

# THE DRAMA OF SPAIN

From the Proclamation of the  
Republic to the Civil War  
1931 - 1936

by

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THE change of regime in Spain took place on April 14, 1931, without the slightest violence. The passage from Monarchy to Republic adopted the form of a transmission of power. It caused a world-wide sensation that a people, relatively backward, should resolve in this way the great historical problem which had necessitated rivers of blood in the rest of the continental countries.

The Second Spanish Republic came into being as a result of an election which was adverse to the Bourbon Dynasty. Certain Municipal elections, considered as an historic plebiscite for the whole national conscience, dealt the final blow to the Monarchy. Even the Republicans and Socialists, who succeeded the Monarchists in power, were amazed at the strength of feeling against the Monarchy.

The mistakes of Alfonso XIII, which we may sum up as an excessive inclination to personal government (which was perhaps a heritage from his great-grandfather the absolutist Bourbon Ferdinand VII, of such unpleasant memory in the history of Spain), had made him hated by the people. But the Republican parties lacked forcefulness. The older ones had been rather spiritless in their opposition to the Monarchy, so much so that with their lack of seriousness and their scanty influence in the country, they had gradually been converted into a merely nominal opposition to His Majesty.

Of the historical Republicans, the Radical Party, led by Don Alejandro Lerroux, was the most active and had the most members. Their leader, an anti-clerical demagogue, had a reputation for having very few scruples and on various occasions he had compromised with the Monarchy on a basis of economic assistance. Señor Lerroux, accustomed to a life of princely luxury, rarely exercised either of his two professions, journalism and the law, but made of politics a lucrative business. The men who surrounded him in his party were of the same moral standing. Various scandals, which stirred public opinion, revealed this lack of honourable character among the Radicals. In 1910 this party was in a majority in the Town Council of Barcelona. Their negotiations with contractors to the Municipality roused the country.

Historical circumstances brought it about that Señor Lerroux was on the Revolutionary Committee constituted in Madrid in 1930, the Committee which, later, was the Provisional Government of the Republic. The other members of the Committee distrusted him, but

it was a question of bringing in the Republic, and the Radical Party could not stay on the outer edge of the pavement. Again Señor Lerroux showed himself in agreement with whatever the Revolutionary Committee did. When the programme of Government was drawn up by this Committee, the views of the Radical leader were sometimes more advanced than those of the Socialists.

### The Provisional Government of the Republic

The Provisional Government of the Republic consisted of the members of the Revolutionary Committee. There were three Socialists in it. The remaining members (with two exceptions) were well-known figures in Republicanism, *i.e.*, representatives of the lower middle classes. In a Government of 12 Ministers, the Socialists had only three. In the Provisional Cabinet there were also two Conservative Republicans who came from the Monarchist camp: the chief of the Ministry, Señor Alcalá Zamora, afterwards President of the Republic, and Don Miguel Maura, son of the Don Antonio Maura who acquired such an unhappy reputation throughout Europe when, as Prime Minister, in 1909, he ordered the shooting of Francisco Ferrer, the founder of the Modern School in Catalonia.

When the Constituent Cortes (the Spanish Parliament elected to make and adopt the Constitution) discussed the religious question, or, rather, the position of the Church in the Republican State, Señor Alcalá Zamora and Señor Maura left the Government because their opinion differed from that of the other Ministers and Parliament on this concrete matter.

Señor Alcalá Zamora was replaced in the Premiership of the Government by Don Manuel Azaña, who was the leader of a party with no great position in the country. Señor Azaña was a revelation. The Republic discovered this man who, until then, had been hidden in literary circles and in a minor position in the Ministry of Justice. Azaña is a great Spanish writer, and one of the best political brains in Europe.

A Left-Wing Parliament, in which the Socialists had 120 seats, *i.e.*, the strongest group, although by no means a majority, evolved the Constitution, the Statute of Catalonia and the Law of Agrarian Reform. The Constitution of the Republic, promulgated on December 9, 1931, was inspired principally by the Mexican Constitution of Querétaro of 1917 and the German Constitution of Weimar. It is a modern political Code, composed by the Spanish jurists of Liberal-Socialist tendencies.

The first Article reads:

“Spain is a Democratic Republic, of workers of all classes, organised in a regime of Liberty and Justice.”

On the religious question it lays down (Article 26) that “all religious confessions shall be considered as Associations submitted to a special law.” It separates the Catholic Church—until that time the official Church—from the State, dissolves the Society of Jesus (Jesuits), and prohibits the remaining religious orders from engaging in business or teaching.

Article 44 authorises compulsory expropriation of all kinds of goods, on the grounds of social utility, with compensation “unless a law approved by the votes of an absolute majority in Cortes shall otherwise dispose.”

It institutes a single Chamber, in accordance with its completely Democratic status, and creates a Tribunal of Constitutional Guarantees to which everyone may appeal against what is considered unconstitutional in any law or legal precept whatsoever.

In short, the Constitution of 1931 is that of a 20th Century Republic. It is inspired by the idea that the more advanced parties may gradually fulfil their historical mission without having resort to violence. At the same time, it is a brake and an obstacle to those social classes which might dream of restoring the Monarchy.

The Socialists among us realised immediately that the real peril for the Spanish Democratic Republic lay, not in the restoration of the Monarchy, which was an improbable occurrence, but actually in the Monarchization of the Republic so that, under an appearance of Republicanism, the classes who had dominated the country in the time of the Monarchy would still hold sway and render the change of regime useless. We quickly saw that this peril was becoming a threatening reality.

