times*, "Neutrality Issue to be Raised First," *The New York Times*, January 3, 1936, 1, accessed April 3, 2023, https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1936/01/03/93515498.html?pageNumber=1. Newspapers, particularly *The New York Times*, did not habitually use bylines during this period. I included bylines when the article has a byline. In many instances the byline indicated "Associated Press," "Special to" or "Wireless to." d
[38] Wireless to *The New York Times*, "Our Plans Worry France," *The New York Times*, January 3, 1936, 9, accessed April 3, 2023, https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1936/01/03/93515584.html?pageNumber=9.

materials such as cotton, oil, and metal ores. They could endure an arms, but not a trade, embargo.

The concern of foreign nations, very much focused on their problems, indicated the larger challenges of the neutrality acts affecting U.S. officials. Secretary Hull cabled the chairman of the American delegation to the London Naval Conference on February 1 to inquire about proposed language for the bill regarding armed merchant vessels docking at U.S. ports. He preferred an international convention over domestic legislation.

The response demonstrated the conundrums faced by diplomats. The chairman, Norman Davis, responded: "The question of armed merchant vessels has so many ramifications and brings up so many issues that it is almost impossible to give you a matured opinion at short notice." He explained the restriction prohibited armed merchant vessels. Disarming them necessitated a ban on submarine and air attacks against merchant vessels. The first time the enemy fired on a merchant ship the embargo became ineffective, and nations would rearm their merchant vessels.[39]

Davis unintentionally summed up realities of neutrality acts being effective only if the United States received truly neutral treatment. For that to occur. the United States needed to treat all nations (particularly those involved in war) equally in terms of the goods they traded and the access they granted. If a nation felt disadvantaged by greater U.S. trade with their adversary, they would attack U.S. commerce. They may even do so if they simply felt they could gain advantage over an adversary by impeding commerce. The United States could only avoid this by cutting off trade with belligerents entirely, which Senator Pope underscored hurt many U.S. industries.

[39] The Chairman of the American Delegation to the London Naval Conference (Davis) to the Secretary of State, February 4, 1936, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1936, Europe, Volume II, eds. Daniel J. Lawler and Erin R. Mahan (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2010), Document 163, accessed 22 February 2023, https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1936v01/d163.

A fulsome examination of non-intervention demonstrated its impossibility. Complete disassociation invariably favored combatants with greater resources. Limited trade with either side invited the belligerents to violently oppose commerce with their opponent. The only logical solution was to choose a side or declare neutrality while trading without prejudice and punish whichever side violated that neutrality through reduce commerce (thereby choosing a side by default). Isolationists won out in the 1935 debate despite the outcomes evident to realist foreign policy makers. On February 29, President Roosevelt signed a one-year extension of the neutrality act.

An Unlikely Ambassador

The United States has a long history of politically appointed ambassadors even after the Rogers Act of 1924 created the modern Foreign Service by combining the diplomatic and consular corps. Through World War II most ambassadors were political appointees based on personal relationships with the presidential administration. Claude Bowers personified the well-connected political operative of his day but took an atypical path that shaped his responses to the civil war.

Bowers' family immigrated from Germany in the mid-1800s to escape the increasing militant German Reich.[40] He spent his early years in rural Indiana, a heavily partisan Democratic area. He recounted in his memoirs that at two years old, in his father's store, during the presidential campaign of 1880, "loungers teased me by cheering for Garfield, the Republican candidate, I at once met the challenge with a 'Naw, naw, rah for Hancock.' My politics came early and I have been a partisan ever since."[41] Only twelve when his father died, Bowers' mother moved the family to Indianapolis. Upon graduating high school, he began a career as a journalist.

[40] Bowers, *My Life*, 7.
[41] Bowers, *My Life*, 2.

Unlike many prominent policymakers of the time, he did not graduate from a prestigious prep school, like Groton and never attended college. His peers in government often were American aristocracy, either born, by marriage, or by education. Bowers, a country boy, worked his way up through the Indiana political machine.

In 1903, at twenty-five years old, the local Democratic party boss invited him to run for Congress. No one, including Bowers, expected him to win. But it offered exposure and his career as a political operative took off. He lost the 1904 election, but the public responded favorably to his speeches. He served as secretary to the Senate majority leader, John W. Kern, from 1911-1916. He then returned to Indiana and wrote editorials while campaigning for numerous Democrats into the early 1920s. His gift for communication, both written and oral, made him a mainstay of Indiana politics.

He first interacted with Hull at the Indiana Democratic party state banquet in 1920. The secretary of state also arose from middle America, the son of a Tennessee farmer. However, he had attended college and law school. In his memoir in the halls of power and respected for his political acumen.

While a partisan journalist, Bowers also wrote the first of three well received books, *The Party Battles of the Jackson Period* (1922). The *New York World*, recently purchased by Joseph Pulitzer, asked him to join as political editor following the publication of his books *Jefferson and Hamilton: The Struggle for Democracy in America* (1925) and *The Tragic Era: The Revolution after Lincoln* (1929).[42] President Roosevelt reviewed Bowers' book on Jefferson and Hamilton and wrote, "Jefferson managed a mobilization of the masses against the autocracy of the few . . .I

[42] Bowers, *My Life*, Chap I to XV.

wonder if, a century and a quarter later, the some contending forces are not again mobilizing. Hamiltons we have today. Is a Jefferson on the horizon?"[43]

Roosevelt's review offered insight into Bowers' opinions of political movements. History, particularly that of democracy, fascinated Bowers. In an oratorical contest as a young man, he had selected Alexander Hamilton whom he long admired. However, as he researched, he found that "it was all too clear that my instincts were opposed to the philosophy of my hero. I was shocked to find that he scorned democracy and honestly thought that only through a partnership between the moneyed aristocracy and government could governmental stability be assured."[44] Bowers developed strong opinions about democracy, wealth, and fairness. and admired Jefferson's mobilization of the masses against autocracy and disdain for Hamilton's elitism. Such a worldview played out later as he witnessed the battle of Irún unfold a decade after publication of his book.

Such political leanings played a role in his relationships with political power brokers. Bowers first encountered Roosevelt in 1913 at a National Press Club event and became close two decades later. Bowers wrote scathing rebukes of the Hoover administration, his editorials shaping Democratic party committees nationwide. When Roosevelt ran for president in 1932, Bowers had the ear of the common man. He remembered: "I had left Indiana in 1923 with no intention of ever again making a campaign speech, but there was no escape in 1932."[45] Bowers campaigned for Roosevelt, giving speeches, hosting events, feting the upset victory of the

[43] Dominic Tierney, *FDR and the Spanish Civil War: Neutrality and Commitment in the Struggle that Divided America*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), 43.
[44] Bowers, *My Life*, 39
[45] Bowers, *My Life*, 250 and 255.

Democrat's candidate for governor in Maine, and took on roles such as Toast Master at galas in New York City.[46]

It paid dividends. At the time, Governor Roosevelt saw Bowers' value and invited him to Albany. Bowers recounted a stay there with anecdotes of Roosevelt's Harvard accent and overhearing him managing his Hyde Park estate over the telephone.[47] Bowers admired the old monied aristocracy Roosevelt representing the common man. But unlike FDR, Bowers obtained power not because of his pedigree or education but through his loyalty and messages.

Bowers served the party, first and foremost and gained a position within it. He remained star struck by proximity to power and later demonstrated those qualities in Spain as some Spanish aristocrats enamored Bowers. But he also related to the plight of the common man. However, ever in the forefront, he followed party dogma. Understanding his origins explain his actions as the war unfolded in an unfamiliar world. As the flaws of neutrality went unheeded America codified the desire to remain aloof of European squabbles. Meanwhile, partisan political journalist with no diplomatic experience as ambassador a Spain crept inexorably toward a war which put the Neutrality Act to the test and found it wanting.

---

[46] "Brann Here, Hailed for Maine Victory," *The New York Times*, September 18, 1932, 3 accessed August 27, 2023, https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1932/09/18/105872041.html?pageNumber=3; "Better Days Ahead, Roosevelt Assert," *The New York Times*, October 28, 1932, 8 accessed August 27, 2023, https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1932/10/28/105877930.html?pageNumber=8. The *New York Times* did not include bylines for locally many written articles in 1936. Front page article sometimes contained a byline. Articles sent from abroad had the byline "wireless" or "special."

[47] Bowers, *My Life*, 251.

Chapter 2: Wading into the Civil War

The world had moved on and Spain needed to catch up. The life of a Spanish in 1936 had changed little in the past hundred years. They toiled in fields owned by the church and aristocracy, tenant farmers but *de facto* serfs. Traditions, the rhythm of the seasons, and tight knit communities made up their pastoral life. But a growing rumble of discontent rippled through the nation. Land reform stirred unrest and political debate from the Basque region through Valencia and Catalonia and down across the Andalusian plains.

City life also roiled with discontent and the pressure of a lagging nation. Many left the fields for the factories. Barcelona, Madrid, Bilbao, and Valencia built industries. But like their agrarian brethren, factory workers labored in harsh conditions for long hours and low pay. They too resented the feudal like control of factory owners. They organized and unionized. Socialism, anarchism, and communism grew in their ranks and recent communist revolutions gave them hope and stoked fear in the wealthy.

The rich and poor still gathered together in church. A devoutly Catholic nation, only the Spanish communists and anarchists truly took umbrage with the church. Yet the church was not neutral. It owned land, was beholden to wealthy patrons, and remained (as always) staunchly conservative. While the local priests sympathized with their congregations, the church leaders were squarely in the nationalist camp.

Anarchists, Communists, and Fascists

As American politicians and bureaucrats grappled with neutrality and how to avoid foreign entanglement, Spanish democracy slowly hurtled towards disaster. The republic was still finding its footing. Its establishment, following broad local victories in 1931, was chaotic. The prime minister, Niceto Alcalá Zamora, resigned and was replaced by Manuel Azaña Diez,

leading a coalition of leftwing parties. King Alfonso XIII went into exile and a provisional government formed to establish a new constitution in June 1931. Alcalá Zamora participated in the development of the constitution. When the constitution came into effect in December 1931, he was elected the first president. From 1931 to 1933 the Cortes under Azaña Diez expropriated land and instituted taxes on the church in an effort modernize Spain. Alcalá Zamora was a devout Catholic and generally conservative, but also staunchly against the monarchy. He had objected to provisions in the constitution codifying the separation of church and state. In 1933 he dissolved the Cortes and called for elections as conservative voices called for an end to Azaña Diez' reforms. The *Confederación Española de Derechas Autónom* (CEDA), the conservative party, won a plurality of seats in the 1933 elections. Their leader, José Maria Gil Robles, however, was a monarchist. Alcalá Zamora declined to invite Gil Robles to form a government and instead asked Alejandro Lerroux, leader of the Radical Republican Party which supported the constitution and the church; they were aligned with Alcalá Zamora's positions. They were not the majority and attempted to rule through coalition with the CEDA. Bowers arrived in Spain in this period.

