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To cite this article: Scott Ramsay (2020) Ideological Foundations of British Non-Intervention in the Spanish Civil War: Foreign Office Perceptions of Political Polarisation in Spain, 1931-1936, *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, 31:1, 44-64, DOI: [10.1080/09592296.2020.1721059](https://doi.org/10.1080/09592296.2020.1721059)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09592296.2020.1721059>



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Published online: 17 Feb 2020.



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## Ideological Foundations of British Non-Intervention in the Spanish Civil War: Foreign Office Perceptions of Political Polarisation in Spain, 1931-1936

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### ABSTRACT

In response to the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in 1936, the British government adopted and maintained a policy of strict non-intervention throughout the conflict. Previous commentators, to varying degrees, have suggested this policy was largely a product of British hostility towards the Spanish Republic and designed to facilitate a victory for the military rebels who would subdue threats of a communist revolution. This analysis argues that historians have exaggerated British concerns about communism and that Britain saw the Republic as a viable political project that it wanted to succeed. Rather than focusing on British perceptions of only left-wing groups in Spain, this analysis also incorporates perceptions of the extreme right and fascist groups. British concerns about Spain's political polarisation laid the foundations of the policy of non-intervention, which sought to avert risks of the conflict escalating and solidifying the broader ideological polarisation occurring in Europe during the 1930s.

On 10 August 1936, just over three weeks after the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, Labour peer Lord Strabolgi wrote an article for the *Daily Herald* in which he accused the British government of pursuing a policy of 'malevolent neutrality' towards the besieged Spanish Republic. Lord Halifax, a confidant of Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain and at the time lord privy seal, wrote personally to Strabolgi upon reading the article. 'I am moved', began Halifax, 'to write a line in protest against [your] concluding paragraphs'. Halifax insisted the objectives of British policy were to localise the conflict to prevent it from developing into a 'first-class international crisis' and avert assistance from outside to both sides, which 'would only result in a prolongation of the disastrous struggle'. 'Surely by no stretch of the imagination', Halifax concluded, 'can our efforts to pursue this double end be described by the terms "malevolent neutrality"'.<sup>1</sup> This is how British politicians and Foreign Office officials would justify their policy *vis-à-vis* Spain during and after the conflict.<sup>2</sup>

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It is Strabolgi's phrase, however, that historians writing on British diplomacy concerning Spain have predominantly taken up and linked to British hostility towards the Spanish Republic that developed leading to the outbreak of civil war in July 1936. The strongest advocate of this interpretation even used Strabolgi's phrase as the title of his major contribution to the historiography.<sup>3</sup> This analysis from an American pen examining British and American diplomacy in Spain between 1931 and 1936 suggests this hostility developed gradually from the Republic's inception in 1931 and became more acute after the election of the Popular Front government in February 1936. Accordingly, when civil war broke out in July 1936, ideological concerns took precedence over strategic factors and the British government therefore quickly opted for a 'better dead than Red' response.<sup>4</sup> The principal problem with this exegesis is that it pays almost no attention to British strategic concerns or the wider context of general appeasement.<sup>5</sup> Similarly, a Spanish assessment, despite considering British strategic constraints and appeasement, suggests a fear of communism in Spain and a general aversion to the Republic, especially after February 1936, led to the British government adopting this policy and pursuing a 'benevolent neutrality' towards the rebels.<sup>6</sup> An earlier British view argued that London made its initial decision to remain neutral against a backdrop of fears that a communist revolution would overthrow the Spanish government after the turbulent breakdown of law and order in spring 1936.<sup>7</sup>

In general, historians have supported their arguments with examples of British antipathy for left-wing elements in Spain, but they have often overlooked British perceptions of the extreme right in light of the growing fascist threat in Europe in the 1930s.<sup>8</sup> The American analysis, for instance, draws on examples of negative comments made by Foreign Office Western Department clerks about left-wing groups in Spain and conflates their opinions with official 'Whitehall' policy. Yet high-ranking Foreign Office officials seldom wrote in the minutes on despatches sent from British diplomats in Spain, and it is unlikely that they read much of this correspondence until spring and summer 1936. This presents problems when considering official British perceptions of Spain during this period, because whilst high-ranking Foreign Office officials said very little about Spain compared to discussions prompted by despatches from Berlin or Rome, British politicians said even less. Of course, what the Western Department officials who digested reports from British diplomats in Spain between 1931 and 1936 did say is important because they would be an important source of information for policy-makers once they began to take more of an interest in Spanish affairs after spring 1936.

Through an analysis of the perceptions of Spain in the Western Department and British diplomatic staff in Spain, this examination argues that historians have exaggerated British hostility towards left-wing government in Spain before the outbreak of civil war. As the civil war almost immediately transformed into an international conflict that confronted broader British foreign policy

objectives, there are many difficulties in linking British perceptions only of left-wing government in Spain with Britain's immediate adoption of a policy of non-intervention. Accordingly, a focus on British perceptions of political polarisation in Spain until the outbreak of civil war demonstrates that both the Foreign Office and British ambassadors at Madrid – George Grahame (1928–1935) and Henry Chilton (1935–1939) – considered the Second Republic a viable political project that they wanted to succeed, even after the election of the Popular Front in February 1936.<sup>9</sup>

For the Republic's success, the Foreign Office desired a Spanish government inclusive of right and left-wing elements and one able to maintain stability in the face of threats from both the left and right. The political culture cultivated in Britain since the First World War when labour militancy had presented the British government with similar problems – albeit on a smaller scale – to those that threatened stability in Spain between 1931 and 1936 arguably influenced such desires. Indeed, Stanley Baldwin, prime minister of the Conservative-dominated National Government at the outbreak of civil war in Spain, had played a pivotal role in resolving the General Strike of 1926 during his second term as prime minister.<sup>10</sup> The experience of the tumultuous 1920s instilled British politicians and civil servants with an appreciation of the fact that improved living standards for the working class provided a more stable political environment in which general economic progress and prosperity were possible.

Bearing this in mind, the British political elite's emphasis on respect for Parliament and the institution of democracy, as well as attempts made by Baldwin and the Conservative Party to incorporate the labour movement within Conservative definitions democracy, played out in assessments of political polarisation in Spain.<sup>11</sup> Oppression of the working class in Spain and a reluctance to introduce reforms to improve living and working conditions would only lead to unrest and violence. Although by summer 1936 it was clear that a stable, democratic government was no longer a realistic possibility, there was no consensus in the Foreign Office on what political regime was most desirable. In this sense, there is a need not to conflate the opinions of some within the British government and Foreign Office before the outbreak of civil war with the opinions prompted by reports of atrocities committed in the republican zone during the first weeks of the conflict.<sup>12</sup> The perceptions of British diplomats in Spain and their colleagues at the Foreign Office before July 1936, rather, provide insight into the ideological foundations of the policy of non-intervention adopted in response to the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War.

