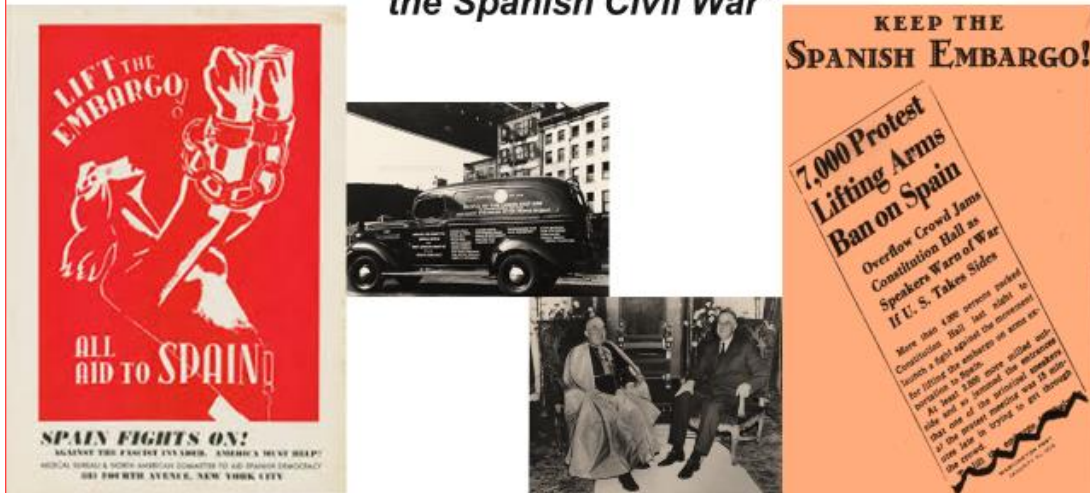


***“Protesting the ‘Condonation of Savagery’:  
American Catholics and Non-Involvement in  
the Spanish Civil War”***



## **Michael Purello**

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From 1936 until 1939, the Republican Spanish government and its Loyalist supporters resisted the military coup of Franco's Nationalist forces during the Spanish Civil War. This paper contributes to an understanding of the U.S. role in the war, specifically the Roosevelt administration's decision to not officially support the Popular Front government against the rebel forces as well as the limits to the American public's effort to support the Loyalists. There was a confluence of factors that stymied American support, particularly that America's European allies officially adopted non-involvement. Using contemporary newspapers, government documents, letters to Franklin D. Roosevelt and the Department of State, and a number of Catholic organization archives, this study advances a further reason American aid was hindered. This paper investigates the extent of American Catholic protests against any form of U.S. involvement in the Spanish Civil War. It argues that Catholics were central to the domestic considerations to retain the non-involvement policy regarding the war. Due to the ardent concern with the reported persecution of Catholics in Spain, Catholic organizations, press, clergy, and politicians protested any involvement that would support the Loyalists. These

protests occurred at all levels of American society. Within the press, priests denounced pro-Loyalist Protestant ministers in the *New York Times*. In government, Catholic politicians denounced fundraising for the Loyalists while other Catholic organizations formed committees and sent letters to Roosevelt opposing reforms to neutrality legislation. Among the public, Catholics impeded the non-governmental fundraising of the North American Committee to Aid Spanish Democracy by protesting and censoring its speakers and events.