

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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# 1

## THE PRIMO DE RIVERA DICTATORSHIP AND THE FALL OF THE MONARCHY

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### BACKGROUND NARRATIVE

Nineteenth-century Spain was torn apart by two civil wars between rival claimants to the throne. An unstable and short-lived republic (February 1873–December 1874) gave way to a constitutional monarchy under Alfonso XII. The 1876 Constitution introduced a bicameral parliament and by 1890 universal male suffrage was established. But, if a new age of political enlightenment seemed at first to be dawning, it was not to be an age of gold: in the 'Disaster' year of 1898, the economically valuable Spanish colonies of Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Philippines were all lost to the United States.

Spain kept out of the First World War. Although neutrality brought economic prosperity, there also came inflation and internal conflict, including a general strike in 1917. In the same year, army officers, still blaming the politicians for the defeats of 1898, set up their own unions. On the far left, anarchism was growing fast. In the regions, there was serious unrest, notably Barcelona's 'Tragic Week' (1909), the 'Three Red Years' (*Trienio Bolchevique*) in Andalucía (1918–20), and guerrilla warfare in Catalonia during 1919–23 when 700 people were murdered. Worker against capitalist, Catholic against atheist, anarcho-syndicalist against conservative, regionalist against centralist, landless labourer against landowner showed divisions deepening in Spain. There were also divisions within the divisions. Captains of

industry resented the hold on political power of the reactionary landowners. Landless labourers, already brutally repressed by the paramilitary Civil Guard, hated the conservative-minded smallholders, the Catholic favourites and potential allies of the landowners. 'Regenerationists', who looked to restore the greatness of Spain, deplored the corruption of local political bosses, known as *caciques*.

Deepening this chasm of national anxiety came the news in 1921 of a gruesome military defeat in Morocco. The reputation of the army top brass was pilloried in the subsequent report on the affair, and the King's role in the campaign was investigated by parliament. The Catholic Church felt threatened when the government seemed about to grant full public freedom of conscience in what church leaders saw as a gross act of state-sponsored atheism. Landowners felt undermined by government attempts at land reform. But, according to Paul Preston in his 1993 biography of Francisco Franco, the flashpoint for General Primo de Rivera's *coup d'état* in 1923 came at Málaga. It was here, the embarkation point for Spanish Morocco, that a non-commissioned officer was murdered. When the suspect, a corporal, was pardoned by the King under political pressure, the officer corps felt doubly humiliated. The corrupt state had to be seized.

Primo de Rivera's dictatorship lasted seven years. Its politics reflected both reactionary and progressive attitudes, but eventually Rivera alienated as broad a political spectrum as had supported him in 1923. In January 1930 he withdrew from politics to exile in Paris, where he died. His successor, General Berenguer, headed a divided government. Although he restored political parties, as well as the four local administrations of Catalonia, parliament (the Cortes) was to be delayed until spring 1931. Berenguer's rule was not a smooth 'transition in reverse' to the system before Rivera's coup, but nor could it be a gradualist transition forward, given the level of support for more radical change, even a new dictatorship. The relatively free municipal elections of April 1931 were in effect a referendum on the monarchy, and they showed overwhelming support for the Republicans and Socialists. Alfonso XIII stepped down and the Second Republic was born.

## ANALYSIS (1): WHAT DID THE DICTATORSHIP OF PRIMO DE RIVERA ACHIEVE?

When, in September 1923, as Captain-General of Barcelona, General Miguel Primo de Rivera issued a *pronunciamento* overturning the Liberal government of García Prieto, he was seen by many as an almost messianic figure, leading a crusade against political corruption, social chaos and imperial humiliation. He was backed by the King, the army, the Church and a wide popular consensus. Yet, although his period of rule to January 1930 is called the *Dictadura*, his was not a dictatorship that followed rigid lines of policy. In Spanish Morocco, he moved from a policy of withdrawal to a strategy of war and consolidation. Initially he seemed keen to maintain an army promotions system based strictly on seniority, but he came to favour advancement through merit. He appeared to be sympathetic to the ambitions of moderate Catalan regionalism, but soon moved to a distinctly unsympathetic centralism. He planned for a constituent Cortes but then abandoned the idea.