In late in 1935 the coalition collapsed. Alcalá Zamora, left with the choice of asking Gil Robles to form a government or calling for elections, dissolved the Cortes and called for elections. In response, left wing parties immediately formed a "Popular Front" to challenge the right-wing coalition. Bowers noted in his *My Mission to Spain* that the Popular Front "was nothing more sinister than a coalition.[48] The *New York Times*, however, characterized the Popular Front as "an alliance with the socialists and other revolutionary extremists such as syndicalists and anarchists, who heretofore have believed in direct action and refused to name

[48] Bowers, *My Mission to Spain*, 180.

candidates for seats in the 'bourgeoisie capitalist parliament.'"[49] Many accepted this characterization of the leftists as Bolsheviks.

The Spanish strife surprised no one, including Bowers. He had been warned of unrest since his arrival in 1933. The speed and efficiency with which the right organized, however, surprised Bowers. He noted that only four days after the call for elections, they plastered vast numbers of right-wing posters all over Madrid. In addition, the right escalated its rhetoric. José Calvo Sotelo, a duke and a member of the rightist *Renovación Española* monarchist political party, openly said: "the new Cortes would be a constituent assembly and would order a referendum on the restoration of the King."[50]

On many fronts, the right's propaganda machine worked at a breakneck pace, turning out new posters daily. Meanwhile, few leftist posters appeared as it lacked the funding of the well-financed right. Still, the right's propaganda had little success as the peasantry refused to rally against the left. The left published a meticulously prepared manifesto which effectively countered the glossy right-wing sales pitch. When a lady of the aristocracy drove her maid and twelve others to the polls, they thanked her and then voted for the Popular Front.[51]

Bowers reported none of this to Washington. He sent nine cables in the period between the dissolution of the Cortes and the elections, all focused-on trade issues.[52] Bowers understood the administration's priorities with Hull concentrating primarily on improving relationships with

[49] Wireless to *The New York Times*, "Spain Enters 1936 in State of Chaos," *The New York Times*, January 2, 1936, 1, accessed April 3, 2023, https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1936/01/02/issue.html.
[50] Bowers, *My Mission to Spain*, 181.
[51] Bowers, *My Mission to Spain*, 183.
[52] *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1936, Europe, Volume II, eds. Daniel J. Lawler and Erin R. Mahan (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2010), accessed 22 February 2023, https://history.state.gov/search?q=Bowers&within=documents&start-date=1936-01-01&end-date=1936-03- 01&sort-by=date-asc.

the Western Hemisphere neighbors and reciprocal trades agreements.[53] Roosevelt's priorities lay elsewhere, not in Spain.

In Spain, Bowers felt confident in the left's victory which likely explains the dearth in reporting on the election.[54] However, warning signs existed, and he should have proactively informed the administration. In his book, *My Mission to Spain*, Bowers recounted the story of a Spanish aviation officer relieved of duty in the barracks of Cuatro Vientos. Rather than going home, he went to his favorite cafe, popular among military men. When other patrons asked why he had left his post, he replied that he had been relieved and told to go home. The others at the cafe exclaimed, "a coup d'état!"

With the information, the officer hurried back to the barracks only to be refused reentry. The officer reported the event and soldiers rushed to the barracks, surrounded it, and arrested the officers inside on charges of conspiring to plan a coup.[55] While the *coup d'état* had not started, in the days leading up to the election, rebellious elements used the barracks to meet after ensuring unsupportive elements were not present. In addition, significant violence during campaigning and on election day seriously injured fifty-five people and killed forty-five.[56] These events warranted attention of the American Mission to Spain, but Bowers' failure to report set the stage for the unprepared response to the outbreak of war in July.

Part of the problem remained that Bowers thought conflict avoidable. He later placed blame squarely on the shoulders of the Axis powers and noted the wealthy withdrawing from society with a mood of "gloomy pessimism" and that "this silly mood was encouraged by those

[53] Hull, *The Memoirs of Cordell Hull*, 342-365.
[54] Bowers, *My Mission to Spain*, 187.
[55] Bowers, *My Mission to Spain*, 192.
[56] Manuel Álvarez Tardío, "The Impact of Political Violence During the Spanish General Election of 1936," *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 48, No. 3 (July 2013): 407.

creating the atmosphere for a military or fascist coup."[57] The propaganda stoked the aristocracy's fears with stories of socialists and anarchists in the countryside threatening travelers. He thought this propaganda "directed by Nazi agents as a justification for a rebellion as both Hitler and Mussolini wanted it."[58] Hitler and Mussolini welcomed the uprising when it came, but provided little support before, aside from assurance they would help when it began.

In response, he decided to investigate the situation beyond Madrid. In early March, he drove with his military attaché, General Stephen Fuqua, to Valencia, down the Mediterranean coast to Cadiz, north to Seville, and back to Madrid; a journey of over a thousand miles. He intended to demonstrate nothing was amiss. [59]

Bowers and Fuqua had three incidents on the trip which should have aroused suspicion. One involved anarchists, another the fascists, and the last socialists, each highlighting the tensions. In Alicante, they encountered a locked church with women on the steps. Peering through a crack in the door Bowers saw there had been a fire as the women reported that "anarchists and rowdies had broken in, smashed the altar, piled all the images together upon the ruins, and given them the flames." The women hoped Bowers and Fuqua had come to repair to the church and punish the culprits. They did neither nor reported anything to the U.S. or Spanish governments.[60]

In Málaga they encountered a group of foreign legion officers returning to Africa. They claimed a mob of Communists attacked them when they disembarked at Cadiz to change boats. "They were forced to shoot, ten being killed by the volley. Then, they said, the mob ran amuck,

[57] Bowers, *My Mission to Spain*, 197.
[58] Bowers, *My Mission to Spain*, 200.
[59] Bowers, *My Mission to Spain*, 201.
[60] Bowers, *My Mission to Spain*, 203.

burning churches and convents," Bowers remembered. [61] He learned a day or two later that no attack occurred in Cadiz. He believed, correctly, the stories were fascist propaganda being stirred by antigovernment elements in the army to create the impression of a state of anarchy in Spain, laying groundwork for a fascist rebellion.

Finally, in Úbeda, special police (called an "assault guard" of police loyal to the leftists) detained Bowers and General Fuqua. Bowers told a harrowing story of walking from the town square to their accommodations.

> I was amazed to see an armed assault guard bearing down upon me… he was running his hands over me before I realized I was being searched for arms in the street… It was so absurd that for a moment I was more amused than indignant. The guard was in such a state of excitement that he could not listen to my explanation of my identity, and, at length, giving it up, I suggested he accompany me to his chief. This seemed to both astonish and relieve him, and he smiled.
>
> The police chief seemed to find the incident diverting, and certainly not one calling for an expression of regret. He coolly explained that they were searching all strangers, and when I suggested that the rule surely did not apply to an ambassador accredited to Spain, he laughed heartily at my simplicity.
>
> "We know no personalities," he said righteously.[62]

Although eventually released, this incident reflected the leftist fervor. Upon arriving at their lodging, Bowers sent a formal complaint to the mayor. Awoken, he apologized profusely and asked that Bowers and Fuqua be guests for festivities planned in the morning. The mayor explained there were rumors of anarchists and fascists coming to disrupt the celebration to justify the aggressive assault guard. Bowers and Fuqua remained and departed on good terms, agreeing not to leak the incident to the press.

[61] Bowers, *My Mission to Spain*, 205.
[62] Bowers, *My Mission to Spain*, 207.

Then, they returned to Madrid in time for the opening of the Cortes. The election of February 16, 1936, resulted in victory for the Popular Front with 286 seats in the Cortes, while the right won 141, and the center held 46. The new leftist government apologized to him about events in Úbeda and thanked him for his calm and decorum in resolving the situation. Bowers wrote of the trip: "We had traveled for days, for hundreds of miles, and seen no outrages, received no affronts, and we had found the villages and countryside as peaceful and law abiding as those of Westchester and New York. Or only incident grew out of the determination of the friends of government to preserve law and order."[63]

Bowers missed key indicators of something badly amiss. In merely a week, he saw three incidents involving distinct groups. He knew of enflamed passions but deliberately hid the incident in Úbeda, knowing it provided propaganda to all sides. The fascists claimed the assault guard repressed the people, while the government asserted the fascists planned to overthrow the government. The anarchists claimed both the right and the left opposed the people. Bowers' desire to remain neutral kept him from reporting accurately, even to his own government.

Bowers finally mentioned the increasingly precarious internal situation in an April 6 cable to the secretary. He had met with the prime minister and reported that "[he was] in the most tranquil and happy mood, apparently quite unworried by the internal situation which, as a matter of fact, has improved greatly during the last few days."[64] The remainder of the cable discussed trade issues, and he remained blithely unaware that Spain would shortly descend into chaos.

---

[63] Bowers, *My Mission to Spain*, 208-209. Westchester is a wealthy upper-class county in New York state.
[64] The Ambassador in Spain (Bowers) to the Secretary of State, April 6, 1936, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1936, Europe, Volume II, eds. Daniel J. Lawler and Erin R. Mahan (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2010), Document 852, accessed 22 February 2023, https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1936v02/d852.

All the News that's Fit to Print

The American public knew of the growing Spanish discontent as the media had reported on the discord for months. The *New York Times* wrote on January 2, when the president dissolved the Cortes and called elections, that a Popular Front victory of left leaning political parties would pattern, "the second Spanish Republic after their Russian ideal of government."[65] Public sentiment, however, felt Spanish turmoil was the norm as the nation had been through several government changes. A snap election raised few American eyebrows.

Little changed in Spain over time. Less than two weeks later, a reporter noted: "Spain today appears just as ripe for a *coup d'état* resulting in a military dictatorship as it was in 1923 when Primo de Rivera took charge of the government."[66] Others issued comparable reports. The *Washington Post* reported on February 18 government had declared martial law due to widespread violence in Valencia, Zaragosa, and Alicante. President Alaza took refuge with his family in the Presidential Palace and declared a national "state of alarm."[67]

While some events made the news, they rarely made headlines. On February 18, the front page of the *New York Times* read, "Riots Sweep Spain on Left's Victory: Jails are Stormed." However, larger headlines were, "Lehman Message Demands Passage of His Crime Bill" and "Supreme Court, 8 to 1, Back TVA on Sale of Power Produced from Wilson Dam." Notably, directly next to the article on Spanish riots, read the headline, "Neutrality Plan Passed by

---

[65] Wireless to The New York Times, "Spain Enters 1936 in State of Chaos," *The New York Times,* January 2, 1936, 11, accessed April 3, 2023, https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1936/01/02/88621922.html?pageNumber=11.

[66] Wireless to The New York Times, "Spain Held Ready for Coup D'état," *The New York Times,* January 4, 1936, 31, accessed April 3, 2023, https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1936/01/12/87894376.html?pageNumber=31.

[67] The United Press, "Martial Law Declared in 3 Cities as Sequel to Radical Victory.: Lepers Liberated; Red Flag Is Flown 5 Die, 100 Hurt in Riots; Government Decrees 'State of Alarm.' Rebellion Sweeps Spain" *The Washington Post,* Feb 18, 1936, X1, accessed April 3, 2023, https://www.proquest.com/docview/150770247/fulltextPDF/DE3DA20A797E47EEPQ/4?accountid=189667.

House."[68] The American public and politicians clearly focused more on domestic issues and neutrality than the gathering storm in Spain.

