

Spain and the Great War

A Futile Neutrality

When the First World War broke out in July 1914, Spain immediately proclaimed her neutrality. Despite that, however, the conflict was still to test the Restoration Monarchy to its limits. Not only did the war accelerate the process of change already gripping Spain, but it also deepened the differences in the dynastic parties, accentuated the clash between reaction and reform and heightened class conflict. Shaken to the core, in 1917 Spain erupted in a multiple crisis that left her in no state to cope with the fresh complications of the post-war era. Had the Restoration Monarchy taken part in the war, in short, its position could hardly have been any worse.

The Rule of the Idóneos

In July 1914 Spain was governed by the charming and affable Eduardo Dato. Born in La Coruña in 1856, he had made his name as the progenitor of Spain's first measures of social reform and was from the start determined to rebuild the old consensus politics – hence the scornful nickname bestowed on him by Maura of the *idóneo* or ‘trimmer’. However, even had Dato wished to be another Maura, he was in no position to do so, as the elections consequent upon the new *turno* produced much greater success for the opposition – dynastic and non-dynastic alike – than was normal, and that despite widespread irregularity. Though in part the fruit of the increasing inability of *caciquismo* to control the larger cities, this result also stemmed from the fact that the Conservatives went into the elections in the grip of a major schism. Thus, although Maura had withdrawn into a disgruntled retirement, such were the hopes that he had encapsulated that Dato's appointment called into being a new political movement. Known as *maurismo*, this had its origins at a major rally that was organized in Bilbao on 30 November 1913 by the Mallorcan politician's disciple, Angel Ossorio y Gallardo, and proclaimed a programme based on

support for the Church, the monarchy and the armed forces; the revitalization of the political system; and the implementation of the doctrines of Social Catholicism. Though Maura himself did not back the movement until June 1914, a combination of intensive propaganda, mass mobilization, Catholic sympathy, and the affectation of dynamism had soon brought the *mauristas* much support, the result being that many constituencies actually witnessed a contest between rival Conservatives.

What, however, was *maurismo*? In brief, the answer is Spain's variant of the proto-fascism that had been raising its head in many European countries. Though large sections of the middle classes – petty *entrepreneurs*, small shopkeepers, minor functionaries, or lesser members of the professional classes – were effectively excluded from the political system, they were yet much exercised by the growth of anti-clericalism, the spectre of disorder and the decay of the provincial towns in which many of them lived. Sharing their discontent, meanwhile, were both young men from propertied backgrounds who had yet to make their way in the world and *caciques* convinced that the Canovine system was no longer capable of facing down the threat of revolution, both these groups being impatient with the structures of the Restoration Monarchy. In *fin-de-siglo* Spain as elsewhere, then, social protest rubbed shoulders with political reaction, and, having already been radicalized by *costismo*, the two were now brought together in an ultra-nationalist movement that promised both moral and physical regeneration and a recasting of the state in a more authoritarian style.

In 1914, and for a few years thereafter, *maurismo* made a brave show of defiance. Yet all was not well. Not only was the leadership deeply divided between Social Catholics such as Ossorio y Gallardo and authoritarian hawks such as the head of the *maurista* youth movement, Antonio Goicoechea, but it soon became apparent that progress was unlikely without the acquiescence of the *datistas*: the number of *maurista* deputies actually fell from twenty-one to fifteen in the 1916 elections, and even then five of the men concerned only triumphed because the *datistas* gave them a free run. There was therefore little chance of *maurismo* revolutionizing Spanish politics, the consequence being that Maura himself soon began to seek a reconciliation with the *datistas*.

That said, however, the rebellion remained most unsettling, for, by persistently denigrating the Canovine system, *maurismo* encouraged hostility to parliamentarianism as a whole. In the short term, moreover, it was a distinct threat to Dato who was quickly moved to reinforce his position in the *cortes* by making a deal with the Lliga, the result being that the law providing for the establishment of *mancomunidades* was hastily rescued from the stagnation in which it had been languishing in the *cortes* and promulgated by royal decree. As the subsequent elections

showed, the move was a shrewd one, the Lliga's opponents in Catalonia being utterly humiliated. When the new *cortes* assembled in April 1914, Dato was better off than might otherwise have been the case. It should not be thought, however, that the Catalan problem had been resolved. Whilst Catalonia's four *diputaciones* now sat as a single assembly and elected a permanent executive council, in practice Catalanists had little reason to be satisfied. Setting aside the fact that the state had the right to dissolve the *mancomunidad* at any time, the municipalities and provinces were not compelled to transfer their powers to the new body, and, in fact, frequently would not do so. For several years, then, the Catalan administration was forced to engage in a constant struggle to extend its authority. By the end of the First World War real progress was being made, but the conditional nature of autonomy, the limited powers of the *mancomunidad*, the grudging attitude of the government, and the miserable budget within which the Catalans were forced to operate all ensured that the problem did not go away.

Initially at least, however, Catalonia did not loom too large on the government's horizons, the last months of peace rather being a time of relative tranquillity. Whilst there were worries about the impact of the overthrow of the Portuguese monarchy in 1910 and considerable turmoil in the Conservative party – premier or no premier, Dato was not officially head of his party, and did not secure the position until July 1914 – social unrest was at a low ebb, and republicanism seemingly on the retreat. Needless to say, however, it was not long before the prognosis was as stormy as ever.

Impact of War

No sooner had war broken out, indeed, than there was a sharp intensification of political debate, the chief subject under discussion being whether or not Spain should join the fighting. Although the bulk of the populace remained apathetic, this was a conflict that affected both Left and Right. Thus, whilst the anarchists remained hostile on principle, most progressives saw intervention in favour of the Allies as a means of furthering their cause. Amongst the political establishment, enthusiasm for wholesale intervention was less common, the vast majority of Liberals and Conservatives alike being agreed on the need for neutrality, but even so opinion was split between those who believed that Spain should do everything she could to assist the Entente, and those who preferred an 'absolute' neutrality that would in practice have favoured the Central Powers. In large part the reflection of ideological proclivities, this debate undoubtedly had an unsettling effect that helped considerably to destabilize both of the dynastic parties.

For most Spaniards, however, the issue of intervention was greatly overshadowed by the war's economic impact, there being no doubt that this was enormous. The picture was initially by no means bright – cotton, brandy, wine and cork were all brought to a near standstill – but it was not long before new patterns of supply and demand had been established, most of which were highly favourable. Spain's mines and factories finding a ready market in Britain, France and other places, the war was marked by unprecedented economic growth. At all events, textiles, engineering, chemicals, shipbuilding, armaments, mining, and iron and steel all boomed, so imposing being the development of Vizcaya in particular that it actually outstripped Catalonia as Spain's strongest industrial area. And, last but not least, the war also brought the beginnings of modernization: soaring coal prices stimulating interest in hydro-electricity, the amount of power generated in this fashion more than tripling between 1913 and 1920.

Striking though it was, the wartime boom was hardly an industrial revolution – total energy consumption, for example, seems to have risen by no more than 25 per cent – whilst it did not even bring much in the way of prosperity. A small number of *entrepreneurs* and industrialists made large fortunes, certainly, but for the bulk of the populace things were by no means so rosy. With the inefficient railway system taxed beyond endurance and the production and import of consumer goods in retreat, many areas began to experience shortages of all kinds, whilst the war inevitably produced general price inflation. On the whole, wages also rose, but even the most favoured sections of the workforce managed to do no more than to keep pace with the cost of living, whilst matters were not helped in this respect by the fact that many basic commodities such as rice, chickpeas and wheat increased in price by far more than the general norm. Nor was inflation the only problem. In the industrial and mining districts expansion brought much overcrowding and discomfort whilst in the *campo* reductions in the import of fertilizer and cut-backs in consumption abroad led to falls in production, wage reductions and falling opportunities for employment. Things were at their worst in sectors specializing in export crops, but few areas were unaffected, the general effect of the war therefore being not to enrich but rather to impoverish.