Although, as Hugh Thomas has noted, Rivera's regime lacked the organized mass base and fanatical imperialism that might have labelled it fascist,<sup>1</sup> the 'Dictator' nevertheless dismissed the pre-existing Cortes, suspended elections and trial by jury, presided over a highly regulated education system, censored the press and forced many people, including some conservatives, into exile. On the other hand, Rivera was also in many ways a humane figure, concerned to alleviate the grinding poverty in which much of Spain's population lived. He posted military delegates to each region as 'pocket iron surgeons', to excise corruption. Sadly, their attempt to free the electorate from the hold of the *caciques* was no more than a qualified success.

The same could be said of Rivera's attempt to build a wide body of political support. Even after the end of the war in Morocco in 1926, when he felt able to 'liberalize' his regime, he never managed to persuade even the moderate Socialists to join his National Assembly. Rivera's Unión Patriótica (UP), which he hoped would give his regime a façade of public zeal, was a failure. His dynamic economic programme was open to political sabotage and susceptible to fluctuations in the world economy. Although Rivera banned the anarcho-sindicalist trade union, the CNT, and secured the cooperation of the moderate Socialist trade union, the UGT, he was never able to ensure united and consistent left-wing support. Three years later, in 1927, banned anarchists secretly re-established themselves as the small underground attack group, the Iberian Anarchist Federation (FAI).

In Catalonia and the Basque Country Rivera at first pursued a genuinely open-minded policy, in the hope that granting a regional assembly to Catalonia would uphold the authority of his Catalan conservative allies in the Lliga (Catalan Regionalist League). It did not, and Rivera saw no alternative but to abolish the assembly, much to the delight of his centralist supporters. As a result, the political tide in Catalonia, further strengthened by Rivera's banning of the Catalan flag, flowed instead towards the more radical anti-clerical Catalan separatism and republicanism as embodied in the *Èsquerra* (Catalan Left Coalition). In the Basque Country, too, Rivera abandoned his original plans for a measure of regional autonomy under pressure from his military associates. However, he retained conservative Basque officials in their posts, while, as S. Payne has shown, the tariff on imported goods and state subsidies to local industry greatly assisted the economy of the Basque Country and, by extension, that of Spain.<sup>2</sup>

Rivera's social policies show similar contrasts. The government's policy on the publication of books in Catalan and Basque was tolerant. Basque culture flourished. The regime built 2,000 new schools and refurbished 2,000 others, and prioritized technical training. At the same time, Rivera disciplined university professors who criticized his government and, in a highly controversial move, delighted the Church by recognizing degrees awarded by Catholic universities. This infuriated the liberal intelligentsia. Less controversial were cheap housing for workers and higher maternity benefits for women. On the other hand, women were still barred from voting.

Social and economic progress was essential to national regeneration, but Rivera was limited in his options and dependent both on a healthy international economy and on internal cooperation. A worthy scheme was stillborn in 1928 when the *latifundistas* (large landowners) resisted the introduction into the countryside of compulsory wages and conditions arbitration committees (*comites paritarios*) which were already operating successfully in urban areas. Similarly, José Calvo Sotelo, Rivera's finance minister, was blocked in his attempts to use tax increases to pay for public works, and had to resort to heavy borrowing and an 'extraordinary budget' which led, in 1928, to the collapse of the peseta. Raymond Carr has criticized Rivera's Council for National Economy for being too bureaucratic,<sup>3</sup> but at the time it seemed a sensible means of pursuing autarky, as did high tariffs and state subsidies to industry. The policy of granting monopolies led to Spanish dependence on the USSR for oil. Nor was there any let-up in industrial unrest. In 1924 the Asturian Mineworkers' Union called a general strike; it failed, and the employers imposed even longer working hours.

However, there were several areas of success. Apart from the successful urban arbitration committees, bold, imaginative public works schemes led for a time to near-full employment: new roads were built and old ones tarmacked; an extended railway network included the first trans-Pyrenees rail link between Spain and France; and 60–80 million pesetas per annum were allocated to hydro-electric schemes. Two international exhibitions in 1929 promoted tourism and Spain's image of national regeneration, celebrating Spanish achievement past and present: the Ibero-American Exposition in Seville and the Barcelona International Exhibition. The Catalan historian Albert Balcells has suggested that Rivera hoped, rather optimistically, that the Barcelona Exhibition would build a political bridge to regional sentiment in Catalonia.<sup>4</sup>

