

the vast potential of goodwill and set off what Bakunin called the 'spontaneous creativity of the masses'.

Their frustration at being unable to 'unlock the mechanism of history', as the Russian writer Victor Serge described it, led to individual acts of political violence in the 1890s. The *tigres solitarios*, as their fellow anarchists called them, acted either in the hope of stirring up others to emulate them or in reprisal for the indiscriminate brutality of the Brigada Social, the secret police. The most famous example was the torturing to death in 1892 of several anarchists in the castle of Montjuich in Barcelona. This led to an international outcry and to the assassination of Cánovas del Castillo, the organizer of the restoration. A vicious circle of repression and revenge was to follow.

During the last quarter of the nineteenth century the Marxist wing of socialism, *los autoritarios*, as their opponents called them, developed much less rapidly. In late 1871 Karl Marx's son-in-law Paul Lafargue arrived after the fall of the Paris Commune and within a year the basis of Spanish socialism was laid in Madrid. The Marxists' comparative lack of success was partly due to the emphasis which they placed on the central state. The socialists under Pablo Iglesias, a typesetter who emerged as the leading Spanish Marxist, proceeded cautiously and concentrated on building an organization. Eventually in 1879 they founded the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE) and formed their General Union of Labour (UGT) in 1888. Iglesias still insisted that the class struggle should be waged in a moderate and evolutionary manner (the PSOE did not formally repudiate the monarchy until 1914). The socialists accused their anarchist rivals of 'irresponsibility', but they in turn were seen as heavily bureaucratic and received the nickname of 'Spanish Prussians'.

Another reason for the socialists' slow development in a predominantly agricultural society came from Marx's contempt for the peasantry and what he called 'the idiocy of rural life'. He believed that capitalism would be overthrown only by its own creation, the industrial proletariat. However, in Spain, the major part of industry was concentrated in Catalonia, which had become the stronghold of anarchism. As a result the 'Castilian' socialists had to look to Bilbao for support among industrial workers. The central mass of Spain and the northern coast were to be their main spheres of influence, while the anarchist following

2

Royal Exit

The first attempt to organize some form of trade union in Spain had occurred as early as the 1830s, and there were small non-political associations in existence at the middle of the nineteenth century. Then new political ideas arrived across the Pyrenees and began to take root. The anarchist, or libertarian, form of socialism arrived first and its fundamental disagreement with Marxist socialism was to have great repercussions in Spain. Proudhon had already been translated by Pi y Margall, the president of the First Republic, when Giuseppe Fanelli arrived in Spain in 1868. Fanelli was an admirer of Bakunin, Marx's great opponent in the First International. He came to Madrid without speaking any Spanish and with no money, but the 'Idea', as it became known, found a very enthusiastic audience. Within four years there were nearly 50,000 Bakuninists in Spain, of whom the majority were in Andalusia.

There were several reasons why anarchism in the early days became the largest force within the Spanish working class. Its proposed structure of co-operative communities, associating freely, corresponded to deep-rooted traditions of mutual aid, and the federalist organization appealed to anti-centralist feelings. It also offered a strong moral alternative to a corrupt political system and hypocritical Church. Many observers have pointed to the naive optimism which anarchism inspired among the landless peasants of Andalusia. Much has also been made of the way in which the word was spread by ascetic, almost saint-like characters and how the converts gave up tobacco, alcohol and infidelity (while rejecting official marriage). As a result it was often described as a secular religion. Even so, the intensity of this early anarchism led converts to believe that everybody else must see that freedom and mutual aid were the only foundation of a naturally ordered society. An uprising was all that was needed to open people's eyes, unfetter

was greatest down the Mediterranean belt, especially in Catalonia and Andalucía.

From the 1890s until the early 1920s Spain experienced many turbulent years, especially those which coincided with the Russian and German revolutions at the end of the First World War. The main areas of strife were the large landed estates, the *latifundia* of Andalucía and Extremadura, the mining valleys of Asturias and Vizcaya, and industrial Catalonia. In *fin de siècle* Barcelona, nouveau riches factory owners had indulged in triumphant ostentation, both architecturally and socially.

The cycle of violence between industrial revolt and repression became chaotic at times. The Brigada Social, the secret police, interpreted its role as the guardian of public order in an extraordinary manner, often hiring gangsters to take on the anarchist 'pistoleros' or strike leaders. The first explosion of urban unrest, the Semana Trágica, or 'Tragic Week', at the end of July 1909, was not, however, caused by industrial dispute in Barcelona. It was a by-product of the colonial war in Morocco. Rifian tribesmen had wiped out a column of soldiers sent to secure mining concessions bought by the Count de Romanones, one of Alfonso XIII's advisers. The government called up the reserves; the poor could not afford to buy themselves out of military service and married workers were the most affected.¹ A strong anti-militarist mood had grown up in the years following the Cuban disaster, and the spontaneous reaction in Barcelona to the Morocco crisis was sudden and overwhelming.

The 'young barbarians' who supported the Radical Party leader Alejandro Lerroux went wild and others followed, with church burning and forms of desecration such as the famous incident of a worker dancing with a disinterred nun. Such symbolic violence was the reaction of a people traumatized by intense superstition. Much of the teaching of the Spanish Catholic Church sounded appropriate to the Dark Ages and this mental repression, together with the political role played by ecclesiastical authorities, made the Church rank with the Civil Guard as the first target of an uprising. Some half a dozen people were killed during this disturbance, but when the army arrived to restore order there was a massacre.

Hundreds were arrested including Francisco Ferrer, the founder of the libertarian Modern School. Although it was evident that Ferrer could have had nothing to do with the rioting, the Catholic

hierarchy put heavy pressure on the government to convict their educational opponent. He was sentenced to death on the basis of obviously false testimony and his execution led to a wave of protest in Spain and abroad.

After the Barcelona upheaval of 1909 a majority in the libertarian movement evolved a fresh strategy. This new direction was mainly influenced by the French syndicalist movement, with a union-based policy, the ultimate objective of which was a general strike followed by the reorganization of society based on self-managed industry and agriculture. This led to the setting up of the anarcho-syndicalist National Confederation of Labour (CNT), whose component unions were to be organized by industry, not by craft. The Spanish libertarian movement thus consisted basically of anarchist purists and anarcho-syndicalists.

During the First World War, while industrialists profited enormously, their workers suffered from high inflation – prices doubled between 1913 and 1918 – yet salaries increased by only 25 per cent.² Union membership rose dramatically as a result. The UGT increased to 160,000 members, while the anarcho-syndicalist CNT swelled to some 700,000 by the end of 1919. The socialist party itself, the PSOE, soon counted on 42,000 activists. Its leading members included Francisco Largo Caballero, Indalecio Prieto, Fernando de los Ríos and Julián Besteiro, all of whom would be major figures in the years to come. Meanwhile the very moderate Catholic union movement, Confederación Nacional Católica Agraria (CONCA), grew mainly in the agrarian heartlands of Castile and León. Its only hope in industrial centres was in the devout Basque country.³

In Spain, the entrenched position of the military establishment proved a major obstacle to gradual reform. The Spanish army was 160,000 strong, commanded by 12,000 officers and 213 generals.⁴ This overmanned and incompetent organization was a heavy charge on the state. Its role was never clear. Although basically reactionary, at times it saw itself as an ally of the people against corrupt politicians and a force for national regeneration. Reduced after the loss of empire to an existence of provincial garrisons, its only active area of operations lay in the Spanish protectorate of Morocco, a far smaller area than that accorded to France in 1906 at the Conference of Algeciras. The only economic interest in the territory

lay in its phosphate mines, while the local Kabyle population longed to rid themselves of European rule. For Spanish officers keen on promotion, service in Morocco promised real soldiering far from the boredom of barrack life at home. An 'africanista' mystique developed, making them the elite of the Spanish armed forces and giving them a sense of destiny as well as arrogance.

In 1917 a military and political crisis developed in Spain. Associations known as Juntas de Defensa had grown up in the forces to demand better conditions, but when the government tried to abolish them their leaders published a manifesto attacking the lamentable state of the army. Afraid of a *pronunciamiento*, the conservative administration of Eduardo Dato conceded to some of their demands. But this encouraged in some politicians, above all Francesc Cambó, the leader of the Lliga Catalana, the idea that they could use the opportunity to force through constitutional reforms. They hoped that this would modernize the country and introduce real democracy. Cambó called for an assembly of politicians on 19 July in Barcelona as a step towards a constituent Cortes, a fully representative parliament.

