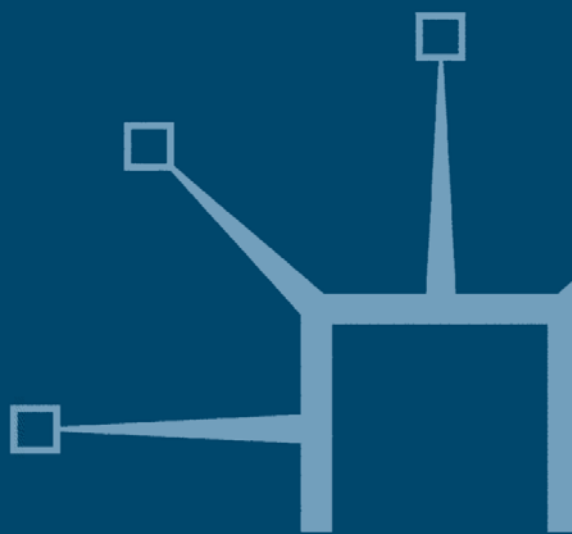


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The Agony of Spanish Liberalism

From Revolution to Dictatorship 1913–23

Edited by
Francisco J. Romero Salvadó
and Angel Smith



The Agony of Spanish Liberalism

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TWENTIETH CENTURY SPAIN: Politics and Society, 1898–1998

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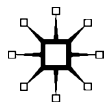
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1

The Agony of Spanish Liberalism and the Origins of Dictatorship: A European Framework

Francisco J. Romero Salvadó and Angel Smith

Introduction

This book analyses the organic crisis of Spain's liberal order that culminated with the establishment of a military dictatorship headed by General Miguel Primo de Rivera in September 1923.¹ The decay of liberal politics in Spain is approached as a regional variant of the general crisis that engulfed most traditional (*fin de siècle*) European regimes in the aftermath of the First World War. At the root of this crisis was the fact that these regimes had taken only limited steps towards democratization. Before 1914, all ruling orders, even autocratic Russia, had introduced a modicum of civil liberties, embraced parliamentary practices and replaced the feudal system with capitalist forms of production. In some, relatively free elections took place and ministers were to an important degree accountable to parliament. However, elements of the *ancien régime* still permeated Europe's political societies. At their apex, the heads of state (in most cases crowned sovereigns) ruled over extended courts and at the very least retained significant constitutional powers. In fact, armies were still the monarch's Praetorian Guard rather than a national institution. The upper houses of parliament were bulwarks of vested interests while a series of devices – ranging from limits to the franchise to giving disproportionate weight to rural areas, and, in southern Europe above all, sheer ballot-rigging – limited the power of lower chambers. This encouraged demands for democratic and even revolutionary change.²

The outbreak of the First World War proved a watershed. Its awesome socio-economic and human impact saw the rise of mass politics and the accelerated breakdown of hierarchical and clientelist-based governments.

Thus the armistice of November 1918 put an end to the armed conflict but gave way to a period of unprecedented social strife and political radicalism that umbilically tied the two world wars in what some scholars have named 'the Thirty Years' War of the twentieth century'; a European civil war that included the dawning era of Fascism and Communism and whose last and fiercest battle before the outbreak of the Second World War was the fratricidal conflict that broke out in Spain in July 1936.³

Growing social and political polarization produced revolutionary upheaval followed by the retreat of liberal-constitutional regimes throughout Europe and their replacement by various forms of dictatorial rule. In 1920, 26 out of Europe's 28 states were liberal parliamentary regimes, but by 1938 16 of them had succumbed to dictatorships. Only four remained by 1940.⁴

The fall of liberal regimes came in two distinct waves; the first in the aftermath of the First World War, hastened by the economic and social strains of war and social and national conflict; the second followed on from the 1929 Great Depression, which played a significant role in the rise to power of Germany's Nazi Party in 1933. It is on the origins of the Primo de Rivera coup during the 'first wave' of authoritarian takeovers that the chapters in this volume focus. In this introduction we will provide background information on the roots of the polarization of culture and society and the wellsprings of reactionary ideology in Spain. Furthermore, we aim to put events in Spain into their broader European context. When analyzing the failure of Spain's own revolution of 1917 particular attention will be paid to events in Russia, both in order to understand the greatly differing outcomes and also to chart the impact of the February and October revolutions in Russia on the social and political climate in Spain. Comparisons with other Western European countries also help explain why, while much of the continent faced a number of common problems, Spain was particularly vulnerable to an authoritarian takeover, despite not having entered the First World War. Furthermore, by contrasting events with those of Italy, a country which, both socially and politically, was quite similar to Spain, the reasons behind the differing paths taken by the counter-revolutionary assault on liberalism (with Benito Mussolini coming to power in Italy in 1922 and General Miguel Primo de Rivera in Spain in 1923) becomes clearer.

Liberalism and the Restoration regime, 1875–98

In Spain, the transition from the *ancien régime* to liberalism was accomplished in the 1830s. In a fierce civil war, urban liberal elites, backed

by sectors of the army, crushed the absolutists or Carlists and laid the framework for the final dismantlement of the old order, including the disentailment of the land and the expropriation of ecclesiastical property.⁵ Nevertheless, in a number of respects, compared to the more robust parliamentary regimes in Great Britain, France and even to late-comers such as Germany and Italy, serious shortcomings could be discerned in the construction of the new liberal nation-state.