Gerald Brenan, in his pioneering work *The Spanish Labyrinth*, first published in 1943, pointed out that the upswing in the world economy assisted Spain's own development.<sup>5</sup> However, could Spain's prosperity last without a sustained rise in agricultural exports? Whatever happened internationally, domestic political consequences arising from Spain's economic performance were bound to follow. Historians have offered contrasting perspectives on this. Hugh Thomas, in his highly readable *The Spanish Civil War*, first published in 1961, juxtaposes people's high expectations, thanks to a new consumer culture, with the arrival of the economic slump in the late 1920s.<sup>6</sup> The resultant disillusionment was made even more painful given the Dictatorship's earlier impressive record of a 300 per cent increase in production and commerce. And even had there been no economic slump, Primo de Rivera had still failed to capitalize on the 'feel-good' factor to wed the people to a more lasting and up-to-date replacement for the monarchy.

Writing in the mid-1980s, an expert on the Rivera dictatorship, Shlomo Ben-Ami, drew attention to the political consequences of economic migration to towns and cities. This had been generated by the opportunities to work in public works schemes and expanding industry: in these more 'open' environments, relatively free of *caciquismo*, the migrant electorate became less deferential and more prone to support radical politics.<sup>7</sup> The American historian Gabriel Jackson, writing in 1959, stressed the positive legacy of the public works programme: it was a base for further modernization during the Republic (1931–6). Paul Preston, on the other hand, has drawn attention to the heavy burden bequeathed to the Republic by the Rivera dictatorship's excessive spending.<sup>8</sup>

Clearly, then, the economic history of 1920s Spain cannot be seen in isolation. Rivera's successes and failures need to be put into a wider

historical and international perspective. His public works schemes built on the progress of previous governments, and were in turn expanded and coordinated by the Republic. The arbitration committees were anticipated in post-1918 legislation and were successfully introduced into rural areas in 1931.

On the negative side, the war against the Riff and Jabala rebels in Spanish Morocco was a severe drain on the economy and Spain's military manpower. However, Rivera's initial plan – withdrawal – was rejected scornfully by the army, so he went instead for the military option. With French help, the Spanish defeated the rebels and forced their leader, Abd-el-Krim, to surrender in 1926. Victory in Morocco was immensely popular at home, but it did not guarantee loyal or sustained support from the army. The policy of promotion through merit, which Rivera was determined to pursue, won him support from the officers in Spain's elite Army of Africa (Africanistas), but earned him the bitter enmity of the ultra-traditionalist artillery corps, who went on strike in 1926 and were involved in a coup attempt in 1928. For a time they were even disbanded. Rivera also undermined his own chances of gaining support from the army by failing to address grievances over low wages and obsolete weapons. His inability to get the army as a whole firmly on side proved fatal. The captains-general responded unenthusiastically to his 'back me or sack me' telegram of January 1930, and the King was able to use this 'unconstitutional' manoeuvre as a pretext for forcing Rivera to resign. Even so, some key elements within the army, notably the Africanistas, were still loyal to Rivera and appalled at King Alfonso's cynical 'dropping of the pilot'. Perhaps ironically, Rivera's very achievements in modernizing the country seemed to have made the monarchy an anachronism. But it was Rivera who fell first. 'Spain, One and Great!' had been the rallying cry of Rivera's UP, but if his rule showed anything, it was that Spain could not unite around a slogan, however inspiring.

#### Questions

1. Was Primo de Rivera a weak dictator?
2. What did Spain gain from Primo de Rivera's dictatorship?

#### ANALYSIS (2): WHAT WAS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE FALL OF THE MONARCHY IN 1931?

Four days after the municipal elections of April 1931, and two days after the provisional government inaugurated the Second Republic,

King Alfonso XIII published his farewell message. This manifesto for the past and future raises several questions about his own role in politics, the position of the monarchy, and the wider nature of Spanish politics. For example, the results of the municipal elections did indeed, as Alfonso maintained, show public alienation from the monarchy, but this was not universal. The King had made mistakes, as he recognized, but was it 'without malice', as he claimed? People would, he continued, come to appreciate his consistent efforts to serve Spain to the best of his abilities. But to be a monarchist was not necessarily to be loyal to Alfonso as an individual: many monarchists were deeply disillusioned with him. The King's prerogatives were, he said, historical and national rather than personal to himself: but he had become closely identified with political controversy. Standing in the way of the national will would risk civil war, he declared, but the experience of the Republic would show that this national will was in fact divided against itself. He was 'King of all Spaniards'; but the Carlists (supporters of a rival branch of the royal dynasty) would hotly dispute that claim. Spain's destiny must be decided by Spain; but the Civil War would highlight the role other powers would play in deciding Spain's future. Alfonso declared he was suspending his royal powers while the nation decided his future: he hoped (in vain) to be recalled to the throne.

