

## **‘Fatal Neutrality’: Pragmatism or Capitulation? Spain’s Foreign Policy during the Great War**

Since the outbreak of the war, our club [Peña] experienced unprecedented activity. Not a single member missed any of the many debates. They were passionate and endless discussions that more than once ended in open and violent arguments leading to the end of friendships hitherto believed unbreakable

...

On our tiny desks a thousand battles were planned and all the manoeuvres ordered by all the General Staffs of the belligerent nations were argued . . .

Oh war miracles! Every day it was said that it [the war] had radically changed a thousand institutions and a thousand habits, and as I heard these reflections, I kept telling myself, ‘Of course, as it has even changed my wife!’ Indeed, such an austere, cool and even sometimes unsociable woman became sloppy, attentive and extraordinarily vivacious. A woman who never asked me a single question about my business . . . now followed with interest its progress and enjoyed its excellent prospects.

The earrings were followed by other jewels, the magnificent fur coat, the expensive tailor-made dresses . . . and then the automobile. Oh, the day when we could show off outside our residence the stunning Renault!’<sup>1</sup>

As with so many narratives of this period, this account from a Catalan industrialist reveals the crucial impact of the Great War on Spain. It was not just the wife of the protagonist of this story, but society as a whole, rich and poor, city and countryside, which was transformed beyond recognition during these years. Paradoxically, a conflict in which Spain did not intervene was to alter decisively its contemporary history. This was the moment in which the country began its take-off towards modernity, despite still having to fight with the burden of its past.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, this was an era of rapid modernization and devastating social contrasts that ultimately eroded the traditional fabric of society. These were golden years of lavish spending and massive fortunes for

speculators, profiteers and industrialists — yet also of rocketing inflation, soaring prices and shortages of basic commodities which were being exported abroad.<sup>3</sup> Nothing could be the same after the war years. Large demographic shifts of population, added to increasing economic dislocation and social upheaval, heralded the arrival of mass politics and popular mobilization which led to the final crisis of the ruling oligarchic regime that had been dominant since 1874.<sup>4</sup>

Although there is scholarly agreement over the paramount importance of this period, it is not surprising that academic attention has mostly concentrated on the dramatic subsequent events: the Second Republic (1931–6), the Civil War (1931–9) and the dictatorship of General Franco (1939–75). Thus the objective of this article is to contribute to an understanding of this crucial moment in the history of both Europe as a whole, and more particularly of Spain. It focuses on one of the period's most ignored aspects: namely, the question of Spain's neutrality during the Great War and the secret campaign waged by the belligerent nations, in particular, Germany, to influence both public opinion and governments.<sup>5</sup> Special emphasis will be placed on the Liberal administration of Count Romanones (December 1915–April 1917); the high point of popular polarization and bitter debate generated by the war, of German aggression and illegal activities, and of the rule of a prime minister who was ready to move within the orbit of the western Allies.

Save for a short flirtation with Germany in the 1880s,<sup>6</sup> all the administrations of the Restoration Monarchy, whether Conservative or Liberal, followed a similar foreign policy of *reconocimiento internacional* or the avoidance of entanglements with either of the two rival blocs then emerging on the continent. Without powerful allies, Spain was isolated in the bloody and costly colonial campaigns that ended with its defeat at the hands of the United States and the loss in 1898 of the remnants of its overseas empire (Cuba, Guam, the Philippines and Puerto Rico). During the following years, Spanish governments conducted a more dynamic foreign policy which was designed to restore international prestige, entering negotiations with Britain and France but without formally joining what became the Entente camp. A treaty signed with France in 1900 recognized Spain's possession of Guinea and the Western Sahara. At the Algeciras conference of 1906, confirmed one year later at Cartagena, France, Britain

and Spain recognized their spheres of influence in the Mediterranean and Spain was granted a strip of land in northern Morocco. Eventually, inhabited as it was by fierce and rebellious tribes, it proved to be a poisoned chalice. Spain soon embarked upon a new imperialist adventure in Morocco for which it was neither militarily nor economically prepared. Furthermore, with memories still fresh from the disaster of 1898, a new colonial enterprise was utterly unpopular amongst the working classes who had paid dearly with their lives in the previous decade. Thus the call-up of reservists in 1909 to put down a rebellion led to a week of rioting and violence in Barcelona, known as the 'Tragic Week'. It was the beginning of a new colonial nightmare that was to last over sixteen years.<sup>7</sup>

