

## THE FIRST MONTHS OF THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

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**Resumen:** Cuando el Congreso de los Estados Unidos legisló sobre cuál debía ser su papel en el mundo en la década de los treinta del siglo XX, nunca pensó en la posibilidad de que hubiera una guerra dentro de un mismo país. La guerra civil española cogió por sorpresa desde Roosevelt a Hull pasando por todos los congresistas y senadores. Entonces, en ese momento, el Departamento de Estado tenía que decidir cuál era el papel a seguir en el conflicto español, porque la Ley de Neutralidad de 1936 no tenía validez porque no consideraba este tipo de guerra. En las siguientes líneas se describirán y analizarán esta situación y la estrategia estadounidense en los primeros meses de la guerra civil española.

**Palabras claves:** Guerra civil española, embargo, asuntos exteriores, leyes de neutralidad, Estados Unidos, De los Ríos, Roosevelt.

**Abstract:** When the Congress of the United States legislated about his role in the world in the thirties, never though relating to a war in a same country. The Spanish Civil War caught by surprise from Roosevelt to Hull and all the congressmen and senators. Thus, in this moment, the State Department had to decide the way to follow with the Spanish problem, because the Neutrality Act of 1936, had not validity because did not consider this kind of war. The next lines describe and analyse this situations and the American strategy in the first months of the Spanish Civil War.

**Keywords:** Spanish Civil War, Embargo, Foreign Affairs, Neutrality Acts, United States, De los Ríos, Hull, Roosevelt.

The study of the Spanish Civil War abroad is one of the most attractive lines of research at this time. This type of work has traditionally been confined to the European scope to analyze the clear leading role both of Italy and Germany, as well as France and Great Britain in the confrontation. In this regard, it should be noted the works of Angel Viñas, Enrique Moradiellos, or Marta Rey. From outside Spain, it is worth mentioning the works of Douglas Little, Allen Guttman, or Dominic Tierney, among others.

The beginning of the Civil War caused that many interests came to light, which were roughly hidden so far. One of them was none other than the sale of weapons, either legal or illegal. The purchase of war equipment or likely to be used in a war played an important role in European and global places where people usually join to chat. Such was the importance of these that the Republican government made use of their best men almost immediately. These were distributed throughout Europe, going from one embassy to another, searching for the support of governments. One of the best-known examples was the story that Manuel de Azcárate described in its autobiography<sup>1</sup> in which he showed how his father, Pablo de Azcárate, Assistant Secretary of the League of Nations, along with Fernando de los Ríos, President of the Ateneo in Madrid at those times, immediately traveled from Geneva to Paris. There they were enjoying their vacation and they did so to obtain the such needed ar-

<sup>1</sup> Azcárate, Manuel, *Derrotas y esperanzas. La República, la Guerra Civil y la Resistencia*, Barcelona, 1994.

mament, thanks to their contacts in the French Popular Front government.

It was reasonable that the main efforts will firstly focus on Europe and on friend governments such as the French; however, other countries were also the centers of attention for the Spanish government, such as the United States. Nonetheless, one of the problems that the Republican diplomacy had to solve was the legislation that guaranteed the neutrality of the country of the stars and stripes. There was an aspect that the laws of the Capitol had not contemplated in the following passed texts, and it was a civil war. Thus, the aim of this text is to analyze the period to legislate and prevent a possible arms sale to Spain, either the side in the war.

## 1. NYE COMMITTEE

Since the end of the First World War, the American society had suffered several events that were shaping its nature in the interwar period. During the thirties the United States were living in a state of great depression after the crisis of 1929.

This situation caused that all sectors of the American society made an analysis of what happened. One of the most important issues was the research on the reasons that drove the United States to participate in the Great War and, to that end, a committee was created in the Senate by Gerald P. Nye of North Dakota. In this Special Committee on Investigation of the Munition Industry more than 300 people were asked in a survey on the reasons for entering the European war. Among the options that were given were included moral, economic or political motivations, and each of them had to be qualified in a range between one and ten.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Documento extraído de:

<http://www.google.es/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0CCIQFjAA&url=http%3A%F%2Fccchs.ccsud.org%2Fapps%2Fdownload%2F6FHRZWgGcw50iBoQeKXkiniMxtXMYoI4p5dsUrX1RpRHLil.doc%2FNye%2520Committee%2520Investigation.doc&ei=WG9U4GGLqPz0GXT6IGYDg&usg=AFQjCNHs4WI6OYRKOSNQT5wUrp5C-ox4lw&BVM=bv.70138588,d.d2k> (consultado el 1 de julio de 2014).