The historical significance of Alfonso's decision is twofold: it helps demonstrate the spread of republican and anti-monarchist sentiment in Spain by 1931, and it provides a basis for tracing the development of monarchist resistance to the Republic. Raymond Carr writes of Alfonso's 'moral isolation' in 1931,<sup>9</sup> yet the King's moral authority had been shrinking for decades. He saw himself as a stabilizing factor in a very fluid political situation that featured competing cliques and changing alignments, in which he was sure to offend one faction or another. In the early 1920s he was accused of employing divide-and-rule tactics, which further damaged an already divided Conservative Party. As a 'hands-on' monarch, Alfonso was, as Carr points out, inevitably identified with unpopular government decisions, such as the sending of working-class Spaniards to shore up mining concerns in Morocco. The King's image also suffered badly from the bloody defeat at Annual (1921).

Perhaps not surprisingly, Spain's long tradition of republicanism came to a head in the 1920s. The Annual affair produced a radical anti-monarchist alliance in 1926, and republicanism was fed further in 1928 by state recognition of Catholic university degrees. During demonstrations against the policy, the King's statue at Madrid University was vandalized beyond repair. It is a sign of how unpopular the King had

become by 1928 that the leader of an abortive revolt against him was a leading conservative monarchist politician, Sánchez Guerra. Despite his failure, or perhaps because of it, Guerra became something of a national hero for his opposition to the King. Monarchists and republicans alike were demanding a decision-making Cortes. Guerra himself remarked, 'I am not a republican, but I recognize that Spain has a right to be a republic.'

The Pact of San Sebastián (August 1930) has been described by the Spanish historian Juan Pablo Fusi as 'the central event in the opposition to the monarchy of Alfonso XIII'.<sup>10</sup> Under this pact, Spanish and Catalan republicans agreed to work together in exchange for a guarantee of Catalan autonomy; it further underlined the impossibility of the King's task of convincing the political elite to operate on his terms. The pact was supported by figures as diverse as Azaña, a progressive Republican; Alcalá Zamora, a conservative Liberal converted to republicanism by his disillusionment with the King; Lerroux, a right-wing Radical; Maura, a Conservative; and de los Rios, a Socialist intellectual. It also enjoyed the support of army radicals.

The King's unpopularity helped boost military involvement in republicanism. In 1930 junior officers staged a revolt at Jaca in Aragón. Many of the military had a personal grudge against the King because he had not kept his promise to overturn Rivera's policy on promotion through merit and the dictator's harsh policy towards the artillery corps. However, the Jaca Revolt failed to spark off a wider uprising, and collapsed: its two leaders were shot for treason. But the political shockwaves from these peacetime executions dwarfed even the trial of Sánchez Guerra. The two young officers became martyrs to an ever more popular republican cause.

Gerald Brenan observed that 'No king or dictator could hope to hold Spain if the towns were against him.'<sup>11</sup> Yet that was exactly Alfonso's position in early 1931. Madrid and most provincial cities voted overwhelmingly Republican or Socialist, with a turnout twice the normal size, in the municipal elections. These damaging results presented Alfonso with something of a *fait accompli*. The Minister of War, General Berenguer (who had recently been Prime Minister), and General Sanjurjo, Commander of the Civil Guard, advised Alfonso that all was lost. By then, for most people in the upper and middle classes, a republic seemed preferable to Bolshevism: at least if Alfonso gave way to a presidency, Spain would not risk becoming the world's second proletarian state.

If the King played a central role in uniting his various opponents in opposition to himself, if not to the monarchy, he played a less central

role in the development of monarchist opposition to the Republic. As his Farewell Message suggested, his initial reaction was realistic: to let the Republic be. But when the new government seized his property, exiled him for life and launched a ferocious attack on the Church and the very national order he had left office to defend, he became more amenable to the overtures of monarchist cliques. While the Church praised the monarchy as an institution, and Alfonso as King, other monarchist groups were mobilizing. They fell into two camps, the Alfonsists and the Carlists, each loyal to one of two rival lines within the Borbón dynasty. They all despised the 'atheistic' Republic; the Carlists also saw the chance to reassert themselves after their defeats at the hands of the Alfonsists during the nineteenth-century-Carlist Wars. Some monarchists favoured a constitutionalist approach, wearing the Republic down from within. However, the higher-profile elements were more militant, pursuing a doctrine of 'catastrophism' – that is, violent and liberating convulsion which would bring the Republic crashing down and lead to the restoration of the monarchy.