At the same time the socialist PSOE and the UGT, under similar illusions, also imagined that the juntas offered a chance of change. They called a general strike to support their own demands for a constituent Cortes. Dato closed parliament and suspended constitutional guarantees. The strike began on 13 August in Madrid, Barcelona, Bilbao, Saragossa, Oviedo and the mining regions of the Asturias and Andalucía. But the Juntas de Defensa not only refused to join the revolution, their members took part in crushing the strikes, leaving 72 dead, 156 wounded and 2,000 arrested. In Asturias, where the strike lasted a month, General Ricardo Burguete and a young *africanista* major called Francisco Franco were in charge of the repression which included torture. It was a foretaste of a far more serious upheaval in 1934, in which General Franco was to play a leading role. While the socialist leaders were condemned to life imprisonment in Cartagena, nothing happened to Cambó.

Repression alone was no solution to the social problems which increased with the end of the First World War. The population was growing, largely due to a fall in infant mortality, and the cities swelled, with internal migration from the more impoverished areas of the countryside as men and women sought work at a time of

rising unemployment. The Church no longer was able to control the population as it had, yet the politicians of the day refused to accept the possibility of change. They did not know, or did not want to consider, how to move from an oligarchic liberalism to mass democracy.⁵ Comparatively little had changed in attitude since Ferdinand VII, a century before, had described Spain as a bottle of champagne and himself as the cork to prevent it gushing over.

When the First World War ended and the export boom slackened, the workers became more militant. Also, the news from Russia brought hope to the left. There was talk of Europe blazing with revolution at both ends. The period of 1918-20, with uprisings in Andalucía and strife in Barcelona, was known as the 'three years of bolshevism'. The worst wave of unrest started when the anarcho-syndicalist CNT brought the workers of La Canadiense out on strike.⁶ The Catalan employers replied with lockouts and resorted to blackleg labour from depressed areas. In answer to the violence from the unions, especially the CNT, they hired *pistoleros* to shoot down union leaders. To restore order Alfonso XIII appointed General Severiano Martínez Anido as civil governor. His chief of police, General Arleguá, reorganized the police *pistoleros* and 21 union leaders were shot down either at home or in the street in less than 48 hours. The cycle of bitterness was such that it later led to the assassination by anarchists of Eduardo Dato in 1921.⁷

The radicalization of the CNT clashed with the moderate stance of the socialist UGT. The anarcho-syndicalists saw the socialists as reformists, if not traitors to the working class. The Spanish Communist Party was founded in 1921, with both militant socialists and anarchists responding to the call of Andreu Nin and Joaquín Maurín. This third, although still minute, force was to take part in the struggle for leadership of the industrial working class. Meanwhile, in the countryside the day workers in Andalucía continued their own long *jacquerie* of doomed uprisings. The strikes of rural labourers followed each other at a rapid rhythm. The Civil Guard would be called out, and the trouble suppressed by shootings and arrests. The protests spread from Córdoba to Jaén, Seville and Cádiz, with demands for better conditions and the recognition of rural trade unions. But encouraged by news from the other end of Europe, they adopted slogans such as '*Vivan los soviets!*', which

they daubed on whitewashed walls, confirming landowners in their suspicion that if they weakened, they could face the same terrible fate as Russian landowners.⁸ Even the politicians in Madrid recognized that some form of land reform programme needed to be implemented urgently, but few governments remained in place long enough to tackle the problem.⁹

Although the politicians in Madrid managed to maintain a certain status quo for most of the time, in July 1921 a far deeper crisis developed when the Spanish army in Morocco suffered a most ignominious defeat. A division commanded by General Silvestre was ambushed at Annual on 20 July 1921 by Moroccan tribesmen under Abd-el-Krim. For reasons of personal vanity, King Alfonso was said to have wanted an outstanding victory to announce on the feast of St James (the Spanish army's patron saint) and that he had gone behind the minister of war's back to encourage Silvestre in this venture.

The Annual expedition was a classic example of military incompetence: 10,000 soldiers were killed, 4,000 were taken prisoner and Silvestre committed suicide. A week later another major position was lost, another 7,000 soldiers were massacred and all the officers were led away in chains. The reaction throughout Spain was so bitter that the government was forced to set up a commission of inquiry. The king was severely censured in its findings, but shortly before the report was due to be published the new captain-general of Catalonia, Miguel Primo de Rivera, made a *pronunciamiento* on 13 September, appointing himself dictator with Alfonso remaining as head of state. The other generals gave him tacit support to prevent this public condemnation of the army and the king.

General Primo de Rivera immediately declared a state of war throughout the country to halt any unrest or protests in their tracks. Yet he was not a typical dictator of that inter-war period. He was in a way an Andalusian version of those hard-living, hard-riding squires of Regency England. As a young officer he had been sickened by corrupt practices within the army, such as the selling of the soldiers' food and equipment. But he also had that fatal military attitude to politics: all would be well if everyone could be united in a single party, rather like the army itself. He subsequently set up his own organization, the Unión Patriótica, but it never

stood a chance of gaining mass support. Primo also had a completely arbitrary approach to justice, trying often to play Solomon with a sense of humour, which fell flat. But there was comparatively little police state brutality under his dictatorship.

Primo's assumption of power was welcomed at first by industrialists and accepted by the liberal middle classes, who felt that nothing could be worse than the recent years of chaos and bloodshed. They hoped that the dictator, even though a member of the aristocracy, might be able to implement agrarian reforms which no landowning government would consider. But although Primo sympathized with the peasants in a patriarchal fashion, any serious attempt to tackle the agrarian problem would have required measures that were too radical for him and unthinkable for those on whom he depended.

He did, however, attempt to end the industrial warfare in Catalonia. Workers' organizations had to be involved, he decided, and the employers controlled. The centralist socialists were the obvious choice for him, and he brought the secretary of the UGT, Francisco Largo Caballero, into his government as a councillor of state, to set up industrial arbitration boards. This idea of working with Primo's administration was firmly opposed by the other main socialist leader, Indalecio Prieto. The anarchists also accused Largo Caballero of shameless opportunism when their organizations and publications were banned.

The Catalan employers, meanwhile, having welcomed Primo's arrival in power, now hated his control over their methods of dealing with union leaders. Primo also took a spiteful pleasure in attacking their nationalism through attempts to suppress Catalan language and culture. Like all patriarchs, he was convinced of his own good intentions. He made grand gestures, took petty measures and was unpredictable. His biggest success, due more to luck than good judgement, was to end the war in Morocco. In April 1925 the great Riffian chief Abd-el-Krim overreached himself by attacking the French zone in a wild fashion. This produced an immediate military alliance between France and Spain. On 8 September French and Spanish troops landed at Alhucemas, trapping Abd-el-Krim's force. The rebellion in Morocco was finally crushed.

In December Primo formed a directorate composed of military officers and civilians. Yet his plans to modernize Spain lacked both judgement and luck. They included overambitious and badly

planned engineering projects, such as hydroelectric dams and highways, which resulted in enormous waste.¹⁰ The deficit doubled between 1925 and 1929, and his young finance minister, José Calvo Sotelo, made things far worse by pegging the peseta to the gold standard. Currency speculators made large fortunes at the government's expense and attempts to prop up the value of the currency failed dismally. There was a flight of capital, and by the time the Second Republic was declared in 1931 the peseta had lost nearly 50 per cent of its value.

Under Primo's rule a claustrophobic irritation built up. Bankers and industrialists hated his intervention in matters he did not understand. The middle classes started to react when he interfered with the universities. As a flamboyant product of his profession and background, the well-meaning patriarch had by now become a liability to the monarchy he had stepped in to save. Alfonso XIII began to fear for his throne. Over the previous five years a political opposition to the dictatorship had developed in left-liberal and intellectual circles. The most important became known as the *Alianza Republicana* and was headed by Manuel Azaña, Alejandro Lerroux, Marcelino Domingo and several others. Its aim was not just to do away with the dictatorship, but also the monarchy. Opposition to the whole idea of collaborating with Primo had also grown within socialist ranks and by 1929 Largo Caballero was forced to realize his mistake in agreeing to work with the regime. When in 1930 the socialists opposed the monarchy and the dictatorship, UGT membership began to rise rapidly. From 211,000 members in 1923 it increased to 277,000 in 1930 and was to reach just over half a million two years later.

Like a stern, insensitive father whose authority is challenged, Primo tried to enforce his will more and more. Hurt and confused at not being appreciated, he appealed to the army to reassure himself of their support. It was not forthcoming, so Primo presented his resignation to the king on 28 January 1930 and went into exile. He died in Paris a few weeks later.

On 30 January Alfonso XIII, who could no longer fall back on the constitution that he himself had openly broken, entrusted the government to another general, Dámaso Berenguer. This outraged General Sanjurjo, then the director of the Civil Guard, who believed himself far better qualified for the post. Alfonso's obstinate recourse to generals and the fact that Berenguer allowed nearly a whole year

to pass before summoning the Cortes only exasperated people more as the country was governed by decree and censorship remained in place. Even former monarchist politicians, such as Niceto Alcalá Zamora and Miguel Maura, publicly came out in favour of a republic.