This decision was reached after analyzing a series of reports which stated that the United States had an economic motivation to enter the First World War. It was supposed that the pressure of the arms industry was the key to participate in the battle. The congressmen considered as intolerable that 53 thousand soldiers had been killed to benefit a productive sector. In addition, it is important to contextualize the creation of this committee, which was on 4 September 1934, a year after Hitler came in charge in Germany and Mussolini in Italy. Therefore the tension in Europe increased, and the United States did not want to become involved in a new confrontation abroad.

Over the 18 months that lasted the commission, there were 93 hearings, still more than 200 from the number of appearing, including the banker J. P. Morgan, or Pierre Du Pont.<sup>3</sup> Both Roosevelt and Cordell Hull served as a support for Nye and the committee, although the Secretary of State found it a problem.<sup>4</sup> Allied countries, such as Great Britain or France, replied for explanations on different occasions, because they had been investigated by an institution in another state, for gathered contracts and documentation on purchase and sale of weapons and war material.<sup>5</sup>

The committee finally issued its findings on 26 February 1936. These were tough and blamed to different American companies and the government, in particular the Department of War. According to them, the usual form of business of different companies was the subornation of officials from foreign governments to secure the weapons export contracts. The action area

<sup>3</sup> Munitions Industry: hearings before the Special Committee investigating the Munitions Industry, United States Senate, seventy-third [-seventy-fourth] Congress, pursuant to S. Res. 206. A resolution to make certain investigations concerning the manufacture and sale of arms and other war munitions (1934).

National Archives and Records Administration (NARA). Internet Archives, disponible en: <https://archive.org/details/munitionsindustr1114unit> (consultado el 26 de junio de 2014).

<sup>4</sup> Hull, Cordell, *The Memoirs of Cordell Hull*, New York, MacMillan, 1948, 398.

<sup>5</sup> Report of the Special Committee on Investigation of the Munitions Industry (The Nye Report), U.S.

of these companies was spreading around the world, being South America the main core. The report also considered that this type of practices had led to the extension of an armed conflict in time. It criticized then the management carried out by the Department of War which would have encouraged that in situations of pre-war were available weapons and ammunition to export immediately. Not only would the responses be inevitable but were known as more details of the interviews were coming into light. The most important was the proclamation of a series of acts that prohibited the arms sale and equipment, the so-called Neutrality Acts.

## 2. NEUTRALITY ACTS

The Neutrality Acts are a series of measures taken by the Congress of the United States. Following their isolationist policy, the country prohibited the sale of weapons to any country that was in war at that time. Four acts were stated in the years 1935, 1936, 1937, and 1939. Each one was the extension or renewal of the previous one in a particularly difficult period with wars and confrontations in Asia, America, Europe and Africa.

While the results of the survey made by the Nye committee were being published, the activity of the Congress did not stop. The news from Europe were in no sense encouraging. In Germany, Hitler had already become the *Führer* and was spreading fear and hatred throughout the territory, being the Jewish the most affected population and followed since the year 1935. On the other hand, the *Duce* in the lead in Italy was looking for his dream to turn the Roman Empire back, nearly about to start his campaign in Ethiopia.