When the European war broke out in 1914, the Spanish government rapidly declared its intention to remain neutral. On 25 August 1914, the Conservative Prime Minister Eduardo Dato informed Antonio Maura, a former prime minister who was by then leading a dissident *Maurista* minority,<sup>8</sup> of the motives for maintaining neutrality:

We would only depart from neutrality if we were directly threatened by foreign aggression or by an ultimatum . . . Hopefully neither of them is to be feared . . . Germany and Austria are delighted with our attitude, as they believed us compromised with the Entente. France and Britain cannot criticize us, as our pacts with them are limited to Morocco . . . Besides we do not owe anything to any of them since in 1898, the moment of our tragic spoil, they did nothing for Spain . . . I do not fear that the Allies would push us to take sides with or against them . . . They must know that we lack material resources and adequate preparation for a modern war . . . Would we not render a better service to both sides by sticking to our neutrality so that one day we could raise a white flag and organize a peace conference in our country which could put an end to the current conflict? We have moral authority for that and who knows if we shall be required to do so.<sup>9</sup>

Dato's justifications for remaining outside of the cataclysm descending on Europe were shared by the majority of the governing class. Military and economic deficiencies, resentment over the events of 1898 and the absence of any formal binding treaties with either of the two warring camps were all powerful reasons for abiding by neutrality. Furthermore, there was a significant amount of opportunism involved in that decision. There existed the hope, and even belief, that by playing the neutrality card, Spain could have a leading role in organizing a peace summit and

thereby gain in the diplomatic field what could never be achieved on the battle fields. King Alfonso XIII in particular coveted that role.

There was initially overwhelming support for maintaining a position of tacit neutrality. Maura promptly replied to Dato, regretting that Spain's fate might well depend on the fortunes or strategies of other countries, but confirming his intention to applaud the government as soon as the summer recess ended and parliament opened. The socialists also welcomed the declaration of neutrality. On 1 and 7 August respectively, the national executive committee of the Socialist Party (PSOE) and its trade union, the *Unión General de Trabajadores* (UGT), published a statement which set out their opposition to intervention in such a terrible conflict where workers would be the main victims. Catalan nationalists did not lag far behind. In an article in *La Veu de Catalunya*, Francesc Cambó, the leader of the Catalan *Lliga Regionalista*, also commented that a poor and badly armed country such as Spain should stay out of the European war.<sup>10</sup>

Most of the dissenting voices were to be expected: the ultra-clerical and traditionalist Carlist movement was unequivocal in expressing its pro-German feelings, and republican parties were naturally aligned with France and the Allies. Particularly vociferous and even openly campaigning for intervention was Alejandro Lerroux, the leader of the Radical Republican Party, a politician with a shady reputation for demagoguery and corruption.<sup>11</sup> However, shocking if not baffling, was the attitude of Count Romanones, the head of the other main monarchist force, the Liberal Party.

A few days after the official declaration of neutrality, the Count's mouthpiece, *El Diario Universal*, published a controversial article entitled: *Neutralidades que matan* (Fatal Neutralities). Although it refrained from openly advocating entry into the conflict, it clearly indicated that Spain should not remain strictly neutral but should move towards the Allies' orbit. Consequently, it was at odds with the position of the government.<sup>12</sup> Romanones, leader of the Liberal Party since November 1912, was a Spanish Grandee and wealthy landowner with vast commercial and mining properties. He was the stereotype of a professional politician of the ruling oligarchy, a maverick figure well known for his contacts at court, cynical approach to politics and mastery of political manoeuvring.<sup>13</sup>