Indalecio Prieto, at first on his own account, then later with the support of the executive committees of the socialist PSOE and UGT union, joined the conspiracy. The republican alliance officially came into being in the Basque coastal resort of San Sebastián on 27 August 1930. Catalan republicans joined the San Sebastián pact, as it became known, on condition that Catalonia received a statute of autonomy. This republican movement strengthened with the support of military officers such as Gonzalo Queipo de Llano, one of General Franco's chief rivals after the military rising of 1936, Ramón Hidalgo de Cisneros, later the communist commander and Ignacio Hidalgo de Cisneros, later the communist commander of the republican air force in the civil war.

In December the UGT called a general strike, which the anarchist syndicalist CNT did not oppose. Meanwhile Alcalá Zamora became the president of a revolutionary committee, which constituted itself as a government in waiting. University students and workers openly campaigned for the overthrow of the monarchy and a rising, which was planned for 12 December, had to be delayed by three days. Unfortunately, nobody warned Captains Galán and García Hernández of the garrison of Jaca. They rose in revolt at six in the morning, but finding themselves on their own, they had to surrender. Tried for military rebellion, they were executed. This turned them into immediate martyrs of the republican cause. General Emilio Mola, the director-general of security, arrested all the members of the revolutionary committee to be found and the uprising collapsed. But this did little to halt the republican momentum.

In the following month, January 1931, another university strike began, headed by a group known as 'Al servicio de la República'. It included the principal figures of the Spanish intelligentsia: José Ortega y Gasset, Gregorio Marañón, Ramón Pérez de Ayala and their president, the poet Antonio Machado. On 14 February the king, shaken by the agitation, replaced Berenguer with Admiral Juan Bautista Aznar and gave orders that municipal elections should be called for 12 April. This allowed the republicans to turn the

vote into a plebiscite on the monarchy itself. On the evening of 12 April the results began to come in. The socialists and liberal republicans had won almost all the provincial capitals of Spain. The excited crowds packing the centre of Madrid instantly acclaimed the shadow government of Alcalá Zamora as the new government, even though these elections had nothing to do with the Cortes.¹¹

General Berenguer, who had become minister of war, ordered the army to abide by the will of the people. The Count de Romanones, a member of Admiral Aznar's government, tried in vain to come to an agreement with the republican committee. He then asked the director of the Civil Guard, General Sanjurjo, if he could count on his force. The offended general took his revenge and answered no. The whole of Madrid became 'a fiesta of the people which took on the appearance of a revolution'.¹² That same evening Admiral Aznar presented the king with his government's resignation.

At six in the morning of 14 April 1931 the Republic was proclaimed at Eibar and the news spread almost instantaneously throughout Spain. Romanones had a meeting with the republican leader Alcalá Zamora, who told him that the king and his family should leave Spain that very afternoon. The king, who rejected the idea of another minister, that the army should keep him in power, left Madrid to embark at Cartagena. His departure created no disturbances. 'Well before its collapse,' wrote Miguel Maura, 'the monarchy had evaporated in the consciousness of Spaniards.'¹³

3

The Second Republic

On 14 April 1931 the revolutionary committee headed by Niceto Alcalá Zamora, a Catholic and a landowner from Córdoba, converted itself into the provisional government of the Republic. Alcalá Zamora then became president and head of state.¹

These leaders of the Republic faced immense problems deeply rooted in Spanish society: agrarian reform, the intransigence of the armed forces, the Catalan and Basque questions, and the issue of relations between the Catholic Church and the state. They also needed to tackle the deficiencies of the educational system in their objective to create a 'Republic of citizens'.

The international situation following the Wall Street crash of 1929 was hardly propitious. The world depression did not affect Spain as severely as some of the more industrially developed countries, yet prices for the country's traditional exports were reduced by nearly half.² Protests over the fall in living standards and social unrest awoke fears across much of Europe of more revolutions following the one in Russia. This had contributed to the assumption of dictatorial or authoritarian regimes in a number of countries.³ In such a climate the fall of the monarchy in Spain and the proclamation of a republic was unwelcome to the international banking community. Morgan's Bank immediately cancelled a loan of 60 million dollars agreed with the previous administration.

The new government also inherited the consequences of the economic mistakes made under Primo de Rivera's dictatorship, the massive debts from public spending projects and the collapse in the value of the peseta. Large amounts of capital had also been transferred abroad in anticipation of increased taxation and a further deterioration of the country's economy.⁴ Landowners and industrialists, afraid of the financial effects of the government's likely social programme, immediately cut investment. These fears

were influenced by the appointment of one socialist, Indalecio Prieto, as minister of finance, and another, Largo Caballero, as minister of labour.⁵

The government, a coalition from six different parties, proceeded nevertheless to summon the Cortes and draft a constitution for the Second Republic. Throughout April, May and June of 1931 they continued to issue decrees dealing with the question of land reform. These forbade landowners to expel tenants or to hire day labourers from outside their municipality. And they extended employment rights agreed in industry, including the eight-hour day, to agricultural workers. On 21 May the government created the Comisión Técnica Agraria to draft a law, setting up an Institute of Agrarian Reform. It established a programme to resettle between 60,000 and 75,000 families each year, but its budget was only 50 million pesetas, a totally inadequate amount for the task.

The following week the new minister of war, Manuel Azaña, set out to tackle the overmanned military establishment. He offered generals and officers the possibility of passing to the reserve list on full pay. He reduced the sixteen captaincy-generals to eight 'organic divisions', suppressed the rank of lieutenant-general, reduced the length of obligatory military service to one year and ordered the closure of the General Military Academy of Saragossa, which happened to be commanded by General Francisco Franco.⁶

These reforms did not bring about any substantive improvements in the modernization or efficiency of the army. If anything, it provided disgruntled officers with the time and opportunity to plot against the Republic. The government also made the error of keeping General Sanjurjo in the post of commander of the Civil Guard, a corps which had a notorious reputation for its deadly acts of repression.⁷ It set up a new paramilitary force, with the unpromising title of Assault Guard. They were known as the *asaltos*, and tended to be deployed in towns and cities while the Civil Guard policed the countryside.

Catalan autonomy was also high on the list of matters to be addressed. It was a question which greatly concerned old-fashioned Castilian centralists, who saw any concessions to the regions as a threat to the unity of Spain. The April elections had proved a victory for the party of the Catalan left, the Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya, an essentially middle-class organization led by Francesc Macià and Lluís Companys. The two of them had proclaimed on

14 April that a Catalan republic would be established within a federal state. This was not exactly what had been negotiated in the pact of San Sebastián, so three days later three ministers left Madrid for Barcelona to discuss with Macià and Companys the best way forward to enable the Cortes to approve a statute of autonomy. On 21 April Macià was named as president of the Generalitat of Catalonia, the name of the medieval Catalan Commonwealth.

The relationship between the new secular Republic and the Catholic Church was unlikely to be simple, with the Concordat of 1851 still in force. No more than fifteen days after the announcement of the Republic, Cardinal Pedro Segura, the primate of Spain, issued a pastoral denouncing the new government's intention to establish freedom of worship and to separate Church and state. The cardinal urged Catholics to vote in future elections against an administration which in his view wanted to destroy religion. The Catholic press followed his lead. The organ of Acción Católica, *El Debate*, dedicated itself to defending the privileges of the Church while the monarchist daily, *ABC*, aligned itself with the most traditionalist positions.

Faced with a revolt by the most important figure in the Spanish Church, republican ministers ordered the expulsion from the country of Cardinal Segura and another cleric, Mateo Múgica, Bishop of Vitoria. In the course of a curious spate of activity Cardinal Segura based himself in the south of France and instructed his priests in Spain to sell Church property without transferring the proceeds into pesetas.⁸

The fanatical mysticism of the Church provoked much of the anti-clericalism in Spain, especially the 'miracles', which in the 1930s often involved a 'red' supposedly committing a sacrilegious act and dropping dead on the spot. The novelist Ramón Sender attributed the left's vandalism against churches, such as the desecration of mummies, to the Church's obsession with the kissing of saints' bones and limbs. Anything, however ridiculous, was believed by the *beatas*, the black-clothed women who obeyed their priests' every word like the devotees of a cult leader. In Spain there were more psychological disorders arising from religious delusions than all other kinds. This atmosphere influenced even unbelievers in a strange way. Workers formed gruesome ideas of torture in convents, and many natural catastrophes were attributed to the Jesuits in the same way as the Church blamed Freemasons, Jews and communists.