The United States were highly concerned about all this tension and they did not even want to see themselves involved in any conflict indirectly. Not to repeat what happened almost 20 years ago, the negotiations began to legislate and to mark a future neutrality before any military conflict. The debate in the House of Representatives and the Senate finished with the passing of the Neutrality Act of 1935<sup>6</sup>. The act,

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<sup>6</sup> The Neutrality Act of 1935, 31 August 1935. Joint Resolution 49, stat, 1081; 22 USC, 441 note. Library of Congress (en adelante LOC), Washington DC.

instead of legislating on a particular matter, designs the strategy of the American foreign policy with regard to violent conflicts and purchases of weapon equipment. It resolves that any type of weapon, ammunition, or equipment that may be used in a war in which two or more countries became involved must not be traded or transported. It also stated that the sale must not be carried out to any state that has been declared neutral and that intends to resell the war equipment to a belligerent country. In addition, the President of the United States, in this case Franklin Delano Roosevelt, was staffed with powers, so that he managed to spread the embargo immediately to any country that may be involved in a conflict at the moment or in the future. In this way, a possible war would be avoided.

Breaching the act would be penalized with a fine of up to \$10,000 and five years in prison, being both compatible and complementary. It would additionally cause the confiscation of weapons and other materials, as well as the means of transport in which they were being transported, taking immediately part of the Department of War of the United States. In the bureaucratic section, it was mandatory to obtain permission from this department to sell the war equipment and, in this way, not to commit mistakes of the past.

Finally and officially through this act, the United States of America were declared neutral to any foreign war. It clearly limited the ability of the government to any incident, giving a very clear message to the international community: the United States were not going to become entangled in any international conflict to be thrown.<sup>7</sup>

The following act, the Neutrality Act of 1936, was passed only three days after the release of the findings of the Nye Committee. These only asserted that for the Congress the line of neutrality should be followed and not modify anything in the previous act, although it was done so in the end. What anybody did not know was that the act was incomplete and they would know sooner.

## 3. MORAL EMBARGO

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<sup>7</sup> The Neutrality Act of 1935, 29 February 1935. LOC.

The Spanish army in Africa revolted against the orders of General Franco, thus giving a coup d'état that fails and makes Spain be immersed in an aggressive civil war. On the other side of the Atlantic, an atmosphere of elections was felt in the United States. In the autumn the new president would be elected; Franklin Delano Roosevelt would run the elections again for the Democratic party while Alf Landon led the Republican candidacy. The election turmoil caused the management delegation into Cordell Hull when the first reports arrived from the American ambassador in Spain, as the Neutrality Acts stated that this would be the position of the United States. The Secretary of State should tackle the situation of the citizens and of American companies strategically located in the Spanish territory and ensure the safety of these.

As the Ambassador of the United States in Spain Claude Bowers tells in his memories he was at that time in Fuenterrabía on vacation and was immediately available to the Secretary of State.<sup>8</sup> The staff of the embassy remained in Madrid, and as the news remained inaccurate, both decided that the civil servants, along with the American citizens, should be immediately deported. Meanwhile Bowers would have to stay in the Basque Country waiting to receive orders about whether crossing the border was necessary.

Cordell Hull and the members of both the Senate and the House of Representatives noticed immediately that the Neutrality Act did not establish any type of ban on the arms sale and war equipment to a country that was found in a civil conflict. While deciding the strategy to follow, Cordell Hull attended several meetings. It should be noted one that he had with the Ambassador of Spain in the United States, Luis Calderón<sup>9</sup>, in which the head of the diplomacy of the United States to Western Europe, Mr. Oultbertson was also present. They analyzed the situation that Spain was living at that moment, giving special attention to the Americans

living there as well as to the industrial and commercial interests. Calderón was asked which side he feels more related to and he replied that he did not feel represented by none of them. They turned into another conversation and went on to talk on the war situation. The ambassador this time reported wrongly, either deliberately or by being misinformed, that the legitimate government controlled the whole territory, except small areas to the south of the peninsula, and that the army was divided but not the Navy, which remained loyal to the government. Another of the aspects that were dealt with was the state of the communications and the security of these between Valencia and the still capital city, Madrid. Finally, Calderón gave his opinion on whether there was going to be or not a civil war and he replied that it was unlikely. Hull told him that even so, he was going to order that the ambassador of the United States should move to Saint-Jean-de-Luz in France.