### The First Burning of Convents

The Alfonso Monarchy drew its support from the feudal classes. The industrialists of Northern Spain were not really Monarchist; but they were timid and reactionary and therefore not Republican either. In face of the great avalanche of opinion which in April, 1931, demanded a Republic, both the landowning classes and the industrialists shrank back. Later, the industrialists accepted the Republic.

But the great landowners of Castile, Andalusia and Estremadura neither accepted nor respected the Republic. The same attitude was adopted by the Catholic Church from the outset.

Not a month had passed since the proclamation of the new regime when Monarchist sympathisers held a meeting in a main street of Madrid and made speeches against the Republic. Some workmen who were present at this scene came to blows with the malcontents, and set fire to one of the cars which were waiting by the door. A taxi driver was wounded. The news of this happening spread rapidly throughout Spain. This took place on May 10, 1931. The next day, mobs went to various convents in Madrid and some of the provinces and set fire to them. The incident had aroused the instinct of the masses against the Church.

Twenty-four hours later the majority of the convents and churches throughout Spain were being guarded and defended against the incendiaries by members of the Socialist Youth Leagues wearing their armlets. This shows what were the intentions of Spanish Socialism under the Republic.

### The Republican-Socialist Coalition in Power

The Republican-Socialist Coalition stayed in power for two and a half years. When Alcalá Zamora and Maura had left the Government, the reins of power may be said to have remained in the hands of the Democratic small middle classes, while the Socialist Party kept strictly to Republican politics. But Spain is an agrarian country which has not had its industrial revolution. Therefore the Spanish middle classes have a feudal mentality. A democratic Republic frightens them. The 1931 Constitution seems to them to be the work of Bolshevism. Nevertheless, they and the Socialist Party aimed at changing the old bases of the national economy with the least possible violence, relying on the laws sanctioned by Parliament and departing not one iota from the Constitution.

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### REFORMS THAT WERE WRECKED

The great historical problems which the Republic was called upon to solve were three: the position of the Church in the new Republican Democracy, the agrarian question, and the problem of regional autonomy.

The Catholic Church could not continue as it had been under the Monarchy, *i.e.*, as the official Church, a State within the State, with

much more power than the real State. The clerical question was dealt with in Article 26 of the 1931 Constitution.

Nor could the agrarian question be left unsolved under the Republic. In Castile, Andalusia and Estremadura, three outstanding agricultural regions, the land was in the hands of very few owners. The land-owning nobility possessed immense tracts of territory which were uncultivated, while the working classes in the countryside were without any means of subsistence. These great estates had to be done away with and the ownership of land made accessible to the peasantry.

The problem of nationalities, which was not understood by the centralist Monarchy, also faced the Republic in all its historical and dramatic importance. Catalonia, the Basque provinces and Galicia wanted provincial self-government, not separation. The intransigence of the Monarchy aroused nationalist sentiment in the autonomous regions, aggravating the relationship between the central power and Catalonia, for example, so that the struggle between Madrid and Barcelona seemed very much like that between London and Dublin.

In September, 1932, Parliament granted Catalonia a Statute of Autonomy. Catalonia now had at least its own Chamber and a Catalan Government whose President was also the representative of the Spanish State in that region. The Statute satisfied Catalonia. When Alfonso XIII used to visit Barcelona, all the windows and balconies would be closed as he went by, the Spanish flag was flown nowhere except on the official buildings, and sometimes a Catalan banner met him as a signal of protest. After the Statute had been granted, the whole of Barcelona cheered the chief of the Government, Señor Azaña, and the President of the Republic. Catalonia had been re-won for Spain.

## The Agrarian Reform

On September 15, 1932, the law of Agrarian Reform was promulgated. The basis of this reform is to settle families on the land. All the estates, which the Institute of Agrarian Reform (founded by the same law) considered beneficial for the reform, were taken over **with compensation**. The proprietors were paid with Government money at the rate of 5 per cent. The fact that on August 10 of that year part of the Army, led by members of the nobility, had rebelled against the Republic, induced the Government to include a new article in the Agrarian Reform Law by which the estates of nobles were expropriated **without compensation**.

This Agrarian Reform, which only affected the districts of great estates, is neither more nor less advanced than the legal reforms which took place in Europe in the first years after the War.

**Nevertheless, it was not carried out in practice. Nor were the other laws of protection for the worker which the Socialist leader, Señor Largo Caballero, drew up in the Ministry of Labour.**

The industrialists in Catalonia would not accept the Autonomy Statute because those who were charged to carry it out were the lower middle classes. The Church, through its political director, Señor Gil Robles, and in its newspapers, announced that it would not obey Article 26 of the Constitution. The landed proprietors opposed the Agrarian Reform by every means at their disposal.

So the Republican-Socialist Government found itself in a difficult situation. It had the political power, but it lacked the economic power. The Republican Revolution remained a thing on paper. The land-owners mocked at the juridical transferences. This conflict between the policy of those in office and the economic opposition to the Republican-Socialist coalition ended (in August, 1933) in the victory of the opposition. The President of the Republic dissolved the Constituent Cortes and held a new General Election. Moderate Socialism had not been able to withstand the attack of the economic interests.

In the 17th century England had its Political Revolution which paved the way for the Industrial Revolution of the 18th century. But Spain has had neither political nor economic revolution. From the 16th century, the Iberian peninsula has had nothing but counter-reforms triumphing over the progressive advances of a weak Spanish capitalism. As a result, industry has developed but poorly and then only in narrow regions in the East and North.