The State Department also concentrated on other issues. Hull mentioned nothing in his memoirs about Spain during this period. Instead, he discussed negotiations with Congress over neutrality legislation, the ongoing London Naval Conference, and communication with London, Paris, Berlin, Rome, and Bern regarding "[placing] an embargo on all commodities to belligerents or on essential war materials, or on such materials in excess of normal trade."[69] He asserted that, despite approaching European nations about embargos, he "gave public warning that even embargoing all trade with the belligerents would not necessarily keep us out of war."[70]

Trade remained central to all discussions. Trade with other neutrals, lax in their definition of neutrality, resulted in American munitions finding their way into conflicts. Despite knowing this, Hull and the Roosevelt administration avoided challenging congressional power impinging on executive responsibilities in international affairs. Handicapped by the neutrality acts and focused elsewhere, the stage had been set for Bowers, Hull, and Congress to be caught flatfooted when the Spanish Army revolted.

Later, each tried writing their own narrative. Hull claimed in his memoirs: "Actually, the revolt in Spain did not surprise us. Dispatches from our Embassy in Madrid had for many months bespoken a condition of unrestrained tension that could not long continue."[71] The *Foreign Relation of the United States*, the official edited record of State Department communications, contain no evidence of these messages. A decade after the war, Hull knew he

[68] William P. Carney, "Riots Sweep Spain on Left's Victory Jails are Stormed 'State of Alarm' Is Decreed in Post-Election Disorders — President's Family Moves," *The New York Times*, February 18, 1936, 1, accessed April 3, 2023, https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1936/02/18/88633477.html?pageNumber=1.
[69] Hull, *The Memoirs of Cordell Hull*, 461.
[70] Hull, *The Memoirs of Cordell Hull*, 463.
[71] Hull, *The Memoirs of Cordell Hull*, 475.

had failed and wanted blame for America's unpreparedness and lack of response to the war shifted to others.

Media reporting became eerily quiet in the weeks before the outbreak of hostilities. The *New York Times* reported minor clashes and revenge killings of fascists and socialists. These paled compared to the large disruptions before and immediately after the elections. Then the *Times* reported José Calvo Sotelo's assassination on July 14, two days after it occurred. Calvo Sotelo was a member of the Cortes and leader of the rightwing anti-republican *Bloque Nacional,* an effort to unite anti-republicans in the manner the Popular Front had united the left. Calvo Sotelo had been abducted by the assault guard at 3 am and his body later delivered to a cemetery[72] The news made page one. The Spanish government charged Luis Cuenca, the bodyguard of Spanish Socialist Workers' Party leader Indalecio Prieto, with the murder. It was a lose/lose proposition. Opposition politicians would have been outraged had the government not charged Cuenca. But in doing so, they acknowledged violence committed by the socialists. Nationalist forces believed the leftists intended to take power by force and this open acknowledgement lent them credence.

The Fascist Insurrection

In hindsight the assassination of Sotelo were the first shots of the civil war. With Sotelo's death, the fascists in the army believed the anarchists and communists wanted them next.[73] They needed an event of significance to ensure the entire military revolted against the government. The murder finally offered the spark to set off their powder keg, but their initial attacks failed to create a popular uprising.[74]

[72] William P. Cary, "Monarchist Chief Murdered in Spain," The New York Times, July 14, 1936, 1, accessed 03 April 2023, https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1936/07/14/93523704.html?pageNumber=1.
[73] Bowers, *My Mission to Spain*, 243.
[74] Traina, *American Diplomacy and the Spanish Civil War, 33.*

Initially the U.S. Mission to Spain was unsure about a rebellion. Bowers cabled to Hull on July 18 at noon stating: "Wendelin in Madrid telephones by special permission *coup d'état* planned for noon today. Telegraphic and telephone communications closed. Will wire when information more definite."[75] In fact, the rebellion began the preceding day. Eight hours later the Consul General at Tangier, Maxwell Blake, cabled Hull stating: "Revolt of Spanish troops broke out yesterday in Melilla and spread rapidly throughout Spanish Morocco."[76] With the war starting, the Mission to Spain struggled to respond.

Events unfolded with the Americans as bystanders. The following day, Blake cabled "Entire Spanish zone in hands of anti-Government forces. Order and calm prevail throughout the zone. Frontiers now open for passengers and traffic other than Spanish."[77] Bowers reported from San Sebastian that the government had shut down communications, but Wendelin managed to call Bowers and said Madrid remained quiet. He continued underestimating the threat, saying, "reports [are] possibly exaggerated and impossible to check are that there is fighting at Barcelona, Seville, Burgos, Cádiz, Pamplona and Valladolid between Assault Guards loyal to the Republic and segments of the Army."[78]

---

[75] The Ambassador in Spain (Bowers) to the Secretary of State, July 18, 1936, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1936, Europe, Volume II, eds. Daniel J. Lawler and Erin R. Mahan (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2010), Document 356, accessed 22 February 2023, https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1936v02/ d356.

[76] The Diplomatic Agent and Consul General at Tangier (Blake) to the Secretary of State, July 18, 1936, *Foreign Relations of the United States,* 1936, Europe, Volume II, eds. Daniel J. Lawler and Erin R. Mahan (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2010), Document 357, accessed 22 February 2023, https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1936v02/d357.

[77] The Diplomatic Agent and Consul General at Tangier (Blake) to the Secretary of State, July 19, 1936, Foreign *Relations of the United States*, 1936, Europe, Volume II, eds. Daniel J. Lawler and Erin R. Mahan (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2010), Document 358, accessed 22 February 2023, https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1936v02/d358.

[78] The Ambassador in Spain (Bowers) to the Secretary of State, July 19, 1936, Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers, 1936, Europe, Volume II, eds. Daniel J. Lawler and Erin R. Mahan (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2010), Document 359, accessed 22 February 2023, https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1936v02/d359

This contrasts with his description in *My Mission to Spain* where he characterized his reaction as sagely knowing the fight would continue for a while. Bowers wrote that "Nine out of ten of my colleagues informed their governments that the war would be over in a few days- a month at most," but then claimed he advised Washington about "a long and bitter war."[79] In his book benefitting from hindsight, he described the struggle as one between the army and the people. For this reason, he claimed the fighting would endure.

The Department's concern, however, concentrated on maintaining American neutrality. On July 21, Blake sent word from Tangiers that the "question of fueling Spanish war vessels in Tangier Bay causing menacing situation." Only days into the war the realities of neutrality confronted America. Vacuum Oil company (later Mobil) sought permission to supply oil to the Spanish Ministry in Tangiers. Blake advised them to withhold delivery while he sought guidance, but Vacuum provided a small amount.[80]

The Statue of Tangiers complicated the situation. An agreement in 1923 by the United Kingdom, Spain, and France, established Tangiers as "under a regime of permanent neutrality."[81] While the United States never signed, the statute highlighted the U.S. desire to remain aloof. Hull acknowledged in his response to Blake that, as a non-signatory nation, no legal prohibition on American entities providing fuel to military elements in Tangiers existed. But, he continued,

[79] Bowers, *My Mission to Spain*, 246.
[80] The Diplomatic Agent and Consul General at Tangier (Blake) to the Secretary of State, July 21, 1936, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1936, Europe, Volume II, eds. Daniel J. Lawler and Erin R. Mahan (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2010), Document 362, accessed 22 February 2023, https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1936v02/d362.
[81] The International City of Tangiers, U.K.-France-Spain, December 18, 1923, Appendix I, Article 3, 202, https://www.worldstatesmen.org/Tangier1923.pdf.

"nevertheless the Department . . . would not be disposed to support American nationals in Tangier in any efforts to furnish supplies to either side to the present conflict."[82]

Bowers temporarily lost communication while Hull and Blake attempted to minimize American exposure to the conflict. The ambassador, his family, guests, and household staff were in Fuenterriabia (now called Hondarribia) in a rented villa. He found the road to San Sebastian impassable, and all communications cut. Fuenterriabia, a small fishing hamlet on the border with France, remained tranquil. However, news trickled in that fighting continued in Madrid, Saragossa, Seville, Cadiz, Pamplona, Burgos, and Barcelona, but the insurgents had gained little ground. Loyalist militias surrounded army garrisons, captured their leaders, court martialed them, and executed them. Bowers, in recalling the events in *My Mission to Spain*, wondered why Francisco Franco, a primary conspirator and the eventual leader was absent in the early fighting. Bowers called Calvo Sotelo, Sanjurjo, and Goded "three of the very strongest men among the conspirators all dead or doomed within four days. And General Franco, where was he?"[83] Bowers recognized the people's popular support for the republic endured, and the rebellion already showed signs of a war of attrition.[84]

By July 24, Bowers found the situation maddening. Communications, first severed between major cities and then between even the smaller towns, even stopped between the houses in villages. The government commandeered all private vehicles in Fuenterriabia, although ambassador Bowers retained his. That day he noticed a large French flag on the gate of another villa. His wife immediately went into the town and bought material to sew an American flag for

[82] The Diplomatic Agent and Consul General at Tangier (Blake) to the Secretary of State, July 21, 1936, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1936, Europe, Volume II, eds. Daniel J. Lawler and Erin R. Mahan (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2010), Document 364, accessed 22 February 2023, https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1936v02/d364.
[83] Bowers, *My Mission to Spain*, 245.
[84] Bowers, *My Mission to Spain*, 247.

their villa.[85] Security of the villa concerned Bowers, but the flag marked the residence as U.S. government property and kept them safe.

In the morning, his deliverance arrived. While looking out over the ocean from his balcony he saw a ship through his binoculars flying the Stars and Stripes. It was the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter *Cayuge*. Hallett Johnson, Bowers deputy and the senior officer in San Sebastian, had recommended the department send a ship, and Secretary Hull concurred.[86]

Johnson, a career diplomat, sympathized with the fascists and distrusted Bowers. He believed the rebellion would succeed and wanted to evacuate Americans. Leaders placed the *Cayuge*, then on a Cadet practice cruise out of the Coast Guard Academy in Connecticut off Havre, France, under naval command. In addition, the navy sent four other vessels to various ports to support evacuation.

Upon arriving in Fuenterriabia, the *Cayuge* sent a landing party. Bowers described their arrival at the fishing wharf: "I wondered about the mood of the crowd. The officers and smart uniforms were standing as the boat rose and fell on the waves. I hurried across the sand to meet [the landing party], and I had never felt so proud of the Spanish masses as when the fishermen and peasants, with guns held awkwardly, saluted our officers as smartly as they could."[87]

After consultations, Bowers remained and sent the cutter back to San Sebastian to evacuate the embassy staff and any Americans wishing to depart. The next day, the "sixty-one officials and refugees and their baggage . . . under trying weather conditions" left and proceeded to St. Jean de Lux, France."[88] During these initial operations, the *Cayuge* reported Republican

[85] Bowers, *My Mission to Spain*, 249. Today the residence of an ambassador would always have the national flag.
[86] Hull, *The Memoirs of Cordell Hull*, 476.
[87] Bowers, *My Mission to Spain*, 250.
[88] "Cayuga, 1932," U.S. Coast Guard Assets, United States Coast Guard, last modified November 20, 2020, accessed April 18, 2023, https://www.history.uscg.mil/Browse-by-Topic/Assets/Water/All/Article/2422583/cayuga-1932/.

ships firing on Nationalist positions outside San Sebastian. The rebels had not overrun the Republic, but the fighting spread.