Nonetheless, what Cordell Hull knew was very different to which Calderón had told. Harriet Johnson, the chief official who had stayed in the United States embassy in Madrid, reported promptly to Bowers and this to Hull that the Republican government, due to the impossibility to control the army and in order to cope with the attacks of the rebels, had begun to provide arms between the militias of workers who were instructed in the capital of Spain.<sup>10</sup> Another aspect that worried him was the expropriation of American factories in Spain, such as Ford Motor Company in Poble Nou.<sup>11</sup>

Hull also requested a report on the situation of the Navy in Europe. William H. Stanley was in charge of meeting with the Secretary of State and the only conclusion to be reached in those first moments was that the distribution of weapons among the militiamen in Madrid had been a failure. As they did not have any training, there was a huge disadvantage towards the

<sup>8</sup> Bowers, Claude, *My Mission in Spain*, Barcelona, Grijalbo, 1970, 140.

<sup>9</sup> Memorandum of the conversation between the Secretary Hull and the Spanish Ambassador, Mr Luis Calderón, 27 July 1936. Cordell Hull Papers, reel 49, LOC.

<sup>10</sup> Little, Douglas, *Malevolent Neutrality: The United States, Great Britain, and the origins of the Spanish Civil War*, Ithaca, Cambridge University Press, 1985, 223.

<sup>11</sup> Tierney, Dominic, *FDR and the Spanish Civil War*, Duke, Duke University Press 2007, 84.

rebellious army.<sup>12</sup> In the same way from Moscow, the responsible for foreign affairs transmitted to Cordell Hull that Stalin had begun to sell weapons to the Republican government.<sup>13</sup>

With this information, therefore, it seems easy to understand the change of views and opinions within the leadership of the Secretary of State. William Phillips was seeking independently that the government of the United States should support the Republican government of Spain in some way.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, Cordell Hull and the rest of civil servants wanted to follow the isolationist foreign policy strictly, marked by both the Neutrality Acts as well as the spirit of the Roosevelt administration policies. It could be confirmed in mid-August when the president gave a speech in the city of Wyandotte, New York. His speech was entitled *I hate the war*, in which he analyzed the tension period from which the world was suffering in such moments. He followed in that the United States never had to seek the war; they had always shown this attitude with their good neighbor policy. Moreover, he stood for a meeting of all the heads of State of the American continent, so that they did not come to war and declared themselves neutral in any war to ensure the peace of all their neighbors.<sup>15</sup>

The turning point came when the Secretary of State received the first requests to purchase arms for Spain. One of the companies that received a request was the Glenn L. Martin Company, after making contact with the person in charge of the Republican government to what they considered a legal gap. The Neutrality Acts set the ban on selling arms and war equipment, such as we have seen to countries that were in conflict between them. Nevertheless, these acts did not mark anything on the ban on selling weapons to two opposing sides within the same country.<sup>16</sup> This fact accelerated the talks in the department led by Cordell Hull who, along with

Phillips and the rest of people in charge of the American foreign policy, knew that they could not forbid any company from selling weapons to Spain. Therefore they opted to mark the government lines and start to advise companies not to export war equipment to any of the opposing sides. This recommendation was given to the Glenn L. Martin Company and marked the beginning of the so-called "moral embargo".

The next step was to move the "board" of the Department of State to the companies that could become involved in this type of transactions. William Phillips used many methods such as personal meetings, phone calls and even the dispatch of letters to the arms companies. In them he insisted that the American government follows the precepts agreed in the Montevideo Convention of 1933. He asserts as well that the current law does not apply to the Spanish case, but that the aim and the strategy of the Roosevelt administration is not to interfere in the domestic affairs of foreign countries. Finally, and to legitimize his decision, he was based on the command they followed from the American public opinion.<sup>17</sup> This decision caused tensions within the Department of State: Hull and Phillips stood for the moral embargo while the assistants of the Secretary of State, Sumner Welles and Robert Walton Moore were against it. However, the most opposing voice was the head of the Office for the Arms and Munitions Control, Joseph C. Green. He defended that whether a similar conflict was to happen in a neighboring country or close to Latin America, the decision of setting the moral embargo would leave the United States in a position of weakness. In case a legitimate government would come to Washington to request aid, it would not be do so, and this would lead to the rebellion of these countries, such as it had already happened in previous years.<sup>18</sup> This tension was reflected in the replacement of William Phillips as Deputy Secretary of State for Sumner Welles since 23 August.