In consequence, Spain once more entered a period of serious unrest. Effective action by the government might have reduced the tension, but this was not forthcoming, the result being numerous strikes, protests and other disturbances. Meanwhile, increasingly at odds with the Lliga, whose leaders were demanding a series of measures aimed at reducing the cost of imported raw material, the Dato government was in November 1915 forced to resign after a plan that it had put forward for reform of the army was sidelined by the *cortes*. As power was immediately restored

to Romanones, it at first appeared that matters might improve: genuinely interested in social reform, and the concept of 'attracting' the Left, the count appointed the relatively radical Santiago Alba as his Minister of Finance. Reinforced in April 1916 by elections that produced 230 Liberal deputies to only 113 Conservatives (*mauristas* included), the new government's most striking proposal was a tax on wartime profits that could be used to fund new measures of social welfare. In reality relatively timid, the new levy aroused a storm of protest, the lead being taken by Cambó and the representatives of Catalan industry (it did not help in this respect that Alba was a notorious opponent of catalanism). To make matters worse, the Minister of Finance soon found that he could not count on the support of a Liberal party unwilling to attack the interests of property. After a long battle the measure was therefore lost, the fact being that once again the oligarchy had blocked all chance of a move in the direction of greater social justice.

Alba's defeat has been described as a turning point in the history of the Liberal Party. Thus, whilst it was deprived of its last chance of transforming itself into a genuine party of the masses, the party's many splits were considerably deepened. Whether even Alba could have won a real measure of popular support is a moot point, however. Not only was he himself only too ready to seek a compromise, but the anarchists and socialists were becoming increasingly belligerent, the early months of 1916 witnessing general strikes in both Barcelona and Valencia. Meanwhile, despite serious misgivings on both sides, the CNT and UGT also agreed to combine in a campaign to force the government to ease the populace's sufferings on pain of a revolutionary general strike. Months of agitation followed, of which the culmination was a twenty-four hour national stoppage on 18 December 1916. However, nothing was achieved but fair words, 1917 therefore threatening to be marked by considerable tension.

Revolution Manqué

By 1917 for belligerent and non-belligerent alike the strains of total war were becoming all too apparent. In Spain pressures were by no means so great as they were elsewhere, but even so revolution was soon to appear a real possibility. If the crisis' depth had yet to be revealed, the New Year still found the Romanones government in serious difficulties. Setting aside the demoralizing effects of the profits struggle, the premier was in addition troubled by the German submarines that were ravaging the Atlantic trade routes. Already a serious problem, on 31 January 1917 the

issue was thrown into high relief by the German declaration of unrestricted submarine warfare. A number of Spanish vessels almost immediately being sunk in cold blood, this in turn revived the question of whether or not Spain should join the Allies. Always strongly sympathetic to the Allied cause, Romanones now judged that he had a perfect opportunity at the very least to break off relations with Germany and Austria-Hungary. However, revolution having just broken out in Russia, many Liberals who would hitherto have favoured such an action now regarded any move that would take Spain closer to war with the utmost terror. Realizing this, the cabinet refused to support the count, and on 19 April a much discomfited Romanones therefore resigned in favour of García Prieto.

On one level Romanones' downfall may be seen as presaging the general crisis of 1917. Thus, encouraged by the Russian Revolution, demands for Spain's democratization now came to the fore, and all the more so as the new government proceeded to declare a state of siege and suspend the *cortes*. Convinced, first, that Romanones had been brought down by pro-German feeling in the palace, and, second, that war would lead to revolution, the Socialists and Republicans launched a concerted campaign in favour of intervention. As for the UGT and CNT, meanwhile, they agreed that they should now move to the revolutionary general strike with which they had been threatening the government since the previous summer.

Impressive though all this was, the real trigger for the crisis of 1917 came from quite another direction in that on 1 June a full-scale military revolt erupted in Barcelona. To understand this development, it is necessary to turn to the war in Morocco. Thus, in brief, the period between 1909 and 1914 had seen the emergence of new divisions in the officer corps. One of the many factors that had led to the army becoming so spectacularly overburdened with officers having been the widespread use of selective promotion, in 1899 it had been decided that all promotions would henceforth rest on the principle of seniority alone, as was already the case in the *cuerpos facultativos*. However, this decision could not but be undermined by the Moroccan war, for those officers sent to the Protectorate naturally felt that they were entitled to greater rewards than those who stayed at home, matters being made still worse by the fact that the volunteers who stepped forward to command the growing number of native troops that were being organized by the military authorities were naturally drawn from most adventurous and ambitious officers in the entire Spanish service (included in their number was a diminutive subaltern of steely determination named Francisco Franco y Bahamonde). At all events, thus emerged the so-called *africanistas*, the latter coming to constitute a pressure group whom it was difficult to overlook, and all the

more so as they soon acquired the royal ear, Alfonso being not only inclined to see them as a means of manipulating the army as a whole, but also much excited by the whole Moroccan affair.

Of all the results of the Moroccan war, few were more pernicious than the emergence of the *africanistas*. Whilst cultivating an image based on extreme violence, blind obedience, suicidal courage, wholesale terror and the supremacy of military power, they succeeded in forcing the government to reintroduce the principle of selective promotion. Tied though this was to heroism on the battlefield, the result was inevitably to stir up hostility and resentment in the rest of the army, and all the more so as conditions in Spain were very poor and the military record of the *africanistas* distinctly unimpressive. Even before the First World War broke out, then, a large part of the Spanish army was increasingly angry and disaffected. As the conflict dragged on, meanwhile, such feelings were inflamed still further by the manner in which officers' salaries were rendered even more inadequate by the impact of inflation, not to mention the fact that the war led Liberals and Conservatives alike once more to examine the question of military reform. The Dato government falling before it could address the issue, the torch was in consequence handed to Romanones. The result was the preparation of a new army law, whose salient points were a reduction in the number of higher formations, a lower retirement age, a partial freeze on promotions, the general introduction of the principle of selective promotion and the subjection of promotions by seniority to aptitude tests. All this was supposed to create a surplus of 11,000,000 *pesetas*, the proceeds of which would be used to improve the army's training and armament and increase its size to 180,000 men.

For the thousands of officers who continued to vegetate in the garrisons of the Peninsula all this amounted to a future that was suddenly very uncertain. Sullen and resentful, many began to consider the possibility of resistance, the most obvious vehicle for their protests being the so-called *juntas de defensa*, or committees of defense, which most of the army's various arms of service had over the past thirty years established to defend their interests. Evolving as powerful pressure groups, these councils had had some success – the representatives of the artillery and engineers had, for example, been able to rebuff repeated attempts to impose selective promotion upon them – and the impending reforms naturally stimulated a revival in their activities. In the infantry, however, no such junta existed, and in the autumn of 1916 a group of infantry officers in the Barcelona garrison therefore set about remedying the want. Playing on the dislike that officers stationed in the provinces felt for those stationed in the more comfortable surroundings of Madrid, not to mention the clique of court generals who surrounded the king, they had

soon obtained much support in Barcelona and beyond, whilst in addition drawing up a constitution that swore all members of the movement to secrecy and bound them to obey its decisions.