**Table 1**  
**Spain's balance of trade with the two warring camps in 1913**  
 (value in millions of pesetas)

	Imports	Exports	Total
France	205,206,453	328,175,911	533,382,634
Britain	317,641,818	241,211,777	558,853,395
Belgium	45,035,003	45,278,431	90,313,434
Italy	15,805,757	34,722,408	50,528,165
Portugal	57,055,336	42,367,918	104,423,254
Serbia	260,078	—	260,078
Russia	44,973,518	8,286,803	53,260,321
Japan	629,587	77,713	707,300
Allies (Total)	686,607,550	705,120,961	1,391,728,511
	Imports	Exports	Total
Germany	185,373,167	74,418,566	259,791,733
Austria	10,334,926	8,797,340	19,132,266
Turkey	—	5,761,019	5,761,019
Bulgaria	80,823	793	81,616
Central Powers (Total)	195,788,916	88,977,718	284,766,634

Source: H. Cenamor Val, *Los españoles y la guerra: neutralidad o intervención* (Madrid 1916), 206–7.

Romanones's call to side with the Allies was not because of his Liberal status leadership. The prominent novelist and philosopher Miguel Unamuno wrote that the limit of a semantic paradox was that Romanones was the leader of Spanish liberalism.<sup>14</sup> Instead, economic self-interest must have played an important role. The Count was one of the largest shareholders in the mining industries of Morocco and of coal and pyrite mines in Asturias and southern Spain, whose production was largely exported to France and now was vital to support its war effort. Nevertheless, 'Fatal Neutralities' can also be regarded as one of the most polemic and daring statements in foreign policy made during the Restoration era. Instead of the traditional alienation, passivity and isolation of the past decades, or waiting in vain to be called by exhausted belligerents to arbitrate in a peace conference, this was an audacious attempt to recover a significant measure of international prestige. The article rightly alluded to the geographical and economic reasons that closely linked Spain with the Entente powers (see Table 1). The conclusion was that only by

moving closer to that camp could Spain aspire to play a central role in European affairs, strengthen its economy and enlarge its colonial empire.

'Fatal Neutralities' was received with shock and disbelief. Though Romanones tried to deny his authorship, blaming instead one of his collaborators, the former foreign minister Juan Pérez Caballero, he had revealed already his intentions publicly and, more inconveniently, far too soon.<sup>15</sup>

With the German offensive halted at the River Marne and the Russian troops beaten in Eastern Prussia, the war dragged on with no end in sight. Countries that had remained initially neutral were affected by the economic impact of the conflict, as well as by its sheer magnitude. There was hardly anyone who was not divided in their sympathies towards the belligerent sides and their governments considered the consequences of joining the conflagration. Eventually, many decided to cast aside their neutrality and commit themselves to one of the two camps. In Spain, save for stunning exceptions such as Romanones, the majority of the ruling oligarchy preserved a façade of absolute impartiality towards the conflict. In a sense, they tried to bury their heads in the sand, ignore what was taking place beyond the borders and hope that they had been forgotten.<sup>16</sup> However, it was beyond their reach to prevent the gradual erosion of the consensus of the first hours as public opinion began to split between the staunchest supporters of the Allies (*Francophiles*) or of the German cause (*Germanophiles*).

For the urban cultural and political élites, the European conflict became a question of obsessive concern. The war was almost immediately perceived as an ideological clash in which each of the warring factions came to symbolize certain transcendent ideas and values. The Allies represented democracy and freedom, and the Central Powers, authority and order. It was such a bitter polemic that it had the moral quality of a civil war: 'a civil war of words'. It represented a verbal clash between two Spains, which was a portent of the real Civil War that still lay a generation in the future.<sup>17</sup> Passions reached such a pitch that, as our Catalan industrialist noted, they often ended in heated arguments, fist fights, family divisions and termination of friendships.<sup>18</sup>