<sup>12</sup> Little, Douglas, *Malevolent Neutrality: The United States*, , *op. cit.*, 224.

<sup>13</sup> *Id.*

<sup>14</sup> Tierney, Dominic, *FDR and the Spanish*, *op. cit.*, 41.

<sup>15</sup> F.D. Roosevelt, *I hate the war*, Wyandotte, 14 August 1936.

<sup>16</sup> Little, Douglas, *Malevolent Neutrality: The United States*, *op. cit.*, 235.

<sup>17</sup> Phillips, William, *Export arms*, Washington, 22 August 1936, *Statements by the Department of State on the export arms*, LOC.

<sup>18</sup> Little, Douglas, *Malevolent Neutrality: The United States*, *op. cit.*, 237.

Although the situation in Spain did not improve, the war had settled and the conflicts between the rebels and the Loyalists were constant. The progress of the army led by the General Franco did not encounter much resistance. Seeing the development of the war, Luis Calderon submitted his resignation as Ambassador of Spain to the United States, and informed Cordell Hull on 8 September, 1936.<sup>19</sup> Calderón gave him the name of the new Ambassador, Fernando de los Ríos, former Minister of State of the Republican government.

From that moment, both Roosevelt and Hull focused their argument on the claim of the isolationist policy; this was perceived in the different speeches which they were giving. During the first days of September the activity of Hull was frenzied, being in charge of many events. A few examples would be a meeting with executives of the electric power industry where he defended the neutral position of the United States. The other was in front of civil servants in which he argued that his government understood relations between countries as a cultural exchange between them.<sup>20</sup>

A new period began with the arrival of Fernando de los Ríos as the Spanish Ambassador to the United States. The former minister presented his placet of ambassador on 8 October and held its first meeting in the Department of State only two days later in the office of Cordell Hull. De los Ríos did not attend to the event alone but with the Chargéd'affaires of the embassy, José Enrique de la Casa. They talked on the difficult situation Spain was living, on how they were seeking to reverse the situation outside and on the French government, led by a good friend de los Ríos, Leon Blum, so that they agree to sell weapons to the Spanish Republican government. For these reasons, de los Ríos pointed out that they had to make the main supporter of the non-interventionist position, the British government led by the conservative Baldwin, see positively the abolition of the neutrality agreement; thus both the United Kingdom and

France may be able to supply arms to the Republican government. It was Blum who said to de los Ríos that he was managing personally this negotiation and so was transmitted to Cordell Hull.<sup>21</sup> In the same way, de los Ríos emphasized the moral embargo and, according to him, its establishment is a support sine qua non to authoritarianism towards democracy, represented by the legitimate Republican government.

The response of Hull focused on the analysis of the European situation and claimed that Europe itself had taken a decision: it had been chosen neutrality and non-interventionism. Hull claimed as well why the non-interventionist position has been approved by no less than thirteen countries. Although he may or may not agree in that regulation, he made clear at that time is that the United States would not go against what has been established in Europe. Hull also recalled that his government was ruled by the agreements in the Montevideo Convention on the non-interventionism in the domestic affairs of other countries. Against this argument, de los Ríos warned him that during the conflict occurred in Mexico between Victoriano Huertas and Plutarco Elías Calles, the American government supported the legitimate government.<sup>22</sup>

This meeting made de los Ríos see which was the line that the Roosevelt administration had regarding the Spanish Civil War; hence he made the President noticed as well in the meeting that both kept on November 1936 in the White House just a week after the presidential elections which won Roosevelt. De los Ríos saw that his previous strategy did not success and chose to submit to the President the dangers entailed by the Spanish Civil War towards the United States. He talked on the desertion of democracies and alliances between fascisms that could lead to establish these regimes in South America. In addition to keep the Republican government its place within the international order, he requested him not to recognize the rebels. Roosevelt appealed to the wisdom of France and England and to the possible excesses of authori-

<sup>19</sup> Conversation between Cordell Hull and Luis Calderon, Washington, 8 September, 1936. Cordell Hull 2, Cordell Hull Papers, reel 49, LOC.