## The Enemies of the Republic

From the Middle Ages until well into the 19th century, Spain was governed by the sheep owners. Then the determining influence on the country's historical destinies passed to the landowners. This agrarian oligarchy is opposed to all progress. On the other hand, the absence of genius in the Spaniard for economics, and the lack of a courageous attack on agrarianism have engendered a biological impotence which is revealed in the almost utter impossibility of acclimatising western Democracy on Spanish soil.

The General Election of November, 1933, took place in a setting of civil war. The two years in which the Republican-Socialists had been

in power showed, firstly that the Spanish middle classes were not disposed to accept the Republic as a regime of social justice superior to the feudal Monarchy, and, secondly, that all the work of those two years—the creation of schools and centres of Higher Education, Agrarian Reform, laws protecting the workers, separation of Church and State, the regional autonomies—was only a bankrupt Revolution, since the old social classes remained intact, and the greater part of the legislation was only “a scrap of paper.”

Who were the opponents of the Republican and Socialist policy? All the well-to-do classes who hoped for a conservative Republic with ancestral privileges, and also some leaders of the Republican middle class whose personal ambitions had not been satisfied. The Radical Republican Party transferred itself with arms and baggage to the camp of the enemies of the new regime, alleging that this new regime had gone too fast and too far with the reforms of those two years. Señor Alcalá Zamora, raised to the Presidency of the Republic by the constituent Parliament, also took the side of the forces which were opposing the authentic Republic.

In the elections of November, 1933, all those whose vested interests had been injured, whose ambitions had been thwarted, all those who wanted power and saw in its possession the hope of valuable booty formed a block against Socialism and the revolutionary section of the people. This block called itself the “Anti-Marxist Front.”

The Church political party “Accion Popular” (Popular Action) became the basis of the coalition.

The Anti-Marxist Front spent ten million pesetas on its electoral campaign. It over-rode civil rights, suborned the poorer electors, coerced voters by threatening to deprive them of employment and their posts.

Spain is one of the countries in which Democracy is most shamelessly falsified. In the small towns and villages one needs to be a hero to vote for Socialism. The coercion of the landowners on the unfortunate peasants is very direct and brutal. Not to vote for the conservatives means exposing oneself to every kind of risk and danger.

The non-Republican groups needed a Republican Party to play their game. They found it. The Radical Party declared itself against Socialism and the reforming policy of Señor Azaña. It allied itself in the elections with the Anti-Marxist groups, or rather with the non-Republican groups. The Republic fell once more into the hands of the old reactionary classes.

## Appearance of Vaticanist and Agrarian Fascism

1934 was a year of counter-revolution. Supported in the Cortes by all the reactionary parties, Señor Lerroux, whose Government needed the anti-Republican votes to preserve itself from falling, lowered wages in the country by 50 per cent., suspended the execution of the autonomist and anti-Clerical laws, restricted liberty of expression and, in short, behaved like a Dictatorship.

It is axiomatic, at least in Spain, that every period of reforms is followed by a period of revolutions. The Spanish workers would not tolerate, under the Republic, the treatment which it had endured under the Monarchy. The working masses began to think of Revolution and the active minority of the Socialist Party decided to make preparations for it.

However bad the Radical Cabinet supported by the reactionary groups might have been, the danger of the Radical Government being replaced by a Clerical Ministry was worse. After the 1933 elections, the Clericals brought forward their demand to govern the Republic. How could the Republican and Socialist accept the return to power of those classes which had abandoned it on the advent of the Republic? Moreover, “Accion Popular” had defined itself as a Fascist movement. Following the lines of Dollfuss, the leader of “Accion Popular” said in Madrid on October 15, 1933:

“We must move towards a new State, and for that duties and sacrifices must be imposed! What matter if it means shedding blood? . . . We need an integral Power, and that is what we are seeking. In order to realise that ideal we will not detain ourselves in archaic forms. Democracy is for us not an end, but a means to go on to the conquest of a new State. When the moment comes, either Parliament will submit, or we shall make it disappear.”—

*From “El Debate,” the organ of the political movement in the Catholic Church.*

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## THE REVOLUTION OF OCTOBER, 1934

The Catholic Church has continued to be the key to the interior and exterior politics of Spain since the 16th century. It was the Church which created the great Spanish Empire, and destroyed it. Four centuries of religious monopoly, as the State Church, have made of it an active political party. In England, where the Catholic Church

has never enjoyed the privileged situation which it has in Austria or Spain, it is difficult to understand in what varied ways and to what extent the Clericalism of the Vatican works, dominating and absorbing. But the Spanish workers and the progressive elements in Spanish society know it well. Therefore, when three Clerical Ministers entered the Government with the Radical party, on October 5, 1934, the Revolution broke out.

The strength of the Church in Spain is partly spiritual and partly economic. It must not be forgotten that in Spain 40 per cent. of the population is illiterate. About 30 years ago the illiteracy was 60 per cent. But, in my opinion, ecclesiastical power in Spain rests more on its economic than its spiritual strength. The Republic has not attacked the material foundations of Clerical predominance. The new regime dissolved the Society of Jesus, and took over their wealth. But how can we know exactly what was the wealth of the Jesuits? Only property to the value of 200 million pesetas was seized, but the wealth of the Jesuits was much greater. Dreading possible prosecution on the part of the Government, the sons of Loyola always legally concealed their property. But the procurator of the Society, Señor Ruiz Senen, a layman, is on 36 Boards of Directors of electrical companies, transport companies, banks and mines.