Much more tightly organized than its counterparts in the rest of the army, the infantry movement was clearly a major threat to the plans of the government, and the latter therefore ordered its dissolution, only for this to provoke the wholesale resistance. With the situation completely out of hand, the García Prieto government panicked, and placed the entire leadership of the infantry *junteros* under close arrest. All this, however, was to no account: large sections of the officer corps reacted with outrage, and on 1 June the deputy committee that had taken the place of the arrested Junta Superior issued a long manifesto that mixed language of stridently regenerationist nature with a call for military revolt. Much shaken, the government gave way and ordered the release of all its prisoners. Further than this, however, it would not go – amongst other things the *junteros* wanted an immediate pay rise, the dismissal of a number of leading generals, smaller cuts in the officer corps and the immediate recognition of the *juntas de defensa* and their statutes – the result being that on 9 June García Prieto resigned, the principle of civilian supremacy having in consequence once more been shown to be meaningless.

It cannot be stressed too strongly that, in its origins at least, the *juntero* revolt was an entirely apolitical event. That said, it nevertheless provided the catalyst for a genuine social and political crisis. Thus, the forces of the opposition were convinced that the *junteros* were as devoted as they were to the democratization of Spain. If this was a piece of self-delusion, the rebellion certainly shook the structure of the state to its foundations: as poorly paid and frustrated as the peninsular officer corps, public servants of all sorts began to establish their own *juntas de defensa* so as the better to resist Romanones' cuts (the new army law was in fact part of a much wider effort to reduce expenditure). Meanwhile, angered by the fact that the king had summoned Dato to replace the count, the Reformists, Republicans and Socialists formed a grand alliance aimed at forcing the government to reopen the *cortes* as a constituent assembly. Given that Dato's forces were very much in a minority, however, the *cortes* remained firmly shut, the three allies therefore agreeing to organize an armed rebellion. At the same time, meanwhile, the crisis acquired a new dimension. Thus, although Cambó had remained aloof from the revolutionary coalition, he was nonetheless committed to securing a degree of political change. Faced by the government's refusal to reopen the *cortes*, the Catalan leader decided that the only way forward was to convene an 'assembly of parliamentarians' that would divert the Reformists, Republicans and Socialists from more dangerous pursuits and thereby avoid

frightening the *junteros* into the arms of the forces of reaction. Held in Barcelona on 19 July, this gathering saw all the non-dynastic parties agree a list of demands which included the restoration of full civil liberty, the appointment of a supra-party government, and the convocation of a constituent *cortes*.

If Cambó hoped that the assembly movement would confine the growing turmoil to political channels, he was to be disappointed. Thus, regarding the revolutionary general strike to which they were in theory committed with considerable alarm, the Socialists were inclined to support his tactics, but they were constantly in danger of being outflanked. Thus, even though the CNT had by 1917 split into a moderate group inclined to think that a democratic republic was a necessary precondition for the establishment of syndicalism, and a more radical one that believed that the workers could establish their utopia immediately, it was only with the greatest difficulty that it was restrained from launching a strike straight away.

Cambó's tactics, in short, were unlikely to be successful, and all the more so given the government's response. Eager to confront the labour movement, Dato seized upon a relatively minor railway dispute as a means of forcing the CNT and UGT to take action before they were ready, the strike finally being launched on 13 August. Exactly as the government had hoped, the result was disappointing in the extreme. Whilst there were stoppages in most of Spain's cities and industrial areas, mutual suspicion, inadequate planning and government repression all combined to ensure that the movement proved a damp squib. As for hopes that the army might join the strikers, these proved to be totally misplaced, the *junteros* restoring order with a ferocity that was rendered all the worse by the armed resistance put up by a few CNT *pistoleros*. By 18 August the strike was therefore almost everywhere at an end, the only exception being Asturias, where the strong and well-organized miners held out for over two weeks.

Alarming though these events had been, the long-planned revolutionary general strike had therefore been a failure. There remained both the *junteros* and the assembly movement, however. Crush the general strike though they had, the dissatisfaction of the former had risen to fresh heights, the return of Dato having given rise to fears of a return to 'business as usual'. Whilst the *junteros* had helped suppress the general strike, the ageing mediocrities who led them were dreaming of installing a regenerationist government and posing as the saviours of Spain. Emerging from the strike filled with the conviction that they were indispensable, the *junteros* were also deeply angered by the manner in which the army was being pilloried on account of the eighty workers who had been killed in the course of the repression (indeed, there were even claims that the

decision to provoke the strike had been a devious manoeuvre designed to discredit the army in the eyes of the people). Whilst remaining determined to secure change in the army – their demands had now expanded to include a purge of the *generalato* and the complete abolition of selective promotion – the *junteros* therefore became more and more strident in their demands for regeneration: on 23 October, indeed, Alfonso XIII was given just seventy-two hours to form a national government.

To say that the government was in no fit state to respond to these pressures is an understatement. Thus far it had possessed the tacit support of the Liberals, but the general strike had so scared Cambó that he had effectively dumped the Left in favour of a deal with the latter. Persuaded that it was safe to start playing politics again, the Liberals had therefore started to advance the case for a new *turno*. Sensing a way out of the crisis – he was, of course, unwilling to take on the army – Alfonso therefore sacked Dato, the crisis eventually being resolved by the formation of a coalition government headed by García Prieto, of which the chief components were the Liberals, the Lliga, the *mauristas* and the followers of the maurist-leaning Conservative, Juan de la Cierva.

In the event, however, this was by no means the political cataclysm which it at first appeared. Despite the fact that a new meeting of the assembly of parliamentarians was at that very moment demanding a new constitution and the appointment of Melquíades Álvarez as prime minister, the auguries for change were distinctly unimpressive. Thus, it was agreed that fresh elections would be held amidst conditions of the strictest fairness and neutrality, to which end the post of Minister of the Interior was given to a noted jurist of no political allegiance; that the new cabinet would include two Catalanists (though not Cambó himself); and that the government would respect the constitution, and refrain from closing the *cortes* and interfering in local government. However, the War Minister was the deeply reactionary La Cierva, whilst the forces of reform had failed even to place the constitution on the agenda, let alone to secure control of the cabinet as a whole. As witness the rage and despair of the Reformists, republicans and socialists alike, the crisis of 1917 had come to a disappointing end.

Trienio Bolchevique

Installed as it was on 3 November 1917, the national government had immediately to contend with the fact that on 7 November Lenin and the Bolsheviks seized power in Russia. The impact was immediate. Whilst the leadership of the PSOE and UGT viewed the coup with immense disapproval – convinced that the revolution could only come after a long

period of bourgeois government, they regarded the Bolsheviks as little more than a gang of wreckers – for many members of the rank and file, not to mention the militants of the CNT, the picture was very different. Whatever may have been the intentions of the leadership, the grass roots of the PSOE, UGT and CNT alike had in many cases gone into the August strike in a spirit of genuine revolutionary fervour. Its disappointing outcome having therefore been a bitter blow, the Bolshevik revolution seemed a new dawn, and all the more so as the situation in Russia was widely misunderstood (extraordinary as it may appear, the anarchists in particular viewed the Bolsheviks very much as co-religionists).