Spain introduced universal manhood suffrage relatively early, in 1890. Only France, Germany, Switzerland and Denmark had previously taken this step (though, as noted, these states retained 'safeguards' which put a break on democratic politics).⁶ Yet universal male suffrage in Spain made little difference to the political system. The meagre number of anti-dynastic MPs returned to parliament was an anomaly in the European context.⁷ This was largely due to the fact that despite significant economic progress, by the turn of the century, it was still a relatively backward country in which two-thirds of its population continued to be engaged in the primary sector and with rates of illiteracy at 56 per cent.⁸ This helps explain why, as Javier Moreno Luzón shows (Chapter 2, this volume), the façade of electoral politics hid a process of horse-trading between local bigwigs or *caciques* and the political elite. Two dynastic parties, the Conservatives and Liberals, monopolized power and rotated in office (the so-called *turno pacífico*), with the results of the elections decided in advance in a process of negotiation between the minister of the interior and the *caciques*. Variants of this system remained in place in other parts of southern Europe, most notably in Portugal (where it was known as *rotativismo*), Italy (*trasformismo*) and in the Balkan Peninsula.⁹

The result was that the classical liberal ideals of meritocracy and effective public administration permeated Spanish political life only imperfectly, to say the least.¹⁰ The entrenched governing oligarchy, closely tied to the local *caciques*, overlooked citizens' real needs and oversaw the operation of costly and inefficient public services that served the interests of the influential and not of the collective.¹¹ In part because of the links established with local elites, the Spanish state was also reluctant, from the late 19th century, to raise the taxes required in order to adopt the more interventionist role in society which was becoming increasingly common in Western and Central Europe. Thus, in 1900–2 its public expenditure made up 9.4 per cent of national income, compared to an average of 15 per cent in France, Great Britain and Germany. Furthermore, Spain's finances had been overstretched, first by the Napoleonic invasion (1808–13), the subsequent attempts to

reconquer her mainland American colonies, and then by the Carlist civil wars, while the officer corps were privileged. As a result, between 1850 and 1890, 27 per cent of its expenditure comprised interest on the public debt and another 25 per cent went on the military.¹² All attempts at budgetary reform were destined to failure given the structural constraints on which the regime rested. In these circumstances it would find it difficult to develop an effective state machine. The state bureaucracy was small and underpaid, and an elementary education system was rolled out only slowly.

This tendency to pact with powerful interests rather than confronting the need for their modernization and subordination to civil authority can be seen in other areas. In early 19th-century Europe, the Church supported the *ancien régime* and so collided with the liberal state. The Vatican would remain opposed to liberal institutions and rationalist thought through to the 20th century. This frequently provoked severe tensions between Church and state. The French Third Republic was anti-clerical, separating Church and state in 1905. The Italian Risorgimento or unification of the country led to an open clash with the Vatican, with its logical conclusion being the seizure of Rome in 1870, thereby ending the papacy's temporal power. Pope Pius IX declared himself a prisoner and it 'inexpedient' (*non expedit*) for Catholics to collaborate with the new state. In Spain – the heart of the 16th-century Counter-Reformation – the Church's revolt against modernity was particularly widely supported, especially in rural areas. The Church-backed Carlist uprising against the new liberal order was finally defeated, but it thereafter soon recovered economic and political influence. From the 1840s, in order to defuse opposition, the dominant conservative-liberal tradition felt the need to re-establish the link between Church and state. Furthermore, it came to see the Church as a guarantor of moral order and a bulwark against dangerous, subversive left-wing doctrines.

A first step was taken down this path in 1851 with the signing of a new concordat, by which Catholicism was confirmed as the country's official religion and the state also assumed the obligation to pay the salaries of the lay clergy. Tacit support for the liberal system was made possible by the ascension of Pope Leo XIII (1878–1903), who, fearing the spread of socialism, began slowly to open the door for collaboration with Europe's liberal regimes (though Italian Catholics were still formally forbidden from participating in the politics of their country). Henceforth, despite its anti-liberal ideas the Catholic hierarchy worked with Spain's ruling order and the 'moderate' Catholic Party, the Unión Católica (Catholic Union), integrated into the Conservative Party in

1883. This allowed the Church to recapture the urban upper-middle classes, most especially through the rapid expansion of the religious orders and of their network of private schools (while religious education was obligatory in state elementary schools). This contrasted with the situation in the major Western European states, where from the late 19th century, state education – in which the religious component was limited – developed rapidly.¹³ Importantly, therefore, at the turn of the century, Spanish bourgeois milieux were closely linked to the Church both culturally and, in many respects, ideologically.¹⁴

The Church remained a reservoir of anti-liberal thought. Its hierarchy may have compromised with the Restoration regime, but there were also more radical strands spurred on by the fear of secularization. Much of rank and file continued to sympathize with the Carlist movement, which combined the call for a return to an idealized theocratic monarchy with a populist anti-oligarchic rhetoric, contrasting an idyllic rural life with the moral perils of the urban world. And though the Unión Católica entered the Conservative Party, a Catholic Integrist movement took off, which would have no truck with liberalism. Under pressure from Leo XIII it broke up in the 1900s, but its ideas remained influential. Simultaneously, the leading Carlist intellectual, Juan Vázquez de Mella, offered a detailed Catholic-corporatist blueprint for the new society which proved attractive to the Right. Yet it would be those Catholics close to the Unión Católica who would ultimately be the greatest threat to liberalism, for it was within their ranks that an effort was made to mobilize support behind a new right-wing nationalism, which equated the Spanish national essence with Catholicism, and baptized dissidents as an anti-Spanish internal enemy.¹⁵

There were similarities in the position acquired by the Spanish army. Throughout Europe, the officer corps remained one of the key bulwarks of entrenched conservatism. By the turn of the century, a significant percentage of the military upper echelons came from the landowning aristocracy whose political and cultural values they obviously shared. Still, the officer class, even in Russia and Germany, did provide an avenue for upward mobility and increasingly co-opted strata from humble origins. Of course, they were indoctrinated in the military academies with the 'right principles' of hierarchy, duty and discipline – *esprit de corps*. This meant that they embodied 'the national idea' and so their task was not just to protect the motherland against foreign threats but also against the internal enemy. Indeed, in the last resort, they were to act as a police force against those threatening the social order.¹⁶