Also the Church itself has a monopoly of rural credit. It can safely be said that in agriculture the keys of credit are in the hands of the Catholic Church. The Catholic-Agrarian Confederation, which extends throughout the countryside of Spain, is simply an official organisation which lends money to the peasants. The Confederation has its own banks for this purpose. There exist also arrangements for rural credit called "Positos," which belong to the State and facilitate loans through the Municipalities.

In Spain there are two-and-half million tenants and small-owners who cannot live without the assistance of the Catholic banks or of the "Positos." But in reality, these "Positos" are controlled by the Catholics, since the majority in rural Municipalities has always been held by the Clerical-Agrarian oligarchy.

So this vicious circle comes about: the Catholics control the credit of the "Positos" because they have majorities on the Municipal boards, and they have these majorities because they hold the keys to agricultural credit.

## No Mass Support for Fascism

After the October Revolution of 1934, the Catholic Ministers in Señor Lerroux's Government increased in number. At first there were three, then five. Their aim was to establish a Dictatorship on the Austrian lines, abolishing the Socialist, Communist and Anarchist Unions, and creating a Workers' Front resembling the "Arbeitsfront" which Dollfuss created in Austria. For that Señor Gil Robles expected to find support in the peasants and lower middle classes which the Church controls in the provinces. But the agrarian workers are anti-Fascist. They are Anarchist and Socialist, not Clerical. And in the big towns, such as Madrid, the Socialist strength is enormous.

Moreover, the October Revolution, in which 1,355 people were killed and 2,951 wounded, had given an epic-heroic tone to Spanish Socialism and had so encouraged the parties of the Left that the Radical-Catholic Government was unable to resist the avalanche of adverse opinion which fell upon it.

All the energy expended by Vatican Fascism to win the adhesion of the labouring masses has been useless. The Catholic Workers' movement has not got half a dozen authentic workmen. It is the despair of the Church. The working class remains faithful to Socialism and trusts in Socialism to gain its victory.

It is necessary to remember, too, that the October Revolution was a national movement in the sense that, although it was directed by the Socialist Party, it had the sympathies of the middle classes and of a Conservative minority. All the Republican Parties—except the Radicals who were allied with the Monarchists in the Government—admitted in notes which they published on October 5, *i.e.*, when the Revolution began, that there was no other way out but revolution. Even a Christian-Socialist, Señor Ossorio y Gallardo, who is of the type of the Italian "Popolari" of Father Sturzo, said to a Socialist on the eve of the Revolution: "I shall be delighted if you win."

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## THE POPULAR FRONT APPEARS

The coalition of the Radicals and members of the C.E.D.A. lasted rather more than a year. But, since the Radicals needed the Clerical vote in order to maintain themselves in office, they had to make such concessions to the C.E.D.A. that this Party, in fact, governed from December, 1933, when the Parliament met, until January 7, 1936, when the President dissolved it.

This Cortes was made up of the following members: 72 Radicals, 114 Popular Agrarians (C.E.D.A.), 28 Agrarians, 24 of the Liga of Catalonia, 20 Tradicionalists, 14 of Renovación Española (declared Monarchists), 50 Socialists, 20 of the Republican Union, 9 of the Republican Left (Señor Azaña's party), 20 of the Republican Left of Catalonia, 10 Basque Nationalists, 12 Conservative Republicans, 10 Liberal Democrats, 21 Independent Republicans, 14 Independents, and one Communist.

The Spanish Constitution of 1931 fixes the limit of duration for each Parliament at four years, but the President of the Republic may dissolve Cortes twice during his term of office. In the last Government crisis, Señor Gil Robles, leader of the C.E.D.A., set the President of the Republic the following dilemma: Either he (Robles) was himself to be entrusted with the formation of a Government, or he would refuse his votes in Parliament to any Ministry which might be formed.

As, however, the entry to office of three C.E.D.A. Ministers had provoked the Revolution in October, 1934, and as the Republicanism of the Radical Party is particularly doubtful, Señor Alcalá Zamora, to avoid another popular rising, preferred to dissolve Cortes.

### The Failure of the Clericals

At first, when the electoral campaign began, Señor Gil Robles irritation with the President took the form of furious attacks and threats against the Presidency. These attacks soon became less violent, apparently on the advice of Don Angel Herrera, the man behind the scenes, the real director and organiser of all the political and economic movement of the Catholic Church in Spain.

The parties of the Right had several reasons for not wanting an election at that moment. Firstly, because the suppression of the Workers' and Republicans' Revolution of October, 1934, was still a too-recent event. Moreover, there were some 25,000 workers still in prison. Secondly, because the period during which the reactionary parties had been in power had been notorious for its corruption. The Strauss and Tayá "scandals" had shocked public opinion. Finally, because the regressive policy of these Cabinets which had legislated against the small-owners and the workers in favour of a minority of landed proprietors and industrialists had brought the Right-Wing Parties into complete disrepute.

The wages of the country labourers had been reduced to the most un-Christian extent, in spite of the fact that the Catholics

had been in power. In many villages the day's wage was fixed at 2 pesetas (about one shilling.)

Don Fernando de los Ríos, the eminent Humanist who is well-known in intellectual circles in England, told me then that, in the province of Granada, there were country folk who got no wage at all, and worked ten and twelve hours a day in exchange for their food.