As San Sebastian came under rebel bombardment, Bowers finally sent a detailed report to Secretary Hull explaining the rebellion with six elements. The monarchists wanted the king back with the old regime while the large landowners wished to end agrarian reform and preserve a feudal system. The industrialists and financiers sought to keep the workers "in their place," and the hierarchy of the church firmly opposed the separation of church and state. The military clique plotted a military dictatorship. And finally, the fascist element, wanted a totalitarian state which blended with all the groups.[89] Bowers had astutely assessed the players. His reporting began to outline the conflict for Washington.

He carried out the primary responsibility of an American Mission abroad in such matters by protecting American citizens. The *Cayuge* returned to Fuenterriabia on July 29 with orders to evacuate Bowers. Initially reticent, Bowers had few options, so he departed on the ship and spent the better part of the subsequent two weeks plying the northern coast of Spain in search of Americans in distress.

While Bowers sailed, Wendelin acted as the Chargé d 'Affaires as the ambassador lacked communications and the ability to return to the embassy in Madrid. Wendelin communicated with Hull and the department through the U.S. Embassy in Paris, one of the only lines of communication remaining on July 21. He worked out an agreement with the telephone company, an American enterprise, to contact U.S. citizens and arranged for them to shelter in the embassy in case of danger.[90]

[89] Bowers, *My Mission to Spain*, 253.
[90] The Ambassador in France (Straus) to the Secretary of State, July 21, 1936, Foreign *Relations of the United States*, 1936, Europe, Volume II, eds. Daniel J. Lawler and Erin R. Mahan (Washington: Government Printing

During this time, Madrid remained firmly in Republican control, but the situation remained fluid. Friendly missions, such as the British and French, assisted Americans in distress as their respective consulates and agents reported them. Those governments, in turn, reported to the American embassies in their nations. This cooperation, often typical in the diplomatic community, began to paint the picture for the department of events in Spain and the status of Americans.

As the situation deteriorated, Wendelin (merely a third secretary, the lowest Diplomatic rank), reported through the embassy in France that the "irresponsible Communist and Socialist youths are now more and more committing acts of depredation."[91] This contributed to the fear of the Communists despite the Soviets not supplying arms. A week and a half later the Soviet Chargé d'Affaires in Washington, Alexey Fedorovich Neymann, told Secretary Hull in confidence: "Although I am not authorized by my Government to make any official statement on the subject, I can tell you privately and in confidence that the Soviet Government has carefully refrained from taking any action which might be considered as interference in Spanish affairs, no Soviet arms or other military equipment have been sent to Spain nor Soviet boats or officials played any role directly or indirectly in the conflict."[92] Soviet munitions would not arrive in Spain until October 15, 1936.[93]

Office, 2010), Document 578, accessed February 22, 2023, https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1936v02/d578.

[91] The Ambassador in France (Straus) to the Secretary of State, July 22, 1936, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1936, Europe, Volume II, eds. Daniel J. Lawler and Erin R. Mahan (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2010), Document 582, accessed February 22, 2023, https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1936v02/d582; Foreign Affairs Handbook, 3 FAH-1 H-2430 Commissions, Titles and Rank, (Global Talent Management/Public Affairs Section, August 11, 2020), accessed April 15, 2023, https://fam.state.gov/FAM/03FAH01/03FAH012430.html.

[92] The Chargé in the Soviet Union (Henderson) to the Secretary of State, July 31, 1936, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1936, Europe, Volume II, eds. Daniel J. Lawler and Erin R. Mahan (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2010), Document 371, accessed May 3, 2023, https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1936v02/d371.

[93] Simon Sebag Montefiore, *Stalin: The Court of the Red Tsar*, (London: Phoenix, 2004), 204.

While events unfolded, Wendelin opened the embassy to Americans even with limited foodstuffs and warned that fighting to the north at the aqueduct threatened the water supply.[94] On July 23, Hull praised Wendelin and authorized him to pay whatever necessary to procure food, guards, and supplies to protect Americans and the embassy.[95] The next week Wendelin, Johnson, and the consuls around Spain worked feverishly to coordinate the evacuation of Americans.

Johnson reported on July 26 that anarchy reigned in San Sebastian. He overstated the conditions, although fighting had begun in the area. The rebels advanced to cut off the western border with France and control supply routes into Spain. They successfully isolated the north of Spain on July 29. That day, Hull cabled all American consuls in Spain encouraging them to advise all American citizens to leave.[96] Miguel Cabanellas Ferrer, a Spanish army officer and leader of the rebellion, attempted to gain international recognition of the fascist government. He sent a message the department stating a new government-controlled Spain. Hull declined to acknowledge or respond.[97]

Hull called for an evacuation of all American citizens and endeavored to sustain America neutrality. On the ground, Bowers stayed on the *Cayuge* evacuating citizens from the northern coast. Johnson stayed in San Sebastian as the insurgents gained control while Wendelin ran the mission in Madrid. During this time, the fascists moved on Madrid and sought international

---

[94] The Ambassador in France (Straus) to the Secretary of State, July 22, 1936, Foreign *Relations of the United States*, 1936, Europe, Volume II, eds. Daniel J. Lawler and Erin R. Mahan (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2010), Document 583, accessed February 22, 2023, https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1936v02/d583.

[95] The Secretary of State to the Ambassador in France (Straus), July 23, 1936, Foreign *Relations of the United States*, 1936, Europe, Volume II, eds. Daniel J. Lawler and Erin R. Mahan (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2010), Document 590, accessed February 22, 2023, https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1936v02/d590.

[96] The Secretary of State to All American Consuls in Spain, July 29, 1936, Foreign *Relations of the United States*, 1936, Europe, Volume II, eds. Daniel J. Lawler and Erin R. Mahan (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2010), Document 618, accessed February 22, 2023, https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1936v02/d618.

[97] Señor Miguel Cabanellas to the Secretary of State, July 29, 1936, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1936, Europe, Volume II, eds. Daniel J. Lawler and Erin R. Mahan (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2010), Document 368, accessed February 22, 2023, https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1936v02/d368.

recognition. Simultaneously, the Republican government, depicted below in blue, mobilized the people to fight in the rebels-controlled areas, below in red.


[98]

In less than two weeks, the rebels established a firm foothold but failed to take Madrid. Bowers spent ten days on the *Cayuge* seeing firsthand the impact of the fascist forces in Spain. In Vigo, the American Consul, Bourke Cochran, reported that the army had marched out of its barracks while an officer in the public square read a proclamation of martial law. An angry loyalist tried to tear the paper from the officer's hand, and the army Garrison fired upon the

[98] Mehmet Taha, "Spanish Civil War," July 10, 2021, Madrid, video, 0:17, accessed April 17, 2023, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MUKpf2NRkBg.

crowd. The army rounded up hundreds of prisoners and packed them in a jail designed for not more than eighty.[99] The audacity of the rebels shocked Cochran.

Such stories repeated in other occupied cities along the coast. However, not all the officials Bowers met shared Cochrane's view. For example, the British Consul in Vigo "poured forth the philosophy and propaganda of fascism."[100] Bowers found the diplomat's support for the rebels abhorrent. A British journalist who accompanied Bowers ashore in Bilbao wrote that they had "past groups of murderous looking men as we rode in 'armored cars' in command of a villainous looking captain of the assault guard." In contrast, Bowers described the event as being received by "a snappy captain of the assault guard and in charge who might have stepped out of a ceremonial occasion at West Point. The drive to the city was uneventful. There was nothing to foreshadow violence. The old, deserted highway was perfectly tranquil."[101] Bowers had become accustomed to this type of propaganda and did not report this to Hull. Nor did he take the opportunity to report the combatants' activities and behavior in the conflict. More fulsome reporting, not merely on the political but also the actions of fighters, could have offered nuance to Washington. However, the expectation in 1936 would not have required this level of reporting. Detailed reporting beyond the political became the norm much later for American diplomats.

Nevertheless, evidence sat clearly in front of Bowers. He experienced the chaos leading to the war. He saw the atrocities of the nationalists. He knew the minds of the rich, the poor, the leaders, and the average citizen. Further, he knew the political climate of the United States. Bowers made his name as a journalist; however, he was a political journalist and not a seeker of

[99] Bowers, *My Mission to Spain*, 265.
[100] Bowers, *My Mission to Spain*, 266.
[101] Bowers, *My Mission to Spain*, 261, 262.

truth and fact. This discouraged him from speaking the truth to his leadership in Washington. Bowers spent years honing the art of political writing. His stock in trade was justifying the positions of his party. The best political journalists, however, knew their opponents positions as well. Effective political writing required understanding the adversary. It is reasonable, therefore, to expect Bowers also knew the arguments for involvement in the war. Further, he knew how the common Spanish citizen was fighting for their nation.

He had little to fear from speaking his mind. The career diplomats who served with him might fear for their position or livelihood if they spoke against Washington. But Bowers was a political appointee. He had no diplomatic career to concern him. His communications were private, he had no fear of domestic political opponents making hay from a dissenting view. The ear of the president gave a political ambassador an advantage over career diplomats. The president knew and trusted them. Bowers could speak his mind without fear of retribution and with the knowledge it would be heard by his superiors. The war was young, and time remained for a great power to choose the harder right over the easier wrong. To make any real decision, however, required Bowers to provide the facts from Spain.

Chapter 3: The End of the Beginning

In 1936 the United States sought to avoid entanglement but felt little other urgency. Prevailing wisdom held the war would end quickly, or there would be time to adjust their approach. In truth, the die would be cast in the first months of the war, despite the struggle lasting three years.

With the battle lines drawn and a quick victory denied the loyalists or nationalists, the war continued. The nationalists controlled significant ground and established a front. The war rapidly became a slow grind. With the professional military in the hands of the fascists, republican militias were formed and thrown into battle. Internally, refugees sought safety, relocating away from the front. Guerrillas began harassing nationalist supply lines behind the lines. Soviet funded international brigades fought, initially made up of leftists from around the world, including Americans. The Italians and Germans sent more and larger forces, such as the armored German Condor Brigades. Debate continues whether the Soviet's smaller effort was due to resource limitations or because Stalin wanted to prolong the war to expend German resources.[102] If so, Stalin's goal failed as the German's honed tactics and tested equipment while nationalist atrocities began, with tens of thousands of loyalist prisoners murdered by the end of the war.[103]

General Emilo Mola, commander of the nationalist forces in the north, believed Madrid would fall in three or four days. However, the loyalist resistance stalwartly resisted following the immediate gains of surprise insurrection. By August 1, 1936, the rebels closed within 15 miles of the capital but found themselves evenly matched. The *New York Times* reported the war: "was

[102] Montefiore, *Stalin: The Court of the Red Tsar*, 204.
[103] Verle B. Johnston, Legion of Babel: The International Brigades in The Spanish Civil War, (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1967), 233.

settling down into a business-like affair run on a fairly predictable schedule, aerial bombardment in the morning by both sides and shelling by artillery and infantry clashes in the later afternoon." The signs of the impeding quagmire manifest themselves, but neither side yet fully appreciated the situation.