Although, with some exceptions, it can be affirmed that the Right wanted a victory for the Central Powers and the Left for

the Entente. Thus right-wing parties such as the *Mauristas* and the Carlists were vociferous in their enthusiasm for Germany and her allies. The traditional ruling social classes were also part of this camp. They included the landowning interests, aristocracy and court led by the Queen Mother, the Austrian Archduchess Maria Cristina. Naturally, amongst the exceptions was the English Queen Victoria Eugenia, married to King Alfonso in 1906. The church and the armed forces were also German strongholds. Spanish officers admired the efficiency and discipline of the Prussian army while the church, the most coherent and unified *Germanophile* voice in the country, loathed anti-clerical republican France and Protestant Britain. All the *Germanophile* elements regarded a victory of the Central Powers as a triumph for those who defended traditional values such as monarchism, discipline, authority and a hierarchical social order. By contrast, the main Entente supporters were the professional middle classes, the intellectuals and sectors of the proletariat. Politically-speaking, they were represented by the regionalists, republicans and socialists. Namely, those who wanted to transform the existing Liberal oligarchy into a genuine democracy. The intellectuals embodied the ideological vanguard. As traditionally historic adversaries of the clergy for control of education and culture, they considered secular France the example to follow in building a modern, democratic state.<sup>19</sup>

Nevertheless, as initially non-aligned nations such as Italy in May 1915, and Portugal in March 1916, entered the war, the concept of neutrality began to acquire a radically different meaning. Whereas the *Francophiles* increasingly demanded a more open commitment to the Allied cause, ranging from a declaration of benevolent neutrality to diplomatic rupture or even intervention, the *Germanophiles* became the most ardent supporters of strict neutrality. It was evident that with the country surrounded by the Allies, intervention in favour of Germany would be military suicide. Under this guise, the friends of the Central Powers could conceal their real feelings and even claim their position was that of the true defenders of independence, while the *Francophiles* were the treacherous agents of the Entente.

With the arrival in office in December 1915 of a Liberal administration led by Count Romanones, a self-proclaimed friend of the Entente, the ideological polarization of the country reached unprecedented levels. The confrontation between

*Germanophiles* and *Francophiles* coincided with increasing economic dislocation and social distress that, in turn, generated unprecedented levels of popular mobilization against the regime. Thus worsening living standards and shortages brought together the two rival trade unions in a labour pact in July 1916, the socialist UGT and anarcho-syndicalist *Confederación General del Trabajo* (CNT). Catalan regionalists initiated a campaign to obtain home rule. Mainland army officers, also affected by economic hardship and inflation savaging their salaries, began to organize themselves into a sort of military trade union, the so-called *Juntas Militares de Defensa*.

During the first months of 1916 an uneasy truce seemed to be holding. The Liberal prime minister went out of his way in any important speech, including the king's message, to declare that neutrality represented the faithful interpretation of the nation's unanimous opinion.<sup>20</sup> Yet beyond public scrutiny, he used secret diplomatic channels, in particular the Spanish ambassador in Paris, Fernando León y Castillo, and in London, Alfonso Merry del Val, to confirm his sympathy for the Entente and in turn to obtain the cession of Tangier, the rich Moroccan town which was then under international jurisdiction.<sup>21</sup> However, attempts to extract territorial concessions from the Entente bore little fruit. The image of Spain in the Western chancelleries was that of a country dominated by *Germanophile* institutions in which the current presence of a friendly administration meant little.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, platonic promises of friendship accompanied by little else in substantial terms naturally were bound not to impress the Allies.