On 11 May, two weeks after the publication of Segura's pastoral, serious disturbances were sparked off by an incident outside a monarchist club in Madrid, when a taxi driver was apparently beaten up for shouting '*Viva la República!*'. Crowds gathered and the buildings of the monarchist newspaper *ABC* were set on fire. The Carmelite church in the Plaza de España suffered next, followed by more and more churches over the next two days, with the outbreak spreading down the Mediterranean coast and into Andalucía – with arson in Alicante, Málaga, Cádiz and Seville. These disturbances finally obliged a reluctant government to impose martial law. The right, however, would never forget the notorious remark attributed to Azaña that he preferred that all the churches of Spain should burn rather than a single republican should be harmed.

On 3 June the Spanish bishops sent the head of government a collective letter denouncing the separation of Church and state, and protesting against the suppression of obligatory religious instruction in schools.⁹ But pressure against the government was also building up from the other side, especially from the libertarian left. On 6 July the anarcho-sindicalist CNT declared a telephone workers' strike throughout Spain. This paralysed lines from Barcelona and Seville, but CNT members also carried out acts of sabotage against the North American-owned Telefónica network, which Primo de Rivera's dictatorship had sold to ITT. The United States ambassador demanded the deployment of security forces and the Madrid government also brought in strike breakers from the UGT.

The CNT declared a national strike and in Seville the funeral of a worker killed by a strike breaker was broken up by the Civil Guard. The ensuing battle produced seven dead, including three civil guards. The Madrid government declared a state of war on 22 July. The army and Civil Guard, the traditional forces of law and order, acted with their customary brutality. They used light artillery as well as the '*ley de fugas*', the excuse of shooting prisoners 'while attempting to escape'. The casualty rate rose by another 30 dead and 200 wounded, as well as hundreds arrested. Spanish workers, who had placed great hopes in the Republic, came to the conclusion that it was as repressive as the monarchy. The CNT declared open war and announced their intention of overthrowing it by social revolution.

The Republic, following the elections on 28 June, was just starting its parliamentary business in the Cortes.¹⁰ The first session had taken place under the presidency of the socialist intellectual Julián Besteiro on 14 July. The socialists of the PSOE were for once united, with a rare harmony between Largo Caballero and Indalecio Prieto, the moderate from Bilbao who was a strenuous advocate of a centre-left alliance with liberal republicans. Largo Caballero had agreed to socialist participation in the government because he felt it was in the best interests of the UGT, his overriding concern. Even though his union was growing rapidly, the CNT was outstripping it, since becoming legal again the previous year. (Government figures in 1934 put UGT membership at 1.44 million and CNT membership at 1.58 million.)

At the end of August the first draft of the constitution was debated, including its declaration that 'Spain is a democratic republic of workers of all classes'. The most contentious sections – articles 26 and 27 – provided for the dissolution of religious orders. This precipitated a crisis, which was solved by the persuasive powers of Manuel Azaña. Only the Jesuit order was to be banned and its property nationalized.¹¹ But article 26 provided for the ending of state subsidies to the Church within two years. The Church faced an acute problem. For the first time it found itself dealing with an administration which rejected the traditional idea that the Church was synonymous with Spain. The fact that religious attendance in Spain was the lowest of any Christian country did not stop Cardinal Segura from declaring that in Spain one was 'either a Catholic, or nothing at all'. Less than 20 per cent of Spain's total population went to mass. In most areas south of the Guadarrama mountains the figure was under 5 per cent. Such statistics did nothing to lessen the Church hierarchy's view, both in Spain and in Rome, that the Republic was determined to persecute it.¹²

The debate over article 44 about the expropriation of land in 'the national interest', demanded by the socialists, produced an even greater crisis and once again (as with article 26) Alcalá Zamora nearly resigned. The policy of agrarian reform needed these powers to work, and even though only uncultivated land would be given to landless labourers, the centre and right were deeply suspicious about where such measures could lead.¹³ Finally,

on 9 December the Constitution was voted through. Niceto Alcalá Zamora was formally elected president of the Republic and on 15 December Azaña formed a new government.¹⁴

Manuel Azaña, the most prominent liberal republican, was a strongly anti-clerical intellectual of brilliant wit and lugubrious pessimism. He came to regard himself as the strong man of the Republic, but he lacked consistency and stamina for such a role. His support came mainly from the progressive middle class, such as teachers and doctors, as well as from lower-middle-class artisans and clerks.

The head of the Radical Party, Alejandro Lerroux, who had hoped to lead the government instead of Azaña, found himself vetoed by the socialists. With justification, they considered his party corrupt. From then on Lerroux would look to make his alliances with the right. His support came mainly from conservatives and businessmen who had disliked Alfonso, but had no deep-rooted opposition to the principle of monarchy.

The opponents of republican reform, supporters of the large landowners, the clergy and the army, represented only a small minority of seats within the Cortes, but this did not slow their mobilization to defend traditional Spain.¹⁵ Fascism was a negligible presence at this stage, with a couple of reviews and a handful of right-wing intellectuals gathered round José Antonio Primo de Rivera, the son of the late dictator.¹⁶

Following the proclamation of the Republic, the anarchists had split between those who followed the syndicalist, or trade union, path, which was the case with 'trinitistas' of Ángel Pestaña and Joan Peiró, and those who belonged to the FAI (Federación Anarquista Ibérica). The FAI lists, including Juan García Oliver and Buenaventura Durruti, believed passionately in the struggle against the state, with strikes and risings, dubbed *la gimnasia revolucionaria*, which was supposed to bring about the social revolution. But it was a small event in the countryside that was to lead to the first major threat to the government.

Castilblanco, a village in the province of Badajoz near the Portuguese border, was on strike during the last days of December 1931. A detachment of the Civil Guard arrived to restore order and one of them opened fire, killing a local man. The reaction of the peasants was ferocious. They lynched four civil guards. The

spiral of violence was immediate. In another incident far away in the Rioja, civil guards appear to have avenged their comrades in Castilblanco by killing eleven people and wounding 30 more. Azaña summoned Sanjurjo, upbraided him for the actions of his force and removed him from his post, half-demoting him with the appointment of inspector general of *carabineros*.¹⁷

General Sanjurjo, who had assisted the arrival of the Republic in April by refusing to support the king, felt badly treated. He began to contact other senior officers with a view to mounting a *coup d'état*. The government was well aware of what was happening and Sanjurjo's coup, when it came in August, was a humiliating failure. It had a momentary success in Seville, but Sanjurjo's inactivity and the CNT's immediate declaration of a general strike finished it off. Sanjurjo tried to flee to Portugal but was arrested at Huelva.¹⁸

The government in Madrid arrested other conspirators, including José Antonio Primo de Rivera and Ramiro de Maeztu, and deported 140 altogether to Villa Cisneros in the western Sahara. Because a number of aristocrats had been implicated, the government decreed the confiscation of lands belonging to grandees of Spain, a sweeping and illegal measure which naturally hardened their hostility. Sanjurjo was condemned to death, but the sentence was immediately commuted to imprisonment. The general did not have long to wait in jail. As soon as Lerroux came to power he pardoned him. Sanjurjo then went into exile in Lisbon to 'organize a national movement which will save Spain from ruin and dishonour'.

The immediate effect of Sanjurjo's rebellion was to speed up the pace of legislation in the Cortes, of which the next most contentious parts were the statute of autonomy for Catalonia and land reform.¹⁹ The right bitterly opposed Catalan devolution but Azaña, in one of the most brilliant speeches of his career, carried the day. The statute was passed on 9 September, helped by the collapse of the Sanjurjo coup, and on 20 November elections to the Catalan parliament took place, won by Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya led by Lluís Companys.²⁰

The year of 1933 began badly for Azaña's government. During the first days of January, as part of the recurring revolts in Andalucía, a wave of violence broke out in the province of Cádiz. A small town, Casas Viejas, with a long anarchist tradition, saw the

arrival of 'the day', that is to say the introduction of libertarian communism. On 11 January a group of anarchists besieged the Civil Guard post and firing broke out. More civil guards and assault guards arrived from Cádiz, and they surrounded a house in which an old anarchist known as 'Seisdedos', or 'six fingers', fought them off. The director-general of security ordered an Assault Guard captain, Manuel Rojas, to put an end to the stand-off. Rojas had the house set on fire and two men who escaped from the flames were shot down. Rojas then ordered his men to kill in cold blood twelve of the anarchists who had been arrested previously. Altogether 22 peasants and three members of the security forces died in Casas Viejas.²¹

The right, which had often called for harsh measures to restore order, now attacked Azaña for brutality. He was falsely accused of having given orders to kill the peasants and his reputation suffered. In the Cortes, deputies on the right argued that the events of Casas Viejas proved that the 'rapidity' of social change in the countryside was the problem and attacked the government's socialist measures in the industrial sector. Azaña's government suffered in the April municipal elections and by the autumn it was clear that he and his colleagues were badly weakened. In the circumstances, Alcalá Zamora entrusted a colleague of Lerroux, Diego Martínez Barrio, to form a cabinet which would call fresh elections.