In the light of the general excitement, 1918 was hardly likely ever to have been marked by much in the way of tranquillity. However, neither the government nor the doctrinaire moderates who dominated the UGT and PSOE did anything to help matters. Thus, it soon became clear that progress in the direction of political reform was likely to be minimal. Central to the whole issue of democratization, for example, was the re-establishment of the principle of civilian supremacy. In this respect, the appointment of La Cierva as Minister of War was at first sight distinctly encouraging in that he was the first civilian to hold the position in the history of the Restoration Monarchy. Appearances, however, were deceptive: given that appointing a civilian meant that the political generals who dominated the high command were excluded from power, García Prieto was actually addressing one of the *junteros*' major grievances, whilst La Cierva was in any case much inclined to regard the discontent which they voiced as a springboard for his political ambitions. Whilst pretending to combat the *junteros*, he therefore spent much of his time trying to win their support, the most important step that he took in this respect being to announce a programme of military reform whose every clause represented a surrender to their demands. Thus, a variety of measures were taken to raise pay, increase the number of posts, speed up promotion, restore the principle of seniority, and reduce the perquisites of *africanismo*. Provision was also made for the establishment of an airforce and the implementation of a general programme of rearmament, but the means by which these goals were to be achieved was not made clear, the failure to do anything to reduce the size of the officer corps ensuring that they would probably never be made good. As for the *junteros* themselves, the fact that they were persuaded to scale down the hierarchy of juntas that had sprung up in every branch of the army meant nothing, their spirit being allowed to live on in a fashion that was more or less untrammelled.

If modernization had clearly been sacrificed to expediency, still worse was the manner in which La Cierva's proposals were introduced, the War Minister insisting that they be promulgated by royal decree. Faced by this

demand, the two Catalanists promptly resigned, but the prime minister eventually agreed to back La Cierva, the so-called Ley de Bases eventually becoming law on 13 March. By this time fresh elections had been held. True to its word, the government made no effort to intervene in proceedings, whilst it also amnestied all those involved in the strike movement, a number of the latter's leaders thereby being enabled to stand for election. Yet in point of fact all this amounted to very little. As previous episodes of reformism had illustrated, the state was not the only agent of electoral malpractice: in rural areas the *caciques* continued to run things more or less as they wished, there being some evidence that matters were worse than ever. Thus, although the PSOE and the regionalists made substantial gains, these were balanced by heavy losses amongst the Republicans and Reformists, the vast majority of seats continuing to go to the Conservatives and Liberals even though these were each now divided into three different factions (in the case of the former, *datistas*, *ciervistas* and *mauristas*; and in that of the latter *garciaprietistas*, *romanonistas* and *albistas*). All that the decision to hold free elections ensured, in fact, was, first, that neither of the two main parties enjoyed the usual overwhelming majority, and, second, that factional differences were exacerbated still further.

The results of the 1918 elections were therefore hardly encouraging, whilst it also became clear that the government had no answer to Spain's worsening social and economic problems (the damage wrought by the German submarine campaign was now causing serious disruption, whilst the winter of 1917–18 was extremely harsh). Openly spoken of as an interim administration, the coalition was very soon revealed to be even weaker than had generally been assumed: unbridgeable differences quickly opening between the violently repressive La Cierva and his more moderate colleagues over the attitude that should be taken towards a strike that had paralysed the post and telegraph system, on 19 March the cabinet dissolved in chaos. Days of deadlock followed, none of the obvious candidates to replace the prime minister being prepared to take office in a situation in which they neither had a majority in the chamber nor could count upon the support of the army. Left with no other way out, Alfonso turned once again to Maura, and on 22 March 1918 Spain duly entered what seemed to be yet another period of regeneration.

If Maura's reappearance placated the *junteros*, and, indeed, much of the essentially *petit-bourgeois* constituency that had rallied to earlier protest movements, it could not but alienate the Left. Distrusted even by the new prime minister, La Cierva, certainly, was out of office, but Maura was as reactionary as ever, whilst Cambó's appointment as Minister of Development suggested that the voice of industry was likely to weigh heavily in its deliberations. Sympathetic to social reform though some

ministers were – the new cabinet contained all the various factions into which the dynastic parties had become divided – the Maura government was therefore ill-placed to conciliate a labour movement that was experiencing a period of mounting excitement.

Nowhere was this excitement more obvious than amongst the Anarchists. Thus, intoxicated by the glorious visions emanating from Moscow, from early 1918 onwards the anarchist movement began to experience a great revival. Whilst leading militants harangued endless mass meetings, anarchist newspapers filled their pages with praise of Bolshevism and appeals to the workers to follow its example. Inspired by visions of land seizures on the Russian model (though theoretically in favour of collectivization, the CNT was at this point very careful to cloud the issue in ambiguity), the landless labourers flocked to the new syndicates that were being established, whilst in Catalonia there was a mood of growing violence and frustration. Whilst Barcelona witnessed the first stirrings of the terrorism that was so much to disrupt its life over the next few years, Andalucía experienced a wave of strikes that brought an increase in wages, a reduction in working hours, the recognition of anarchist unions as *de facto* labour exchanges, and the abolition of piecework. Less than 20,000 strong in 1917, by June 1918 the number of *cenetistas* had therefore risen to 75,000.

Although militancy was on the march even within the ranks of the strongly reformist PSOE and UGT, amongst whom the first stirrings were visible of a 'left-opposition' terrified that the party would be left behind, the government did little to address the situation. Thus, as Minister of Development, Cambó supported a programme centred on improvements in transport, greater use of irrigation and a further expansion of hydro-electric power. Radical enough in its own way, all this offered little in the way of immediate assistance to the workers, whilst the rest of the government were in any case instinctively opposed to the heavy burden of debt that Cambó's interventionism would inevitably have incurred. Whether the leader of the Lliga would ever have achieved his aims is therefore very unclear, but the national government was in reality so divided that it could not have lasted for very long in any case. Trouble could in fact have erupted along any one of a whole series of fault lines, but in the event it was Alba who precipitated the crisis. Already angered by the preferential treatment that Cambó's programme accorded Catalonia, he was convinced that the Allied victory that was now all but a *fait accompli* required the formation of an overtly democratic government. Seizing on a minor pretext, on 9 October he therefore resigned from the government in the hope that this would precipitate its collapse and leave the king no option but to form a more progressive cabinet. In the event Maura managed to keep the government afloat, but on 27 October Dato

followed Alba's example on the grounds of ill-health, whilst it was also becoming apparent that many Conservatives were unlikely to accept the moderate increases in direct taxation that the government had decided to introduce as part of its programme of regeneration. Weary and exhausted, Maura could take no more, and on 6 November he therefore tendered his resignation.

The end of the First World War five days later did not bring any relief to Spain's tense situation. Although there was no immediate end to the wartime boom, the situation was quite bad enough even as it was, whilst Spain had also begun to experience the first ravages of the influenza epidemic that swept Europe at the end of the war. Given this situation, the labour movement could only go from strength to strength. Some 75,000 strong in June 1918, the anarchosindicalists had by the end of the year increased their numbers by at least one-third. Meanwhile, the Socialists were on the move too. Thus, though still committed to electoralism, even the dominant *pablistas* were excited enough by the end of the war to engage in a bout of quasi-revolutionary rhetoric, whilst the rank and file could not but be stirred by the example of the CNT. Now that the war was safely won, too, there emerged a more conciliatory attitude to the Bolshevik Revolution on the part of the leadership, the combined result being that by November 1918 the Socialist movement was gripped by real fervour. At the same time, there was a further increase in membership. Thus, 32,000 strong in 1918, membership of the PSOE had by 1920 grown to 53,000, the corresponding figures for the UGT being 89,000 and 211,000.