After the fall of the Primo de Rivera dictatorship (1923–1930), the right in Spain stood in disarray whilst left-wing opinion overwhelmingly favoured a - Republic.<sup>13</sup> Although some right-wing and conservative groups were prepared to accept the new regime in principle, the Republic failed to consolidate

a cohesive social base that would have paved the way for the introduction of moderate reforms. Instead, attempts to consolidate itself through structural reforms of education, land, and the military solidified significant right-wing opposition almost immediately.<sup>14</sup> Francisco Largo Caballero, leader of the Socialist *Unión General de Trabajadores* [UGT] and minister of Labour, introduced a series of agrarian reforms aimed at improving living and working conditions that would be a source of contention and a major cause of the coup in 1936.<sup>15</sup>

Whilst Largo Caballero's reforms provoked the hostility of many landowners, reforms relating to the Spanish military and Catholic Church solidified opposition to the regime amongst other powerful sectors of Spanish society. Manuel Azaña, the minister of War, attempted to modernise the military by reducing the inflated officer corps and making cuts to save money.<sup>16</sup> Catholic opposition to the Republic hardened early on after left-wing groups burned a number of churches in Madrid in May 1931 without any serious opposition from the government. The announcement of the proposed Article 26 of the Constitution, which sought to prohibit the Church from engaging in education, further exacerbated the religious question. In summary, the Republic's reforms consolidated the hostility of landowners, large swathes of the military, and Catholics from the outset.<sup>17</sup> As a result, these groups began calling for the overthrow of the Republic and likened it to the weak Alexander Kerensky government in Russia after the fall of the tsar in 1917.

Historians have suggested the British government also held these concerns of a Kerensky-style government in Spain.<sup>18</sup> However, it was the uncertainty of the Spanish situation, rather than the character of the new regime, that influenced early negative perceptions of the Republic within the Foreign Office. Grahame told the Foreign Office on the day of the Republic's proclamation that the 'situation within the last hour or two has developed in the most alarming manner and the regime has collapsed'.<sup>19</sup> Due to family ties between the British and Spanish royal families, there was concern about the plight of King Alfonso XIII and his family, but Grahame soon informed his colleagues in London that the regime change had occurred with no bloodshed and that the royals had safely arrived in France after fleeing Madrid.<sup>20</sup> When Grahame assured the Foreign Office that 'the new republican government are evidently desirous of doing all in their power to maintain the movement on peaceful lines', Arthur Wiggin, first secretary in the Western Department, asked his colleagues, 'will there be such unanimity when the government get to business? There is almost no chance of it, one may predict with reasonable certainty'. 'The future', he concluded, 'is as obscure as ever'.<sup>21</sup>

This uncertainty delayed recognition of the Republic for a week after its proclamation. The new Spanish government prompted the question of recognition and led to the Foreign Office's first detailed discussion on the matter. Charles Howard Smith, a private secretary and later assistant under-secretary,

favoured moving forward with recognition but was concerned that ‘it is not absolutely certain that the [municipal election results] showed a republican majority. There was a strong republican majority in the towns but we know nothing of the country districts . . . . Moreover, it seems quite likely that the new government may have stormy times ahead’.<sup>22</sup> An assistant under-secretary, Sir George Mounsey, agreed: ‘we must know a great deal more about the internal reactions ensuing from this first landslide victory before we can accord official recognition’. In a better position to judge the situation, Grahame was more enthusiastic than his counterparts in Whitehall and urged the Foreign Office to move quickly with recognition:

It is by no means outside the bounds of reasonable possibility that a republican regime may consolidate itself in Spain . . . . The Republican government is at present being carried on a flood tide of enthusiastic popular support . . . . News of the attitude of Great Britain towards it will be eagerly awaited and future relations between the two countries will doubtless be influenced thereby . . . . Great Britain has long held a leading position in the estimation of Spanish public opinion and our national interests both political and commercial may suffer if impression be given that Great Britain is imbued with a prejudice against new regime which is not manifested by other governments<sup>23</sup>

The British government formally recognised the republican regime on 22 - April.<sup>24</sup> Despite somewhat overdue, such a delay was not unusual given the dramatic change in the style of regime, the uncertainty surrounding the situation, dynastic links with the royal family, and the absence of a constitution.<sup>25</sup>

In the months following recognition of the Republic, there was further uncertainty surrounding which parties would find representation in the Constituent Cortes after general elections in June. Envisioning the Cortes composed primarily of Socialists and Republicans and led by Alejandro Lerroux, the foreign minister of the provisional government, as prime minister,<sup>26</sup> the Foreign Office regarded Lerroux as an ideal moderating influence between the multitude of competing political parties and ideologies in Spain. As Lerroux stated, ‘I am a conservative when confronted with anarchy, and a revolutionary when confronted with the forces of stagnation’.<sup>27</sup> It soon became clear that the *Partido Socialista Obrero Español* was the largest party and with support by republican groups in the Cortes. Accordingly, Grahame informed the Foreign Office, ‘the future Cortes will be of an advanced democratic but not revolutionary character’.<sup>28</sup> Wiggin remarked, ‘what has happened so far must be regarded as distinctly satisfactory. The elements of moderation seem at present in ascendant, and despite all the forecasts, broken heads seem to have been relatively few’.<sup>29</sup>

Some in the Foreign Office also recognised political cleavages amongst the various left-wing groups in Spain, such as socialists, communists, and anarchists. When Norman King, the British consul-general in Barcelona, wrongly reported that communists had caused disturbances in the Catalan capital, Alexander Leeper, who in August 1933 would be appointed head of the

Western Department, merely noted, 'it was the anarchists, not the communists, who caused the trouble'.<sup>30</sup> Indeed, the biggest threat to stability came from the anarchists who did not participate in parliamentary politics and were responsible for persistent strikes and disturbances in Spain throughout the year.<sup>31</sup> Wiggin noted his concern, 'the fact that the extremist labour organisation [UGT] stands aloof from the parliamentary struggle is a factor in Spanish politics which must always be borne in mind'.<sup>32</sup>

Due to these anarchist threats, the Foreign Office could only hope that 'whatever prime minister takes office will show an iron hand in dealing with such situations'.<sup>33</sup> Firm leadership took on special importance in Spain not only because of the widespread strikes that occurred during 1931, but also due to the need to steer the Cortes in the debates surrounding the new Spanish constitution.<sup>34</sup> As mentioned above, the articles relating to the religious question were extremely controversial, and these proposals alone served to alienate large swathes of Catholics. By challenging the influence of the Church, Leeper noted how the Republic was 'getting into deep water. It is embarking on an attempt to deal with the status of the Church ... I think we should hear of a monarchist reaction in 1932'.<sup>35</sup>

It was amidst the debates on the Constitution that Azaña, leader of the republican party, *Acción Republicana*, and still minister of War, emerged as the dominant figure in Spanish politics. The debates surrounding the religious question led to the resignation of the cabinet, paving the way for him to preside over a new one. At the time, the Foreign Office knew little about Azaña but soon came to respect him as a robust and highly skilled politician despite right-wing claims he would be a Spanish Kerensky. In February 1932, for example, after a botched insurrectionary attempt by anarchists, Grahame told the Foreign Office of how Azaña's government had 'taken the drastic step of using powers under the Law for the Defence of the Republic to deport ringleaders of the movement without trial to Spanish Guinea'.<sup>36</sup> Passed in October 1931, this law allowed the government to take extreme measures when dealing with threats to political stability.<sup>37</sup> Over the following year, it proved a useful tool for the Azaña government as threats to political stability came from both the extreme left and right.