Ironically, Spanish territorial demands were fuelled by Germany's shrewd strategy. Unlike the Entente, there were no obstacles to German promises of land that did not belong to it. Sometimes only Gibraltar and Tangier were on offer; at other times Portugal and French Morocco as well.<sup>23</sup> It is highly unlikely that the Germans believed that Spain could be tempted to enter the war. Yet their approach was enough to embarrass the Allies, faced with the dilemma of either rejecting any territorial resettlement and thereby confirming the idea spread by the *Germanophiles* that they were historic enemies of Spain, or surrendering valuable territory merely to secure Spanish gratitude. To the Entente diplomats, it amounted to little more than moral blackmail to be confronted by ministers and even the king with a list

of German offers and then be expected to match it. The Spanish monarch even obtained the support of the Russian Ambassador, Baron Budberg, in order to lobby the Allies for the concession of Tangier.<sup>24</sup>

There is no evidence that the Allies exerted any kind of pressure to achieve Spain's entry into the war. It would not have been difficult to force its hand since they controlled the sea routes and the traffic of coal, cotton and oil which was vital for the Spanish economy. In fact, the alignment of Italy, and then of Portugal, diminished the value of an alliance with Spain. Certainly, France and Britain were eager to have Spain on their side. Yet they were not prepared to pay an excessive price for an ally that they did not consider indispensable. Hence their strategy was to wait and negotiate from a position of strength in the event that Spain decided on its own to enter the war. By contrast, the Central Powers followed an aggressive diplomacy which sought to ensure by any means the maintenance of Spanish neutrality and, simultaneously, to damage the interests of the Entente in the Iberian Peninsula.

There were incidents that seemed to confirm the Allies in their suspicions of Spain being a *Germanophile* country. Particularly revealing was the arrival in June 1916, without previous notice, of the German submarine U-35, supposedly the author of several attacks on Allied convoys in the Mediterranean, at Cartagena. An embarrassed Romanones had to face an avalanche of protests coming from Paris and London. The official version was that it had brought a personal letter of gratitude from the Kaiser to Alfonso for the excellent treatment of those German officers who had surrendered to the Spanish authorities in Guinea after the loss of the colony of Cameroon. Yet it was believed that its mission also included the coordination of new actions with other submarines near the coast of Bilbao. León y Castillo wrote to Romanones:

How painful! As I suspected this affair of the submarine has produced in England the same deplorable effect as here . . . The French just want proof of our friendship, and this is the spectacle we are providing.<sup>25</sup>

Even more disturbing was the secret campaign carried out almost with impunity by the Central Powers that converted Spain into a theatre of operations. Thus Germany, backed by Austria,

established throughout 1915 and 1916 an extremely efficient and extended spy network in industrial and coastal areas, the Balearic and Canary Islands, Spanish Morocco and near the French border.<sup>26</sup> Bribes were lavished generously to win the favour of the local authorities to acquire information about shipping routes so that they could be targeted by submarines. Industrial production with the Allies was often disrupted by strikes or sabotage by infiltrated anarchist groups. German consulates in Spanish Morocco became operating centres supplying money, weapons and even advisers to rebel native tribes in the French zone. Many Spanish colonial officers, whose relations with their French counterparts had always been marked by jealousy and mistrust, often turned a blind eye to these activities. Levels of complicity reached scandalous heights in Guinea. There the Spanish colonial officers openly fraternized with the allegedly interned German troops from Cameroon. France even sent two cruisers after news that the Germans were re-arming and planning a sortie. Finally, from the summer of 1916, German submarines, abandoning their former cautious approach, initiated a devastating campaign to sink increasing numbers of Spain's merchant fleet and attack cargo in its waters.<sup>27</sup>

German deeds were underpinned, supported and even defended by her powerful friends and a relentless and highly able press campaign. Both warring sides, but above all the Central Powers, took advantage of the exorbitant rise in the price of paper to win control of an impressive number of Spanish publications. By the end of the war, the Central Powers controlled over 500 local and national newspapers. The best-known national right-wing journals, those of rival factions within the Liberal Party and even anarcho-syndicalist and republican newspapers were under their influence or control. Thus an intelligent and well-planned campaign seeking to influence and manipulate public opinion was carried out. With editorials in which either neutrality was equated to *Españolismo* or intervention to involvement in an imperialist war in which workers would be slaughtered, these journals managed to conceal their pro-German feelings and attack the *Francophiles* from both sides of the political spectrum. Any criticism of the outrages committed by Germany — the loss of innocent lives in a submarine attack, spy activities or atrocities in the occupied territories — was depicted as warmongering.<sup>28</sup>