It is important to realize that Alfonsists and Carlists were rivals: indeed, Carlists saw Alfonsine rule as iniquitous. Yet to a significant extent they cooperated. Both were militant, and bitterly critical of such right-wing 'moderates' as José María Gil Robles; but when the occasion demanded they were prepared to work with these same moderates, notably at election time. The government's 'revolutionary' reform policies made the monarchists increasingly sceptical of the constitutionalist approach, and in 1932 they formed the 'catastrophist' political parties, *Comunión Tradicionalista* for the Carlists (hence, 'Traditionalists') and *Renovación Española* for the Alfonsists. Both parties also operated as extra-parliamentary groups, hatching plots to destroy the Republic. The catastrophists relished their romantic struggle on the periphery of Spanish politics. *Renovación Española* plotted with military die-hards and sent delegates to lobby the Duce and the Pope. In the Carlist camp, paramilitary units (*requetés*) drilled for the coming conflict, supported by militant Catholic priests and, for historian Martin Blinkhorn, resembling Mussolini's *squadristi*.<sup>12</sup>

Hugh Thomas has noted that although Alfonso requested that nothing stand in the path of democracy in April 1931, during the Civil War he was active politically while resident in Italy: he gave generous financial help to the Nationalists and used his influence with the Italian state. Thomas also points up the class differences between Alfonsists, among whom wealthy landowners and financiers were prominent, and Carlists, who comprised less affluent aristocrats, peasants, skilled craftsmen and shopkeepers disillusioned by the government's economic agenda.<sup>13</sup>

Writing in the mid-1990s, George Esenwein and Adrian Shubert's emphasis is rather on the way Alfonso XIII himself betrayed the constitutional monarchy by accepting Primo de Rivera's coup and his *Dictadura*.<sup>14</sup> Predictably, this boosted the Republican cause as shown by the conversion of Alcalá Zamora, later President of the Republic. Esenwein and Shubert also offer a different perspective from Thomas's on the division between Alfonsism and Carlism: that the Alfonsine Renovación Española was not a mass party like the Carlist Comúnión Tradicionalista but that it nevertheless wielded considerable economic influence and had close associates in the army. For Carr, however, it was the Carlists who were 'the most serious and consistent plotters', though he, too, stresses the strong connection between generals in the Civil War and Alfonsists.<sup>15</sup> The consensus is that, at grassroots level, it was the Carlist *requetés* who played a crucial role on the Nationalist side, providing some of Franco's most highly trained and fanatical soldiers. Indeed, the Carlists had come to regard Gil Robles's 'accidentalism' as anathema, far too moderate for their apocalyptic tastes.

Brenan also allows Alfonso the attempt to return to constitutional government in 1930 – without the risk of elections – but stresses that leading politicians would not cooperate. On the contrary, their anti-monarchist, pro-republican stance acquired its highest profile yet in the August 1930 Pact of San Sebastián.<sup>16</sup> Carr's rather different emphasis is on General Berenguer's role in delaying the elections, which added fuel to the campaign against the King. And the one party that in 1930 was monarchist – the Unión Monárquica Nacional – was at odds with Alfonso over his dismissal of General Primo.

In the end, the monarchists' uncompromisingly independent stance could not be sustained. In any case, the Civil War's most celebrated Nationalist leader, Francisco Franco, did not like the idea of working with independent-minded paramilitary groups, whether monarchist or fascist. He therefore subsumed them all in a 'super-movement', the Spanish Traditionalist Phalanx of the Groups of the National Syndicalist Offensive (FET y de las JONS), where they could be more easily controlled. Alfonso XIII did not formally abdicate until 1941, and for loyal Alfonsists he remained a symbol of hope; Franco, on the other hand, had no intention of undermining his own supremacy by restoring the King. It would be forty-four years after Alfonso's departure before the monarchy would be restored in the person of his grandson, King Juan Carlos. No Carlist pretender has challenged him. Yet.

## Questions

1. How did the monarchy contribute to the growth of republicanism during the period 1921–31?
2. How important was monarchism in the Second Republic and the Civil War?