The most significant attempt to destabilise the Republic came in August 1932 when José Sanjurjo y Sacanell, a prestigious general who had fought in Morocco and would later play a leading role in the July 1936 military rebellion, attempted to bring down the Republic through a *-pronunciamiento*.<sup>38</sup> The government quickly suppressed the rising in Madrid and soon after in Seville, where Sanjurjo led a force of 6,000 troops. At the same time, anarchists around Seville took the opportunity to cause trouble of their own, and government troops sent to suppress Sanjurjo's revolt then had to subdue an anarchist rising. Grahame noted how 'it is

unfortunate that one more “pronunciamiento”, however futile, has to be added to the list former ones’.<sup>39</sup>

The Sanjurjo revolt bolstered Azaña’s role as a bulwark against attempts from both the left and right to destabilise the Republic.<sup>40</sup> Grahame gave the Foreign Office his thoughts on what would have happened if the Sanjurjo coup had been successful. Not only would it have ‘damaged irretrievably Republican institutions’, it would have ‘obliterated ordinary constitutional and parliamentary government in Spain’ and led to ‘another edition of the Primo de Rivera *coup d’état* with a general in charge without any political acumen’.<sup>41</sup> This, Grahame emphasised, would have ‘probably involved a return to the unfortunate conditions which occurred so often in the nineteenth century in Spain, with disastrous consequences for the stability and orderly progress of the country’.<sup>42</sup> Azaña’s uncompromising attitude towards attacks from both the left and right led Wiggin to consider him ‘an absolute politician’ and ‘the best man one could wish for Spain at this critical juncture’.<sup>43</sup>

In fact, Azaña’s success rectified some of the negative views of the Republic held by some in the Foreign Office in April 1931. After suppression of the Sanjurjo revolt, for instance, Grahame complained to the Foreign Office about Eugene de Caux, a *Times* correspondent in Madrid, who had been writing unduly critical reports of the Republic. For Grahame, the correspondent ignored ‘the fact that the Republican Government, ever since the revolution, has been engaged in a continuous struggle to preserve the safety of the new regime from both the extreme left and the extreme right’. The extreme right, he went on, had ‘been working hard to damage and if possible overturn the Republic’. Grahame also complained that de Caux’s articles ignored the severity with which the extreme left was treated but was quick to fire criticism at any negative treatment of ‘priests and aristocrats’.<sup>44</sup> Leeper agreed; the tone of de Caux’s articles was ‘unfairly critical of the Republican regime which has done less badly than I, for one, in my ignorance expected’.<sup>45</sup>

Azaña’s job became increasingly difficult over the next year, however, as right-wing opposition to the government increased and unified. José María Gil Robles, a deputy in the Cortes for Salamanca, became the leader of this movement officially united under the *Confederación Española de Derechas Autónomas* [CEDA]. CEDA was a right-wing mass Catholic party founded in March 1933 and made up of a broad coalition of right-wing groups.<sup>46</sup> As leader of this party, Gil Robles sought to take over the Republic through legal means using the parliamentary system.<sup>47</sup> However, CEDA increasingly took on an authoritarian character that resembled the fascist movements of Germany and Italy.<sup>48</sup> By August 1933, six months after Adolf Hitler’s rise to power, Grahame spoke of an ‘incipient Fascist movement in Spain’ that took inspiration from the successes of the German and Italian regimes. He predicted that eventually the Azaña government would fall, and a likely result

would be another dictatorship along fascist lines supported by ‘the adherents of Primo de Rivera, whose regime was already a species of fascism inspired by the Italian regime’.<sup>49</sup> After increasing instability and right-wing unwillingness to do anything other than oppose the government, President Niceto Alcalá-Zamora dissolved the Cortes and called a general election for November 1933.<sup>50</sup> The situation did not inspire optimism in the Foreign Office. Leeper noted, ‘the whole incident may prove calamitous to the Spanish Republic. The elections may lead to a monarchist reaction & if so conceivably to serious disorders’.<sup>51</sup>

Divisions between left-wing parties on one hand and the ability of Gil Robles to rally the right behind the defence of ‘religion, homeland, order, family, work and property’ on the other led to CEDA becoming the largest party in the Cortes.<sup>52</sup> Fearing that a government headed by Gil Robles would only further arouse republican fervour, Alcalá-Zamora opted for a centrist-government led by Lerroux, which Gil Robles’ party supported. However, CEDA’s strength in the Cortes allowed the party frequently to effect cabinet reshuffles and wield significant influence over the direction of government policies.<sup>53</sup> It prompted Grahame to warn the Foreign Office that if the right-wing parties used ‘their majority unduly and without prudence a dangerous situation might arise’ with the Socialists, who were ‘extremely hostile to Lerroux and likely to oppose him in every way if he were in power and allied to any party of the right’. He felt this course particularly dangerous because ‘in their opposition they would have behind them all the industrial proletariat’.<sup>54</sup> Grahame hoped that in towns and cities that required a second ballot, the left would realise the importance of putting aside differences and uniting to ‘redress the swing to the right’.<sup>55</sup> The Foreign Office acknowledged this risk of further polarisation. Charles Stirling, a clerk, wrote how the ‘fate of Spain is now largely in the hands of Señor Robles and the Catholics’. But ‘if they insist on taking office themselves and reforming the constitution there will be a head-on clash between them and the socialists and both sides are already hinting at a resort to revolutionary measures if they cannot get their way by constitutional methods’.<sup>56</sup>

The forecasts of Grahame and his colleagues in London eventually unfolded. During the following year, the Spanish government failed to maintain order and the Foreign Office and Grahame held it responsible for the deterioration of the political situation. Grahame noted how ‘the Lerroux cabinet shows little life and seems to have no drive or purpose’, which provoked agitation in left-wing groups. Stirling observed how Spain seemed ‘to be drifting slowly towards an inevitable struggle between the extremes of the Left and Right’.<sup>57</sup> Indeed, when circumstances forced Lerroux to assemble a new cabinet and include more right-wing elements, the Foreign Office was concerned the new cabinet would only lead to the right-wing elements growing ‘more exacting in their demands’. It might have provoked more

serious demonstrations and outbreaks of violence 'by the communists and the socialists leading possibly to a demand by the Right for a "strong" government of a dictatorial character'.<sup>58</sup> Grahame weighed in with his assessment that the goal of the right was 'to advance by degrees towards a fuller control of the government', but that the 'whole proletariat' would be ready to resort to violence 'if the reactionary parties take undue advantage of their parliamentary predominance'.<sup>59</sup>

Parallels exist with the British Conservative Party's active efforts to avoid political polarisation in Britain during the 1920s and early 1930s by attempting to incorporate the socialist Labour Party and movement. Whilst the Liberal Party retained some central ground in Britain until the start of the 1930s, the moderate centre in Spain eroded rapidly as extremists of both the left and right grew more exacting in their demands on the government. In the first two years of the Republic, this situation presented fewer problems for Azaña than it did for his opponents. Indeed, whilst facing problems from both the left and right, Azaña was able to incorporate more left-wing elements than the string of governments in power after November 1933. According to Grahame's appraisal, 'the fundamental trouble [since the November 1933 elections] is the antagonism between the whole Spanish proletariat and Sr. Lerroux'. Under Azaña, conversely, the 'moderate socialists were in the cabinet and supported the [government] in suppressing extremist labour agitation: but now the situation is very different and much more disturbing'.<sup>60</sup>

The Foreign Office concurred with Grahame and believed the solution would be a government representative of both left and right-wing interests. In an assessment of the development of Spanish politics between 1931 and 1934, for example, Stirling concluded that as long as reactionaries refrained from pushing the government to a 'pronounced measure of reaction', there was 'hope that a balance between the interests of the Right and the Left may eventually be found by parliamentary means'.<sup>61</sup> Again, this reflects the political culture in Britain cultivated during the 1920s and early 1930s, adhered to by virtually all of Britain's political elite. As Conservative Party leader, Baldwin believed the appeal of Labour to be too powerful and constant, and that only a positive and inclusive response could counter it. For Baldwin, successful resistance to revolution from the Labour left also required opposition to reaction from the Conservative right.<sup>62</sup> However, Gil Robles was unwilling to compromise with the left and withdrew CEDA's support for the government. The result, as he intended, was to secure ministerial positions for CEDA members. Perceiving this development as one more step in an attempt to establish a fascist dictatorship in Spain, left-wing groups launched a revolutionary strike. The lack of planning ensured the government was quickly able to suppress the rising in cities

such as Madrid and Barcelona.<sup>63</sup> In the northern region of Asturias, however, it was initially successful and lasted for a number of weeks.