Nowhere was this 'praetorian sense of manifest destiny'¹⁷ more clearly manifested than in Spain. Having delivered victory during the Carlist wars, the officer corps attained a paramount position as guarantor of the new state against insurrection from below and potential new absolutist challenges. In 1844, the Civil Guard was created to police the countryside and was put under military control. Simultaneously, the army became the ultimate arbiter of politics as the narrowly based liberal regime broke down into small bickering factions led by rival generals. For nearly three decades, *pronunciamientos* or military coups were the only valid means of political change.¹⁸

Tellingly, the Bourbon Restoration was the product of a *pronunciamiento* in December 1874. The architect of the regime, Antonio Cánovas del Castillo, managed, temporarily as it turned out, to return the army to its barracks. However, fear of the masses meant that the Restoration authorities never attempted to reform the army and subordinate it to civilian sovereignty. Both dynastic parties frequently responded to any sign of unrest with the suspension of constitutional guarantees and the declaration of martial law, which left the army in charge of public order.¹⁹ In return, as Sebastian Balfour notes (Chapter 10, this volume), the armed forces acquired almost total institutional autonomy; an autonomy that was exceptional in comparison with other Western states. Officers were rewarded with promotions and aristocratic titles, and governments did little to tackle inefficiency in the armed forces, symbolized above all by its bloated officer corps, the payment of whose salaries left little for new equipment.²⁰

Challenges to the Restoration regime, 1898–1914

Europe's liberal regimes faced significant challenges from the 1890s. In the first place there was the threat from below, embodied by the rising consciousness and organization of the lower classes. Increasingly powerful labour movements grew up, accompanied by escalating strike action. Even though before 1914 the percentage of workers affiliated to labour organizations was relatively small, protest and strike activity began to reach unprecedented heights. In Germany, the Social-Democratic Party had nearly 1 million members and its dependent Free Trade Unions about 2.6 million. In France and Italy, significant sections of the labour movement espoused the doctrine of revolutionary Anarcho-Syndicalism, which combined a radical rejection of 'bourgeois politics' with the argument that proletarian emancipation could only come through the result of workers' direct action rooted in grass-roots

activism at the level of the factory and community. Such ideas were dominant in both the Confédération Générale du Travail (hegemonic in French labour) and the Italian Unione Sindacale Italiana (a rival to the dominant Socialist Confederazione Generale del Lavoro).²¹

In July 1889, Socialist parties established the Second International. In theory at least this pursued a Marxist programme of class struggle and revolution to establish the dictatorship of the proletariat. In practice, however, the growth of a large paid bureaucracy, the easy recourse to economic determinism, and the stress on the preservation of the organization meant that Socialist leaderships often showed reluctance to back revolutionary adventures.²²

In the second place, a New or Radical Right emerged which moved beyond the conservatism of established elites, rejected any reasoned debate and adopted an extreme 'blood and land' xenophobic nationalism, wild imperialist rhetoric, racism, anti-leftism and anti-liberal corporatism. This was most visible in France, Italy and Germany. In France and Germany the groups which respectively coalesced to form Action Française and which made up the *völkish* nationalist leagues combined suspicion of big business and an idealization of the rural world with fierce anti-Semitism. The doctrinal bases of Italy's Radical Right, represented between 1910 and 1918, above all by the Associazione Nazionale Italiana (Italian Nationalist Association – ANI), had a more 'modern' feel. According to one of its leaders, Alfredo Rocco, 'Modern technology demanded an organic system whose highest expression was the professional syndicate, the organization in which owners and workers would meet.'²³ Particular stress was laid on the condemnation of the 'parasitic' Italian political class. Furthermore, its ideology, while based on reactionary anti-liberal Catholic corporatism, juxtaposed the 'productive' classes, above all the industrial bourgeoisie, to the 'unproductive' and corrupt liberal elites as the potential saviours of the nation, with the result that it was attuned to the world of industrial capitalism. For this reason, while the more backward-looking French and German movements comprised, above all, distressed farmers, retired officers, clerical employees, small businessmen and shopkeepers, the Italian Radical Right was able to reach out and attract the Futurist artistic movement and some sectors of Italian big business. Moreover, as we shall see in the next section, where the challenge by the working-class Left became particularly acute, wider liberal-conservative circles would, at least tacitly, back the far right as a (literal) club with which to beat socialism.²⁴

Italian radical nationalists shared with their German counterparts a frustration at the lack of significant imperialist aggrandizement and the

belief that they had been unfairly excluded from the race for colonial spoils by the Western 'plutocracies'. This occurred in a context in which, from the 1890s, imperial rivalries escalated and Europe began to divide into two power blocs. Europe's ruling and governing classes adopted a more aggressive nationalist discourse. Social Darwinism, with its claims that humanity was divided into a hierarchy of races, was widely adopted, and 'Social Imperialism' was increasingly viewed as a valid formula to buttress governments' domestic positions by transferring strife from the national to the international sphere in order to draw middle and even lower strata into an imperialist consensus.²⁵ From the turn of the century heightened imperialist rivalries were accompanied by a massive redistribution in colonial and international hegemony. Portugal had its ambitions in Africa checked by the concerted actions of Britain and Germany. Italy's dream of an Abyssinian Empire collapsed with the defeat at Adowa (1896). France was bitterly divided by the Dreyfus Affair while her colonial expansion foundered against the British at Fashoda (Sudan) in 1898. After suffering a comprehensive defeat in Manchuria and Korea against Japan, Russian tsarism was rocked by the revolutionary wave of 1905.²⁶