While the fighting continued, Bowers established the embassy on August 7 in Hendaye, France, just across the Bay of Txingudi from Fuenterriabia. Other diplomatic corps also established de facto embassies in Hendaye. Bowers and his staff sat on the balcony of their hotel in Hendaye and watched muzzle flashes from the rebel cruiser *Almirante Cerava* firing at the three-hundred-year-old Fort Guadalupe, which commanded the harbor from 1,700 feet above. Each round reverberated in their chests, but each fell short, the ancient fortress simply too distant. Guadalupe's ancient cannon then replied, its rounds also falling short; its archaic armaments unable to span the gap. As the fighting unfolded, the Americans observed the impotent duel, a real-time metaphor for the war, and discussed the war's implications. From Hendaye, Bowers kept the pulse of the war and his fellow diplomats. From here he reported on the diplomatic corps' meetings and activities.

General Mola knew the strategic value of the north and sought to subdue the Basque region by taking Irún. However, determined and well entrenched loyalist forces held against the rebel's modern firepower. Yet government forces could not drive off the professionally trained and equipped rebels. Bloody fighting ensued at the rebels sought to cut off resupply, terrorized the civilian population, advanced slowly under the cover of Italian and German air support, and fought street to street and house to house. Loyalist forces, woefully untrained, undersupplied, and reliant on outdated weapons, remained determined to force the insurgents to bleed for every inch.

Front Row Seats to the War

His vantage point allowed Bowers to witness the first attritional struggle of the war. On August 8, he wrote efforts to evacuate Americans complete, but that: "too many Americans here have been expressing open partiality for the rebels." His sympathies are evident in his lament of America's supporting the rebels, but he does not articulate why they ought not support the rebels or further, why one might support the loyalists. He, at most, entreated his superiors to measure their commentary. He reported Indalecio Prieto, a leader in the Spanish left, had published a scathing article condemning the European nations' refusal to support the duly elected government of Spain. His cable encouraged Hull to choose his words cautiously: "you may wish to consider the wisdom of refraining publicly from the use of the word 'neutrality' at this juncture of events and confining ourselves to the protection of the lives of Americans."[104] These were the strongest words Bowers used to that date in official correspondence to suggest the danger of neutrality. He simultaneously softened them by suggesting the sole focus be on American lives.

The American diplomats' views were not monolithic. Bowers sympathized with the Spanish government. Secretary Hull supported neutrality, while Johnson and Wendelin at best feared Communists behind every door and, at worst, sympathized with the fascists. Outside the department, the mainstream press stoked the fires of anticommunism as Congress endeavored to keep the United States out of any wars, despite American volunteers fighting with the Republican forces. President Roosevelt, facing election in November, focused on issues other than Spain.

[104] The Ambassador in Spain (Bowers), Then in France, to the Secretary of State, August 8, 1936, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1936, Europe, Volume II, eds. Daniel J. Lawler and Erin R. Mahan (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2010), Document 390, accessed February 22, 2023, https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1936v02/d390.

Bowers acted by addressing the protection of American lives and property and largely succeeded. His reticence to express support for the loyalists reflected the lack of political support in Washington. Thereby he missed the opportunity to lay a foundation for objections later. His communications never adequately addressed the fascist atrocities, the popular support for the government he saw in the people, or the spreading fascist propaganda from Mussolini and Hitler. Laying out these issues left both his subordinates and superiors with their biases, rather than planting the seeds of doubt.

Bowers furthermore knew this was not purely a civil war. "Arrangements had been made long before for the military participation of Hitler and Mussolini, and they were now pouring their forces into Spain," he later wrote. Before the Spanish elections of 1936, General José Sanjurjo y Sacanell and José Sanjurjo y Sacanell, leaders of the insurrection, traveled to Germany for meetings. Hitler and Mussolini agreed to support the rebellion in exchange for an opportunity to test weapons, equipment, tactics, and hone the skills of the military officers. They believed the Spanish government would collapse quickly. [105] Bowers likely did not know in 1936 of the specific arrangement but saw firsthand the German and Italian war machines on the battlefield.

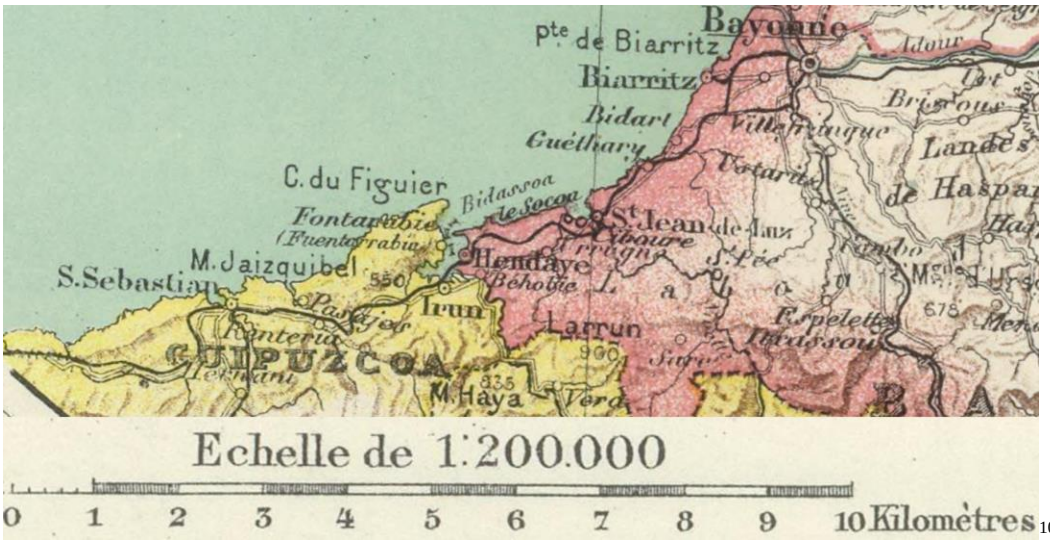
The rebels controlled the northwestern third of the French border, with the exception ten kilometers leading to the ocean. This narrow strip included the road from Hendaye, France. The loyalist overland resupply route began in Barcelona, went north into France, west to Bayonne, and south though Hendaye. The journey of over 600 kilometers, around the Pyrenees mountains, took a fortnight to traverse but was the sole means of resupply. For the rebels, control of Irún meant isolating of the Basque region in northern Spain and control of its industry, raw materials,

[105] Bowers, *My Mission to Spain*, 292.

and ports.[106] The map below shows the border between Spain and France as well as the long road around the Pyrenees. The second map shows the area of and around Irún, Spain.

[107]

Above: Northern border with Spain. Below: Irun and surrounding area.



[108]

[106] The Associated Press, "Fight for Seaboard On," *The New York Times,* August 2, 1936, 1, 2, accessed July 26, 2023, https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1936/08/01/87969197.html?pageNumber=2.
[107] Schrader and Vivien St Martin, *France Flle. S.O.,* (Paris: Librairie Hachette,1930), accessed January 16, 2024, https://www.davidrumsey.com/luna/servlet/workspace/handleMediaPlayer?qvq=&trs=&mi=&lunaMediaId=RUMSEY~8~1~31803~1151167.
[108] Vivien St Martin, *France Flle. S.O.,* (Paris: Librairie Hachette,1930), accessed January 16, 2024, https://davidrumsey.oldmapsonline.org/maps/202bb157-31b2-5912-9900-121beed6a083/vie

Bowers remained engaged with the Spanish across the border and the diplomatic corps gathered in the French fishing village. He held no great affection for the town of Irún, calling it: "the frontier station on the Spanish side, utterly without charm, barren of artistic treasures, either those of canvas or stone. But it guards the entrance to Spain."[109] He watched as arms and men streamed into the town. Here, mere weeks into the fighting, the first international fighters joined government forces. French socialists came south to support the loyalists in Irún.[110] On the rebel side German light tanks, planes, and military advisors augmented the professional Spanish Foreign Legion forces.[111]

The day after the pointless canon duel, the American diplomats heard small arms fire. That night the booming sounds of a massive bombardment woke the hotel residents, who sprang from their beds, only to discover a thunderstorm (not cannons) had disturbed their slumber. Everyone was on edge.[112]

Personal and professional demands pulled on Bowers. He attended regular meetings of the diplomatic corps. In *My Mission to Spain*, he later wrote: "During the three years in Madrid before the war there have been no formal meetings, but now for a time they were to come in quick succession."[113] Bowers warned Hull that the conflict appeared to be "developing into a European quarrel." Did Bowers attempt to broach the seriousness of the conflict with Hull? Or was Bowers alerting Hull that the war risked spilling over if not contained? The context of the time made the latter more likely. Bowers remained focused on neutrality, despite his affection for Spain.

---

[109] Bowers, *My Mission to Spain,* 273.
[110] Johnston, *Legion of Babel*, 159.
[111] Antony Beevor, *The Battle for Spain: The Spanish Civil War 1931-1939,* (London, Penguin Books, 2006), 116.
[112] Bowers, *My Mission to Spain,* 273-4.
[113] Bowers, *My Mission to Spain,* 292.

That week Bowers received a letter on the mayor of Fuenterriabia's stationery. A Spanish friend and member of the aristocracy wrote the communique while being held prisoner in Fort Guadalupe. It outlined an ultimatum from the *Frente Popular* (government militia) in Irún. The *Frente Popular* threatened to shoot five prisoners for each civilian killed by rebel bombardment. Bowers forwarded the letter to the government commander of regular forces. He reported the event in a cable: "San Sebastián bombarded from air yesterday and many civilians including children and old men killed. In accordance with the warning given, to my personal knowledge reprisals will be taken on a certain number of political prisoners. Among prisoners there is Count Romanones."[114] Bowers recognized the rebels' inhuman attacks and the danger if loyalists responded in kind and sought to defuse the escalation. He did not, however, include in his cable the nationalist's initiation of the threats. Despite the omission, he further rounded out the picture beyond events in diplomatic and political circles.

The following day he received a second letter from the Countess de la Maza, a Spanish aristocrat and friend, requesting sanctuary in his official residence in Fuenterriabia if the situation further deteriorated. Bowers acquiesced, though the countess never relocated.[115] Bowers held deep sympathies for the government of Spain but had personal relationships with the aristocracy, who supported the fascist nationalist forces. He walked a tightrope of American neutrality, assisting his friends (those who were nominally non-combatants), and pushing back against fascist sympathizers within the diplomatic corps and his own staff.

---

[114] The Ambassador in Spain (Bowers), Then in France, to the Secretary of State, August 19, 1936, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1936, Europe, Volume II, eds. Daniel J. Lawler and Erin R. Mahan (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2010), Document 427, accessed August 27, 2023, https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1936v02/d427.

[115] Bowers *My Mission to Spain*, 275. Bowers omitted the name of the signatories in his book, saying only that he had been a quest at the count's country home. He included the name in the cable to Hull.

Most of all, he worried about the wellbeing of his household servants still in Fuenterrabia. His concern grew with the letters about the constant bombardment. German bombers struck San Sebastian at night and destroyed a maternity ward. The next day he drove across the border and found, "Irún and Fuenterrabia were grimly silent. All the aristocratic summer residents in their villas, all enemies of the Republic, were confined to their houses, with armed guards patrolling up and down in front. Only soldiers paced the street, and they walked with the silence of shadows."[116] News reports supported his characterizations. The *Los Angeles Times* reported that: "the town of 22,000 rapidly shrunk to 500 as refugees streamed out of the town."[117] He found the countess de la Maza calmly sewing on the veranda of her hotel, but not all were so calm.