Still, the swift suppression of the revolt relieved Foreign Office concerns about a communist revolution in Spain, but focus soon shifted to the harsh repression meted out by the military authorities, especially in Asturias.<sup>64</sup> One concern in the Western Department was that repression could not be ‘a good foundation for a moderate government which is what is really required to consolidate the Republic’.<sup>65</sup> Stirling noted that the ‘consequences [of the revolt] are depressing in spite of the government’s victory’, as ‘liberals of all shades have been crushed and discredited’.<sup>66</sup> He went on, ‘the triumph of the right may give Spain at least some months of orderly government. But Spain is in need of progress in many ways and the fact that the progressive forces are now heralded as potential enemies of law and order cannot make for peaceful development in the long run’. Indeed, the press launched an atrocity campaign, the object of which was, according to Grahame, ‘to create a sensation of horror in Spanish public opinion as to cause socialists and communists, etc. to be regarded as outside the pale of humanity’ and sweep away with a ‘flood of reprobation’ anyone ‘previously associated with them’.<sup>67</sup>

The Asturias rising would have a profound impact on the polarisation of Spanish politics over the subsequent two years.<sup>68</sup> Towards the end of 1935, right-wing parties in Spain attempted to alleviate British pessimism about the political situation. For instance, in November 1935, Gil Robles met Chilton, Grahame’s successor, assuring him that he would ‘not countenance any action towards a dictatorship’ and that was he determined ‘to attain complete power only by strictly legal and democratic methods’.<sup>69</sup> However, the Foreign Office doubted Gil Robles and took for granted rumours that he was taking part in plots for a military rebellion.<sup>70</sup> Gil Robles lent support to these rumours when he met Chilton again in December to speak about the political situation in Spain and share his thoughts on the likely outcome of another election. The CEDA leader told Chilton that the extreme left would sweep the elections in Barcelona, Madrid, and everywhere south of the capital; and the result would be a ‘revolution more bloody than the French and Russian revolutions’. In his meetings with Gil Robles, Chilton doubted the CEDA leader’s sincerity, warning the Foreign Office that a successful coup would allow him to ‘set up a regime similar to that existing in Italy today’. Regarding Gil Robles’ ominous forecasts for the next election, Chilton concluded, ‘I cannot quite credit Gil Robles’s fears, but one can only wait and see’.<sup>71</sup>

By the end of 1935, cracks were beginning to show in the relationship between Gil Robles and the monarchists, upon whom much of the CEDA’s support rested. According to Chilton, the monarchists were having misgivings that Gil Robles was more ‘interested in forging a base for a fascist republic’ than in forwarding the interests of the Church and the monarchy.<sup>72</sup> Meanwhile, the parties of the left – not only the moderate parties, but also the anarchists and

communists – were resolving their differences and, in mid-January 1936, issued a manifesto proclaiming they had achieved identity of aims and interests and were going to co-operate at the elections as a Popular Front coalition. Stirling noted how this manifesto was ‘not quite so blood curdling’ as the Right had made out but doubted such a coalition would be able to co-operate harmoniously even with a majority in the Cortes.<sup>73</sup>

Prior the election, the Foreign Office was more concerned about the reaction of the losing side rather than displaying a preference for either left or right. Warnings continued flowing in from right-wing groups, as well as the deposed Alfonso XIII, residing in Italy. He told Eric Drummond, the ambassador at Rome, that regardless of which side won the election, there would be a revolution in Spain. The risk, he warned, came particularly from the communists who numbered some 300,000 and were well armed and organised. Stirling doubted the truth in these claims and, although ‘probably a little exaggerated’, were what one would expect from such an individual.<sup>74</sup> Chilton predicted a victory for the right but said he could not be certain. Whatever the result, the Foreign Office believed the election would only answer two questions: who would win? And whether the losing side would ‘resort to violence’?<sup>75</sup>

Historians have suggested that in the months following the election of the Popular Front government, British hostility towards the Republic solidified. A recent argument is that ‘there was a prevailing belief, fanned by the fiercely right-wing Ambassador Sir Henry Chilton ... that in Spain the victory of the Popular Front in February 1936 had signified the beginning of a pre-revolutionary crisis’.<sup>76</sup> In ‘despatch after despatch’, Chilton ‘managed to convey the impression that the Popular Front cabinet was the puppet of extreme left Socialists and Communists’. However, such views of Chilton’s despatches are somewhat exaggerated. Although at times over-emphasising communist influence in Spain, Chilton’s assessments of the political situation between February and July 1936 contained more nuance. In his first despatch in mid-February after the election, for instance, he said the new government would ‘consist of men of fairly moderate views’.<sup>77</sup> He also predicted that Azaña as prime minister would have a ‘fairly easy time for the next six to twelve months’. In late March, he still would not entertain the possibility of a communist regime in Spain: ‘As the Spanish people do not desire a communist regime, I do not think that such a form of government, if it is ever established, would be of long duration’.<sup>78</sup>

The Foreign Office also did not place all blame for the deteriorating political situation on anarchists and communists. Indeed, Western Department officials frequently made distinctions between the political leanings of those who caused disturbances and held right-wing groups and fascists responsible, too.<sup>79</sup> Chilton could not say whether Azaña had the situation under control but speculated that

he might have been 'allowing the lower classes to blow off some steam' and waiting for the opportunity for 'suddenly calling a halt and restoring order once more'.<sup>80</sup> Certainly, this was not Azaña's tactic, and continued disturbances led to the proliferation of rumours of an impending communist revolution. To make matters worse, these rumours prompted ones of a right-wing military coup set to take place before 12 April. The Foreign Office's attitude towards the situation in Spain was summed up by Evelyn Shuckburgh, a Western Department clerk chiefly responsible for Spanish affairs, who noted that the situation was 'disturbing', but 'there is nothing we can do, except wait for the coup d'état, or the revolution, or whatever is to come'.<sup>81</sup>