All this was accompanied by a further increase in labour unrest. Thus, in the province of Córdoba the beginning of November witnessed the outbreak of a great general strike that involved no fewer than thirty-four different *pueblos* and united *braceros*, artisans, shopkeepers and domestic servants. Whether the government was in a position to cope with this agitation was a moot point, however. Following the fall of Maura, a wholly Liberal government had been formed under García Prieto on the grounds, first, that the Liberals had slightly more deputies than the Conservatives, and, second, that they had a far more acceptable image in the eyes of the Allies. However, it was soon all too clear that García Prieto was extremely vulnerable, quarrels over the response that was demanded by the excitement generated in Catalonia and the Basque country alike by the famous 'Fourteen Points' leading to the collapse of his administration after barely three weeks.

The fall of García Prieto on 3 December 1918 serving notice that the Catalan problem was becoming extremely urgent, the king's next move was to summon the Conde de Romanones, it being Romanones who had essentially been responsible for establishing the *mancomunidad* in the

first place. However, the former being opposed to any concessions to the Catalans whatsoever and the latter inclined to make demands that no Madrid government could have tolerated, the new premier was unable to secure the support either of the *garciaprietistas* and *albistas*, or the Lliga. In short, the Romanones government was unlikely to have survived for any longer than its fellows even had it not been swamped by other troubles of a rather different character.

In the immediate aftermath of the war, the situation in Barcelona was particularly tense. Eager to avoid trouble, the civil governor had been trying to strengthen the position of the more moderate element of the local CNT leadership (personified by the general secretary of the Catalan branch of the CNT, Salvador Seguí, these men represented a growing trade-unionist tendency whose aim was not the overthrow of capitalist society, but rather the betterment of the conditions of the working classes). Typically enough, however, he found his authority challenged by the far more rigid Captain General, Joaquín Milans del Bosch. Thus, Milans had become increasingly preoccupied with the growing excitement of the Catalanists. Not only had an overtly separatist organization – the *Federació Democràtica Nacionalista* – been established by an emotional and romantic demagogue named Francesc Macià, but officers were being abused in the streets. Absolutely furious, Milans had in consequence forced Romanones to suspend constitutional guarantees in Barcelona, the Captain General promptly seizing the opportunity to clamp down not only on the Catalanists but also the CNT, the latter eventually being provoked into launching a general strike. Eager to seek a confrontation with the ‘Bolshevik menace’ as soon as possible, this was precisely what both Milans and the employers had wanted, the most draconian methods promptly being deployed against the strikers. However, this only served to stimulate the workers’ resistance still further, and Romanones, who had never been very happy about the attempt to break the workers in the first place, came to the conclusion that the only way out was conciliation. With commendable decision, the prime minister therefore replaced both the civil governor and the chief of police with men who could be trusted to come to an agreement with the strikers, the result being that within three days a series of major concessions had been offered to the workers.

As the workers accepted these conditions, the city might now have returned to normal, but in fact the deal was sabotaged by Milans, the Captain General tendering his resignation rather than implement his part in the peace deal (specifically, the release of all imprisoned *cenetistas*). Knowing that Milans enjoyed the support of the *junteros*, Romanones had no option but to allow him to continue in post, the peace deal in consequence falling by the wayside. When this provoked a restoration of

the strike, moreover, the Captain General ran amok. Under the protection of martial law, thousands of troops, police and *somatenes* patrolled the streets, took over the running of the city's public services, intimidated the lower classes, and forced open the many small shops which had supported the strike. As for the unions, their premises were closed down, their leadership arrested, their archives seized, and their activities suspended, the strikers having as a result by early April been forced back to work. Humiliated by Milans, the government tried to redress the balance by decreeing the eight-hour day (a key part of the original peace deal), but the Captain General showed what he thought of such attempts at conciliation by expelling Romanones' nominees on the grounds that they were undermining his attempts to restore order.

Faced by an intolerable situation, on 15 April 1919 Romanones resigned. As he tacitly recognized, the army was now the effective ruler of Spain, in which capacity it proceeded to drive the situation to fresh extremes. Thus, for all the CNT's revolutionary rhetoric, its most important figures – Salvador Seguí and the editor of *Solidaridad Obrera*, Angel Pestaña – were in reality closet reformists who believed that the immediate task of the syndicalist movement was to build up its forces and work for the betterment of the conditions of its members. The syndicalism that they represented being particularly strong among the Catalan militants who made up two-thirds of the CNT, the fact was that there had been very little that was revolutionary about the events that had convulsed Barcelona. However, within the CNT there had always been a number of pure anarchists who remained wedded to the idea of the revolutionary general strike, whilst its ranks had also begun to be infiltrated by rootless young drifters who had come to Barcelona in search of work only to end up leading marginal existences on the fringes of the underworld. Inured to violence, such elements had played a key role in the events of 1909, whilst they were naturally attracted to the concept of revolutionary terrorism, associating this with regular pay, little work and lots of excitement. Despised and feared by such men as Seguí, they were until 1918 more or less kept in check, but the defeat of the general strike inevitably brought them to the fore, and all the more so as the repression that followed saw the blacklisting of many militants who were then left with no other means of employment than terrorism.

With the CNT being nudged more and more in the direction of revolution and terror, the military authorities contrived to make the situation even worse. Even before the First World War there had been a tendency on the part of the forces of order to employ terrorists of their own – drawn, incidentally, from the self-same groups as those who supplied the CNT's *pistoleros* – to act as *agents provocateurs*, discredit the labour movement and assassinate key labour activists. Milans and the

employers being much attracted by such a policy, the early months of 1919 therefore saw the authorities establish a terrorist gang under the leadership of a police officer disgraced when the CNT had revealed that he had been running a German spy ring, there following a series of brutal murders.

Appalling though Barcelona's situation quickly became, the attention of the propertied classes was in 1919 rather more focused on events in Andalucía, for the agrarian disturbances of 1918 had burst forth with much greater violence than before, there even being some attempts at collectivization and the establishment of 'soviet republics'. Absolutely terrified, the landowners started to flee their estates for the safety of the towns and cities, whilst some even left the country altogether. With matters in this state, the obvious candidate to replace the count was the tough and uncompromising Maura, and all the more so as he was the only politician acceptable to the *junteros*. Initially it seems that Maura planned to reconstitute the national government of the previous year, but such were the divisions that now prevailed that this proved impossible, the result being that he was forced to form a cabinet composed only of *mauristas* and *ciervistas*. Whilst pursuing a vigorous policy of repression, he therefore obtained a decree of dissolution and called fresh elections. These, however, proved a disaster. Having always forbidden his followers to develop a formal organization of their own, Maura could hardly expect them to do well, the fact being that the Conservative Party's *caciques* had on the whole remained loyal to more mainstream figures. For the first time ever, then, a government failed to win a majority in a general election (the exact figures were 104 *mauristas* and *ciervistas*, ninety-three *datistas*, 133 Liberals, thirty Socialists, Reformists and Republicans, twenty-three regionalists and fifteen others). No sooner had the assembly reassembled, then, than Maura was forced to resign, though such were the differences that had begun to emerge amongst the *mauristas*, of whom one wing were broadly social catholic and the other wholly reactionary, that it is difficult to see how even electoral victory could have made much difference. At all events, what was needed was a compromise figure acceptable to all sides, to which end the king selected the widely respected *datista*, Joaquín Sánchez de Toca.

Physically ugly and a poor public speaker, Sánchez de Toca was nevertheless possessed of both talent and common sense. Rejecting both misty notions of a 'revolution from above' and the idea that the question of public order was one that could be solved by repression alone, he therefore embarked on a policy of conciliation. Thus, Barcelona was given a new civil governor who believed in the need for moderation and social reform whilst at the same time being impossible for Milans to reject, the new man being a prominent *juntero* who had for a long time

been the editor of a leading military newspaper. Meanwhile, Sánchez de Toca also ended martial law, decreed a general amnesty, and established a special commission composed of representatives of government, industry and labour alike to examine the situation in Barcelona. For a brief moment, all this made a real difference: with Milans and the employers forced to back down, Seguí proved only too happy to enter negotiations and order all *cenetistas* to return to work.