Faced with the possibility of defeating the government, almost all the groups on the right united on 12 October to form a coalition called the Union de Derecha y Agrarios. Alejandro Lerroux's Radical Republican Party presented itself as the moderating force in the centre. The left, on the other hand, was divided when it went into the elections. The socialists were dissatisfied with the reformist caution of their republican colleagues and were pressured by the UGT to denounce what they saw as the reactionary repressiveness of the Azaña government. The anarchists, loyal to their anti-statist ideas and furious at the killings by the Civil Guard, called for abstention.

The elections took place on 19 November 1933. Thanks to the Republic's new constitution, women went to the polls for the first time in Spain, yet many of them voted for the centre-right, which won the most seats.²² Alcalá Zamora, as president, entrusted the formation of a government to Lerroux. Lerroux's cabinet, composed entirely of Radical Party members, needed the parliamentary

support of the CEDA (the Spanish Confederation of the Autonomous Right), which of course extracted its own terms. Its leader, José María Gil Robles, insisted on a range of measures, reversing some of the previous administration's reforms, such as those affecting primary schools, ecclesiastical measures, agrarian reform and labour laws. Lerroux and Gil Robles also agreed an amnesty for all those involved in the coup of General Sanjurjo.

The most dangerous development at this time was the bolshevization of the socialists led by Largo Caballero. On 3 January 1934 *El Socialista* had declared: 'Harmony? No! Class War! Hatred of the Criminal Bourgeoisie to the Death!'²³ Ten days later the socialist executive committee compiled a new programme. Among the points bound to alarm the centre as well as the right were:

Nationalization of the land

Dissolution of all religious orders, with seizure of their property
 Dissolution of the army, to be replaced by a democratic militia
 Dissolution of the Civil Guard²⁴

Following their electoral defeat, the more moderate Indalecio Prieto found himself losing power in the executive committee of the PSOE, which Largo Caballero now controlled. From then on the bulk of the socialists followed a process of radicalization, which led them to focus more outside the Cortes, such as their establishment of an Alianza Obrera - a Workers' Alliance. On 3 February they set up a revolutionary committee ready to create an insurrection against the government, which should take on 'all the characteristics of civil war' and whose 'success would depend on the extent of its reach and the violence which it produces'.²⁵

Largo Caballero ignored the warnings of the deposed leader of the UGT, Julián Besteiro, that such a policy constituted 'collective madness' and that an attempt to impose the dictatorship of the proletariat would turn out to be 'a vain, childish illusion'.²⁶ Manuel Azaña had also warned the socialists that preparing an insurrection would give the army the excuse to re-enter politics and crush the workers.²⁷ Largo Caballero brushed such cautions aside. The attacks published in his newspaper *Claridad* against Besteiro, Prieto and other moderate socialists 'were even more virulent than those against Gil Robles or the monarchists'.²⁸ Utterly irresponsible rhetoric and the debasement of political discourse fanned the flames

of resentment and created fear. The socialist youth began to arm and train in secret, like the Carlists in the north-east and the minuscule Falange. Ortega y Gasset had warned the previous June of the 'emergence of childishness, and thus violence, in Spanish politics'.²⁹

Lerroux's government, as well as bringing land reform to a halt, cancelled in May the confiscation of land belonging to the grantees of Spain and annulled the law which provided agricultural workers with the same protection as industrial employees. Landowners are supposed to have told hungry labourers seeking work to 'eat the Republic'. The agricultural subsidiary of the UGT³⁰ called for a general strike but it took effect only in the provinces of Cáceres, Badajoz, Ciudad Real and in certain parts of Andalucía. To start a strike in such circumstances, without any parliamentary support, was a serious error for it played into the government's hands.

That summer of 1934 also saw a clash between the Madrid government and the Generalitat of Catalonia, which was involved in its own version of land reform, affecting the tenant farmers of vineyards. On 2 October 1934 the new government of Ricardo Samper, an associate of Lerroux, became a casualty of this imbroglio, under pressure from an intransigent right, and Samper resigned.

President Alcalá Zamora had to manage this crisis in the face of outrage from the left, which claimed that the right was determined to destroy the Republic and that new elections must be held, and the right which wanted to be represented in the government. Gil Robles announced that he would not support a government from the back benches unless it included members of the CEDA.

Largo Caballero himself had acknowledged the previous year that there was no danger of fascism in Spain, yet in the summer of 1934 the rhetoric of the *caballeristas* took the opposite direction, crying fascist wolf – a tactic which risked becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy. Following an outcry over a shipment of arms to socialists in the Asturias, Gil Robles, the leader of the CEDA, announced that they would 'no longer suffer this state of affairs to continue'.³¹ Despite being the largest party in the Cortes, the CEDA had received no ministerial posts, and Gil Robles now demanded a share. The UGT, which suspected the CEDA's lack of commitment to the Republic (due primarily to the anti-clerical clauses in its constitution), announced in turn that they 'would not answer for their future action'. Following the fall of the Samper government

on 4 October, three members of the CEDA, but not Gil Robles himself, entered the new government of Alejandro Lerroux.

The socialist PSOE, fired up on militant rhetoric and prepared to rise against the government, decided to unleash a revolutionary general strike. Other parties of the left and centre-left, fearing that the Republic was about to be handed over to its enemies, proclaimed that from that moment they were breaking away from legality. The government felt compelled to outlaw the general strike and proclaim a state of war in Spain.

The general strike began on 5 October and took effect throughout most of the country. Largo Caballero and his followers compounded the irresponsibility of their actions. They launched an insurrection without any planning. It was the most obvious way of terrorizing the middle classes and forcing them into the arms of the right, just as Besteiro and others had warned.

When the UGT declared its general strike in Madrid, it asked soldiers and police to join the revolt as if the capital of Spain in 1934 were Petrograd in 1917. Largo Caballero was soon forced to recognize that this did not produce the spontaneous revolution of the masses that he had hoped for. The strikers tried to occupy the ministry of the interior and some military centres, a few of them firing pistols, but they were soon rounded up by the security forces. By 8 October nearly all the members of the revolutionary committee had been arrested.³²

In Catalonia the general strike took hold, despite the abstention of the CNT, whose leaders wanted nothing to do with a revolution started by socialists and republicans. The Catalan left, on the other hand, exasperated at the Madrid government's treatment of their statute of autonomy, saw in the general strike an opportunity for accelerating their independence. At eight in the evening on 6 October, Companys appeared on the balcony of the Generalitat to proclaim 'a Catalan state within a Spanish federal republic'. He invited 'anti-fascists' from all over Spain to assemble in Barcelona to establish a provisional government. Lerroux ordered the local military commander, General Domingo Batet, to proclaim a state of war and end this sedition. Batet, who was a prudent man, positioned a pair of field guns in the Plaza de Sant Jaume and gave the order to fire blanks. At six in the morning of 7 October, Companys surrendered. He and his followers were arrested and tried. Companys was sentenced to 30 years in prison. Manuel

Azaña, who had been in Barcelona purely by chance, was arrested and confined on a prison ship. The Catalan statute of autonomy was suspended immediately and Manuel Portela Valladares was appointed governor-general of Catalonia.

In the north of the country the revolutionary general strike spread immediately in the mining areas of León, in Santander and in Vizcaya. In Bilbao there were clashes over five or six days with the security forces and in Eibar and Mondragón 40 people were killed. But the arrival of troops and the Spanish air force dropping bombs on the mining areas put an end to the revolt.

In Asturias things were very different. One month before there had been a strike to protest against the CEDA gathering in Covadonga, a sacred spot for the Spanish right for it was regarded as the starting point of the *Reconquista* of Spain from the Moors. Asturias was also the only place in Spain where the CNT had joined the revolutionary coalition, Alianza Obrera, and where the communists had a noticeable following. The revolutionary committee was led by the socialist Ramón González Peña, yet the communists later boasted that they had directed the uprising. This confirmed the worst fears of the centre and right, and later gave Franco an excuse for talking of a 'red conspiracy'.³³

Estimates of the numbers of armed workers who took part in the uprising range between 15,000 and 30,000. Most of their rifles came from a shipment of arms supplied by Indalecio Prieto, supposedly one of the most moderate members of the parliamentary socialist party. These rifles had been landed by the yacht *Turquesa* at Pravia, north-east of Oviedo.³⁴ Prieto had promptly fled to France to avoid arrest. Other weapons came from arms factories in the region which were seized. The miners also had their dynamite blasting charges, which were known as '*la artillería de la revolución*'.