As the rumoured coup gradually appeared less likely, however, attention soon shifted to the parliamentary crisis. Under the republican constitution, if the president dissolved the government on more than one occasion within a six-year period, the Cortes could decide whether the second dissolution had been necessary. If the Cortes decided it unnecessary, it could remove the president from office. As Alcalá-Zamora had dissolved the government in October 1933 and again in January 1936, the Cortes met in April to discuss the necessity of the dissolution and a majority subsequently voted to end his tenure.<sup>82</sup> Chilton believed that Azaña was the most likely replacement and that Diego Martínez Barrio of the Radical Republican Party would become prime minister. Barrio's centrist politics led the Foreign Office to think that having 'Azaña as president and Barrio as prime minister would be a strong combination'.<sup>83</sup> Azaña became president on 10 May, but the role of prime minister ultimately went to a Left Republican Party politician, Santiago Casares Quiroga. Nevertheless, Chilton and the Foreign Office both considered this a satisfactory outcome. Chilton told his colleagues, 'there might now be some chance of a better maintenance of public order and the curbing of the many demands of the proletariat'.<sup>84</sup> Of Azaña, he said, 'one hears nowadays, from mouths which but two months ago would have condemned him unreservedly, suggestions that Señor Azaña is, at the moment, the only man who can save Spain from anarchy or communism'.<sup>85</sup> William Montagu-Pollock, a Foreign Office official with experience in the Diplomatic Service, concurred, noting, 'there is a good chance that the Azaña-Quiroga combination, which should be a strong one, will succeed in restoring order; even if it has to walk worriedly at first'.<sup>86</sup>

It is possible that Azaña would have prevented Spain from drifting into civil war if right-wing groups had been willing to co-operate with the Popular Front. The Foreign Office had even hoped that as Azaña's government was moderate, there might have been some passive support from right-wing parties for the government's efforts in maintaining order.<sup>87</sup> In fact, Gil Robles and most right-wing groups were opposed to the Popular Front from the start and immediately began attempting to undermine it. Political instability in Spain gave rise to further strikes and disturbances and, during

the spring, the issue of law and order became the dominant theme in Cortes debates. Politicians such as Gil Robles and José Calvo Sotelo, a member of the monarchist *Renovación Española*, attempted to embarrass the government and rally more opposition against it by reading out detailed lists of incidents to highlight the Popular Front's inability to maintain order.<sup>88</sup>

Azaña had in fact already taken responsibility for the disorder in Spain but accused Gil Robles and Calvo Sotelo of conflating incidents perpetrated by fascists and other right-wing groups with those of anarchists.<sup>89</sup> Indeed, the Popular Front government had been striving to maintain order through the suppression of both left- and right-wing groups. Azaña warned Spaniards and international observers that the fascist movement in Spain was not as negligible as people might have thought, and the Foreign Office was inclined to believe it.<sup>90</sup> In April, for instance, Chilton told London of a conversation he had with a friend with connexions to fascist groups in Spain. According to this friend, these groups were not in a hurry to launch a coup because 'recruits to fascism were flowing in thick and fast' and 'the actions of the government were driving hundreds daily into the arms of fascism'. Shuckburgh noted, 'we have heard much of the communists' activities; this is the other side of the picture'.<sup>91</sup>

Chilton could substantiate this information based on some of his own experiences in Spain. In May, for instance, he told the Foreign Office that 'not without reason', the government was seriously afraid of fascism. After a recent drive between Zaragoza and Madrid, he wrote of 'villagers unanimously [giving] the fascist salute as we passed. I did not see one clenched fist'.<sup>92</sup> Perhaps more alarming was the apparent widespread support in Spain for fascist Italy's conquest of Abyssinia. Antonio Goicoechea, leader of *Renovación Española*, for example, sent a telegram to Benito Mussolini, the Italian dictator, congratulating him on the entry of Italian troops into Addis Ababa, the Abyssinian capital. The Italian ambassador at Madrid, Orazio Pedrazzi, also published a statement in the Spanish press announcing that it would be impossible to respond personally to the thousands of letters he had received demonstrating support for the Italian conquest of Abyssinia.<sup>93</sup>

Spaniards of the right were well aware of foreign perceptions of these links between Spanish and Italian fascists. In June, plotters of the military rebellion sent a representative to inform the British government that there would be a coup in Spain within the next week. This informant claimed that 'the head of the Spanish army' had sent him and wanted the British government to know that the organisers of the coup were 'anxious His Majesty's Government should know that it is not a fascist movement and anxious not to be thought connected with Italian propaganda or interests'. The coup was apparently strictly to restore order and place in power a 'civilian right-wing government'.<sup>94</sup>

As the political situation continued to deteriorate, George Ogilvie-Forbes, counsellor in the British Embassy at Madrid, suggested that the foreign secretary, Anthony Eden, raise the issue with Augusto Barcía Trelles, the Spanish foreign minister, at an upcoming League of Nations meeting at Geneva. In preparation, Montagu-Pollock drew up a memorandum on political developments in Spain since 1931 for Eden to read before departing for Switzerland; it discussed the Spanish government's apparent inability to maintain order stating, 'chances of parliamentary government are slight'. However, it also asserted that a 'fascist coup' was very unlikely because the Spanish Army was a 'very uncertain element' and left-wing feeling was 'very strong among the lower ranks'.<sup>95</sup> Thus, just weeks before the outbreak of civil war, Eden and the Foreign Office were far from certain that there would be a coup in Spain and, should one come, doubted its chances of success.

When the war did erupt in Spain, the situation remained unclear for some days afterwards. Telephone lines were still functioning, but telegram communications remained severely disrupted. Many British diplomatic staff in Spain were on holiday, including Chilton in San Sebastián, on the north coast. On the morning of 21 July, the Foreign Office received a telegram from Chilton stating, '[the] general situation remains confused and reliable information is not obtainable'.<sup>96</sup> These obstacles to communication delayed a Cabinet discussion of the civil war until 22 July. The summary of this discussion, however brief or detailed it might have been, was only that the 'situation remains unclear' but should be 'carefully watched'.<sup>97</sup>

It was the prospect of the civil war becoming internationalised and exacerbating the ideological cleavages amongst other European nations that led Baldwin's government to opt decisively for neutrality within a week of the outbreak of the conflict.<sup>98</sup> Indeed, the first challenge came when the Spanish government requested war material from France on 20 July, to which the French government initially agreed.<sup>99</sup> Between 23 and 25 July, the French foreign minister, Yvon Delbos, and Prime Minister Léon Blum visited London. Baldwin reportedly told Blum that if French intervention provoked a conflict with Italy, his government would remain neutral.<sup>100</sup> Just before Blum returned to Paris, Eden apparently told him that if he went go ahead and aided the Spanish government, he should 'be cautious'.<sup>101</sup>

The day after the French delegation left London, Baldwin gave Eden explicit instructions regarding Spain: 'on no account, French or other, must [you] bring us into a fight on the side of the Russians'.<sup>102</sup> Some historians have suggested this comment was a manifestation of Baldwin's anti-communism, reflecting his hostility towards the Spanish Republic and a belief that it was on the cusp of falling victim to a Moscow-inspired communist revolution.<sup>103</sup> Rather than hostility specifically towards the Spanish Republic, Baldwin's instruction to Eden ties into his views more

generally on foreign policy and the trajectory of Europe's political polarisation. Baldwin had earlier predicted that soon 'from the Rhine to the Pacific there will be a people running into millions who have been trained to be either Bolshevik robots or Nazi robots'.<sup>104</sup> His fear at this stage was not so much that Spain was about to fall to communism. A conflict between Italy and France, provoked by French aid to the republican government, would draw in the Soviet Union and Germany and further polarise Europe. In such a conflict, Baldwin felt that a Franco-Soviet victory over Germany 'would probably only result in Germany going Bolshevik'.<sup>105</sup> For him, communism was only marginally worse than fascism, and he would therefore have been content to leave 'the Bolshies and the Nazis' to fight each other.<sup>106</sup> Indeed, as he told the House of Commons in October 1936, 'You have now on either side [in Spain] large bodies of men who are prepared to fight and to die for an abstract creed. That is a new feature since the War, and, to my mind, far the most dangerous thing in this world today'.<sup>107</sup>