The United States was the other non-European state to lay down its claim to great power status. This was partly achieved at the expense of Spain, which in a short war lost its last overseas territories in the Pacific and the Caribbean. The colonial defeat of 1898 (often referred to in contemporary circles as, simply, 'the Disaster') proved a catalyst to growing opposition. In an era of Social Darwinism, when the health of nations appeared to be marked by imperial expansion, Spain – until recent times the world's largest colonial power – seemed sick. As the dream of empire vanished, 'the Disaster' brought into question the capacity of the dynastic politicians to rule the country.²⁷ Blame was above all directed at the distant political 'oligarchy' and the *caciquista* networks it utilized in order to remain in power. As in the case of Italy, therefore, the regime came widely to be seen as an impediment to modernization. The new formula was called *Regeneración*, by which was meant the major institutional changes that were needed to rebuild the country and restore its prestige. Three opposing proposals were developed: a left-wing path predicated upon popular mobilization 'from below' against the Restoration regime, a liberal road based on reform of the regime 'from above', and an authoritarian route embodied by a strong leader or 'iron surgeon'. The picture was further complicated by the growth of regionalist/nationalist movements in the Basque Country and Catalonia, the latter in particular developing its own brand of Regenerationism. From

1917 the social and political climate would become increasingly polarized, and the left-wing and authoritarian routes came to the fore. Their final and bitter clash would take place in 1936.²⁸

Left-wing Regeneration 'from below' began to gain ground after 1898 as in the larger cities an increasing number of Republicans were elected. In an urban environment, and in the rural south, Spanish politics was to an important degree built on the clash between the anti-liberal, theocratic world view of the Catholic Church and the materialist perspective of the liberal-left, based on the Enlightenment canon of progress and reason. Indeed, the growing influence of the Church meant that from the 1900s anticlericalism became a central element of political life. This helps explain why in Spain the urban-based 'little men' tended to remain on the Left, linked above all to Republicanism.²⁹ The most important exception in these years was in the Basque Country, where faced with breakneck industrialization and rapid migration, a virulently racist and populist movement, based on the petty bourgeoisie of Bilbao and its surrounds, appeared in the 1890s. However, it adopted a Basque nationalist rather than a Spanish nationalist ascription.

Both the Basque and especially the Catalan regionalist/nationalist movements were also strengthened by 'the Disaster'. In Catalonia in 1901, the grip of the *caciques* was loosened by the electoral success of both Republicans and the newly established Lliga Regionalista. The latter, a social-conservative party with strong links to industrial interests,³⁰ followed a policy of Catalan nation-building at home while simultaneously advocating the construction of a new decentralized but pro-business and interventionist Spanish state. The fact that sectors of business had distanced themselves from the regime would, over the subsequent two decades, prove particularly important, making it easier for Catalan business leaders to attack its policies and, eventually, play a leading role in undermining it.

The 'national problem' in Spain cannot be compared to that of the Habsburg Empire, which was torn apart at the end of the First World War by a host of competing 'micro nationalisms'. In most of Spain there was no serious challenge to Spanish national identity, and pro-Spanish currents contested the nascent alternative Catalan and Basque nationalisms in their own territories. Indeed, as Angel Smith points out (Chapter 6, this volume), there was ambiguity as to whether the Catalan movement should be referred to as 'regionalist' or 'nationalist' (conveniently covered over by its leaders through recourse to the term 'Catalanist'). Nevertheless, the challenge from these movements produced serious strains. In the 19th century, Spanish Liberalism had

(with a brief radical interlude between 1868 and 1874) adopted a variant of the French nation-state-building model, which emphasized the centralization of political power in the capital. Hence, for most of the political elite, Catalan and Basque nationalist demands were seen as an affront, which called into question the liberal Spanish nationalist historical narrative, developed from the 18th century, which argued that since pre-Roman times Spain had formed a single cultural entity, and that down the centuries Spaniards had valiantly struggled against foreign invaders to secure their freedom and independence.³¹ Conservative elements like Antonio Maura could aim for some compromise (because the Conservative Right had inherited elements of the Church's anti-Jacobin decentralizing discourse), but the Liberal Party in particular was extremely hostile and from 1901 even supported the anticlerical and populist rabble-rouser Alejandro Lerroux and his Radical Republican movement in order to stem the rising tide of Catalanism.³²

As Alejandro Quiroga (Chapter 8, this volume) and Javier Moreno Luzón explain, faced with new challenges, in the 1900s for the first time the Restoration regime began to seriously pursue the 'nationalization of the masses', above all by both improving the education system and the erection of a nationalist toponymic landscape. This was combined with efforts to modernize the state apparatus.³³ However, as Quiroga stresses, because of the key ideological and cultural role assigned to the Church by conservative liberalism it took on board much of the new Catholic nationalist discourse, with the result that the dominant rendition of this 'official' or 'state nationalism' was suffused in Catholic imagery and gave the Church a primary role in the historical narrative of nation-building. And while this discourse could attract the conservative upper classes and make an impact in small towns and rural areas in the north and centre, it alienated broad sections of the population. This should be contrasted with the situation in France, and even to a degree in Italy, where a more liberal state nationalist discourse helped gain the loyalty of broader sectors of the urban populace.