When Bowers arrived at his villa and the staff said militias had visited the villa three times to take possession and only departed when told the home belonged to the American ambassador. His Italian chef feared being attacked because of his nationality. "Even that early everyone knew that Italy was actively in the war . . . His condition was so pitiful I promised to take him across the border with me, but, noting the abject terror on his face, I roughly told him to rid himself of that expression of guilt and fear or he would be suspected at the frontier," Bowers recalled.[118] Bowers successfully smuggled him into France and resolved to take the remaining servants there. Conditions remained tense and word reached the press. The Associated Press reported on August 14 that loyalists had seven hundred suspected fascists and nationalist prisoners. They continued to threaten to execute them if the rebel ship fired on the city.[119]

---

[116] Bowers, *My Mission to Spain,* 276.
[117] The Associated Press, "Irun Threatens to Expose Prisoners," *The Los Angeles Times,* September 1, 1936, 2 accessed May 24, 2023, https://www.proquest.com/hnplatimes/docview/164582663/5F91EE9154FB4BDBPQ/1?accountid=10051.
[118] Bowers, *My Mission to Spain,* 277.
[119] The Associated Press, "More Hostages Seized," *The New York Times,* August 15, 1936, 3, accessed July 9, 2023, https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1936/08/15/87976016.html?pageNumber=3.

Irún, with a total land area of only forty-two square kilometers, proved deceptively difficult for the rebel forces. The *Cerava* fired on the city and the fort with little effect. German Junker's bombed government positions but failed to displace defenders. The loyalist militias pressed private property into military service and placed anyone they thought sympathetic to the rebels under house arrest while most of the population fled. Finally, reinforcements, Moorish Foreign Legionnaires under fascist command arrived from Africa and a new offensive began. "The foreign legion, leading the attack against the improvised army of the loyalists, threw itself into the fight with all it had, with the aid of tanks and armored cars. The untrained loyalists met the onslaught without blanching and fought with the spirit and courage of veterans…. With their vast superiority of equipment, training, military leadership, the rebels gained but 200 yards, and without taking a single strategic point," Bowers remembered.[120]

Sporadic fighting unfolded for three days with no gains for the rebel forces. The assistant military attaché of the American embassy in Paris, told Bowers he doubted the rebels could take Irún. Had the government militia been resupplied and reinforced, he may have been proven correct. The rebels, however, could not allow "a little unfortified town, defended by fishermen and mountaineers untrained in war" to defeat them.[121]

The next day Bowers drove west of Irún to the castle of Empress Eugenie. He had never experienced war in person and learned that 'front lines' are porous. He used his diplomatic status to cross the border. Here the dichotomy of war stuck him. There he observed a man and woman swimming and hiking near the cliffs, and wrote "while shivering reverberations shook the air, and shells sped with a weird whistling sound over our heads from the *Cervera*… It was an

[120] Bowers, *My Mission to Spain,* 278
[121] Bowers, *My Mission to Spain,* 280; Special Cable to *The New York Times,* "Rebels Flung Back at Irun Once More: Mola's Army Gains," *The New York Times,* August 28, 1936, 1-2, accessed September 3, 2023, https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1936/08/28/88691498.html?pageNumber=1.

unforgettable scene – the blue skies, the bluer sea, the meadows red with clover, the hum of bees, the chirp of birds, the hellish sound of battle, and the lovers on the distant rock shut in from all behind them by a granite wall, and with only the sea before them, utterly oblivious to the whistling shells. Life went on in the midst of death."[122] Bowers sought to make sense of war's chaos and randomness in the midst of the rebels making little progress against the tenacious loyalists.

The nationalists knew they must succeed in Irún. Bowers and his staff awoke that night as the rebels fired on San Marcial. No one slept that night. The Foreign Legion attempted to take the fort by moving up a ravine under cover of darkness to fall on the defender's rear. "There men had grappled, man to man, and fought with hand grenades. But San Marcial remained in possession of the loyalists, and numbers of the Legionnaires who had marched up the hill never marched down again."[123] A lull in the battle followed as Legionnaires deserted into France, and the nationalists awaited reinforcements. The rebels grew desperate. An unfortified town, defended by untrained volunteers, continued to hold off the elite troops of the professional army. At the end of August, the press called the battle for Irún a draw.[124]

General Mola, concerned with the lack of progress, took personal command in Irún. German airpower and mercenary reinforcements from Africa ruthlessly bombarded the town and finally took the outlying trenches. In this moment the French government effectively sided with the rebels and blocked transit of all military supplies from crossing the French border. The French, pressured by the British under threat they would withdraw their guarantee to defend the French border, agreed in principle to nonintervention in the war while finalizing negotiations

[122] Bowers, *My Mission to Spain,* 279.
[123] Bowers, *My Mission to Spain,* 280.
[124] G.L. Steer, "Battle for Irun Termed a Draw," *The New York Times,* August 31, 1936, 2, accessed September 3, 2023, https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1936/08/31/87984120.html?pageNumber=2.

with Germany and Italy for an international neutrality agreement.[125] Wilson, the *chargé d'affaires* in France, cabled regarding internal pressure from the right, Germany, and Italy to seal the borders. He asserted that the French permitted only shipments under Spanish government seal to transit the border.[126] But at the border, Bowers saw the supplies stopped their daily crossings. The battle to maintain control of the northern provinces of Spain hung on the battle of Irún, now at a critical phase. Basque country had a long history of fierce independence and fighting spirit. For the rebels, control of the region rated second only to capture of Madrid.

Bowers watched closely. He recorded the events saying, "That day I saw pitiful scenes. Hundreds, thousands, of women and children and old men poured across the border from their ruined homes that no longer could be defended. Penniless, friendless, they staggered into an alien land, bringing as much of their pathetically meager belongings with them as they could carry on their backs." The defenders were in equally dire straits. Bowers watched them filling sandbags across the bay to make their final stands. The next day, he watched as Irún fell. "Some of the defenders, with a few rounds of shot left, stood at their posts and died in their tracks. Others, more realistic, escaped in boats and made their way to Bilbao to continue the struggle. And some . . . set fire to buildings that might serve the enemy. This was shocking to some who later were to applaud the 'scorched earth' policy of the Russians."[127]

The battle for Irún, a microcosm of what unfolded over the next eighteen months across Spain, demonstrated the outcome for an embargoed Spain. It lasted merely three weeks; but three weeks to take ten kilometers of ground. The government controlled the high ground with the

[125] Bowers, *My Mission to Spain,* 280-1.
[126] The Chargé in France (Wilson) to the Secretary of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1936, Europe, Volume II, eds. Daniel J. Lawler and Erin R. Mahan (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2010), Document 467, accessed 22 February 2023, https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1936v02/d467.
[127] Bowers, *My Mission to Spain,* 284.

anachronistic fortress. Loyalist resupply, cut off from the south, came from across the French border. Tourists traveled into Hendaye as the morbidly curious sought a firsthand view. Diplomats, having fled San Sebastian, gathered in the French resort town, and deadlocked on debates of what to do. The rebels, with material, technical support, and manpower from the Germans and Italians, used the foreign inaction to choke off and slowly grind down the loyalists. Bowers watched ineffectually as government forces fought to the last bullet while six freight cars of ammunition from Catalonia sat across the French border, stopped by the neutrals at the critical hour.[128] Irun had fallen.

Normally ambassadors of the time did not engage with the locals, making Bowers' approach atypical. U.S. diplomats assigned abroad before World War II focused on reporting, not development or even truly implementation of policy. The modern practice of U.S. diplomats engaging outside of the host government, developing policy objectives, or taking policy actions beyond those directed from Washington began after World War II.[129] Perhaps because of this, his peers within the department had little time for him and many thought him amateurish.[130] Ironically, his approach afforded him the first-hand knowledge the government could have actually been used.

He remained engaged daily in both the diplomatic and military fronts. He intervened on behalf of noncombatants and sought to keep the diplomatic corps out of the fray. His communications did not, however, contained few facts and events outside the traditional role of U.S. diplomats. Notably, he omitted any mention of Spain's right to its own property, whether it transited France or not. The sudden cessation of Spanish government resupply across the French

[128] Bowers, *My Mission to Spain*, 282.
[129] Interview by the author, Paul M. Pitman, Department of State Historian, June 20, 2023.
[130] Dominic Tierney, *FDR and the Spanish Civil War: Neutrality and Commitment in the Struggle that Divided America*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), 43.

border violated international law. The French, of course, had the right to control their border, however the refusal to allow Spanish property to reenter Spain amounted to the seizure of that property.

Bowers did not communicate the impact France had closing the border or the involvement of Germany and Italy. He saw equipment and troops. He witnessed the bombardment of civilians by these forces. The personal impact on people he knew, such as his chef, were obvious to him. These facts would not have changed the outcome. More likely Hull and Roosevelt's reticence would increase. However, the report would have both provided the most accurate information.

Diplomatic Inaction

While Bowers help those he could, his colleagues in the diplomatic corps vied to influence the conflict. The hamlet of Saint-Jean-de-Luz and Hendaye across the border from Spain had not seen a comparable level of international intrigue for nearly three hundred years when, in 1660, the daughter of Philip IV had married Louis XIV in the seaside hamlet.[131] Now distinguished men from the international community debated whether a sovereign nation could arm itself against insurgents. Bowers attended the meetings of the diplomatic corps, engaged his colleagues in discussion, and his readouts comprised the bulk of his reporting cables from this time. He chose, however, to do very little else. As noted, in this period diplomats reported, they did not decide or recommend policy. As mentioned, political appointees like Bowers had greater latitude.

[131] Bowers, *My Mission to Spain,* 288.

Jesse I. Straus, the U.S. ambassador to France, typified the political appointee. He reported in July 31 that internal French government discussions compared the Spanish border to America's Canadian border: "France has not maintained troops there and it is the one frontier from which France has felt that there was no danger to be feared. The setting up in Spain of a government of the military dictatorship type might well alter this situation and prove a serious danger to French security." His report was both factually accurate and reflected a policy proposal. On the surface this inferred a desire to see the rebellion crushed. However, in practice it meant appeasement. The cable continued: "after mature consideration by the French Cabinet a decision had been reached that the French Government would not permit the despatch [sic] to Spain of any airplanes or munitions of war since any other attitude on France's part would risk serious international complications."

The French moved cautiously but also provided useful information to Straus. The report also detailed an Italian plane forced down in Morocco. Aboard were five men dressed in civilian clothes. They carried Italian air corps uniforms and identification. Shortly thereafter, a Spanish plane flew over and dropped a package containing Spanish Foreign Legion uniforms, presumably for the Italian aviators. Additionally, the report corroborated intelligence that Germany had been promised a naval base in Palma upon the successful resolution of the insurgency. Despite this, the French concluded to establish an agreement with the United Kingdom and Italy to "join in a formal commitment not to furnish arms to either side nor to interfere in any way in events in Spain."[132] The reporting from France was clear. Paris would not support the Spanish government while other European fascist governments supported the rebels.

[132] The Ambassador in France (Straus) to the Secretary of State, July 21, 1936, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1936, Europe, Volume II Document 370, eds. Daniel J. Lawler and Erin R. Mahan (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2010), accessed May 16, 2023, https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1936v02/d370.