By considering Foreign Office perceptions of political developments in Spain between 1931 and 1936, British responses to the outbreak of the civil war come into focus not as an ideologically-driven attempt to facilitate the overthrow of the Republic, but as responses to what the British government perceived as a major threat to its foreign policy objectives. By summer 1936, political divergence in Spain, combined with the ideological polarisation in Europe more generally, ensured that the Spanish conflict was elevated almost immediately into a primary British foreign policy consideration. Within this context, there emerged the underlying motivations behind the British decision to remain neutral and in the enthusiastic acceptance and advocacy of the Non-Intervention Agreement in August 1936.<sup>108</sup>

None of this suggests that the British response to the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in 1936 lacked the ideological antipathy on which other historians have focused. It existed. However, understanding British diplomacy in Spain between 1931 and 1936 requires a more nuanced assessment of official views of Spanish politics by incorporating an appreciation of extreme right and fascist threats to stability. Until the outbreak of civil war, the Foreign Office and British diplomats in Spain wanted to see a stable government that could assimilate elements of both the left and right. This attitude reflected the political consensus in Britain according to which a government ought not to oppress the working class but incorporate it. Doing so was a means of taming working class militancy to create political stability. This hope for the Republic became increasingly difficult to maintain after the Popular Front's election in February 1936 but, in assessing Spain's political situation, the Foreign Office blamed instability and the irreconcilability between the left and right on both extremes of the political spectrum, not just the left.

Of course, when an inclusive, stable, and democratic government was no longer possible, many British politicians, diplomats, and Foreign Office officials preferred a reactionary government and sympathised with the military rebels. However, no consensus existed on the form of a desirable government based on realistic assessments of the situation. Indeed, the surge of support for extreme right and fascist groups in Spain, in addition to anarchist militancy, was a microcosm of British concerns about the broader ideological polarisation occurring in Europe at the time. Accordingly, the almost immediate internationalisation of the conflict ensured the British government opted for non-intervention in anticipation of the dangers that the Spanish Civil War presented to Europe's *status quo* and reflected the British government's weakness in confronting dictatorships.

## Notes

1. Halifax to Strabolgi, 11 August 1936, FO [Foreign Office Records, The National Archives, Kew] 371/20530/W8416/62/41.
2. For example, see Anthony Eden, *The Eden Memoirs: Facing the Dictators* (London, 1962), 395–418; Edward Frederick Lindley Wood [Lord Halifax], *Fulness of Days* (London, 1957), 192.
3. Douglas Little, *Malevolent Neutrality: The United States, Great Britain and the Origins of the Spanish Civil War* (Ithaca, NY, 1985). For a recent but similar line of argument, see David Jorge, “Gran Bretaña y la Segunda República española: prejuicios históricos y progresiva hostilidad”, in *La Segunda República y su proyección internacional*, ed. Ángeles Egido León (Madrid, 2017), 160–87.
4. Douglas Little, “Red Scare, 1936: Anti-Bolshevism and the Origins of British Non-Intervention in the Spanish Civil War,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 23, no. 2 (1988): 291–311.
5. There is no consensus on exactly when the policy of appeasement began. Some historians have suggested the policy dates to the immediate aftermath of the First World War. See Martin Gilbert, *The Roots of Appeasement* (London, 1966). Others have suggested it started much later, under Neville Chamberlain's premiership. See B. J.C. McKercher, “Anschluss: The Chamberlain Government and the First Test of Appeasement, February–March 1938,” *International History Review* 39, no. 2 (2017): 274–94. For a discussion of how views on appeasement have developed since the Second World War, see Sidney Aster, “Appeasement: Before and After Revisionism,” *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 19, no. 3 (2008): 443–80. On British non-intervention in Spain and appeasement, see Scott Ramsay, “Ensuring Benevolent Neutrality: The British Government's Appeasement of General Franco during the Spanish Civil War, 1936–1939,” *International History Review* 41, no. 3 (2019): 604–23.
6. Enrique Moradiellos, *Neutralidad benévola: El Gobierno británico y la insurrección militar española de 1936* (Oviedo, 1990); Enrique Moradiellos, *La perfidia de Albión: el gobierno británico y la guerra civil española* (Madrid, 1996), 24–39; Jill Edwards, *The British Government and the Spanish Civil War, 1936–1939* (London, 1979), 7–11.
7. Edwards, *British Government*, 15–30.
8. As Spanish society became increasingly polarised during the republican period, a fascist movement developed in Spain and would later play a major role in

- Franco's new state. See Ángela Cenarro Lagunas, *El fin de la esperanza: fascismo y guerra civil en la provincia de Teruel (1936-1939)* (Teruel, 1996), 67–91; Stanley Payne, *Falange: A History of Spanish Fascism* (London, 1962).
9. Spanish President Niceto Alcalá-Zamora referred to Grahame in his memoirs as a “true friend of Spain”: Niceto Alcalá-Zamora, *Memorias: segundo texto de mis memorias* (Barcelona, 1977), 326.
  10. Laura Beers, “Is this man an anarchist?: Industrial Action and the Battle for Public Opinion in Interwar Britain,” *Journal of Modern History* 82, no. 1 (2010): 30–60; Keith Jeffrey and Peter Hennessy, *States of Emergency: British Governments and Strikebreaking since 1919* (London, 1983), 102–42.
  11. Philip Williamson, *Stanley Baldwin: Conservative Leadership and National Values* (Cambridge, 1999), 204, 211, 235–38, 325–26, 353.
  12. Maria Thomas, “The Front-Line of Albion’s Perfidy. Inputs into the Making of Policy Towards Spain: The Racism and Snobbery of Norman King,” *International Journal of Iberian Studies* 20, no. 2 (2007): 105–27; Tom Buchanan, “Edge of Darkness: British ‘Front-Line’ Diplomacy in the Spanish Civil War, 1936-1937,” *Contemporary European History* 12, no. 3(2003): 279–303.
  13. Javier Tusell Gómez, *La Segunda República en Madrid: elecciones y partidos políticos* (Madrid, 1970), 23–27.
  14. Helen Graham, “Reform as Promise and Threat: Political Progressives and Blueprints for Change in Spain, 1931-6,” in *Interrogating Francoism: History and Dictatorship in Twentieth Century Spain*, ed. Helen Graham (London, 2016), 74–78.
  15. Paul Preston, “The Agrarian War in the South”, in *Revolution and Civil War in Spain, 1931-1939*, ed. Paul Preston (London, 1984), 159–81; Cenarro Lagunas, *El fin de la esperanza*, 38; Paloma Biglino Campos, *El Socialismo Español y la Cuestión Agraria, 1890-1936* (Madrid, 1989), 313–22; Edward E. Malefakis, *Agrarian Reform and Peasant Revolution in Spain: Origins of the Civil War* (London, 1970), 162–204.
  16. Nigel Townson, *The Crisis of Democracy in Spain: Centrist Politics Under the Second Republic, 1931-1936* (Brighton, 2000), 24–47.
  17. Mary Vincent, *Catholicism in the Second Spanish Republic: Religion and Politics in Salamanca, 1931-1939* (Oxford, 1996).
  18. Thomas, “Front-Line”, 105; Helen Graham, *The Spanish Civil War: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford, 2005), 38.
  19. Grahame to Isaacs, 14 April 1931, FO 371/15771/W4146/46/41.
  20. Cabinet Conclusion [CC] 21(31)6, 15 April 1931, CAB [Cabinet Archives, The National Archives, Kew] 23/66; Grahame to Foreign Office, 14 April 1931, FO 371/15771/W4147/46/41; Grahame to Isaacs, 15 April 1931, FO 371/15771/W4204/46/41.
  21. Grahame to Isaacs, 15 April 1931, Wiggin minute, 16 April 1931, both FO 371/15771/W4202/46/41.
  22. Howard Smith and Mounsey minutes, 18 April 1931, both FO 371/15771/W4251/46/41.
  23. Grahame to Foreign Office, 16 April 1931, *Ibid.*
  24. CC 24(31)1, 22 April 1931, CAB 23/66.
  25. Glyn Stone, *Spain, Portugal and the Great Powers, 1931-1941* (Basingstoke, 2005), 8.
  26. Lerroux had assured the British government in May 1931 that fostering good relations with other countries and abiding by League of Nations principles would define Spanish foreign policy. On republican foreign policy, see Ángeles Egido León, *La Concepción de La Política Exterior durante la Segunda República, 1931-1936* (Madrid, 1987); see Javier Tusell Gómez, *Historia de España en el Siglo XX, II. La crisis de los*