Within the dynastic class, the main statesman associated with the idea of Regeneration was Antonio Maura. The idea was, at least in theory, to democratize the regime, mobilize a potentially dominant middle-class Catholic electorate and so put into practice the 'revolution from above' which would trump any left-wing 'revolution from below'.³⁴ There are disagreements amongst historians (including the contributors to this volume) on the extent to which the regime reformed and extended its social base between 1900 and 1923. As noted above, the regime did begin a serious programme of nation-building. However, substantial

political reforms were not forthcoming. Despite democratizing rhetoric, Maura and other dynastic politicians continued to use *caciquista* networks to maintain power. They found it difficult to swim in the sea of mass politics.³⁵

Some scholars have argued that the Liberal Prime Minister José Canalejas represented the liberal-left response to Maura's conservative Regeneration by offering a programme of social reform and mild anticlericalism. Killed in office by an anarchist gunman in November 1912, Canalejas never saw the accomplishment of his work. He enacted some significant measures (for example, forcing the middle and upper classes to undertake a period of military service), but his hopes of finding a *modus vivendi* with sectors of the Left imploded amidst a wave of strikes and repression.³⁶

Maura's 1907 government had itself collapsed in October 1909 amidst a combination of popular outcry, dynastic intrigue and royal intervention. Not particularly keen on colonial ventures, he saw himself forced to intervene in the Moroccan Riff – a coastal strip of land in the north allotted to Spain in 1906 at an international conference – when a rebellion broke out there in 1909. However, with the bitter memories of 1898 still fresh, Spain could no longer use Social Imperialism to rally popular energies.³⁷ The call-up of working-class reservists – who could not pay the 1,500-peseta fee necessary for exemption from conscription – led to a week of rioting and church-burning in Barcelona, known as Tragic Week.

Unlike Italy's Red Week of June 1914, let alone the Russian Revolution of 1905, Spain's Tragic Week was not a concerted attack on the regime but a spontaneous explosion of anticlerical and anti-military feelings. Its consequences were, nevertheless, very significant. The Partido Socialista Obrero Español (Spanish Socialist Workers' Party – PSOE) formed an electoral alliance with the middle-class Republican groups. Subsequently, the domestic and international protest at the repression was the pretext used by the Liberals, in collusion with King Alfonso XIII, to oust Maura from office. When, four years later, Maura refused to rotate in office with the Liberals, the bulk of his party, desperate to regain the spoils of office, deserted him in favour of the more orthodox Eduardo Dato.³⁸

The ousting of the regime's most charismatic statesman had parallels with the assassination, in September 1911, of Prince Petr Arkadievich Stolypin, the tsarist strongman since Russia's 1905 Revolution, and the fall of Italy's Liberal leader, Giovanni Giolitti, in March 1914. As Moreno Luzón notes, this proved a key moment in the break-up of the *turno*

pacífico. The establishment of a Dato administration in 1913 triggered a genuine grass-roots mobilization that heralded the birth of right-wing mass politics in Spain and the irrevocable split of the Conservative Party. Mostly young middle-class students and white-collar workers rallied around the vilified Maura, and its movement even adopted the name of their admired leader (Maurismo). As Alejandro Quiroga notes, the Mauristas tried to construct a mass base, going so far as to set up workers' centres. However, Maurismo never constituted a coherent party, but was a broad church united in its devotion to Maura, monarchism and its bitter criticism of dynastic corruption. It embodied two currents, a Christian Democratic faction and a dominant nationalist and anti-liberal tendency that, like its French counterparts of Action Française or the Italians of the ANI, moved from traditional conservative positions to the far Right. Young Mauristas also showed also the determination to 'take to the street'.³⁹

In other quarters anti-liberal ideological tendencies were already visible prior to Tragic Week. The Church remained a reservoir of anti-liberal sentiment. The colonial trauma gave anti-liberal Catholics additional ammunition as they could now give their critique of the political class a regenerationist flavour. And the events of Tragic Week provoked laments that excessive liberty had allowed subversive ideas to take hold.⁴⁰

In some business circles, already in the late 19th century, especially in Catalonia, as in Italy a 'productivist' language developed, combining calls for corporatist representation in parliament and for joint employer and workers unions (*sindicatos mixtos*), which would make possible the reconstruction of the medieval guilds in a modern setting, thereby eliminating social conflict. This perspective further cemented the reconciliation between anti-liberal Catholicism and the world of capitalist industrialization. Significantly, calls for joint unions received enthusiastic backing in some sectors of the Catholic Church, with the extraordinarily powerful businessman-cum-Catholic evangelist Claudio López Bru, the Second Marquis of Comillas, a major backer.

The crisis of 1898 led to intense criticism of the regime within Catalan business circles (which had lost lucrative markets in the Caribbean). The Tragic Week then provoked a conservative reaction and heightened anti-liberal sentiment. Business leaders, with Catalan industrialists at the forefront, complained that the regime was not defending their interests with sufficient vigour and called for an exemplary repression, a stance echoed in broader bourgeois circles.⁴¹ More diffusely, as mass mobilization intensified from the turn of the century, in some intellectual circles an elitist tone could increasingly be discerned, which

evinced a pronounced distain for the eruption of 'the mob' on to the political stage.⁴²

In the aftermath of 1898 discontent with the regime also grew within the military. As Sebastian Balfour explains, there was a sense within the officer corps that they were taking the blame for the defeat, but that the politicians had not given them the wherewithal to fight the war effectively. They were particularly chastened by public demonstrations against the military. This hastened a drift to the Right amongst the officers and precipitated threats of intervention. Embittered by the resounding defeat, they found a new role, that of defenders of national unity and of social order. In the context of the growth of peripheral nationalism and labour agitation, sectors of the army began to consider the existing liberal order as inadequate to crush the 'pernicious effects' of class conflict and separatism.⁴³ Many officers were particularly angered by the fall of Antonio Maura, with whose policies they had identified, in the aftermath of Tragic Week.⁴⁴ To worsen matters for the governing elites, the army found a ready ally in the new king. Alfonso XIII, on the throne since 1902, not only identified with his army officers but also often used his executive prerogatives to appoint and dismiss cabinets. Political crises were known as '*orientales*', as they were produced and resolved at the Palacio de Oriente, Alfonso's residence.⁴⁵

To sum up, the 'Disaster' provoked an intensified critique of the political class. Most critics envisaged this as opening the way to a more democratic political system, but within Catholic circles, amongst elements of the officer corps and within business circles, issues such as the corporative restructuring of the political system and a takeover of power by the military were on the agenda. The fear engendered by Tragic Week that the Restoration regime was having increasing difficulty in maintaining social control served to intensify such sentiments. Then, the defenestration of Antonio Maura in 1913 encouraged the emergence of a far Right movement (Maurismo) which while still conserving links with the regime it was also highly critical of it.