## SOURCES

### 1. THE PRIMO DE RIVERA DICTATORSHIP IN CONTEXT

#### Source A: Manuel Azaña on the power of the *cacique*, 1923.

The oligarchy, as a system, and *caciquismo* as an instrument – the exclusion of the will of the rest – derive from before the constitutional regime and the suffrage and have persisted with them . . . The *cacique* scandalizes us because the public conscience is more sensitive than fifty years ago . . . The blackest side of the activities of the *cacique* is the everyday sordid oppression, that rarely gets reported in the press or in parliament; an oppression that bears fruit in votes, because it demands them . . . The kingdom of the *cacique* rests fundamentally on two bases: economic and professional. The ownership of the land; a little – or a lot – of disposable income, and the offer of some necessary services, such as medical help, are the strongest means of hitching the people to his wagon . . . That which the loanshark or the doctor does not take for himself is fruit left to the priest, because (heavens above!) here also the true evangelicals are few and far between . . . The serious combat against the *cacique* is sustained by the organizations of landworkers and small peasants . . . [These] germs of peasant democracy are destroying the political bands and unmasking the allies of the *cacique*.

#### Source B: a Left Book Club viewpoint, 1936.

In the summer of 1922, the report of the committee, headed by General Picasso, was presented. Promptly the Council of Ministers suppressed it . . . Among the punishments recommended for the culpable was death for the high commanding generals in Morocco and several of the ministers in Madrid . . . A storm of protest burst over the news that the Picasso report was to be shelved. The King dissolved Parliament. New elections left conditions unchanged. The way was open for a dictator to step in . . . With an iron hand [Primo de Rivera] put an end to the movement which threatened to implicate the King himself. The nobility, the large landowners, the Church dignitaries, the monarchist pensioned mayors, the responsible militarists, all breathed a sigh of relief at the advent of the Primo de Rivera dictatorship.

**Source C: Franz Borkenau, an Austrian sociologist, on the achievements and problems of the dictatorship.**

What elements of modern European life there are to-day [1937] in Spain mostly date from the time of Primo; *the republicans are loath to acknowledge it*. But wherever there is a splendid road (and there are many), a modern inn in a small town, a new breakwater at some important port, a modern barrack or a modern prison, in nine out of ten cases it will have been constructed under Primo's administration. The dictatorship was able to secure the foreign loans needed for this work of construction. And at first it had the enthusiastic support of the industrial bourgeoisie . . . Neither was the dictator unaware of the need for giving the urban proletariat something more than prisons and cartridges in order to make it cooperate. For the first time in Spanish history a constructive effort was made to solve the 'social problem'. Compulsory collective bargaining was introduced, in order to secure acceptable wages for workers . . . Altogether it was the greatest attempt ever made to transform Spain into a modern country . . . But . . . from the first to the last moment [Primo] was in power, he was passively tolerated . . . Moreover, Primo's regime was not only up against the profound Spanish apathy that confronts constructive effort; it contained within itself elements absolutely incompatible with the winning of mass support. A progressive dictatorship such as his must rely, in the first place, on the bourgeoisie and the progressive intelligentsia. But Primo had to foregather with their two natural enemies, the army and the Church.

**Source D: a Right Book Club viewpoint, published in 1938.**

Once he is stirred, the Spaniard is a crusader, but he does not readily understand a crusade against an enemy so amorphous as apathy. Though Primo de Rivera failed to get the Spaniard to appreciate collective civil responsibilities, so that it became increasingly difficult to lay aside his powers . . . his dictatorship did much good work in other directions . . . One of its great works was an attempt to assist labour towards a wise development, and Primo de Rivera instituted what were known as Comites Paritarios, composed of representatives of employers and employees . . . Largo Caballero, later seduced to the cause of the extremists, did great work in those years . . .

It is amusing to read in reputedly well-informed British periodicals that the Republic and its politicians had bestowed the inestimable boon of electric light upon the poor country villagers. The writers probably believe this, and are unaware that the credit for the initiative in most of the great hydro-electric schemes was due to the Dictatorship, whose schemes would have absorbed something like the total estimated national wealth . . . The Ministers of the Dictatorship were over-optimistic in their finance. That, perhaps, was the most important reason for the fall of the Dictator; for the over-expenditure resulted in

conditions which gave the agitators their opportunity to pull down first the Dictatorship itself, and secondly the Monarchy . . . It was a strange, patriarchal sort of Dictatorship, one of the most moderate, when one considers the difficulties of governing this fierce nation.