The respite, however, was short-lived. Unwilling to abandon their careers of violence, the anarchist *pistoleros* were in no mood to compromise, whilst they were tacitly supported by the many militants who rejected the trade-unionism of Seguí (for the whole of 1919 conflict had been growing between the anarchist and syndicalist wings of the CNT). Whether syndicalism would have been able to retain control is a moot point, but all chance of their being able to do so was soon lost in that the Spanish economy at last began to sink into the recession that had been threatening ever since 1918 (the economic expansion brought by the conflict had often been achieved on the shakiest of foundations – in Asturias, for example, many of the wartime mines depended on the coal that they were producing fetching prices three times the pre-war norm). Determined in consequence to cut costs, the employers suddenly imposed a general lock-out that by the end of November had affected more than 200,000 workers. Absolutely outraged, the unions renewed their strike activity and walked out of the special commission, which had, in fact, just worked out an agreement that might have restored a real measure of stability to labour relations in Barcelona.

In consequence of these events, Catalonia was plunged into a purgatory from which it proved difficult to escape. Whilst strikes and lock-outs continued to disrupt Barcelona, both sides' gunmen engaged in a tit-for-tat spiral of murder that was to cost at least 1,500 lives, matters being rendered still worse by the fact that the CNT was soon being challenged by a rival union of Carlist origin known as the Sindicato Libre. Within a very short time, meanwhile, the apparatus of terror had got completely out of control. Not only did its masters come to realize all too well that curbing the gunmen was likely to lead to them being killed themselves, but amongst the CNT in particular there was great reluctance to do anything that might jeopardize a comrade. Thus protected, the *pistoleros* were enabled to extend their actions into areas whose legitimacy was more and more dubious. Protection rackets and blackmail flourished, whilst the gunmen increasingly funded themselves by robbing banks and extorting money from the workers, the only beneficiaries from the situation in consequence being the proponents of dictatorship.

With Barcelona once again out of control, Sánchez de Toca resigned at the first pretext. It was now 5 December 1919. Forced to search for a

fourth government in the space of less than a year, Alfonso was once again placed in a position of extreme difficulty, and all the more so as the anarchists and socialists were becoming ever more excited. With Seguí in retreat and the CNT now 760,000 strong, on 10 December 1919 the Anarchists held a congress in Madrid at which they proclaimed their support for collectivization; rejected moves that had been afoot to merge the movement with the UGT; evinced huge enthusiasm for the Bolshevik Revolution; and voted to join the Russian-organized Third International. As for the PSOE and UGT, whilst the leadership remained as reformist as ever, the rank and file were being radicalized by a combination of economic distress, the enormous growth of the CNT, disappointment with the results of the First World War, and the advent of the Third International. At a conference held in Madrid at the same time as that of the Anarchists, the *pablistas* more or less held the line, but only at the cost of accepting that joining the Third International should definitely be debated in the near future.

One way or another, in short, it appeared that 1920 would prove to be even more fraught than before, and yet the new government was weaker than ever. A frail coalition of Liberal and Conservative opportunists headed by a *maurista* nonentity named Manuel Allendesalazar, its only aim was survival, the consequence being that it did nothing to solve the social problem whilst doing everything that it could to conciliate the *junteros*. So severe was the clampdown that resulted, however, even some of its members objected, and on 3 May 1920 the cabinet finally collapsed, leaving the torch in the hands of a rather unwilling Dato. Instinctively reformist in social matters, the new premier at first swung back towards a policy of conciliation, and for a time it once more seemed that substantial progress might be made: many militants were released from jail, for example, whilst a variety of decrees were promulgated that imposed rent controls on all Spain's larger cities, encouraged the provision of cheap housing, and tightened up the implementation of existing legislation concerning the compensation of workers involved in industrial accidents.

Dato's attempt at conciliation was to prove short-lived, however, the prime minister being increasingly mesmerized by the spectre of revolution. Spurred on by the fact that strikes and murders had continued unabated, he therefore replaced the reformists that he had appointed as Minister of the Interior and civil governor of Barcelona with noted reactionaries, the person chosen for the latter post being the notoriously brutal General Severiano Martínez Anido. Already military governor of the city, the general promptly secured the support of the Sindicato Libre, mobilized the *somatén*, and embarked on an attack on the CNT that was unprecedented in its ferocity. Needless to say, the anarchists did not

remain inert in the face of these measures, the immediate result of Martínez Anido's actions being to provoke both a considerable increase in the number of terrorist attacks and a near-total general strike, but the fight could not go on forever, Barcelona's libertarian movement having within a year been effectively broken.

Whilst Martínez Anido was crushing the Catalan CNT, the *trienio bolchevique* was also on the wane elsewhere. Turning to the other main epicentre of anarchist unrest, repression had never been relaxed in the countryside (even the most progressive Conservative ministers were as unwilling as they were unable seriously to consider agrarian reform). Meanwhile, the steep fall in agricultural exports consequent on the slump inclined the landowners, who were now much better organized, to take a harsher line with strikes, force down wages and allow much land to go out of production. Subjected to unremitting repression, reprisal and impoverishment, the *campesinos* in consequence lost all faith in the anarchist movement. In the larger towns anarchism survived rather better, whilst the mining areas continued to be extremely combative, but the fact was that it was not only in Catalonia that anarchism was a spent force.

Conscious of the worsening situation, in December 1920 the CNT leadership made one last effort. As we have seen, Martínez Anido had been met by a general strike, and a desperate attempt was now made to extend this to the rest of the country by invoking the terms of an alliance that the growing climate of repression had persuaded the CNT to sign with the UGT three months before. However, the latter having only responded to its overtures in the hope that it might thereby lay the foundations for an eventual takeover, it therefore refused to second the CNT's calls for a strike, the result being that the movement almost immediately fell apart.

In many ways the last gasp of the *trienio bolchevique*, the abortive general strike of December 1920 is symbolic of the reasons why a genuine revolutionary crisis failed to develop in Spain at the end of the First World War. True though it is that the establishment never lost its ability to repress disorder, the left was in a state of utter disunity. Indeed, thanks to the emergence of Communism, matters were now worse than ever, both the anarchists and the socialists being bedevilled by growing demands that they should affiliate with the Third International (indeed, in April 1920 a small Partido Comunista de España had been formed by a group of dissidents in the socialist youth movement, the PSOE actually voting to join the International two months later). Not only was the workers' movement disunited, meanwhile, but it was also bereft of allies (the 1917 alliance with the Republicans had long since completely broken down), and dependent on a membership whose commitment was

open to serious question. In short, the *trienio* had not been very *bolchevique* at all, revolution still being far away.

Annual

If the failure of the general strike of December 1920 marked the end of the *trienio bolchevique*, it did not bring any respite to the embattled Restoration Monarchy. In the first place, the post-war depression had now reached its lowest point, mining, textiles, engineering, and iron and steel all experiencing widespread lay-offs. With labour unrest still by no means defeated, the political system was therefore going to be hard put to convince an increasingly hysterical establishment that it could continue to protect its interests. That said, the system might yet have struggled on, but in July 1921 the Spanish forces in Morocco suffered a disaster on an unprecedented scale, the result being a crisis of such magnitude that constitutional government was finally brought to its knees.