The impact of the First World War and the revolutionary attraction

Spain did not enter the First World War but was greatly affected by it. Indeed, the war proved a catalyst for rapid socio-economic transformation and mass mobilization; a process that undermined – often fatally – the foundations of traditional liberal states.

In Spain, after an initial economic downturn, the opportunities to supply the warring powers and export to markets that they had vacated laid the basis for a boom. Unfortunately, a number of factors, most notably undersupply of the less lucrative home market and rising prices, also provoked huge shortages of staple products and an inflationary spiral. These factors encouraged, from 1916, a significant growth of labour organization, which was further radicalized by the battle to maintain real wages, leading to the historic labour pact of July 1916 between the Socialist trade union, the Unión General de Trabajadores (General Workers' Union – UGT), and the Anarcho-Syndicalist Confederación Nacional del Trabajo (National Labour Confederation – CNT). The war also produced political polarization around the neutrality question. As Moreno Luzón and Romero Salvadó (Chapter 3, this volume) explain, Spain was divided between liberals and leftist francophiles, who backed the Allies, and right-wing germanophiles, who sympathized with the Central Powers. In addition, the Allies became identified with the cause of the 'small nations' of Central and Eastern Europe, especially after the United States' president, Woodrow Wilson, issued his 14 Points on 8 January 1918. This stimulated the radicalization of the Catalanist movement, as indicated by the increasingly unruly nature of the demonstrations on the Catalan(ist) national day of 11 September. From the autumn of 1914 the Lliga Regionalista and the Catalan business associations also pressed the state for economic concessions, which they saw as essential in order to lay the foundations of the new industrial Spain.

Mirroring the pressures from below elsewhere on the continent, Spain experienced a revolutionary drama in 1917, a three-pronged offensive against the regime: first, the movement of army officers organized into military trade unions (*Juntas Militares de Defensa*) in June; second, in July, the summoning by the Lliga of an Assembly of dissident parliamentarians to initiate a process of constitutional reform and Catalan home rule; and third, the launching of a revolutionary strike in August by the PSOE-UGT, backed by the CNT, in order to secure the triumph of the Assembly programme.

As Romero Salvadó (Chapter 3, this volume) shows, the regime was able to face down the revolutionary challenge. Crucial in this respect was the failure of Maura to act as the vital link between army officers and parliamentarians. Despite the insistence by the Lliga leader, Francesc Cambó, that the Assembly represented the 'revolution from above', which he claimed to desire, Maura refused to endorse any extra-constitutional initiative that could endanger the throne. His attitude was a major political error; his last opportunity to play a leading part in the renovation of

the regime.⁴⁶ Furthermore, the self-elimination of Maura provided the Conservative government headed by Eduardo Dato with the chance to pursue a reckless gamble: to bolster its prestige as saviour of the social order by luring the labour movement into an ill-timed general strike and consequently forcing the army to quell the disturbances. This initiative paid off in the short term. The Spanish troops obeyed the instructions of their officers, who forgot the regenerationist rhetoric espoused by the *Juntas* and put down the revolutionary strike with stunning brutality. This attitude was not surprising. At a European level, the period between 1917 and 1920 demonstrated that while disbanded peasant and worker soldiers would be a revolutionary force (playing a significant role in the Russian Revolutions of 1917, in the fall of the German monarchy and break-up of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1918), following the Armistice officers adopted their traditional conservative-authoritarian stance and headed the crushing of leftist revolts.⁴⁷

The opportunity for democratic reform was lost with the failure of the assembly movement. As Smith shows for Catalonia (Chapter 6), the shock of army intervention shifted bourgeois opinion further to the Right. The business associations totally backed government repression. Crucially, praetorian intervention had ended hopes of ushering in democracy in Spain via reform from above or revolution from below. Nevertheless, it soon emerged how reckless Dato's gamble had been. The liberal regime owed its survival to mere military expediency. From now on, its existence rested inextricably on the attitude of the armed forces.⁴⁸

It was not, however, immediately apparent that the revolutionary road in Spain was blocked. As charted by Chris Ealham (Chapter 4, this volume), Spain was caught in the red tide that swept over Europe following the Bolshevik Revolution of October 1917. In order to justify his party's takeover, Lenin had argued that Russia was the 'weakest link' in the capitalist-imperialist chain. Therefore, the successful example of Soviet power would act as the spark to ignite a socialist revolution throughout Europe.⁴⁹ Once in power, the Bolsheviks affirmed that their *raison d'être* was to export world revolution and so in March 1919 they founded a 'truly' revolutionary Third International (Comintern). Initially, events appeared to bear out their hopes. By making plausible, for the first time, the idea of a workers' state, Bolshevism had a mesmerizing effect across the continent, causing as much panic amongst the ruling elites as raising expectations amongst revolutionaries. Soviet states briefly sprang up in Bavaria, Slovakia and Hungary in 1919. An all-socialist administration in Germany had to fight off armed insurrections staged by the Spartacus League, soon re-named the German

Communist Party. The Habsburg Austro-Hungarian Empire imploded and its capital was dubbed 'Red Vienna'. Italy experienced a period of rural insurrections and factory occupations.⁵⁰