By December 1916, the truce was all but broken. As the Count endeavoured to take firmer, although still cautious, steps towards the Entente, the Central Powers responded by stepping up their brutal actions and launching a devastating campaign against the Liberal prime minister. Germany had important interests in the peninsula. They included economic investments, 70,000 nationals and over eighty vessels that had sought shelter in Spanish ports at the outbreak of the war. The presence of a pro-Allied prime minister was a pending threat. Therefore it was imperative to bring about his downfall. The result was to push Romanones more and more towards the Allied camp.

After discussions with the French ambassador, Romanones refused to endorse the peace initiatives put forward by the Central Powers and US President Wilson and instead published a statement protesting against Germany's contempt for the rules of international law, blaming it for the outbreak of the war. This stance led to a clash with the Spanish monarch's own plans. Indeed, from the beginning of the conflict he had coveted the central role of mediator in the European tragedy. Alfonso took personal charge of establishing a diplomatic centre in Madrid to deal with both sides, gathering information on missing citizens and soldiers, acting on behalf of the population in occupied territories, advocating the repatriation of wounded or sick soldiers and performing a large variety of other altruistic services.<sup>29</sup> Alfonso believed his moment had finally arrived. The death of Austrian Emperor Franz Josef provided him with the opportunity to meet the rulers of the Central Powers and then, on his return journey, to exchange views with the Allied leaders in Paris. None other than Kaiser Wilhelm encouraged this stance.<sup>30</sup> To his chagrin, Romanones not only conveyed and supported the French rejection of this initiative, but also opposed his attendance at the funeral of the late Austrian emperor in Vienna and at his wearing an Austrian uniform at the private service that subsequently took place in Madrid.<sup>31</sup>

By then the Central Powers regarded the Liberal prime minister as the leading enemy of their cause, and orchestrated a vicious offensive with the objective of removing him from office. A newspaper article in which the Austrian Ambassador, the Prince of Furstenberg, accused Romanones of being behind contraband interests provided the starting signal.<sup>32</sup> A few days later, the French secret services intercepted a radiogram in which the

German Ambassador, Prince Ratibor, asked Berlin for more funds with which to increase the campaign against the Count.<sup>33</sup> The outcome could only be either the end of Romanones's premiership or Spain's final breach with the Central Powers.

The polarization of public opinion reached a peak. The *Germanophile* press argued that Germany was within its rights to use all available means when fighting for its survival. They singled out the prime minister as a warmonger surreptitiously seeking to embroil the nation in the European conflagration, accusing him of placing Allied interests above those of Spain and of using his position to make profits by smuggling war contraband. In contrast, the *Francophiles* claimed that the government should take stern and dignified measures against Germany. Spain was heading down a slippery slope leading to either the rupture of diplomatic relations with Germany or allowing it to act with total contempt for the neutrality of the host country.

A showdown seemed inevitable when Germany announced an unrestricted submarine campaign to commence in February 1917. Henceforth any vessel, regardless of nationality, navigating in the forbidden areas off the Allied coasts would be sunk. Romanones declared in parliament that his government was determined to take the necessary steps to avoid disruption to the economic life of the country. The *Francophiles* demanded to follow the American example and break off diplomatic relations with Germany. This was the view of León y Castillo, Merry del Val and Fermín Calbetón, ambassador in the Vatican. Merry del Val advised the seizure of all the German and Austrian vessels in Spanish harbours, warning them that any new sinking would mean final confiscation of similar tonnage. He regretted that Spain might have to resort to that measure when it would be too late. Calbetón even suggested that the continuity of neutrality was a threat to national honour.<sup>34</sup>