- años treinta: *Republica y Guerra Civil* (Madrid, 1998), 240–49 for a brief overview of republican foreign policy.
27. Grahame to Henderson, 26 June 1931, Wiggin minute, 2 July 1931, both FO 371/15774/W7543/46/41.
  28. Grahame to Henderson, 15 July 1931, FO 371/15774/W8234/46/41.
  29. Wiggin minute, 30 June 1931, FO 371/15774/W7660/46/41.
  30. Leeper minute, 15 September 1931, FO 371/15775/W10541/46/41.
  31. Julián Casanova, *De la calle al frente: El anarcosindicalismo en España, 1931-1936* (Barcelona, 1997).
  32. Grahame to Henderson, 7 July 1931, FO 371/15774/W7884/46/41.
  33. Wiggin minute, 28 July 1931, FO 371/15774/W8648/46/41.
  34. Stanley Payne, *Alcalá Zamora and the Failure of the Spanish Republic, 1931-1936* (Brighton, 2017), 30–45.
  35. Leeper minute, 8 October 1931, FO 371/15775/W11648/46/41.
  36. Grahame to Simon, 15 February 1932, FO 371/16506/W1956/12/41.
  37. Chris Ealham, *Anarchism and the City: Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Barcelona, 1898-1937* (Edinburgh, 2010), 77, 130–31; Stanley Payne, *Spain's First Democracy: The Second Republic 1931-1936* (Madison, 1993), 73.
  38. A *pronunciamiento* is a form of military rebellion, associated particularly with Iberian and Latin America states, through which the military, or a section of the military, abandons its role as a neutral instrument of the state and attempts to either seize control of state power for itself or bring about a change in government. The military rebellion in July 1936 tried to do something along these lines but due to the strength of republican resistance instead plunged Spain into a drawn-out civil war. The Sanjurjo rebellion in 1932 received funding from fascist Italy, as did many right-wing groups opposed to the Republic. See Ismael Saz, “La política exterior de la Segunda República en el primer bienio (1931-1933): Una valoración,” *Revista de Estudios Internacionales* 6, no. 4 (1985): 853–54.
  39. Grahame to Simon, 15 August 1932, FO 371/16506/W9230/12/41.
  40. Paul Preston, *The Coming of the Spanish Civil War: Reform, Reaction and Revolution in the Second Republic* (London, 1994), 100–01; Sanjurjo was sentenced to death and later reprieved. He went into exile in Portugal from where he would collaborate with the military rebels that planned the revolt of July 1936. The supposed leader of the revolt, Sanjurjo died in a plane crash on 20 July whilst travelling back to Spain. Hundreds of his collaborators in the 1932 revolt were sent into exile in West Africa without trial. See Henry Buckley, *The Life and Death of the Spanish Republic: A Witness to the Spanish Civil War* (London, 2013), 88–92.
  41. Grahame to Simon, 23 August 1932, FO 371/16506/W9493/12/41.
  42. Grahame to Simon, 7 September 1932, FO 371/16506/W9944/12/41; Grahame to Simon, 20 September 1932, FO 371/16506/W10388/12/41.
  43. Wiggin minute, 14 December 1932, FO 371/16506/W13695/12/41.
  44. On the British press and reports on Spanish politics between 1931 and 1936, see Darrin M. McMahon, “La política española desde la perspectiva del London Times, 1930-1936,” *Espacio, Tiempo y Forma* 9 (1996): 159–88; Miguel Fernández-Longoria, “La percepción de los acontecimientos políticos españoles de enero a julio de 1936 en la prensa inglesa,” *Espacio, Tiempo y Forma* 17 (2005): 191–205.
  45. Grahame to Smith, 17 August 1932, FO 371/16506/W9269/12/41.
  46. Ferran Gallego, “The Importance of Being Fascist: The Falange and the Spanish Counter-Revolution (1931-1936),” in *The Last Survivor: Cultural and Social Projects*

- Underlying Spanish Fascism, 1931-1975*, ed. Ferran Gallego and Francisco Morente (Brighton, 2017), 38–41.
47. José María Gil Robles, *No fue posible la paz* (Buenos Aires, 1968), 77–80.
  48. Julio Gil Pecharromán, *Historia de la Segunda República Española, 1931-1936* (Madrid, 2002), 182.
  49. Grahame to Simon, 9 August 1933, FO 371/17427/W9240/116/41. The British and French governments became increasingly concerned over the strategic implications of closer Italo-Spanish relations in the 1920s; see Gustavo Palomares Lerma, *Mussolini y Primo de Rivera: Política Exterior de dos dictadores* (Madrid, 1989), 221–39.
  50. Grahame to Foreign Office, 12 September 1933, FO 371/17427/W10357/116/41; Grahame to Simon, 10 October 1933, W 11428/116/41; Grahame to Simon, 19 October 1933, FO 371/17427/W11858/116/41.
  51. Grahame to Foreign Office, 4 October 1933, FO 371/17427/W11165/116/41.
  52. Gallego, “Importance of Being Fascist”, 38; Grahame to Foreign Office, 22 November 1933, FO 371/17427/W13297/116/41.
  53. Preston, *Coming of the Spanish Civil War*, 120–26.
  54. Grahame to Simon, 29 November 1933, FO 371/17427/W13657/116/41.
  55. Graham to Foreign Office, 22 November 1933, FO 371/17427/W13297/116/41.
  56. Grahame to Vansittart, 30 December 1933, FO 371/14727/W14852/116/41.
  57. Grahame to Simon, 20 February 1934, FO 371/18595/W1781/27/41.
  58. Grahame to Simon, 1 March 1934, FO 371/18595/W 2101/27/41; Stirling minute, 5 March 1934, FO 371/18595/W/2168/27/41.
  59. Grahame to Simon, 2 March 1934, FO 371/18595/W2255/27/41.
  60. Grahame to Simon, 13 March 1934, FO 371/18595/W2476/27/41.
  61. Stirling memorandum, 19 March 1934, FO 371/18595/W2654/27/41.
  62. Williamson, *Baldwin*, 204.
  63. See documents, 3 October 1934, FO 371/18596/W8779/27/41; 5 October 1934, FO 371/18596/W8841/27/41; 5 October 1934, FO 371/18596/W/8854/27/41.
  64. Grahame to Simon, 6 October 1934, FO 371/18596/W8854/27/41; Grahame to Simon, 8 October 1934, FO 371/18596/W8913/27/41.
  65. Leigh-Smith minute, 8 October 1934, FO 371/18596/W8934/27/41.
  66. Stirling minute, 15 October 1934, FO 371/18696/W9132/27/41.
  67. One example Grahame drew on was a story of “20 little girls”, all daughters of Civil Guards, who reportedly had their eyes gouged out by extremists in Asturias. See Grahame to Simon, 30 October 1934, FO 371/18597/W9526/27/41.
  68. See Brian Bunk, *Ghosts of Passion: Martyrdom, Gender and the Origins of the Spanish Civil War* (London, 2007).
  69. Chilton to Hoare, 15 November 1935, FO 371/19736/W9890/18/41.
  70. Chilton to Hoare, Stirling minutes, 21 December 1935, all FO 371/19736/W10877/18/41.
  71. Chilton to Eden, 30 December 1935, FO 371/19736/W11051/18/41.
  72. Chilton to Eden, 3 January 1936, FO 371/20519/W65/62/41.
  73. Chilton to Eden, 21 January 1931, FO 371/20519/W585/62/41.
  74. Drummond to Seymour, 7 February 1936, FO 371/20520/W1235/62/41.
  75. Chilton to Eden, 14 February 1936, FO 371/20520/W1355/62/41.
  76. Paul Preston, “Britain and the Basque Campaign of 1937: The Government, the Royal Navy, the Labour Party and the Press,” *European History Quarterly* 48, no. 3 (2018): 491–92.
  77. Chilton to Eden, 17 February 1936, FO 371/20520/W1444/62/41; Chilton to Foreign Office, 24 February 1936, FO 371/20520/W1643/62/41.