It was during this time that both Right and Left started to draw parallels between Russia and Spain. Both were relatively undeveloped countries on the periphery of capitalist Europe, and it was either hoped or feared that Spain might be the next domino to fall. And in both labour agitation was often raw and violent. The Bolshevik example, the shortages of basic products and galloping inflation, led to a massive increase in the number of strikes, together with social upheaval, food riots and street protest. In Barcelona, and probably in other urban centres, this resulted, between late 1918 and early 1920, in a major redistribution of national income from capital to labour, which more than made up for the decline in real wages during the war years.⁵¹

Despite this escalation of social conflict, traumatized by the repression of August 1917, the Socialists returned to their traditional cautious stance. They experienced two splits – one by sections of the Socialist Youth in April 1920 and another the following year by a minority of the party. However, the subsequent Communist Party, unified in November 1921, failed to lure any significant number of workers from the two established traditions of socialism and anarcho-syndicalism.⁵² It was the CNT that profited from acute class struggle to become Spain's dominant labour force. Francisco Cobo Romero (Chapter 5, this volume) analyses the case of Andalusia, one of the focal points of violent social conflict. Historically a land of insurrection, spearheaded by the CNT from the summer of 1918, the rural south experienced three years of upheaval, largely triggered by the influence of Russian events, known as the *Trienio Bolchevique*. By early 1919 the CNT was also totally dominant in the Catalan labour movement. This territory, as the studies by Ealham, Romero Salvadó and Smith reveal, constituted the Spanish version of Italy's Po Valley in that it was at the heart of both revolutionary agitation and the subsequent reaction. As Spain's economic powerhouse, Barcelona presented, as no other city, the critical combination of a large proletariat with an unequalled tradition of social struggle, an intransigent employer class, nationalist feelings amongst sections of its middle classes, and a restless officer corps, while all of them shared a widespread mistrust of the central administration.⁵³

A vociferous campaign for political autonomy began in the Catalan capital, sparked by the conclusion of the Armistice in November 1918. The issue of Catalan autonomy was at the centre of Spain's political stage until it was suddenly eclipsed by the mobilization of the proletariat

under the leadership of the CNT. The Catalan labour movement had been transformed radically in the summer of 1918 when the old craft trade unions had been replaced by local industrial unions (*Sindicatos Únicos*). The turning-point took place in February 1919 when a dispute broke out at the Anglo-Canadian hydroelectric concern known as La Canadiense. After 44 days, the workers obtained a stunning victory that was described in the sober centre-left newspaper *El Sol* as the victory of the only well-organized force in Spain.⁵⁴

The slow death of the Spanish liberal regime and the origins of dictatorship, 1919–23

One of the most surprising paradoxes of the Bolshevik Revolution was that many European liberal states did not succumb to the feared 'Red Spectre' but fell victim to the triumphal march of a brutal 'black', authoritarian and nationalist reaction of which Fascism was the most glaring exponent. Soviet overconfidence combined with contempt towards national peculiarities and dogmatism split the labour movement and undermined the cause of revolution. The defeat of the Red Army at the gates of Warsaw saw Bolshevism's physical retreat from Central Europe. In March 1921, the crushing of a Communist uprising in Germany represented the swansong of the revolutionary offensive. By then, even the Bolshevik leaders had discarded their dreams of world revolution – confirmed by the conclusions of the Third (22 June–12 July 1921) and Fourth (5 November–5 December 1922) Comintern Congresses. The priority was now to break international isolation and consolidate the Soviet state.⁵⁵

Nevertheless, the existence of Bolshevik Russia added to the recent industrial strife and revolutionary bluster caused widespread panic amongst broad social sectors. In Western Europe, outside Spain it was in Italy that such fears were most pronounced. The populist Fascist movement grew rapidly, mobilizing above all sectors of the lower middle and middle classes, along with decommissioned officers, and launching, from late 1920, a violent assault on labour unions in central Italy. It was backed up by the more elitist far Right organization, the ANI, which was more in tune with the wealthier middle classes. Fearing that their world was imperilled, landowners, sectors of industry, and even local liberal elites, bankrolled the Fascists' assaults on the Left. In much of Europe, business also realized that new structures would need to be put in place to stabilize labour relations, championing closer co-operation between government and business and the integration of the labour movement

into a corporatist bargaining system supervised by a strong state. As Charles S. Maier argues, in Germany they viewed this as compatible with parliamentary liberalism, but in Italy there was more sympathy for reactionary Catholic-corporatist ideas of the ANI, which envisaged the subordination of labour to capital within an authoritarian regime.⁵⁶

In Spain, as Ealham explains, some of the country's most sophisticated revolutionaries, Andreu Nin and Joaquín Maurín, who had leading positions within the CNT, set about trying to marry the country's syndicalist traditions with the construction of a more effective revolutionary force. No one could but admire that audacity with which the Bolsheviks had taken power. Yet between 1917 and 1923 it was the differences rather than the similarities with Russia that came to the fore. In Russia the army had disintegrated, leaving a power vacuum. Furthermore, Spain did not comprise small industrial islands in a vast peasant sea. On the contrary, from 1919 it would become clear that Spain had a large, vociferous bourgeoisie, able and willing to defend its interests.