Before going any further, it must first be pointed out that such danger as the Left had ever represented was in the course of 1921 dissipated still further, for the anarchists and socialists alike were now to suffer internal disputes on a scale that dwarfed those of previous years. Thus, 1920 the PSOE, CNT and PCE had all sent missions to Moscow to apply for admission to the Third International, but of these only the last had been happy with what it found: whilst the PSOE delegation returned home deeply split, its CNT counterpart did so shocked and upset, it being all too obvious not only that the Communist regime rested on terror and dictatorship, but also that it was bent on the complete destruction of syndicalism. In consequence, the stage was set for a series of ferocious disputes. Within the PSOE the matter was settled by a stormy, extraordinary congress in April 1921 which decided against affiliation to the Third International by a solid majority, albeit at the cost of a major split that led to the formation of a second Communist group known as the Partido Comunista Obrero Español. In the CNT, meanwhile, a small group of militants headed by Andrés Nin and Joaquín Maurin had adopted Leninist ideas and continued to press for affiliation to the Comintern. Courtesy of the arrest of so many leading *cenetistas*, they achieved a position of considerable influence within the movement and were thereby able to commit the CNT to joining the syndicalist international known as the Profintern that was also being organized in Moscow at this time. However, their efforts were badly undermined by the report that was received from the delegation that had been sent to Russia, the result being that no sooner had a full CNT congress been able to meet than it broke off all contacts with Moscow. Unwilling to accept this decision, Nin and

Maurín seceded to form an independent communist–syndicalist movement. Also eclipsed at this meeting were the more anarchistic elements of the CNT, the congress voting to move decisively in the direction of *seguismo*, but the ideological unity that had at last been established was all but meaningless, the CNT no longer being in any position to benefit (at the same time, too, small groups of militants continued to intrigue against the leadership in the hope that they could win back the movement for the cause of revolution).

As a result of all this, the early 1920s found the labour movement in a state of total disarray. The two Communist parties merged in November 1921, but they were completely unable to win the support of the socialist and anarchist rank and file, the only result of their emergence therefore being to spread dissension and mistrust, much to the detriment, of course, of the efforts of the UGT and CNT to resist the employers' attempts to force down wages and close down uneconomic enterprises. With membership generally in decline, the fact was that the labour movement was in full retreat. As early as the general elections that Dato had held in December 1920 as the price of continuing in office, indeed, the Socialist vote had declined dramatically. As was only to be expected, meanwhile, Dato increased the number of his supporters from ninety-three to 179. His triumph, however, was short-lived: on 8 March 1921 a group of anarchist *pistoleros* ambushed his car and shot him dead. Other than to provide the authorities with a further pretext for persecuting the Left, his death made little difference, however: working though Dato was to restore the unity of the Conservative Party, Spain was about to be engulfed by events of a sort that could not but have swamped his best efforts.

This being the case, it is now time to return to Morocco, where the First World War had for a variety of reasons been a period of deceptive tranquillity. In reality, however, the situation was anything but stable. Extremely poor and still largely unconquered, the Spanish protectorate was racked by repeated famines which the colonial administration did little to ameliorate, the resultant effervescence being worsened by the latter's pursuit of a policy of divide and rule that made many enemies for the Spaniards whilst gaining them very little in the way of reliable support. Though trouble was therefore a certainty, the Spanish forces were little more impressive than before, the bulk of the garrison still consisting of unwilling conscripts whose conditions remained as appalling as ever, the military administration being notoriously corrupt. In every respect, then, it was imperative that conflict should be avoided, but a variety of pressures – the colonialist enthusiasms of the Conde de Romanones; pressure from the army in Morocco; and French demands that the Spaniards end the raids that were constantly being launched

against their territory – led to offensive action being resumed in the spring of 1919.

For the first year of operations the fighting was mostly concentrated in the western part of the Protectorate, the Spaniards even obtaining some success. Under the command of the newly appointed governor of Ceuta, General Manuel Fernández Silvestre, direct communications were opened between the major bases of Ceuta, Tetuán and Larache, and a firm grip established on the Tangier peninsula. Moreover, success continued into 1920. Transferred to Melilla, Silvestre initiated offensive operations in the eastern zone as well, whilst in the west control was secured of the city of Xauen. With the Spanish forces reinforced both by extra Moorish auxiliaries and a new force of professional troops – the Foreign Legion – specifically recruited for service in the Protectorate and imbued with a spirit of the utmost ferocity, it seemed that 1921 could not fail to produce a triumphant advance into the Rif – the range of mountains between Xauen and Melilla that constituted the last heartland of tribal independence.

If things did not work out in this fashion, it was largely the fault of Silvestre. Whereas the overall commander in Morocco – the thoughtful and intelligent General Dámaso Berenguer – believed that every Spanish advance had to be preceded by a careful programme of political preparation designed to persuade the tribesmen concerned to accept Spanish rule, Silvestre was a deeply ambitious man who yearned for glory and progress. Still worse, he was a personal favourite of Alfonso XIII, the latter being known to be much excited by the prospect of a rapid conquest. Lionized by many newspapers and faced by resistance that was at best sporadic, Silvestre in consequence moved deep into the interior, the result being that by January 1921 he had established a line of outposts that stretched as far as the town of Anual. To make matters worse, meanwhile, he had none of the crack units of the Foreign Legion attached to his over-extended forces, to whose welfare he habitually paid little attention. Had the Moors of the Rif remained passive, none of this need have mattered, but by the winter of 1920–1 they had coalesced around the figure of Muhammed Abd al-Karim, a Spanish-educated chieftain who united considerable personal charisma with a high degree of intelligence. Large forces of Moors were therefore soon massing round Anual, but the general was now dreaming of advancing all the way to the important town of Alhucemas. Scorning Berenguer's increasingly worried attempts to check his operations, he therefore sent his troops still further forward to the villages of Sidi Dris, Abarran and Igueriben, only for Abd al-Karim to choose that very moment to launch an all-out offensive. Taken by surprise, the Spaniards were overwhelmed, and by 21 July it was clear that Anual was completely untenable. Many outlying positions had

fallen, supplies were low, the Moorish auxiliaries were increasingly unreliable and the Spanish conscripts were utterly demoralized. Very reluctantly, Silvestre now gave the order to retreat, but such was the state of his forces that they disintegrated into a panic-stricken rabble. Encouraged by the certainty of plunder, large numbers of tribesmen who had hitherto remained neutral now joined in the attack, the result being that by the end of July the surviving Spanish forces were penned up in Melilla and a few isolated forts such as Monte Arruit. As their supplies ran out, the unfortunates who had taken refuge in the latter were forced to surrender, only for the most part to be massacred in cold blood, whilst Melilla itself would probably have fallen but for the hasty dispatch of several battalions of the Foreign Legion.

Anual was a shattering blow. Silvestre was missing; at least 10,000 men had been killed; and large quantities of weapons and other booty had fallen into the hands of the enemy, along with several hundred prisoners. Assailed by a storm of criticism, the government, which had since the assassination of Dato been headed by the stop-gap figure of Allendesalazar, resigned, its replacement being headed by the increasingly patriarchal Antonio Maura. Encouraged by renewed demands for a fundamental reform of the Restoration system, the Mallorcan statesman formed a new national government in the hope of at last securing his much-dreamed-of 'revolution from above'.