### The Popular Front Programme

The Republican Party and the Workers' Party were well aware that the battle was a decisive one. If the Left lost at the elections, the reactionaries would set up a Vatican Fascism, on the Austrian model, deposing, if necessary, the President of the Republic. In face of such a peril, there was formed a Popular Front which went solidly to the polls. It was made up of the following parties: Republican Left, Republican Union (moderate Republicans), the Socialist Party, the General Workers' Union (Socialist Trade Unions), the Communist Party, the National Federation of Socialist Youth, the Syndicalist Party and the Workers' Party of Marxist Unification (the Trotskyists).

All these groups had subscribed to a programme of Government. If the Popular Front won, only the Republicans would go into office, but they would bind themselves to carry out the programme which had been agreed upon. The workers' sections of this union promised, in their turn, to give their support in Parliament to the Republican Government when it was formed.

The Socialists, who have the greatest influence among Left-Wing opinion in the country, had made enormous concessions in that programme. Strictly speaking, it was a question of purely Democratic methods of government.

The programme was extensive. It promised general amnesty to all political and social prisoners; the re-establishment of the rule of the Constitution; the independence and re-organisation of Justice; fixing of responsibilities for the public "scandals"; protection of the country labourers and of the small agriculturists; repeal of the laws which injure their interests; settling families on the land; reorganisation of industry; protection of small industries and individual trade; a plan of public works; a housing scheme; the Treasury and Bank to be placed at the service of National reconstruction; equitable distribution of taxes; and, in the political sphere, a regime of Democratic liberty.

The programme was indisputably and in every way moderate and realisable. The Republicans rejected the proposals for nationalisation of the land, subsidies for unemployment and control of industry by the workers, which were put forward by the Socialist Party.

The electoral slogan of the Popular Front was: "Against the thieves and their protectors!" It is worth noticing that, in face of the constructive programme of the Left, the Right Parties offered only a negative formula. They were content to cry: "Against the Revolution and its accomplices!"

The intentions of the Anti-Marxist groups were clear enough. The C.E.D.A. was in coalition with all the Right-Wing Parties, including the Monarchists. So this reactionary front consisted of: C.E.D.A., Renovación Española (Monarchists), Tradicionalists (Monarchists), Agrarians, the Liga de Catalonia, Conservative Republicans, Liberal Democrats and Independent Republicans. Almost all the members of this block were Monarchists, some declared, others secretly.

## Victory of the Popular Front

The elections of February 16, 1936, like the previous ones of 1933, took place in an atmosphere of civil war. The 30,000 workers who had been imprisoned as a result of the October Revolution of 1934 and the peasants' strike in the June of the same year were awaiting in the prisons and gaols, with natural anxiety, the results of the new elections. For the prisoners, a victory for the coalition of the Right represented a loss of liberty for an indefinite time. For all the Parties of the Popular Front an electoral defeat represented, without any doubt whatever, the triumph of Fascist Dictatorship, it being well known that the reactionary group were fully conscious that this was their last throw.

The Right gave themselves up to the usual excesses. They bought votes, terrorised the humble electors in the villages, and falsified the results wherever they were able to do so.

In spite of all that, the Popular Front obtained a crushing, indisputable and sweeping victory.

The Radical Party of Señor Lerroux, which, in the previous Parliament, reckoned on a hundred seats, was literally wiped out. It obtained less than half a dozen members, and these did not even call themselves Radicals, but, ashamed of having been so, united themselves to a

group called the Centre, the Leadership of which was taken by Señor Portela Valladares.

It is interesting to point out that the President of the Republic, Señor Alcalá Zamora, was dominated by the obsession of creating, artfully, a Centre Party. His idea consisted in bringing out of nothing, by means of electoral corruption, a political group which, calling itself of the Centre, *i.e.*, not extremist, would produce, firstly, in the Parliament an equilibrium which the Chamber lacked, and, secondly, would be his creation or the docile instrument of his personal politics. Alcalá Zamora's temperament and psychology are more in keeping with the attributes of a South American President than with those which should accompany the Chief of State in a Democratic and Parliamentary Republic. That explains why the first President of the Spanish Republic chose Señor Portela Valladares so that, at the head of a Government of old politicians representing nobody but themselves he could "make" the elections as he wished and in accordance with his personal whim.

But this proposal to create a new Party by falsifying the popular will was a failure. In the Parliament which resulted from the elections of February 16, 1936, Señor Portela Valladares, administrator of the political will of the President of the Republic, did not have more than thirty supporters, and the Chamber is composed of 470.

The Anti-Marxist block lost the majority. The Popular Front gained nearly 150 seats. For the first time the Communists who, since the advent of the Republic, had been represented by one deputy only, acquired a certain strength in the Cortes with their 16 members. The Socialist Party gained 40 seats, thus becoming the most powerful group of the Popular Front, although it can be asserted that the Communists and Republicans gained votes at its expense through the alliance, *i.e.*, the Socialists should have obtained many more seats than those it obtained on February 16, if we consider its proper strength in the country.

The triumph of the Popular Front filled the Republican and working class masses with joy. The President of the Republic and his Government of old politicians without authority did not expect such a resounding victory. As a result of the defeat of the reactionary block, of the Government and of Señor Alcalá Zamora, authority passed automatically to the Parties of the Popular Front, and before the Cortes could meet to which the Government of Portela Valladares had to give account



of its electoral conduct, the chief of State gave the power to the most vigorous and popular personality of the Spanish Left-Wing supporters of the moment, namely, Don Manuel Azaña.