<sup>20</sup> Department of State: war and peace. State Department. USA Foreign Policy. Washington, D.C. United States of America, Print Office, pp. 310-339.

<sup>21</sup> Conversation between Cordell Hull and Fernando de los Ríos, Washington. Cordell Hull 2, Cordell Hull Papers, reel 49, LOC.

<sup>22</sup> Id.

tarian governments, without citing to Germany and Italy, were prudent and responsible. With respect to the possible aid given to the legitimate Spanish government, Roosevelt told de los Ríos that if he could maintain the situation until the following spring, it could be changed regarding the arms sale.<sup>23</sup>

The method followed by both the American and Spanish governments did not change until the end of the year when an event changed the friendly atmosphere between them. This caused to legislate rapidly to finish with the legal laps in the acts of 1935 and 1936.

#### 4. NEUTRALITY ACT OF 1937

The Neutrality Act of 1937 began to develop in December 1936 when an American company, the Vimalert Co, decided to disobey the moral embargo imposed by the Department of State. At the head of the company was Robert Cuse, a Lithuanian employer of unclear fame, who led the challenge of transporting to Spain the requested transport licenses of arms with a value of more than \$2,500m on board the *Mar Cantábrico* boat.<sup>24</sup> The permission was requested on 24 December and just a few days later, the agreement was already closed with the Republican government.<sup>25</sup> Both Roosevelt and Cordell Hull became enraged, taking this fact as an unpatriotic dishonor. They immediately decided to legislate the moral embargo to become legal embargo.

The meetings and negotiations immediately began to shape the moral embargo. Two people were in charge, the senator Pittman and the congressman McReynolds. Both were the chairmen of the Committee on Foreign Affairs in their corresponding houses. Meanwhile, many companies, seeing that one of them was

about to sell weapons, accepted all the requests from the Republican government.

On 6 January, both Pittman as McReynolds presented their corresponding texts, the same day that President Roosevelt gave the traditional speech at the beginning of the year in the Congress. At the Capitol he requested to the congressmen and the senators to seek the best way to act towards Spain, which according to him, it was to change the legislation on neutrality, filling the hole created by the legal gaps of the laws in the previous years.

The Joint Resolution of 8 January, 1937 prohibited the arms export to Spain until a new Neutrality Act was proclaimed.<sup>26</sup> In five paragraphs it stipulated that all weapons, both their sale and export, and war equipment to Spain were banned, either the side, government or intermediary. It also punished the export to third countries that sold to Spain later. Finally it pointed out that all pending licenses for approval were cancelled from that moment. The resolution was approved almost unanimously by both the Senate and the House of Representatives. There was only one vote against, since the thoughts among the Congress were that the embargo did not adversely affect only the Republican government but also to the rebels. By this way, the legal embargo was marked in Spain.<sup>27</sup> This triggered Spanish diplomats protest in the United States. Fernando de los Ríos immediately requested to meet with Cordell Hull, who took almost twenty days in making an appointment. Finally they met on 27 January.

A few days before, on 22 January, a resolution was adopted at the request of the Senator Pittman by proposing staffing with powers to the president; hence, in case he considered it convenient, he could repeal, cancel or extend the law. Another of the regulations was to confiscate the properties of the American company responsible to have provided war equipment to a belligerent country, if it was confirmed so. This extension was approved in the Senate and

<sup>23</sup> Meeting between Fernando de los Ríos and Franklin Delano Roosevelt, President of the United States of America, 10 November 1936. Box 25, folder 1, document 9, telegram 150 to the Ministry of State. File of the Student Residence. Fernando de los Ríos Foundation.

<sup>24</sup> Suárez, Xosé Manuel, *Las armas de la República. La aventura del Mar Cantábrico*, El Ferrol, Edición Embora, 2006, 30.

<sup>25</sup> New York Times, 31 December 1936.

<sup>26</sup> Joint Congressional Resolution of January 8, 1937, Department of State: war and peace. State Department. USA Foreign Policy. Washington, D.C. United States of America, Print Office, 353-354.