On 5 October the first move of the rebels was to attack the Civil Guard posts and public buildings at dawn. They occupied Mieres, Gijón, Avilés and some small towns in the mining region. They also sent columns to seize Trubia, La Felguera and Sama de Langreo. The next day they moved on Oviedo, defended by a garrison 1,000 strong, and took it, fighting street by street and house by house. The revolutionaries set up a commune, replacing money with coupons signed by the committee. They requisitioned trains and transport vehicles, and took over buildings. Some 40

people were murdered, mainly the rich and a number of priests. It was full-scale civil war, although limited to one region.

With the country under martial law the minister of war ordered General Franco to suppress the rebellion. On 7 October General López Ochoa left Lugo with an expeditionary force. The same day the cruiser *Libertad* accompanied by two gunboats reached Gijón, where they fired at the miners on shore. Aircraft also bombed the coalfields and Oviedo. On 8 October Franco sent two *banderas* of the Spanish Foreign Legion and two *tabors* of Moroccan *regulares* under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel Yagüe.³⁵ López Ochoa took Avilés later that day.

By 11 October the situation of the revolutionaries in Oviedo was desperate. They had run out of ammunition and knew that the rising had failed in the rest of Spain. At dusk on 12 October General López Ochoa's troops were in control of almost the whole town. Six days later the new head of the revolutionary committee, Belarmino Tomás, offered to surrender providing the Moorish troops were kept out of the towns and villages. Yet from 10 October legionnaires and *regulares* had invaded the mining villages and treated them as enemy territory, with looting, rape and the execution of prisoners on the spot. The security forces unleashed a savage repression on the area as a whole. The man most notorious for his cruelty was the Civil Guard commander, Major Lisardo Doval.

The Asturias revolution had lasted no more than two weeks, but it cost around 1,000 lives and created enormous damage. Thousands of workers were sacked for having taken part in the rising and several thousand were imprisoned, of whom many were liberated in January 1935 when the state of war was suspended. Altogether twenty people were condemned to death, but only two sentences were carried out, which was extremely lenient for the age, when one considers how Stalin's or Hitler's regime would have reacted to a revolutionary rising. Responsibility for the appalling brutality of the security forces lay more with their commanders, especially Yagüe and Franco, than with the politicians in Madrid. Azaña had been unfairly blamed for Castilblanco, but this was on a different level. The Asturias rising inevitably demanded stronger measures, which meant even less possibility of control from Madrid over the actions of the army and Civil Guard.

The clearer minds on the left saw that the rising had been a

terrible disaster. But for the militants, especially Largo Caballero, it had produced an intoxicating whiff of revolution. For the right, on the other hand, it seemed to show, as Calvo Sotelo argued, that the army – the spine of the state – was the only guarantee against revolutionary change. Yet above all, the rising had been a profound shock to the nation as a whole and a near fatal blow to democracy in Spain. There can be no doubt that such a violent insurrection alarmed the centre as well as the hard right. It certainly appeared to confirm conservatives in their belief that they must do everything possible to prevent another attempt to create the dictatorship of the proletariat, especially when Largo Caballero declared: 'I want a Republic without class war, but for that one class has to disappear.'³⁶ They did not need to be reminded of the horrors which followed the Russian revolution and Lenin's determination to annihilate the bourgeoisie.

With the defeat of the October revolution the suspension of the Catalan state of autonomy and the dissolution of the left-wing town councils, the Radical-CEDA coalition seemed supreme. The CEDA, however, felt that its presence in the Lerroix government did not do justice to its parliamentary strength. Gil Robles wanted to amend the Constitution to abolish the restrictions on the Church's role in education, but he had little success. Lerroix and his Radicals had at least held on to one principle, and that was their anti-clericalism. Yet the government crisis which ensued had another cause. When President Alcalá Zamora decided to exercise his constitutional prerogative and commute the death sentence passed on González Peña, the CEDA leaders declared their opposition. Lerroix had to form another government and this time include five members of the CEDA. Gil Robles insisted on becoming minister of war. He appointed General Fanjul to be under-secretary and Franco to be the chief of the general staff.³⁷

The new government turned back the Republic's clock in certain matters, such as returning property to the Jesuits and indemnifying the grantees for the expropriation of their land. It ignored agrarian reform and public education. Meanwhile, the republican left began to get itself together again. In December 1934 Azaña was cleared of any involvement in the events of October and freed. A few months later he made a pact between the left and the three centrist parties: Izquierda Republicana, Unión Republicana and the Partido Nacional Republicano. In March 1935 Azaña reappeared in the

Cortes and began a series of mass meetings around the country. In Madrid more than 300,000 people turned up. During this speech he laid out the basis for an electoral alliance of the left which would take them to victory in the elections that took place the following February.

The socialists, on the other hand, remained profoundly divided. Prieto, still in exile in Paris after the October revolution, broke with the followers of Largo Caballero – the *caballeristas* – and once again tried to align himself with Azaña. Largo Caballero himself came out of prison in November, more of a bolshevik than ever, having at last read the works of Lenin in his cell and received visits from Jacques Duclos, the French Comintern representative. The leaders of the uprising received surprisingly lenient treatment.

The alliance between the CEDA and Lerroix's radicals finally collapsed at the end of 1935 as a result of political scandals. In October there was the *estraperlo* gambling scandal, which allowed the president of the Republic to demand the resignation of Lerroix.³⁸ He entrusted Joaquín Chapaprieta with forming a new government, but the following month another row broke out over corruption, which provided the *coup de grâce* for the Radical Party as a whole.³⁹

Gil Robles thought that his time had come to take over the government and he withdrew support from Chapaprieta, but his move proved a mistake. President Alcalá Zamora, who did not like him and wanted to create a large centre party, entrusted the government to a man he trusted, the former governor of Catalonia, Manuel Portela Valladares. Blind to the fact that democracy in Spain had become so fragile, Alcalá Zamora had pushed republican democracy into its endgame. It soon became clear that the clash of attitudes throughout the country was so great that the forces of conflict could not be contained within the Cortes.

4

The Popular Front

When the new head of government, Manuel Portela Valladares, summoned the council of ministers on 1 January 1936 he already had in his hands the decree to dissolve the Cortes. New elections were to be announced for 16 February. They were to be the last free elections held in Spain for 40 years.

The decree was finally published on 7 January and the electoral campaign rapidly became heated. The results of the previous election had underlined the way the law gave such a favourable weighting to political coalitions. This encouragement to both the left and the right to create alliances had the effect of emptying the centre ground.

Any possibility of compromise had been destroyed by the revolutionary uprising of the left and its cruel repression by the army and Civil Guard. The depth of feeling was too strong on either side to allow democracy to work. Both sides used apocalyptic language, funnelling the expectations of their followers towards a violent outcome, not a political one. Largo Caballero declared, 'If the right win the elections, we will have to go straight to open civil war.'¹ Not surprisingly, the right reacted with a similar attitude. In their view a left-wing victory in the polls was bound to lead to violent revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat which Largo Caballero had promised.

The main group on the right was basically an alliance of the CEDA with monarchists and Carlists of the National Block. José María Gil Robles, the CEDA leader, called it 'the national counter-revolutionary front'.² Gil Robles, whose Catholic corporatism had acquired some superficial fascist trappings, allowed himself to be acclaimed by his followers at mass meetings as the leader, with the cry '*jefe, jefe, jefe*'. (The Spanish for 'chief' was an amateurish imitation of '*Duce!*' or '*Führer!*'.) His advertising for the campaign included a massive poster covering the façade of a building in

central Madrid with the slogan: 'Give me an absolute majority and I will give you a great Spain.' Millions of leaflets were distributed saying that a victory for the left would produce 'an arming of the mob, the burning of banks and private houses, the division of property and land, looting and the sharing out of your women'.³ The finance for such a campaign came from landowners, large companies and the Catholic Church, which hurried to bless the alliance with the idea that a vote for the right was a vote for Christ.