A fulsome picture could have been provided to Washington had Ambassador Bowers' reports included the involvement of German and Italian forces in Spain. Bowers witnessed his fellow ambassadors plan to undermine the Spanish government, knew of their machinations to delay or stop equipment and supplies, and recognized their intent. His cables touched the issues but focused on American neutrality note context or impact. Only after the war does Bowers round out the events. In *My Mission to Spain*, he demonstrated the depths of duplicity and treacherousness of the foreign diplomats involved. The contrast of reporting from Bowers and other mission overlayed with Bowers later description in his books demonstrate how much was not in his cables.

A primary example is the role of France in preventing material from reaching Spain. In *My Mission to Spain* Bowers related the story from mid-July 1936. The Spanish government directed its ambassador to France, Señor de Cárdenas, to seek aircraft from Blum. However, Cárdenas, a dedicated royalist, supported the insurrection. Blum immediately agreed to the request, and Cárdenas immediately sought a way to delay. He claimed a need to clarify with Madrid the specific types of planes needed. He then leaked the agreement to the rightist press, who began to rail against French support. Blum did not seek clarification from the Spanish and the resultant pressure ensured French aircraft never reached the Spanish government.[133] Bowers cables from the time did not report the incident.

The French government bowed to pressure from the noninterventionists, however, word of French neutrality had not reached Italy. The day after Straus reported French government deliberations, the U.S. ambassador to Italy, Alexander C. Kirk, cabled, "the reported assistance from France to the Madrid Government has further intensified the anxiety of the Italians over the

[133] Bowers, *My Mission to Spain,* 281.

situation."[134] France found itself in a politically precarious position. France remained far more vulnerable than the United States. While Americans bore grudges for being pulled into World War I, France bore the literal scars of the conflict with craters, trenches, and unexploded munitions littering farms, fields, forests, and towns. Their economy had not recovered from the war and the depression. More than anyone, the French feared another war. They did not have the geographical barriers of Britain or the United States. France prioritized containing the conflict over all else.

The blind eye turned to growing fascist militantism ultimately failed three years later. Meanwhile, Germany and Italy adeptly cloaked their involvement through denial and misdirection of intent. Mussolini's government characterized the Spanish war as one against communism and inferred that reported French support justified other nations supporting the rebels. Furthermore, they denied prior agreements between Franco and the insurgents.

Cables from other missions helped fill in Washington's understanding of the war. The U.S. mission to Portugal reported the fascist military dictatorship looked upon Franco's success as a matter of life and death. Their support for Franco remained unwavering throughout. Similarly expected, the report from Belgium stated there were no laws regarding exportation of arms to any parties, however no reports of exports arose. The chargé d'affaires to Germany inferred Hitler's willingness to participate in negotiations toward a non-intervention agreement. Germany displayed the duplicitousness of the Nazis as it expressed willingness to negotiate while simultaneously providing men, munitions, and material for the Spanish fascists. Though not surprising cables, they held value in confirming the public positions.

[134] The Chargé in Italy (Kirk) to the Secretary of State, August 1, 1936, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1936, Europe, Volume II, eds. Daniel J. Lawler and Erin R. Mahan (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2010), Document 372, accessed September 27, 2023, https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1936v02/d372.

Meanwhile, the diplomatic corps to Spain convened in France. Ambassadors from fascist nations sought to undermine the Spanish government. Bowers found few allies in the group. There were the representatives from Britain, France, Argentina, Belgium, Italy, Norway, Sweden, Holland, Uruguay, Peru, China, Turkey, Poland, Japan, Egypt, Czechoslovakia, Ireland, Columbia, Romania, Venezuela, and Finland. Bowers wrote of colleagues who parroted fascist propaganda, such as Madrid being defended by 50,000 Russians, and those who defended an Austrian consul caught in Bilbao sketches of harbor defense as "merely and amateur artist".[135]

The senior member of the diplomatic corps, Argentinian ambassador Daniel Orazio Pedrazzi, called a meeting. Bowers attended the first, but soon Orazio Pedrazzi's intent became clear. Orazio Pedrazzi proposed the diplomatic corps offer to mediate the conflict. An offer to mediate amounted to extending recognition to the rebels undermined the government. Bowers recognized this and expressed concern and the Argentine representative offered to approach the government first. Bowers saw through this ploy. The government would refuse and Orazio Pedrazzi would leak the refusal to the press. Subsequent reporting would characterize the government refusal as jingoistic and undermine international support for the Spanish. Bowers and the British ambassador, Sir Henry Chilton, voiced their objections and ceased attendance.

Wisely, Bowers cabled Washington on August 24 to report on Orazio Pedrazzi's actions, saying: "that the mere publication in the press of such a meeting for the purpose could be made to serve propaganda ends against the constituted authorities … Argentine Ambassador is hostile to regime and I suspect his motives. My own impression is that such a meeting now would be offensive to the Government." However, he continued to look for cover from Washington and couched his concerns in terms of neutrality: "My suggestion is that I be instructed that, since at

[135] Bowers, *My Mission to Spain,* 291-2.

this juncture the matter of intervention is premature, I should not associate myself with the meeting. I am sure we should not associate ourselves with any mediation or intervention maneuver since this Civil War is developing into a European quarrel. Please wire instructions before tomorrow morning."[136]

In his element and ever political, Bower sought guidance and followed it faithfully. Hull responded, "I approve your decision not to attend this meeting. As regards the question of your attendance at any future meetings, I feel that I must leave the matter to your discretion. You may, of course, consult me about any particular meeting."[137] Hull's reply supported Bowers' decision but more so reinforced consulting before meetings.

Ambassadors to other European nations reported the positions of their host nations. On paper the embargo held. The debate on Orazio Pedrazzi's proposal, however, continued. The French Ambassador to the United States, André Lefebvre de Laboulaye, met with Hull on August 29. The French sought coordination with America on the proposal to "stop the wholesale assassinations of civilians." Hull wanted to know the status of proposals and who took part from what governments. Bowers reported back on the content and participants. He added: "There seems to be no doubt that France, Germany and Italy have all been guilty of interference in this domestic quarrel. I have stood aloof awaiting such instructions as the Department may send."[138]

---

[136] The Ambassador in Spain (Bowers), Then in France, to the Secretary of State, August 17, 1936, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1936, Europe, Volume II, 1936, Europe, Volume II, eds. Daniel J. Lawler and Erin R. Mahan (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2010), Document 413, accessed July 18, 2023, https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1936v02/d413.

[137] The Secretary of State to the Ambassador in Spain (Bowers), Then in France, August 25, 1936, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1936, Europe, Volume II, eds. Daniel J. Lawler and Erin R. Mahan (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2010), Document 445, accessed June 10, 2023, https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1936v02/d445.

[138] The Secretary of State to the Ambassador in Spam (Bowers), Then in France, August 28, 1936 and The Ambassador in Spain (Bowers), Then in France, to the Secretary of State, August 29, 1936, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1936, Europe, Volume II, eds. Daniel J. Lawler and Erin R. Mahan (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2010), Document 449 and 454, accessed May 25, 2023, https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1936v02/d449 and https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1936v02/d454.

On August 29, the nonintervention agreement, including the European powers and the United States, took effect theoretically prohibiting signatories from any intervention or involvement in the Spanish Civil War. Bowers avoided meetings discussing the meditation offer to Madrid. He attended other meetings and gleaned information on the progress to proposed message to Marid. Hull cabled Bowers on September 1 regarding the mediation offer. The United States did not join as Hull directed Bowers: "If, without deviating from this policy of non-interference, we can exert our moral influence in support of impartial steps looking to a more humane conduct of the conflict, we not only should do so, but would thereby give expression to feelings which have deeply moved the American people." He added: "Please, therefore, telegraph the text of the proposals which are understood to have been forwarded to Madrid and keep me fully informed of their status in order that I may determine whether there may be practicable means of making known, wholly independently but concurrently with any joint action taken by other governments, our earnest interest in any impartial program designed to render more humane this terrible conflict."[139] Bowers failed to prevent the diplomatic corps from proposing involvement to the Spanish government. But he broke through to Hull, albeit in a small way.

The proposal led by Argentina to mediate provided cover for the United States look for opportunities to mitigate the crisis. Approaching the Spanish government had been breached by other nations. The United States might follow suit, albeit separately, and retain the appearance of independence. Bowers understood this clearly. In his response he wrote: "Should the Government acquiesce in the proposal and invite cooperation of corps diplomatique we can now

[139] The Secretary of State to the Ambassador in Spam (Bowers), Then in France, September 1, 1936, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1936, Europe, Volume II eds. Daniel J. Lawler and Erin R. Mahan (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2010), Document 457, accessed August 15, 2023, https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1936v02/d454.

do so without subjecting ourselves to the criticism of interfering in the internal affairs of Spain from the legal Government."[140] Bowers lacked the knowledge and experience to provide Washington with the cables it truly needed; an explanation of how the war itself was unfolding, involvement of Italy and German, and the atrocities committed by the fascist rebels. However, he carried out the political will of his superiors and found opportunities to crack the absolute nonintervention policy.

Bowers' greatest diplomatic success lay in careful inaction. He observed and reported, remained above the fray. He engaged in the day-to-day work of multilateral diplomacy within the diplomatic corps. Reporting on both these efforts kept Washington well informed. Above and beyond the traditional roles of an ambassador, he engaged outside of the government and diplomatic corps as he moved back and forth across the Spanish border with France. His understanding of the war's impact on the Spanish people in conjunction with the roles and actions of their government and foreign governments afforded him a deep understanding of the conflict.

In addition, he took care to serve the Americans abroad. The welfare of U.S. citizens is of paramount importance to U.S. diplomats. He plied the southern waters of the Bay of Biscay to aid those in distress and safeguard American property. His failure, however, remained not informing the secretary what he saw of the war on the ground. He saw the Italian and German forces, bore witness to the brutality of the fascist forces, and the collapse of loyalist resistance when cut off from resupply through France. These events comprised the compelling argument

[140] The Ambassador in Spain (Bowers), Then in France, to the Secretary of State, September 2, 1936, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1936, Europe, Volume II, eds. Daniel J. Lawler and Erin R. Mahan (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2010), Document 460, accessed August 12, 2023, https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1936v02/d460.

for allowing munitions sales. The role of a U.S. diplomat abroad to paint a complete picture for policymakers in Washington was the missing link to informing government decision.

Conclusion: The Myth of Neutrality

The United States began to understand the myth of neutrality following the Spanish Civil War. It took many more years and deaths before it truly sunk in. However, ultimately America questioned neutrality itself. The government of Spain fought an insurrection supported by German and Italy without the ability to purchase equipment from abroad, and Germany and Italy capitalized on the Spanish Civil War. They tested equipment, tactics, and trained the leaders who plunged the globe into World War II. The war allowed Germany and Italy to establish an ally on the Iberian Peninsula, or at least a neutral who declined to shut the entrance to the Mediterranean.

American, British, and French neutrality in the Spanish Civil War ultimately acted to support the fascist insurrection and thereby Germany and Italy. The Soviet Union contributed substantially fewer resources to Spain. As noted, debate remains whether the limited contributions were a result of limited resources or a choice by Stalin to lengthen the war and stymie Germany. Regardless, either course of action failed as Germany used the war to its advantage and the republican forces lost.