Initially all went well: every member of the cabinet could unite around the goal of restoring order in Morocco; the propertied classes threw themselves into an orgy of support for the war effort; and a series of counterattacks recovered a substantial amount of territory in the vicinity of Melilla. Once the immediate crisis was past, however, the government began to run into a web of contradictions. Thus, convinced that the defeat was in part due to the huge amounts of revenue that were absorbed by the salaries of the officer corps, Juan de la Cierva, who had once again been appointed War Minister, launched a sustained offensive against the juntas that stripped them of all independence. At the same time, meanwhile, he ensured that Berenguer was confirmed in the post of High Commissioner of Morocco, and exempted from the enquiries of the commission that had been established to investigate the disaster under General Juan Picasso, in the meantime doing everything that he could to flatter the *africanistas*. Yet in doing so he was not only providing much ammunition for the Republicans and Socialists – exempting Berenguer implied exempting the ministers to whom he had been responsible, not to mention Alfonso XIII – but jeopardizing the unity of the cabinet in that many of its members were opposed to the resumption of a forward policy and wanted the appointment of a civilian to the post of High Commissioner. Indeed, as Minister of Finance, Cambó was attempting to cut

government expenditure in a manner that was incompatible with the *africanistas*' plans for total conquest. Nor did it help in this respect that he also forced through a new tariff that greatly increased the protection available to Catalan industry at the expense of the agrarian interests of Castile and Andalucía. Sooner or later, in short, collapse was inevitable.

It was not, however, the incompatibilities in its own make-up that broke the last Maura administration. Thus, almost from its very inception, it was enmeshed in the damaging question of 'responsibilities'. Not surprisingly, the defeat had provoked a storm of criticism amongst the Reformists, Republicans and Socialists, whilst the more progressive elements of the Liberal Party were unhappy at the prospect of having to support the government *tout court*, and all the more so when it became apparent that Berenguer was not even to be investigated. For those Liberals represented in the government – and for that matter the Lliga – the position therefore soon became increasingly uncomfortable. Within the Liberal Party, meanwhile, a growing *rapprochement* between Romanones and García Prieto seemed to offer the hope that the king would permit a new *turno*. On 7 March 1922 Romanones and García Prieto therefore ordered their placemen in the cabinet to resign, the result being that Maura was forced to surrender power for what proved to be the last time.

If Romanones and García Prieto had brought down Maura in the expectation of being appointed to power, then they had miscalculated, for Alfonso XIII was far too committed to the conquest of Morocco to be happy with the prospect of a Liberal government ruling in *de facto* alliance with the parliamentary Left. Much to the Liberals' chagrin, he therefore instead placed the premiership in the hands of Dato's replacement as Conservative leader, José Sánchez Guerra, the latter proceeding to form a coalition composed of the *datistas*, the *mauristas* and the Lliga. An intelligent *datista* from Córdoba, the new prime minister was above all a pragmatist, and therefore quickly saw that to continue in the traditions of his predecessor was impossible: indeed, it is not without significance in this respect that La Cierva had been excluded from the new government. Ignoring the fury of the *mauristas* and the Lliga, whose representatives proceeded to resign from the cabinet, he in consequence ended the suspension of constitutional guarantees that had been imposed as an initial response to Anual and attempted to back away from the compromise position that had eventually been adopted with regard to Morocco (in brief, it had been agreed that rather than either pulling back to the coast and attempting to control the Protectorate through indirect means, or going ahead with a policy of total conquest, the army should recover all the territory that had been lost at Anual and then consider the

position further). In this respect, moreover, a series of fortuitous developments enabled the new prime minister to go much further than he had expected. Thus, in April 1922 the Picasso commission submitted its report to the government which immediately proceeded to pass it on to the army's highest judicial authority, the Supreme Council of War. The senior generals of which the latter was composed being deeply jealous of Berenguer, and in the case of its president, General Francisco Aguilera, highly ambitious, this body voted to accept Picasso's recommendations. Including as these did the proposal that Berenguer should be put on trial, the High Commissioner immediately resigned, the result being that Sánchez Guerra was able to replace him with the much more malleable General Ricardo Burguete, the latter being instructed to make peace with the Moors. Meanwhile, the post of High Commissioner was subordinated to the Foreign Ministry and the *cortes* persuaded to establish a special all-party commission of enquiry.

Thus far it might appear that Sánchez Guerra was doing no more than governing in alliance with the *junteros*. However, the prime minister also restored the principle of promotion by merit, abolished the last vestiges of *juntero* organization and dismissed Martínez Anido and his henchman, Miguel Arlegui, from the posts that they held as Governor and Chief of Police of Barcelona. With Burguete's policy of conciliation seemingly bearing fruit in Morocco – by the autumn, the chief opponent of the Spaniards in the western part of the Protectorate had been persuaded to accept a settlement that effectively transformed him into an agent of the colonial administration – it really seemed that the post-war crisis might at last be coming to an end.

In reality, however, nothing could have been further from the truth. In the first place, Abd al-Karim refused to make peace, Burguete in consequence being drawn deeper and deeper into operations in the heart of the Rif. On 1 November, meanwhile, a column dispatched in the direction of Anual ran into difficulties at a place called Tizi Azza, the relatively large number of casualties that it suffered leading Sánchez Guerra to prohibit any further forward movement. Yet by doing so, the prime minister alienated many of his own supporters and created an indefensible strategic situation that was in the long run to unsettle Spanish politics at least as much as a resumption of a full-scale offensive would have done. At the same time, his earlier handling of 'responsibilities' now backfired dramatically in that the *cortes* commission of enquiry proved to be incapable of fulfilling the role which had been expected of it, which was effectively to limit the blame to Berenguer and Silvestre. Though no fewer than seventy-seven officers had now been put on trial for their role in affairs, it was soon apparent that the Allendesalazar government and even the king might be vulnerable. The government's position having

become untenable – whilst those ministers who had actually been in office in the summer of 1921 were demanding that the prime minister defend them against attack, those who were not believed that some concessions would have to be made on the issue – on 5 December Sánchez Guerra was forced to submit his resignation. Left with no option, the king summoned the Liberals to power, the latter having recently sealed their right to office with a *de facto* pact of union.

In the Bleak Midwinter

With the collapse of the Sánchez Guerra government, the Canovine system had reached a nadir from which it was never to recover. More or less capable of governing the Spain of the period 1875–1914, it had shown itself to be utterly incapable of dealing with the problems thrown up by the First World War. Whether governing separately or together, the Liberals and Conservatives had repeatedly proved that they could not maintain even a minimum degree of cohesion, whilst such attempts as had been made to co-opt new forces had if anything made matters worse. If Spain had emerged from the immediate post-war crisis without undergoing a full-scale revolution, it was therefore hardly the fault of the politicians: what saved the system in this respect was rather the willingness of all factions of the army to set the defence of law and order above their many grievances, the ever more ferocious disputes that beset the socialists and anarchists and the distinctly flimsy character of the labour movement.

Grim though the period 1917–21 may have been, however, by the summer of the latter year it must have seemed that a corner had been turned in that the labour movement was clearly in retreat, and the Conservative party regaining its coherence: the government of Eduardo Dato had, after all, already lasted ten months when he was assassinated. In Morocco, however, years of mismanagement had created the proverbial disaster waiting to happen, and at Anual it duly did. Thus emerged the question that finally killed the Canovine system. Not only did the ‘responsibilities’ issue trigger a furious wave of in-fighting in the officer corps, but it intensified military – and, indeed, royal – discontent with the political system, and rendered government impossible. Sooner or later, the disaster was as bound to engulf the Liberals as much as it had already engulfed the Conservatives, the fact being that the new ‘government of Liberal concentration’ was likely to be as short-lived as that of Sánchez Guerra. Incapable of renovating itself – as we shall see, the hopes that were placed in the new administration soon proved to be illusory – the Canovine system was, in the words of its own terminology, ‘exhausted’.