Since the proclamation of the Republic in April 1931, with the subsequent burning of churches and convents and the anti-clerical provisions in the Constitution, the Catholic hierarchy had already demonstrated its hostility. But the rising of October 1934 had pushed it into advocating disobedience to a legally constituted government if it were necessary to protect the interests of the Church. When the Republic suppressed the state subsidy the Church had soon found itself impoverished, and its priests depended even more on contributions from their parishioners.⁴

In 1936 Spain had some 30,000 priests, most of whom were poor and very uneducated, incapable of any other employment. The hierarchy, however, was jealous of its privileges. When Cardinal Vidal y Barraquer, faced with the Church's financial crisis, proposed that the richer dioceses should help the poorer ones, most of the bishops objected furiously.⁵

On 15 January 1936 the parties of the centre-left and left signed a pact to contest the elections as a single group.⁶ A Popular Front programme was drafted, concentrating mainly on agrarian reform, the re-establishment of the Catalan statute of autonomy and an amnesty for the prisoners in Spain arrested after the October revolution.⁷ Nothing was said about nationalization of banks or division of the land, but the right claimed that there were secret clauses in the pact.⁸ This was a natural suspicion in the circumstances. The Popular Front election manifesto was indeed mild, yet the *caballeristas* had already called for the nationalization of the land, the dissolution of the army, Civil Guard and all religious orders with seizure of their property. In May 1935 the manifesto of the Alianza Obrera had called in addition for 'confiscation and nationalization of large industry, finance, transportation and communications'.⁹

The proposal to free all those sentenced for taking part in a violent rebellion against the legally elected government of the day

was bound to provoke the right. In fact, the open determination of the left as a whole to release from prison all those sentenced for the uprising of 1934 was hardly an assurance of its respect for the rule of law and constitutional government. The Janus-like nature of the Popular Front alliance was demonstrated one week after the election. On the same day Diego Martínez Barrio said that the Popular Front was a 'conservative enterprise' and *El Socialista* proclaimed: 'We are determined to do in Spain what has been done in Russia. The plan of Spanish socialism and Russian communism is the same.'¹⁰

The electoral pact, first urged by socialists and left republicans, had been born in the Asturias rising. It coincided with the new policy of the Comintern which called on communists to ally with non-revolutionary left-wing groups to fight the new threat of fascism in Europe. This was a two-stage plan, moderate at first, then revolutionary in the longer term.¹¹ In June 1936 the Comintern leader Georgi Dimitrov stated that given the present situation in Spain, 'the fundamental and urgent task of the Communist Party in Spain and the Spanish proletariat' was to ensure victory over fascism by completing 'the democratic revolution' and isolating 'the fascists from the mass of peasants and urban petit bourgeois'.¹²

The Comintern controllers were hardly interested in preserving the middle class. The Popular Front strategy was simply a means to power. This was confirmed later at the Comintern's meeting on 23 July to discuss the right-wing rising. Dimitrov warned that the Spanish communists should not attempt to establish a dictatorship of the proletariat 'at the present stage'. 'That would be a fatal mistake. Therefore we must say: act under the banner of defending the Republic ... In other words, comrades, we believe that in the present international situation it is advantageous and necessary for us to carry out a policy that would preserve our opportunity to organize, educate, unify the masses and to strengthen our own positions in a number of countries - in Spain, France, Belgium and so forth - where there are governments dependent on the Popular Front and where the Communist Party has extensive opportunities. When our positions have been strengthened, then we can go further.'¹³

Going further also meant that the elimination of political rivals was a high priority right from the start. On 17 July, just as the anarchists were preparing to defeat the generals' rising in Barcelona,

the Comintern 'advised' the Spanish communist politburo: 'It is necessary to take preventative measures with the greatest urgency against the putschist attempts of the anarchists, behind which the hand of the fascists is hidden.'¹⁴

The Spanish Communist Party, as the French Comintern representative André Marty reported later to Moscow, was run almost entirely by Vittorio Codovilla (who had the cover-name 'Medina') and the PSUC in Catalonia by Erno Gerö (alias 'Singer' or 'Pedro'), another Comintern envoy. Marty later dismissed the work of the Spanish Communist Party's politburo as 'terribly primitive'.¹⁵ José Díaz was the only competent member, but he was too ill with liver problems to be effective.

The largest party of the Popular Front was the Partido Socialista Obrero Español (PSOE). Francisco Largo Caballero, now 66 years old, had become its most radical and bolshevized leader. He distrusted the broad alliance with the Left Republicans of Manuel Azaña and allowed himself to be courted by Jacques Duclos, another Comintern representative in Spain, who had identified Largo Caballero as the most suitable leader of the Spanish working class. Not only *Claridad*, the newspaper of the *caballeristas*, but the communist press of Europe began to hail this old trade union leader as the 'Spanish Lenin'. Yet Largo Caballero, carried away by his own rhetoric, began to alarm his new communist friends. His inflammatory and revolutionary speeches at mass meetings around Spain calling for the elimination of the middle class was contrary to Dimitrov's policy. (Some wit at the time coined the slogan 'Vote communist and save Spain from Marxism'.) But whether or not his speeches were the product of revolutionary intoxication or revealed his own intentions at that time, it was hardly surprising that the right, threatened with extinction by the left, should have prepared to strike back.

The influence of the Spanish Communist Party was considerable for an organization which when founded in 1921 had numbered just a few dozen militants. A decade later, at the time of the fall of the monarchy, it mustered a few thousand members. In the elections of November 1933 it received 170,000 votes and its first seat in the Cortes. But in the first half of 1936 it went from 30,000 members to nearly 100,000.¹⁶ The left needed the anarchists to vote if it was to win such a closely fought election. This time the anarchists were prepared to vote, even though it was against their

principles. The only hope of getting their comrades out of prison lay with the Popular Front.

On 16 February the voting stations opened in a tense yet calm atmosphere. The two coalitions of both right and left were each convinced that they would win. General Franco's propagandists later tried to claim that there had been serious irregularities and implied that the results were somehow invalid, but this was completely untrue. Even the monarchist newspaper, *ABC*, wrote on 17 February that the poll had taken place 'without strikes, without threats and without any scandals. Everybody voted as they wanted to, in absolute liberty.'

The provincial electoral commissions finally gave their verdict on 20 February: the Popular Front had won by just over 150,000 votes. The electoral law encouraging coalitions, which had favoured the right in 1933, now favoured the left. The Popular Front, despite winning by a margin of less than 2 per cent of the total vote, achieved an absolute majority of seats in the Cortes.¹⁷ Perhaps the most striking figure from the election revealed that the Falangists of José Antonio Primo de Rivera received only 46,000 votes out of nearly ten million throughout Spain: on average less than 1,000 votes per province. That provided a rather more realistic indication of the fascist threat than that proclaimed by Largo Caballero.

The left, ignoring the narrowness of their victory, proceeded to behave as if they had received an overwhelming mandate for revolutionary change. Predictably, the right was horrified to see crowds rush forth to release prisoners themselves, without even waiting for an amnesty. Almost as soon as the results were known, a group of monarchists asked Gil Robles to lead a *coup d'état*, but he would have nothing to do with it personally. Instead he asked Portela Valladares to proclaim a state of war before the revolutionary masses rushed into the streets. Embittered by defeat, Gil Robles also came out with a surprising and hypocritical attack against the rich, the very people who had supported and financed his campaign, accusing them of having demonstrated a 'suicidal egotism' in the way they had reduced wages.

General Franco, the chief of the general staff, sent an emissary to General Pozas, director-general of the Civil Guard, inviting him to take part 'in the decisions which need to be taken in the defence of order and the well-being of Spain'.¹⁸ Franco also tried to convince Portela Valladares that he should not hand over power to the

Popular Front and offered the support of the army. This was evidently the first time that Franco had considered military intervention. He fully realized the importance of the Civil Guard and the Assault Guard.

Franco, not yet convinced that a coup would work, went to see Portela again on 19 February. He said that if he allowed the country to go communist he would bear a heavy responsibility before history. But Portela, although driven to the wall and shattered – he 'gave the impression of a ghost', wrote Manuel Azaña, 'not that of a head of government' – did not cede to Franco's moral blackmail.¹⁹ He resigned that very day. The President of the Republic, Alcalá Zamora, had no alternative but to ask Azaña, whom he disliked, to form a government. Azaña proceeded to assemble a cabinet with members of his own party and that of the Unión Republicana. He did not consider including a single socialist in his government. In any case, Largo Caballero vetoed the participation of the socialist party (PSOE) in the new administration to prevent Prieto forming a social-democratic alliance with the Left Republicans.

Despite the moderate basis of the new cabinet, the right reacted as if the bolsheviks had taken over the government. They were appalled by the rush of people into the streets to celebrate their victory and marching to the prisons to release prisoners. The Church warned that the enemies of Catholicism, 'under the influence and direction of the Judaeo-Masonic world conspiracy, are declaring a war to the finish against us'.²⁰ The right had decided that to safeguard its idea of Spain, the parliamentary road was no longer an option, if only because their opponents on the left had already demonstrated their own willingness to ignore the rule of law.

On 20 February the first council of ministers of Azaña's government met after he had addressed the nation on the radio. Azaña spoke of justice, liberty and the validity of the constitution. He would undertake, with the approval of the Cortes, 'a great work of national restoration in defence of work and production, encouraging public works, and paying attention to the problems of unemployment and all the other points which had motivated the coalition of the republican and proletarian parties which is now in power'.²¹

Among the many problems which faced his government, perhaps the most urgent was the proclamation of an amnesty, following prison riots in Burgos, Cartagena and Valencia. The government

could not wait until the Cortes was assembled. On 23 February it re-established the Generalitat of Catalonia and also the socialist councils suspended throughout Spain after the revolution of October 1934. At the same time Azaña embarked on a reorganization of the army command, appointing generals loyal to the Republic to key posts and sending those suspected of plotting to appointments far from Madrid.