78. Chilton to Eden, 26 March 1936, FO 371/20520/W2678/62/41.
79. Chilton to Eden, 4 March 1936, FO 371/20520/1938/62/41; Chilton to Eden, 11 March 1936, FO 371/20520/W2179/62/41; Chilton to Eden, 14 March 1936, FO 371/20520/W2384/62/41.
80. Chilton to Eden, 18 March 1936, FO 371/20520/W2387/62/41.
81. Chilton to Eden, 26 March 1936, FO 371/20520/W2678/62/41; Little, *Malevolent Neutrality*, 197 refers to Shuckburgh as Whitehall's "expert on Spain".
82. Payne, *Alcalá Zamora*, 129–49.
83. Shuckburgh minute, 29 April 1936, FO 371/20521/W3723/62/41.
84. Chilton to Eden, 13 May 1936, FO 371/20521/W4243/62/41.
85. Chilton to Eden, 14 April 1936, FO 371/20521/W3224/62/41.
86. Chilton to Eden, 18 May 1936, Pollock minute, 20 May, both FO 371/20521/W4433/62/41. At this time, Little, "Red Scare", 298 claims that the growth of the PCE since February 1936 and the ongoing disturbances "lent credence to rumours circulating among British politicians and civil servants, including Stanley Baldwin's personal confidant, Thomas Jones, that 'Moscow foretells a communist government in Spain in three months'". This is somewhat misleading because Jones was hardly representative of all "British Conservatives", and in fact usually voted for the Labour Party. The diary entry where Little references Jones merely states that Joachim von Ribbentrop, the German ambassador at London, claimed that Moscow predicted a communist government in Spain. See Thomas Jones, *A Diary with Letters, 1931-1950* (London, 1954), 210–11. British deciphering of communication between Moscow and the Spanish Communist Party in Madrid at this time suggested that the intention of the Comintern was not to ferment revolution in Spain but to collaborate with the republican Government and support it against left-wing extremism. One deciphered telegram sent from Moscow to Madrid in May 1936, for instance, read: "in all the party activity you must realise that in the situation as it stands the creation of soviet power is not in the order of the day, but, at the moment, it is solely a question of establishing such a democratic rule that it will be possible to bar the progress of fascism and anti-revolution". See Moscow to Spain, 6 May 1936, HW [Signals Intelligence Records, The National Archives, Kew] 17/26/5300.
87. Chilton to Eden, 13 May 1936, FO 371/20521/W4249/62/41.
88. Chilton to Eden, 21 April 1936, FO 371/20521/W3449/62/41; Chilton to Eden, 18 May 1936, FO 371/20521/W4433/62/41; Ogilvie-Forbes to Eden, 25 June 1936, FO 371/20521/W5670/62/41.
89. Payne, *Spain's First Democracy*, 314–20.
90. Chilton to Eden, 24 April 1936, FO 371/20521/W3567/62/41; Chilton to Eden, 27 May 1936, FO 371/20521/W4749; Chilton to Eden, 3 June 1936, FO 371/20521/W4915/62/41.
91. Chilton to Eden, 29 April 1936, Shuckburgh minute, 30 April, both FO 371/20521/W3720/62/41.
92. Chilton to Eden, 8 May 1936, FO 371/20521/W4074/62/41.
93. Chilton to Eden, 12 May 1936, FO 371/20521/W4190/62/41.
94. Shuckburgh minute, 3 June 1936, with Vansittart's reply enclosed, FO 371/20521/W4919/62/41.
95. Montagu-Pollock memorandum, 23 June 1936, FO 371/20521/W5693/62/41.
96. Chilton to Eden, 20 July 1936, FO 371/20523/W6606/62/41.
97. CC 54(36)5, 22 July 1936, CAB 23/85.

98. On Foreign Office debates on the threats of communism and fascism, see Donald Lammers, "Fascism, Communism, and the Foreign Office, 1937-1939," *Journal of Contemporary History* 6, no. 3 (1971): 66–86.
99. Gerald Howson, *Arms for Spain: The Untold Story of the Spanish Civil War* (London, 1998), 24–25, 58–61.
100. Edwards, *British Government*, 28.
101. Joel Colton, *Léon Blum: Humanist in Politics* (NY, 1966), 241.
102. Jones, *Diary with Letters*, 230–31.
103. For examples, see Moradiellos, *La perfidia de Albi6n*, 58; Howson, *Arms for Spain*, 36.
104. As early as 25 July, Sir George Clerk, the British ambassador at Paris, said the Quai d'Orsay had pressured the French government to go back on its decision to send arms to Spain because it "already had reason to think that the Italian and German governments were assisting the 'White' forces in Spain": see Clerk to Eden, 25 July 1936, FO 371/20524/W6960/62/41. Interestingly, British intelligence picked up on communication between the rebels and the Italian government as early as 23 July 1936. Exactly when this reached policy-makers, however, is unclear. See 23 July 1936, HW 12/205/065679.
105. CC (36)1, 11 March 1936, CAB 23/83/18.
106. Williamson, *Baldwin*, 315–17.
107. House of Commons, *Hansard* (29 October 1936), 150–51.
108. Eden to Cambon, 4 August 1936, FO 371/20527/W7504/62/41; also see David Carlton, "Eden, Blum and the Origins of Non-Intervention," *Journal of Contemporary History* 6, no. 3 (1971), 40–55.

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