<sup>27</sup> Hull, Cordell, *The Memoirs of Cordell*, *op cit*, 505.

the House of Representatives in a manner more than ample, since they were not more than eighteen votes against more than four hundred and thirty in favor.<sup>28</sup>

Since then the relationship between de los Ríos and Hull grew apart; the restrictions were increasing as the weeks were going by. In fact the last meeting that both had was in February 1936 and they did not even speak on the law situation, but de los Ríos complained angrily as it is shown by the memorandum of the meeting. The US government was not spreading the passports for the medical personnel that were going to move to Spain and to help the wounded in the Republicans.<sup>29</sup> The response of the Secretary of State was that anyone who would like to travel to Spain to help should do so by the Red Cross and never independently, following the law of that time.

Without having any progress on the legislation, the Neutrality Act of 1937 was passed on 1 May as an extension of the earlier acts, including the incorporation of the agreements reached at the Congress in the previous months.<sup>30</sup>

Finally the international role that Spain was building around the world in the thirties was worthless. The so long awaited democracy with a cultural basis in which members of several generations of intellectuals were participating actively. They lived to strengthen the country that could face all the problems that might arise. There were Unamuno, Ortega, Garcia Lorca, Alberti and Dalí, among others. From different institutions, such as student dormitories, they came and went and brought important personalities to a state in constant growth. Even in the international political scope, Spain was placing easily to people such as Pablo de Azcárate or Salvador de Madariaga in key positions.

The majority of those countries, however, that received all these intellectuals boasted of hosting them in their universities and centers of studies turned their back on Spain that promot-

ed cultural growth and equality of rights. Neither Europe or the United States responded to the help of the Republican government for many reasons.

In Europe fragile governments caused uncertainty; although the Prime Ministers, such as Blum supported clearly the Spanish legitimate government, the internal pressure caused him to choose not to cooperate with their Spanish colleagues of the Popular Front. In this way, Blum kept safe his country. In the United States the situation was very different, as there were different aspects that led the Roosevelt administration to a position resistant to change. The president always showed a positive position towards the Republican government, but its neutral and non-intervention positions were forged in two areas, outside and inside its borders.

The traditional submission of the international American policy, not to the dictates but to the suggestions from the number 10 of Down Street in London, enforced the agreement signed between thirteen countries, at first, Europeans. It established the non-interference in the Spanish confrontation, so that the United States chose to maintain its isolationist policy. Thus, as we can see in the pages that precede these conclusions Cordell Hull made Fernando de los Ríos realize in their meetings and talks that the Department of State would not change its policy whatsoever with regard to Spain.

Regarding the domestic policy, the beginning of the Civil War overlapped with the electoral campaign for the presidential elections in autumn. As it is well known, the Catholic Church supported the coup d'état of Franco; Roosevelt, although he was not a follower of this religion, needed the support of the American Catholics who supported him. He couldn't afford to lose their trust.

Moreover, isolationism was increasing in the United States, as it has been discussed with the Neutrality Acts and the Nye Committee. It was demonstrated that the American society did not want another war, and that the problems taking place in Europe have nothing to do with them; in addition, they begged not to come into war due to third parties. They followed this way throughout the Second World War and did not

<sup>28</sup> Id.

<sup>29</sup> Conversation between Cordell Hull and Fernando de los Ríos, Washington, 24 February, 1937. Cordell Hull 2, the papers of Cordell Hull, reel 49, LOC.

<sup>30</sup> The Neutrality Act of 1937. 1 May 1937. LOC.

come into conflict until the well-known attack on Pearl Harbor.

Neither the work of Fernando de los Ríos nor that of the rest of the Spanish ambassadors around the world helped to make the Republican government receive the support needed to deal with the attacks launched by the rebel army on an equal footing, which was supported by the authoritarian regimes in Italy and Germany.

It is not possible to say that neither the moral embargo nor the Neutrality Acts were the key in the speech of the Civil War; however, they could be considered as an important aid to warn the British and French governments to change their minds and enforce a legitimate government emerged from the polls.