The government then reanimated the work of the Instituto de Reforma Agraria, with the minister of agriculture himself, Mariano Ruiz Funes, overseeing the process in Andalusia and Extremadura. The president of the Generalitat, Lluís Companys, left the prison of Puerto de Santa Maria and was welcomed in Barcelona by an enormous demonstration as he reopened the Catalan parliament. On 16 March Azaña announced that the confiscation of land belonging to aristocrats involved in the Sanjurjo rising would be reactivated. And all those workers who lost their jobs as a result of participating in the October revolution would be reinstated.

The economic situation was not good. Since 1931 private investment had plummeted and in 1936 it dropped to the level of 1913. Not surprisingly, with the new government's programme, capital left the country at an increasing rate. Juan March, the Mallorcan multimillionaire, who had amassed an enormous fortune through tobacco smuggling, fled Spain to avoid prison. Once out of the country, he concentrated on speculating against the peseta on the foreign exchange markets. From his own pocket he provided a tenth of the twenty million pesetas collected by the anti-republican group of whom the Count de los Andes was the president.²¹

Far more serious than March's financial chicanery were the economic consequences of the left's electoral victory. Workers put in huge wage demands, far beyond what the factory or farm could sustain. Strikes multiplied, unemployment rose and the value of the peseta fell sharply on the foreign exchanges. The real problem facing the centre-left government of Azaña was the result of its Faustian pact with the hard left of *caballeristas*, who saw it as the equivalent of the Kerensky regime in Russia, a view shared by the right. This liberal government found that it had no influence on its electoral allies, now set upon a revolutionary course, and could not persuade their followers to obey the law. Luis Araquistain, the editor of *Claridad* and the voice of the bolshevizing tendency within the socialists and UGT, had argued during the election campaign

that Spain, like Russia in 1917, was ready for revolution. He had rejected the earlier warnings of Julián Besteiro, the former leader of the UGT, that revolutionary activities such as factory occupations simply horrified the middle class and destroyed the economy. Each left-wing organization began to form its own militia – the communists' was the most disciplined and effective. And an unprecedented number of people went around armed, ready to defend themselves from the attacks of opponents. The general impression of a breakdown of law and order played straight into the hands of the undemocratic right. The right-wing press blamed the disorders on the left, while the left blamed the right. The right insisted that democracy was not working and that the Cortes had become useless. Women from the middle and upper classes insulted officers in the streets, telling them that they were cowards for not overthrowing the government.

No group on the right did more to cause disorder, and thus to provoke a military coup, than the Falange. It was subsidized from a number of sources – 10,000 pesetas monthly from Renovación Española, money from the Banco de Vizcaya, and later from Juan March, and 50,000 pesetas a month from Mussolini passed through the Italian embassy in Paris.²³ The Nazis, however, had little confidence in them and refused them the million marks of support which they had requested. The Falange needed the money because it was growing at an astonishing rate, largely due to an influx from the youth movement of Acción Popular – some 15,000 of them in the spring of 1936, effectively doubling the size of the Falange to 30,000.²⁴

The Falange Española, or Spanish Phalanx, had been born in the Comedy Theatre in Madrid on 29 October 1933. It was founded by José Antonio Primo de Rivera, the elder son of the dictator, a young lawyer of dark good looks and supposedly great charm. He attracted a coterie of fascist intellectuals and appealed to students, especially those from wealthy families, the *señoritos*, as well as many from the lower middle class who felt threatened by social change. The Falange had also been joined by former members of his father's Patriotic Union from a decade before, as well as frustrated monarchists and conservatives appalled by the electoral victory of the left.

Falangism differed from Nazism and fascism in its profoundly conservative nature. Mussolini used Roman symbols and imperial

imagery in his speeches merely for their propaganda effect. The Falange, on the other hand, used modern and revolutionary phraseology while remaining fundamentally reactionary. The Church was the essence of *Hispanidad* (Spanishness). The new state would 'draw its inspiration from the spirit of the Catholic religion which is traditional in Spain'. Their symbols were those of Ferdinand and Isabella: the yoke of the authoritarian state and the arrows of annihilation to wipe out heresy. They did not just borrow the symbols, but tried to revive the Castilian mentality. The ideal Falangist was supposed to be 'half-monk, half-soldier'.

Yet the movement suffered from something of a split personality between the nationalist and the socialist elements. José Antonio attacked 'the social bankruptcy of capitalism' and denounced the living conditions of workers and peasants. Yet Marxism he found repugnant as an ideology, because it was not Spanish and because a class struggle weakened the nation. The country had to be united in a system in which the employer could not exploit the employee. At one moment José Antonio was making vain approaches, first to the socialist Prieto, then to the anarcho-syndicalist CNT. The next, he was reminding Franco of Oswald Spengler's remark that in the last resort civilization had always been saved by a platoon of soldiers. But a civilization which has to be saved by soldiers is a conservative's image of a perfect world, rather than that of a revolutionary national socialist.

The Falange constantly sought more firearms for their street fighting and José Antonio put in motion a Bulldog Drummond-style intrigue. Luis Bolin, the London correspondent of the monarchist ABC, met a prominent but anonymous Englishman by a secret recognition signal in Claridge's Hotel. They arranged for large quantities of submachine-guns to be packed in champagne cases and shipped from Germany in a private yacht. In fact, they did not arrive in time, but it was not long before Bolin in London began to organize a far more important delivery.

The Falange, however, already had weapons from other sources. On 10 March a Falangist squad led by Alberto Ortega tried to assassinate Professor Luis Jiménez de Asúa, a socialist deputy, but instead killed his police escort. Four days later Falangists made an attempt on Largo Caballero's life. That same day, 14 March, José Antonio met Franco in the house of the general's brother-in-law, Ramón Serrano Suñer, to discuss a joint plan of action. The

following day the Falange was outlawed by the government because of the attack on Largo Caballero and José Antonio was arrested for the illegal possession of arms. It is difficult to reconcile José Antonio's famous charm with the brutality of his followers and the outspoken racism of his coterie at their dinner-jacketed gatherings in the Hotel Paris. He cannot, in any case, escape responsibility, because his speeches were a clear incitement, even if violence remained an abstract quantity to the fastidious Andalusian.

The ideal of defending traditional Spain required active preparation, now that the authoritarian right had discarded any further attempt to make use of the parliamentary system. In the Pyrenees the Carlists had started to arm and train their *requeté* militia, famous since the Carlist wars in the nineteenth century for its uniform of a Basque beret in bright red.

The Carlist movement was purely arch-conservative. Its official title was the Traditionalist Communion and it has been described as a form of lay Jesuitry. It believed that a 'judaeo-marxist-masonic' conspiracy was going to turn Spain into a colony of the Soviet Union.²⁵ Liberalism, in the view of Carlists as well as the Church hierarchy, was the source of all modern evils, and they dreamed of reviving a royal Catholic autocracy in a populist form. The main Carlist strength lay in the Pyrenees, though they did have supporters in a number of other areas, such as Andalusia. The Carlists no longer showed their former sympathy with regionalist aspirations. This had stemmed from their stronghold being in the former kingdom of Navarre and had also been a means of winning Basque and Catalan support for the Carlist wars in the nineteenth century. By 1936 they had come to detest Basque and Catalan nationalism.

A number of Carlist officers were trained in Italy with the help of Mussolini, while their leaders, Fal Conde and the Count of Rodezno, organized the purchase of weapons from Germany. The strength of the *requetés* is hard to calculate exactly, but there were probably more than 8,000 members in Navarre alone early in 1936. A figure of 30,000 for the whole country has been suggested. One of their backers, José Luis Oriol, organized a ship from Belgium which brought 6,000 rifles, 150 heavy machine-guns, 300 light machine-guns, five million rounds of ammunition and 10,000 hand grenades.²⁶

In the spring of 1936 the Carlists' Supreme Military Council was set up in Saint Jean de Luz, just over the French frontier, by

Prince Javier de Borbón-Parma and Fal Conde. It was composed of former officers and began to plan a rising in conjunction with the right-wing Unión Militar Española, a secret association of right-wing officers within the army, with Alfonsine monarchists and the Falange. Their contact was Colonel José Varela (later one of Franco's most important field commanders) who had earlier been training the Carlist *requetés* secretly in the Pyrenees mountains. So far only the vaguest rumours of these preparations had reached Azaña's government in Madrid.