### Popular Front Begins to Govern

With an absolute majority of more than sixty members, the Popular Front prepared to govern. It was necessary first to fix the responsibility for all that had occurred during the two years of domination by the Clerical Fascists and Radicals. It was necessary to replace the President of the Republic (who was guilty, in great part, for the unchaining of the Revolution in October, 1934, which occurred because he gave entry to power to the Fascists). It was necessary to raise wages in the villages, these having been reduced by half or more in the period above-mentioned. It was necessary to continue the Agrarian Reform interrupted by the defeat of the Republicans in November, 1933. It was necessary, above all, to liberate the political and social prisoners. In short, it was necessary to honour the spirit and letter of the Popular Front Programme.

The President of the Republic was dismissed from office by Parliament in accordance with Article 81 of the Constitution. The Spanish Constitution of 1931 establishes in the aforesaid Article that the President of the Republic will consider himself dismissed if the majority of the Chamber declares that the dissolution of the previous Cortes was not justified. The Cortes of the Popular Front agreed on this indirect vote of censure and Señor Alcalá Zamora abandoned the National Palace.

On May 10, 1936, Don Manuel Azaña was elected by the deputies and presidential electors to the highest position in the nation. Señor Azaña resignedly accepted this delicate post. A man of prophetic instinct, he knew that, under his mandate, some enormous tragedy was to shake the Spanish nation. But Señor Azaña never thought, surely, that he was to be a witness of the most terrible of all the civil wars ever known by a people on whose territory civil wars have been frequent.

We should be concealing an unusually significant detail of Spanish politics in the months which preceded the military rebellion if we did not point out that Don Manuel Azaña was voted into the Presidency of the Republic, not only by the Parties of the Popular Front, but also by some of the groups in the Anti-Marxist block, whilst others, like the Clerical group of Señor Gil Robles, abstained from voting.

**The fact is that Don Manuel Azaña is a Republican and a Democrat of deep convictions, but not a Socialist.**

Frightened by the victory of the Popular Front and by the presence in Parliament of a strong contingent of Marxists, the Right thought that, in any case, Azaña in the National Palace would be a guarantee for the system of private property. For this reason they looked upon his election as a lesser evil. One day in March, 1936, Azaña had said to Señor Gil Robles in the Cortes: "What would happen to you and to me if the Communists were to triumph in Spain?"

During the four months that intervened between the establishment of the third Parliament of the Republic and the starting of the civil war on July 18, 1936, the Parliamentary sessions abounded in outrages of all sorts. The Monarchist and Conservative Parties, especially the Party of Señor Calvo Sotelo (National Block) and that of Señor Gil Robles (Agrarian Popular Action), vied with each other in their provocation of the Left.

**The Clerical Party, in particular, shares grave responsibility for the sanguinary and cruel repression of the revolutionary movement of October.**

Frequently the deputies of one or other of the Parties came to blows or brandished revolvers. Under these conditions, which reveal the degree of tenseness reached by the class struggle in Spain, Parliament could not work.

At the same time, the provocations of reactionary orators in the Chamber was finding a sanguinary echo in the streets. From the time the Popular Front triumphed at the polls, the Right did all they could to maintain a situation of terrorism in the street. Their method consisted in bringing the Government into disrepute by presenting it as incapable of maintaining order or guaranteeing the personal security of citizens.

**They were thus preparing the ground for a military Dictatorship, a solution which Señor Calvo Sotelo and the other Monarchists were proclaiming publicly with the greatest effrontery.**

**Señor Gil Robles and the Clericals not only privately incited the military to rise up in arms against the State, but collaborated with them in preparation for the civil war.**

**The armed gangs of the Fascist Parties—and lately all the Parties of the Right were, in some ways, Fascist—assassinated in the street**

outstanding members of the Popular Front. The employers provoked strikes of long duration and boycotted the Governmental laws. The reactionary Press fomented anarchy by praising the conduct of the armed Fascist gangs. The magistrates set at liberty the assassins paid by the groups of the Right.

How could there be anything other than disorder when the conservative classes had the greatest interest in preventing peace in the streets? The deputies Gil Robles and Calvo Sotelo, in an aggressive tone in Parliament, blamed the Government for the chaos, to the creation of which they themselves, with their demagogic conduct, had contributed.

### The Victims of Fascist Terrorism

As examples, I will cite some cases of Fascist terrorism after the elections of February 16, 1936. On April 14, 1936, reactionary provocation was carried even to the extent of placing petards under the Presidential rostrum in the Paseo de la Castellana in Madrid. The contrivance exploded at the feet of all the members of the Government and the Provisional President of the Republic, Señor Martínez Barrio. There were no victims, but this produced great alarm among the spectators and those taking part in the military review which had been arranged in commemoration of the anniversary of the Republic. As a result of this aggression there were, soon after, some dead and wounded. One of the dead was a Civil Guard. In their turn, at the funeral of this policeman, which the Right took advantage of in order to carry out a Monarchist demonstration, the military who formed part of the cortège fired on the workers who were working in one of the buildings close to the route of the funeral procession.

One afternoon after the victory of the Popular Front, on leaving his house accompanied by a policeman to protect him, the well-known Socialist Professor and Vice-President of Parliament, Señor Jiménez de Asúa, was shot at from a motor-car by young Fascists affiliated to the Party of Señor Calvo Sotelo. Fortunately, Jiménez de Asúa escaped unhurt, but the policeman who accompanied him died of the wounds he had received.

We can take the attempt to assassinate Jiménez de Asúa as a symbolic action. Spanish Fascism did not choose any ordinary victim. Learned Professor of Law, Vice-President of Parliament and active militant Socialist, the Right projected against Asúa all its traditional hatred of culture, its aversion to Parliament and Democratic institutions, and its anti-Socialist rage.