The grinding civil war lasted another thirty months. By the end of 1936, the rebels had consolidated their gains and established internal lines to connect the cities they controlled, foretelling the conflict's incremental nature. The United States renewed and updated the Neutrality Act to explicitly include civil wars on January 6, 1937. General Francisco Franco succeeded Miguel Cabanellas, a politician, as the rebel leader, cementing the fascist leadership of the insurrection. Despite the war lasting two more years, the die was cast. Western non-intervention, German and Italian direct intervention, and the rebel successes of controlling more

than half of Spain, ensured their eventual success. The map below shows the status of forces on January 6, 1937.

The Department of State under Hull largely ceded foreign policy to Congress. Hull later claimed that he warned of the danger. The evidence, however, from his own correspondence and speeches shows otherwise. It is unlikely he could have swayed Congress. Roosevelt preferred personal management of foreign affairs and intentionally chose a secretary of state who rarely took independent action.

The Germans and Italians provided men and material to the fascists while the Republican government struggled with only some assistance by the Soviets and independent organizations.

By the end of the war, Roosevelt admitted to Bowers: "We have made a mistake."[141] However, the recognition came too late.

Following the war, in 1939, the pendulum began a slow swing towards executive power and gained momentum through World War II. Congress has not declared a war since World War II. Today there is evidence of legislative pull against broad presidential war powers following the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. America still strives to strike a balance between rapid executive action and laborious legislative deliberations. The slow pendulum swing which began following the Spanish Civil War may have reached its zenith.

Diplomatic reporting began then to change as well following Franco's victory. Bowers had the knowledge, ability, and authority to provide America with the insights. Before the war, he saw the indicators of unrest. The rumors ran rampant, and he sought the truth. He drove around the country and recorded events which warranted acknowledgement. In the north of Spain, he witnessed the outbreak of the war, the will to resist, the popular support of the government, and the atrocities of the insurgents. He observed the German and Italian men, material, and equipment fighting against Spain. He participated in the debates of the diplomatic corps and knew the political machinations of his fellow ambassadors. No one else could have provided this intelligence directly to Hull, Roosevelt, and Congress. Despite this, Bowers' reporting had holes. Today the State Department and American public expect nuanced and detailed reports from missions abroad.

Bowers had succeeded in care of American lives and property. He provided timely and informative reports on the diplomatic maneuvering of his fellow ambassadors. His deft reporting on the diplomatic corps was a bright spot in his tenure. And he carried out the vision, however

[141] Bowers, *My Mission to Spain,* 418.

misplaced, of his superiors to ensure American neutrality. No one can fault Bowers execution of the policy Washington provided.

Today the Department of State must notify publicly Americans of impending dangers to allow timely departure before a crisis.[142] Unfortunately, no such policy existed in 1936. It remains unlikely accurate and timely cables would have changed policies, but preparations for evacuating Americans could have been prepared with knowledge of the approaching war. The underlying motivations for Germany, Portugal, Italy, Argentina, and others may have been clearer knowing of foreign fascist troops on the ground. And, while the least likely, perhaps Congress would not have precluded all arms sales and assistance.

The diplomatic transformation, like the move away from neutrality, continued through World War II. In modern American diplomacy the onus falls on the mission abroad to opine on consequences of policy. In addition, a modern diplomat is expected to offer policy solutions to Washington. Policy was made, and continues to be made, in Washington. It is no longer made without input from the diplomats in the field. The result is better policy and greater trust with our foreign partners.

These lessons continue to be valuable today as the United States faces resurgent aggression in Europe, China seeks control of the South China Sea and eyes Taiwan, and Iran disrupts the power balance and relationships in the Middle East. America appears to have learned the lessons of the 1930s and 1940s. When Russia planned to invade Ukraine, the State Department sounded the alarm early. The secretary knew the impact of continuing current policy and received the policy recommendation to change course from the field. The secretary of state stood firm against congressional concerns, and the president empowered the department and

[142] United States Department of State, "No Double Standard Policy," *Foreign Affairs Manual*, Vol. 7 sec. 050, April 27, 2016, fam.state.gov/fam/07fam/07fam0050.html.

military to act. The flow of supplies, material, training, intelligence, and resolve to support the Ukrainian struggle is the antithesis of western failures from a century ago. The Navy conducts regular freedom of navigation exercises throughout the South China Sea while the U.S., United Kingdom, and Australia strengthen their military cooperation alongside South Korea, the Philippines and Japan. Diplomats report on the impact of these policies and recommend their continuation or recommend changes. In the Middle East, a delicate balance of diplomacy, posturing of forces, and counter insurgency operations has thus far prevented the Israeli-Hamas war from spreading to the wider region. The rhetoric, in fact, from Arab nations has been decidedly subdued.

We will not know for years, if ever, the true role of diplomatic reporting played and is playing in Ukraine, East Asia, and the Middle East. Historians will continue to examine and consider the efforts in the lead up and early days of the Spanish Civil War. The evidence, however, strongly supports the value of early and accurate reporting from diplomatic missions when instability is present.

Despite this, lessons continue to be missed in the moment. The wars in Ukraine and Israel brought into stark relief the inability of American industry to produce sufficient munitions in a conventional war. This shortcoming was evident, in hindsight, during the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. U.S. industry kept up with the war time demand of fighting a low-grade insurgency. It did not significantly exceed that demand. That production capacity should have been a clear indicator America could not sustain production in even a medium level war.

The advent and use of unmanned drones by U.S. forces also presaged the challenges faced today. In Ukraine drone make maneuver near impossible. Artillery, rockets, or aircraft engage the moment a vehicle or infantry unit begins to move. In Israel unmanned attack drones

and rockets cost a fraction of the expense outlaid to shoot them down, creating an unsustainable cost imbalance to the defender. These were both foreseeable and should have been learned from Iraq and Afghanistan.

In the end, Claude Bowers deserves credit for his successes and acknowledgement of where he fell short. He served his nation well and faithfully, but the result for Spain was tragic. Expanding the view of Bowers' role leading up to the war and in the first few months provides a fuller picture of where America succeeded and failed in Spain. There is also context which deepens our understanding of the evolution of American diplomacy. The Spanish Civil War is too often looked at through the lens of a civil war. The impact it played as a catalyst for change throughout the world deserves further consideration.

There remains room to examine Claude Bowers' and the role of U.S. diplomacy in the Spanish Civil War. Research in the National Archives would illuminate the role of the American Defense Attaché in Spain. He may have provided additional reporting on the war itself. The archive would also provide insight into internal Department of State deliberations and planning regarding interventionism. Reading in the FDR library may revel letters to and from Bowers. Personal correspondence played a significant role at the time. Finally, the advent of scientific polling corresponds with the time. An examination of popular American opinion regarding the war would provide valuable context to the political decisions of its leaders. It remains clear, however, that Bowers and U.S. diplomatic actions in 1936 mark a beginning of changes to U.S. diplomacy and international affairs.

Bibliography

Books

Bowers, Claude G. *My Mission to Spain: Watching the Rehearsal for World War II.* New York: Simon and Schuster, 1954, 238.

Bowers, Claude G. *My Life: The Memoirs of Claude Bowers.* New York: Simon and Schuster, 1962.

Burt, A.L. "American Foreign Policy in the 1930's." *American Neutrality and the Spanish Civil War*. Editor, Allen Guttmann. Boston: D.C. Heath and Company, 1963.

Gellman, Irwin F. *Secret Affairs: FDR, Cordell Hull, and Sumner Welles*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2019.

Guttmann, Allen. *The Wound in the Heart: American and the Spanish Civil War.* New York: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1962.

Hull, Cordell. *The Memoirs of Cordell Hull*. New York: The MacMillian Company, 1948.

Johnston, Verle B. *Legion of Babel: The International Brigades in The Spanish Civil War*. University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1967.

Montefiore, Simon Sebag. *Stalin: The Court of the Red Tsar*. London: Phoenix, 2004.

Taylor, F. Jay. *The United States and the Spanish Civil War (1936-1969).* New York: Bookman Associates, 1956.

Tierney, Dominic. *FDR and the Spanish Civil War: Neutrality and Commitment in the Struggle that Divided America.* Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007.

Traina, Richard P. *American Diplomacy and the Spanish Civil War*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press,

Welles, Benjamin. *Sumner Welles: FDR's Global Strategist.* New York: St. Martin's Press: 1997.

Newspapers, Journals, and Magazines

Álvarez Tardío, Manuel. "The Impact of Political Violence During the Spanish General Election of 1936." *Journal of Contemporary History,* Vol. 48, No. 3 (July 2013): 407.

Blower, Brooke L. "From Isolationism to Neutrality: A New Framework for Understanding American Political Culture, 1919–1941." *Diplomatic History,* Vol. 38, no. 2 (2014): 345–76. https://www.jstor.org/stable/26376561.

Buchanan, Tom. “Edge of Darkness: British ‘Front-Line’ Diplomacy in the Spanish Civil War, 1936-1937.” *Contemporary European History,* Vol. 12, no. 3 (2003): 279–303. http://www.jstor.org/stable/20081161.

Fernsworth, Lawrence A. “Back of the Spanish Rebellion.” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 15, No. 1, (October 1936): 87-101. https://www.jstor.org/stable/20030781.

Frank, Willard C. “Multinational Naval Cooperation in the Spanish Civil War, 1936.” *Naval War College Review*, Vol. 47, no. 2 (1994): 72–101. http://www.jstor.org/stable/44642663.

McCannon, John. “Soviet Intervention in The Spanish Civil War, 1936–39: A Reexamination.” *Russian History,* Vol. 22, no. 2 (1995): 154–80. http://www.jstor.org/stable/24657802.

McGarry, Fearghal. “Irish Newspapers and the Spanish Civil War.” *Irish Historical Studies,* Vol. 33, no. 129 (2002): 68–90. http://www.jstor.org/stable/30006956.

The New York Times. https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/browser.

The Washington Post. https://www.proquest.com/?accountid=189667

The Los Angeles Times. https://www.proquest.com/?accountid=189667

Government Documents

Lawler, Daniel J. and Mahan, Erin R., editors. *Foreign Relations of the United States,* 1936, Europe, Volume I-II. Washington: Government Printing Office, 2010.

The International City of Tangiers. U.K.-France-Spain. December 18, 1923.

Congressional Record. 74th Congress (1935-1937). https://www.Congress.gov/bound-congressional-record/1936/01/03.

United States Department of State. *Foreign Affairs Manual.* Washington: Government Printing 2016. fam.state.gov.

Digital Media

U.S. Coast Guard Assets. “Cayuga, 1932.” United States Coast Guard. Last modified November 20, 2020. https://www.history.uscg.mil/Browse-by-Topic/Assets/Water/All/Article/2422583/cayuga-1932/.

Taha, Mehmet. “Spanish Civil War.” July 10, 2021, Madrid. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MUKpf2NRkBg.

Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. “List of Arms Trade Suppliers.” https://armstrade.sipri.org/armstrade/page/toplist.php.

Department of State, Office of Security Assistance. “What We Do.” https://www.state.gov/about-us-office-of-security-assistance/.

Department of Defense. “Foreign Military Sales.” https://www.dsca.mil/foreign-military-sales-fms.