**Source E: an evaluation of the dictatorship by historian and MP Katharine Atholl, 1938.**

For forty or fifty years Spain has had her Socialist and trade-union movements, by no means confined to the towns. A peasant rising, however, as recently as 1919 had been fruitless, and since Primo de Rivera's seizure of power in 1923, though some useful constructive work had been achieved, no agrarian reform had been possible. Moreover, there had been no freedom to ventilate grievances in speech or press, no free elections, and no Cortes with any powers to legislate; while the desire of Catalonia for autonomy had been sternly refused. Some universities had been suppressed; professors and teachers were miserably paid . . . and religious tests had been imposed on State officials. The dictatorship, in fact, by overriding the Constitution, had read the nation a lesson in anarchy.

**Questions**

1. Explain the references to: (a) 'the republicans are loath to acknowledge it' (Source C) (2); (b) 'a lesson in anarchy' (Source E). (2)
2. How revealing is Source B as to the nature of Spanish government in the early 1920s? (3)
3. What can be inferred from Sources A and E as to political and economic relationships in rural Spain in the 1920s? (4)
- \*4. Assess the relative value to historians of the evidence provided by Sources C and D. (6)
5. Using these sources and your own knowledge, comment on the description of Primo de Rivera's rule as 'one of the most moderate' types of dictatorship. (8)

**Worked answer**

\*4. [Apart from considering the accuracy or otherwise of these sources, also give thought to language and tone and other senses in which the sources may or may not be 'reliable'.]

What Borkenau says in Source C about the lack of active support for the Rivera regime can to some extent be corroborated: the Unión Patriótica did not become the affirmative mass-movement he had hoped for, and

the Socialist Party would not join the National Assembly. However, the Socialist Largo Caballero joined Rivera's Council of State, even though he later distanced himself from the regime. As Borkenau suggests, it is true that Rivera found it difficult to unite right and left behind him. On the other hand, Rivera was not the first to attempt to solve the 'social problem'. Earlier governments had both initiated public works schemes, which after all have a social and political as well as an economic function, and made efforts to arbitrate in labour disputes.

Both Borkenau and the authors of Source D make generalized assertions about Spanish 'apathy' in the face of 'constructive effort'. Contrary to the authors' claims, many thousands willingly sought work in the public works schemes. The Africanista infantry also had cause to appreciate Rivera and were shocked when he was dismissed.

Borkenau's language and tone are relatively detached, though his repetition of the word 'modern' suggests admiration. Despite the provenance of Source D, its assessment is not entirely one-sided. It is true that politics intrude more clearly ('a wise development . . . seduced to the cause of the extremists . . . gave the agitators their opportunity'). They are also not averse to stereotypes: witness their references to 'the Spaniard' and 'this fierce nation'. They are somewhat patronizing, for example towards sections of the British press, though that of itself does not make their specific point of criticism wrong. Although themselves right wing, they acknowledge Largo Caballero's 'constructive effort' in the field of labour relations, while criticizing the financial policy of the dictatorship. Both sources give useful near-contemporary insights into the achievements and problems of Rivera's rule. Neither can be dismissed as mere propaganda.

As always, it depends to some extent on what the historian is looking for; and what his or her source is 'valuable for'. For unleavened propaganda one would look further afield. Nevertheless, Right Book Club analyses provide a counterweight to analyses such as Sources B and C.

## SOURCES

### 2. THE MONARCHY AND THE BIRTH OF THE SECOND REPUBLIC

#### Source F: Left Book Club authors on the events of 1930.

On August 17, 1930 republican leaders met at Hotel de Londres, San Sebastian. Headed by the extreme Right republican leaders, such as Niceto Alcalá Zamora,

later President of the 1931 Republic; Alejandro Lerroux, later associated with the fascist leader José María Gil Robles, Miguel Maura, and others, a pact was drawn up compromising whatever differences there were to attain the common object of the establishment of a republic. They counted on nation-wide general strikes and support of the bulk of the army.

Captain Fermin Galán, a heroic republican figure, author of an idealistic book for the regeneration of Spain, *The New Creation*, on December 12, 1930 led what was known as the Jaca Revolt.