Another day, certain Fascist elements placed a very powerful bomb in the apartment of the Republican lawyer, Señor Ortega y Gasset. His residence was blown up but, fortunately, his family being away, they came to no harm.

Not satisfied with acts of terrorism against the civilian members of the Republic and Socialism, the Fascist armed gangs began to assassinate the officers of the police corps known as the Assault Guard. This corps, created by the Republic, defeated the troops of General Sanjurjo in Madrid in 1932, and it had distinguished itself by its loyalty to the regime.

In May, 1936, in the streets of Madrid, the Fascists treacherously murdered the Captain of the Assault Guard, Señor Faraldo. Various companions of the dead man were on the lists of the Fascists, chosen as future victims of the "White" Terrorism.

\* \* \*

### THE CIVIL WAR OF JULY, 1936

On July 13, 1936, the Lieutenant of the Assault Guard, Señor Castillo was going along the Augusto Figueroa Street, in Madrid, on his way to the police headquarters, when three armed Fascists fired on him with machine-gun rifles, leaving him dead on the spot. In face of this second aggression, which promised not to be the last one against the Republican Police, some officers of this corps, seized with natural indignation, apparently resolved to take revenge on the person of an outstanding Fascist politician.

The man most praised by the Clerical and Monarchist Press, the one who constituted the hope of the Right for the Dictatorial chair against Marxism, was Don José Calvo Sotelo. Calvo Sotelo, leader of a small group of Monarchists, ex-Minister under the Dictatorship of Primo de Rivera, author of the financial disaster encountered by the Republic on the fall of the Monarchy, had declared himself a Fascist some days previously in Parliament. In an aggressive and unjust speech against the Government he demanded order and civil peace, measures against the Socialist masses, etc. "If," he said, "this is to be a Fascist, then I confess that I am a Fascist."

It is said, I repeat, that on learning of the assassination of Lieutenant Castillo, several officers of the Assault Guard decided to avenge him in the person of Señor Calvo Sotelo. What is certain is that, in the

nearly morning of July 14, 1936, the corpse of the Fascist chief was found in the mortuary of one of the cemeteries in Madrid.

The Government ordered the detention and imprisonment of the supposed authors of the crime and named a special judge, trusted by the Right, asking him to do justice strictly and faithfully.

But the Monarchists, Fascists, Clericals and other components of Spanish anti-Marxist and anti-Republican opinion were disposed to take all the advantage possible of this political crime. In spite of the censorship of the Press, they began an extremely violent campaign against the Government and against the Assault Guard Corps. The truth is that the Government lamented, as much as the Fascists, the death of Señor Calvo Sotelo. Nevertheless, it was spread about that this was a State crime.

Three days had passed since the funeral of the remains of Señor Calvo Sotelo when, on July 18, the army in Morocco rose against the legally constituted Government. General Francisco Franco Bahamonde, appointed by the Minister of War to the Military Command of the Canary Isles, flew over to Spanish Morocco after having incited to rebellion the garrison in the afore-mentioned isles.

In Spanish Morocco, after a Terrorist offensive in which perished the majority of the Government representatives who refused to support the rebellion, Franco took possession of the territory entrusted to the Spanish Protectorate in the North of Africa.

The shooting of the Republican and working-class leaders in Ceuta, Melilla and other Spanish towns in Africa, the cruelty with which the military rebels repressed the slightest hostility, civil or military, was a foretaste of what was to be the conduct of the military in the Peninsula. On July 19, the Peninsular Army also rose against the Republican Government.

After some grave vacillations, the Government decided to arm the supporters of the Popular Front. At this moment began one of the most dramatic and terrible civil wars that the history of the world has ever known.

Señor Casares Quiroga, who replaced Don Manuel Azaña at the head of the Government when the latter was raised to the Presidency of the Republic, was ill and physically exhausted by five months of conflict and incessant work. He resigned. With the object of attracting to the Republic the adhesion of the middle classes, Señor Martínez Barrio, President of Parliament, took over the post of Señor Casares

Quiroga. Without doubt, Señor Martínez Barrio is the most Conservative of the Republicans. He lasted a very short time as head of the Government, because a few hours later, as he was not in agreement with the idea of arming the people, he ceded his post to Señor Giral, a University Professor and chemist, intimate friend of the President of the Republic. It is evident that Señor Azaña nominated this obscure and modest politician to the Premiership of the Council of Ministers with the object of directing personally from the National Palace the work of the Cabinet.

## The Reason for the Rebellion

Let us leave on one side for one moment the cretinous generals, enemies of the Spanish people and its Republic, who unleashed the civil war. We shall deal with them and their actions further on. Now let us see first of all what are the reasons, if there are any, which have incited them to stain with blood and terrible cruelty the soil of Spain.

If the reader has read attentively the previous chapters, he will have noticed that Spanish politics revolve round two axes: the agrarian question and the Clerical problem. The most powerful section of the Spanish wealthy classes is that of the landowners. The Spanish Catholic Church possessed much property in the rural zones of the country. The owners of the land in Spain have never carried out an Agrarian Reform, nor has there been a Government that would impose it, nor did they ever show themselves propitious to allow themselves to be deprived of any of their monstrous privileges, however feudal and primitive they might be. In the Republican Parliament all the Conservative political groups, with the exception of the Basque National Party and the Liga of Catalonia, represented the big landowners and the peasant middle class. It is these people who have unchained the war in Spain. In the same way they advised General Sanjurjo to rise up in arms in 1932 against the Agrarian Reform.