Spain's reaction was triggered by both labour unrest and (to a lesser degree) the intensification of Catalan nationalist agitation. Alejandro Quiroga and Javier Moreno Luzón analyse the increasingly belligerent attitude taken by sectors of the Church who embraced (a highly conservative reading of) Social Catholicism and by the Maurista movement. In the aftermath of the First World War, they demanded a strong centralist state, which would outlaw radical Catalanism (thereby breaking with Antonio Maura's pro-decentralizing stance) and adopted a vociferous anti-liberal rhetoric. In small town and rural central Spain above all, the lay Catholic associations – *Acción Católica* (Catholic Action) and the *Asociación Católica Nacional de Propagandistas* (National Catholic Association of Propagandists) – developed a Catholic co-operative movement and regional Catholic leagues. The corporatist vision of the strongest nucleus of Social Catholics was, rather like *Action Française*, backwards-looking, extolling the virtues of the uncorrupted Castilian peasantry. As Moreno Luzón points out, these events emphasized the Church's ability to mobilize against secularization and the threat of the Left. It would be fully realized during the Second Republic.

However, in comparison with the Radical Right in Italy, France and Germany, Maurismo and the Social Catholics lacked a populist cutting edge in urban Spain. This probably had much to do with Spain's strong Republican tradition, which mobilized important sectors of the lower middle and working class. Despite efforts to reach out to the workers, Maurismo had an established middle-class feel to it, and the Catholic associations were under the control of the elite (as epitomized by the

Second Marquis of Comillas) and picked up little urban popular support. In addition, unlike Italian Fascism, the anti-liberal Catholic and Maurista Right was not able to forge any over-arching ideology or operate as a separate party. Important in this respect was the fact that its various components owed allegiance to other bodies. Many Mauristas retained their links to Antonio Maura, though some formed a separate Partido Social Popular (Popular Social Party) in 1922 (which, however, had a Christian-democrat wing). Given the centrality of Catholicism for these groups, the Vatican and Spanish episcopal hierarchy remained important sources of power and legitimacy. There was also a lack of clarity in right-wing thought, with some Mauristas, for example, seemingly favouring a hybrid system, combining universal suffrage and corporatism.⁵⁷

On the contrary, Italy's Fasci di Combattimento offered a modernizing model for anti-liberal forces in Europe.⁵⁸ There was no equivalent in Spain to the former syndicalists, who initially constituted the 'revolutionary' elite that led the movement. Nor was there anything like the thousands of post-war ex-combatants and officers to organize its cadres. The Mauristas were the closest street phenomenon to the *Squadristi*, but, as noted, they were too middle class and lacked the ruthless violence that marked the black-shirts' expeditionary missions to instil fear amongst their enemies.⁵⁹

Nevertheless, if unable to generate a counterpart to Italian Fascism, Spain did have an unequalled tradition of praetorian intervention. Indeed, whereas Italian's political elites – the Piedmont's Liberal class – led the Risorgimento without recourse to mass mobilization,⁶⁰ the military, as we have seen, had been from the 1830s the guarantor and often the arbiter of Spain's liberal politics. Under the pretext of 'national regeneration', it merely resumed its interventionist tradition in the aftermath of the First World War and led the overthrow of parliamentary liberalism.⁶¹

Praetorian counter-revolution had its capital in Barcelona.⁶² As the CNT's stronghold, the apparent revolutionary threat was greatest there. Hence an alliance between industrialists and the army in Barcelona not only began to operate independently of the central government but also to behave as a veritable 'anti-state', bypassing and often even forcing the downfall of cabinets in Madrid. In this context, La Canadiense dispute proved a watershed. Bourgeois and also wider established middle-class circles, in Catalonia in particular, emerged from the dispute not only deeply anxious given the strength of the unions that they equated with Bolshevism, but they also felt indignant at what they

considered the capitulation of the authorities in Madrid. Hence Catalan business launched incessant attacks on the political elite, which was seen as soft on CNT terrorism (if not actually in cahoots with the terrorists) and anti-industry, combined with outright demands for military intervention. Business was particularly upset that governments frequently attempted to use a carrot and stick approach with the CNT and integrate it into a system of state-sponsored collective bargaining. They developed a corporatist alternative, whereby workers would have to join state-sponsored unions (*sindicalización forzosa*).⁶³

As Romero Salvadó notes (Chapter 7, this volume), significant numbers of Catalonia's industrial barons concluded in the spring of 1919 that to defend their corporate interests they had to close ranks and prepare for war: *Si Vis Pacem Para Bellum*.⁶⁴ They therefore resuscitated a Barcelona (subsequently Catalan) Employers' Confederation to co-ordinate action and a crucial alliance was sealed with the local garrison then headed by Captain General Joaquín Milans del Bosch.⁶⁵ Equally concerned with the escalation of labour protest, the army was willing to take drastic measures to curb the CNT and, in the process, undermine the Catalanist movement. Under ultimate army control, a bourgeois paramilitary force (Somatén) was organized to take on labour. Similar militias were subsequently set up in other parts of Spain.⁶⁶ Gangs were also hired to act as an employers' police force and a new right-wing labour union, the Sindicatos Libres, which recruited amongst Catholic and Carlist workers, was given strong support.

Other sectors of Catalan society and of the Catalan political elite were drawn into this counter-revolutionary coalition. As Quiroga notes, many Catalan Monarchists formed an association called the Unión Monárquica Nacional (National Monarchist Union), which shared business's belief that the Restoration parties were not dealing with the leftist threat severely enough. A more populist albeit ephemeral protest movement, the Liga Patriótica Española, was also founded principally as a reaction to Catalanist agitation. It enjoyed support in the Barcelona garrison, and attracted state functionaries, radical Carlists and even, it seems, some anti-Catalanist Republicans, who in early 1919 fought running street battles with radical Catalanists.⁶⁷

There was no ideological unanimity within these groups. There were many 'old rightists' who would have been happy with a more authoritarian parliamentary settlement. However, the leadership of the Catalan Employers' Confederation (and its offshoot, the Spanish Employers' Confederation) adopted as its goal an authoritarian corporatist revolution led by the industrial elite. After the March on Rome in October