The fact that Captain Galán commenced the revolt prematurely shows the mistrust of the republican officers towards the republican civil leaders, who constantly postponed the hour of revolution. Captain Galán and his associates hoped to confront the republican leaders with a *fait accompli* and thus compel them to act further. The revolt was a miserable failure. Together with Captain Ángel García Hernández, Captain Galán was court-martialled and sentenced to death. At the trial he was asked: 'Did you have accomplices?' 'Yes,' was the reply. 'Who are they?' 'Yourselves, cowards!' shouted the condemned captain.

#### Source G: a pro-monarchy perspective.

The outstanding feature of the tragedy of the fall of the Monarchy was the statesmanship of Alfonso XIII. It would be hard to find a more patriotic and disinterested gesture than he made on the eve of his departure, when he issued his public proclamation . . .

'I prefer to stand resolutely aside rather than provoke a conflict which might array my fellow countrymen against one another in civil and patricidal strife . . .

'I shall await the true and full expression of the collective conscience and . . . I deliberately suspend my exercise of the Royal power and am leaving Spain, thus acknowledging that she is the sole mistress of her destinies. Also I now believe that I am fulfilling the duty which the love of my country dictates. I pray God that all other Spaniards may feel and fulfil their duty as sincerely as I do.'

#### Source H: Franz Borkenau on the April 1931 municipal elections.

The polls demonstrated . . . facts of primary importance for the future. The revolutionary movement had hardly yet reached the countryside; the peasant was untouched; which meant, after all, that it had no deep roots in Spain as a whole. The countryside still obeyed the *caziques* [*sic*] and the aristocrats and voted monarchist. But . . . with two or three exceptions, all the provincial capitals voted for the united list forwarded by the coalitions of those parties that had signed the pact of San Sebastian. The monarchy had been optimistic; the result came as a terrible shock. The results in Barcelona were decisive. There everybody had expected the success of the Lliga; the Esquerra came in with an overwhelming majority. A few hours later Macià proclaimed the independent Catalan republic.



The only possible help lay in the military. But the generals saw no reason to defend Alphonso, whom they had learned to hate . . . [The King] issued a pathetic proclamation that he resigned in order to spare the country civil war.

**Source I: Minister of War Manuel Azaña speaking in July 1931.**

A year ago today the forces that prepared and brought about the revolution had still not come to agreement. Three months ago the limping monarchy was still trying to aim its weapons against us. And three days ago, after the Spanish people had said let there be a republic and the Republic had been born [in April 1931], three days ago we went to the Constituent Cortes and told them: 'Here are the powers that the republican people delegated to us' . . .

Some might wish to rub out the memory of December like a bad dream . . . But it does not embarrass me at all, as a member of the government, in a difficult and sensitive post, it does not embarrass me at all to invoke the memory of the December revolution which was the starting point for the victorious vote of April. ('Hear, hear.' Loud applause.) The vote of April did no more than corroborate and sanction within the legality of the polls the effort and the propaganda of the martyrs for freedom of December, morally victorious if apparently defeated . . .

And I say here, friends and co-religionists, from my sensitive position of power that this memory does not embarrass me at all, because I have always and still do maintain that against tyranny everything is permissible and no law is binding. Just as I maintain that against the revolution that has now become the Republic by sanction of popular elections nothing is permissible that steps outside legal channels. (Long and loud applause.)

**Questions**

- \*1. Explain the references to: (a) 'and others' (Source F); (b) 'in a difficult and sensitive post' (Source I). (2)
2. What grounds might the monarchy have had for being 'optimistic' (Source H)? (3)
3. Contrast the perspectives offered on the Jaca Revolt by Sources F and I. (4)
4. What are the underlying purposes of the July 1931 speech delivered by Azaña to the Republican Action Party? (6)
5. Critically examining these sources and using your own knowledge, discuss the circumstances which led to the transition from monarchy to republic. (8)

**Worked answer**

\*1. [Two marks for each part means that you must also offer some analytical comment.]

(a) There are names omitted here: for example, Azaña, the Left Republican leader; de los Rios, the Socialist; and MalloI, the Catalan nationalist. The reason might be that Gannes and Repard, Marxists writing in 1936, were keen not to associate the political left overtly with the origins of the problem-plagued Second Republic. Hence the anonymous 'and others'.

(b) Azaña was Minister of War in the first government of the Second Republic. However, he was a Left Republican, critical of much of the Spanish army's record and its organization. As Minister of War he would be expected to work for the improvement of the armed forces, but *his* definition of the national interest would bring him up against army traditionalists.