The Republican Agrarian Reform has been the principal cause of the rebellion of the Army chiefs and officers, all, or nearly all, sons or brothers of landowners.

Is the Agrarian Reform so radical? Was it worth destroying the Spanish nation before allowing the policy of the Republican Government and Parliament to prosper? Certainly not. I have already informed the reader of the general lines of the Spanish Agrarian Reform. The

Popular Front Government limited itself, in this respect, to continuing the policy which was interrupted in 1933 when the Right, as a result of their electoral triumph in November, returned to direct public affairs. The settlement of peasant families, to whom the State gave the land belonging to the idle nobles and money with which to work it, was now being carried out, it is true, by the Popular Front Government more rapidly, at the rate of 600 settlements daily. The Republican and Socialist pre-occupation was the Agrarian Reform, without which there was no possibility of acclimatizing in Spain a Democratic system of social justice. The big landowners knew that their old privileges could not last any longer. The same was occurring to the Church and to the military who have always had in Spain an aristocratic idea of the army.

### Clericals and Moors against the People

The Church is the enemy of the Republic because, accustomed to living according to its pleasure, as a State within a State, the Republic resolved in Article 26 of its Constitution, that it should concentrate on its specified religious mission. When the Republic arrived, there were 27,000 elementary schools lacking in my country. In its first two years, the new regime created 10,000 non-confessional secular schools. This was the first attempt to make up for the deficiencies of the Monarchy in the sphere of education.

We have seen the Spanish Catholic Church arm in arm with the military against the poor. The Church launched its fanatical call to war against the Democratic State. From the churches, convents and cathedrals shots were fired, as on previous occasions, against the workers. The religious establishments were arsenals and depositories of arms.

But does the Church go arm in arm only with the military? Ethically, this is not the most serious point. The Catholic Church has taken the Moors for its allies in its fight against the Spanish workers and democrats, those Moors who never have enough of blood—Christian and Spanish blood; those Moors who pillage the churches of Extremadura in order to carry away as many as possible Christian relics which they consider of material value.

So serious and concrete is the complicity of the Church in the crimes of the Moors and military that, in the Presidency of the Majorca Council of Defence, figured the Bishop of the diocese. Can English opinion

now understand why the churches have been burning once more in Spain?

The generals, who have committed the terrible crime of inciting the Army to rebellion against Spain, are acting under orders from the anti-Marxist political parties to which I have referred more than once. But these reactionary parties have shown that they have not the faintest idea of the State which they propose to erect if they triumph. The programmes of Government, if we can call them such, which have been found in the possession of the rebels in Catalonia and Madrid do not offer more concrete solutions to Spain's extremely grave and ancient problems than the shooting of all the Socialist and Republican leaders, the suppression of all the Democratic and Socialist Press and the establishment of concentration camps for those political adversaries who, owing to their relative unimportance, do not "deserve" to die at the hands of the executioner.

### Incapacity of the Rebels

Let us note that it would be very difficult to maintain in Spain a State in the German or Italian manner. The characteristic of the political-military movement which has unleashed civil war in Spain is its extreme minority position. Neither are the Spanish people given to allowing themselves to be carried away by nationalism, one of the principal ingredients of the Fascist victory in Italy and Germany. For these and other reasons which are not less essential, the intention of establishing a Fascist regime in Spain constitutes, more than in any other place, a real madness.

One can understand why the incapacity of the Spanish reactionaries, the absence of men of talent in their ranks, and their torpid historical vision have frequently launched them into suicidal adventures. If the Government succeeds in vanquishing the rebels, the wealthy classes, and especially the landowners, will have lost everything, and no one more than they themselves will be to blame.

It is a fact that, from the side of the rebels, no solution can be gleaned nor any attitude that is not negative. They do not know what they are going to do with Spain. They are ignorant of the most elementary laws of economics and history. These generals, who would constitute the first Government of the counter-revolution, are the prototype of the barbarism of the barracks. Queipo de Llano has astounded the world by broadcasting the greatest nonsense every day from the Seville Radio station. Franco is a cold man, notorious for his Moroccan

cruelties at the head of the Foreign Legion. Mola, who was the last Chief of Police under the Monarchy, proved to the hilt his ineptitude to this post. Only Miguel Cabanellas has shown any personal qualifications for the treason. All are military men of the *coup d'etat* type, more attentive to low politics and intrigue in military cliques than to their profession.

The method of the rebels consists in copying literally, but with greater cruelty, the politics that reigned during the Dictatorship of Primo de Rivera (1923-1929). During the first stages of Fascism, a military Dictatorship would rule Spain. Afterwards a Cabinet of civilians would be formed. For the Presidency of the Republic they had destined General Sanjurjo, who was killed, at the beginning of the civil war, in an aeroplane accident as he was leaving Portugal for Seville. As I have said, the civilian who was the greatest hope of the Monarchists and Fascists was Calvo Sotelo. As a result of this sinister personage's violent death, the reactionaries lost the most outstanding figure of the counter-revolution. But Calvo Sotelo, like the civilian and military elements on whom the agrarians and Monarchists counted in order to subjugate Spain, if all went well with them, are all old politicians in bad repute, always failures, survivors of the Dictatorship of Primo de Rivera and the Monarchist regime.

This is not the moment to speculate on what Spain would be under Fascism, nor to foresee, on the other hand, the political and social consequences of the Government's victory. My object has been to inform the people of Britain, and particularly the working class, of the causes and antecedents of the civil war which is shaking and tearing, with exceptional drama, not only the spirit of the Spaniards but of all the civilised world.

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