Constant German illegal activities in Spanish territory seemed to lend credit to that position. On 16 February, an individual who turned out to be a German sailor was arrested in Cartagena with two suitcases full of explosives. The Count wrote that there was enough dynamite to blow up all the fleets of the world and all Spanish factories. He commented that it was not surprising that the Allies doubted the reliability of Spain when he could not control what was going on in many Spanish cities.<sup>35</sup> From the time of 'Fatal Neutralities', Romanones believed that Spain

should move into the Entente camp in order to increase its international prestige and restore its position amongst the great powers. German bullying tactics and the Americans' tough response seemed to strengthen this view. Yet as he confessed to León y Castillo, although personally prepared to follow the American stance, he felt the right psychological moment to carry the nation with him had not arrived. For the time being, he encouraged the ambassador in Paris to initiate contacts with the French government.<sup>36</sup>

For the next two months, and in absolute secrecy, Spanish diplomacy sought to clinch a favourable deal with the Allies. Thus León y Castillo met the French foreign minister and asked that, in exchange for diplomatic rupture with Germany and a more active contribution to the Allied war effort, Spain should obtain Tangier, Gibraltar and a free hand in Portugal. The French government was prepared to reach an agreement, although for internal reasons it said that a settlement in Morocco should be postponed until the end of the war. For the French, Spain's collaboration could represent the end of the nightmare that Morocco had become, the free access of their fleet to the Spanish ports and the possible reinforcement of the front with thousands of fresh troops.<sup>37</sup> In early April, the British Embassy in Madrid, relayed that the French ambassador, Geoffroy, had held a long conversation with Count Romanones in which the Spanish prime minister had argued that, particularly after the entry of the USA and some Latin American countries into the war, Spain could not maintain its present position or it would certainly sink to the level of an insignificant power such as the Netherlands. The moment had come when Spain could no longer remain neutral and that in the next day or so he would make a public declaration of policy to the effect that it must enter into the war on the side of the Allies. If his advice was disregarded, Romanones said he would resign.<sup>38</sup>

In April, the sinking of the Spanish steamer *San Fulgencio* marked the point of no return. That incident went beyond the long list of outrages committed by Germany: the ship was in possession of a German permit of free circulation and when it was torpedoed it had been navigating outside forbidden waters, heading towards Spain with a much-needed cargo of Welsh coal. The correspondence between Romanones and his ambassador in Paris revealed the gravity of the situation. León y Castillo wrote:

‘We must act now otherwise it will be too late.’<sup>39</sup> The prime minister did not need any prompting though, as he confided that day:

The culminant moment has arrived. The sinking of the *San Fulgencio* has been the final straw.

The route I will take is already determined in the direction that you have known for a long time . . .

The note of protest to Germany . . . is the first and crucial step . . .

The struggle between the Germanophiles and myself is to the death . . .<sup>40</sup>

The Count’s private papers reveal the strategy he had in mind. He was to send a forceful message to Germany that practically amounted to an ultimatum. If, as expected, it refused to modify its submarine blockade and deadly activities, the sinking of another vessel would mean the immediate rupture of diplomatic relations and the final alignment with the Entente.<sup>41</sup> In fact, this was never put into practice. On 19 April the king entrusted the Marquis of Alhucemas with the formation of a new Liberal cabinet. The same day another Spanish vessel, *Tom*, which was heading towards Spanish waters, was sunk. The *Germanophiles* finally collected the big prize, the head of the prime minister. To add insult to injury, one of them pictured the Count with his heart pierced by a sword named ‘neutrality’ in a cartoon sarcastically titled ‘Fatal Neutralities’.<sup>42</sup>

In his resignation statement, the Count mentioned the opposition of important members of his party and of public opinion as main reasons for his fall.<sup>43</sup> Certainly, several notables of the Liberal Party used the neutrality issue as an excuse to oust him from office and replace him with the weak and malleable Marquis of Alhucemas. However, as the socialist editor of the journal *España*, Luis Araquistáin argued, nobody that knew the political foundations of the ruling system could believe his fall was due to public opinion. He did not resign but was forced to stand down by the real ultimate power in the country, Alfonso XIII.<sup>44</sup>

In fact, the oligarchic nature of the regime did not permit the implementation of the adventurist foreign policy defended by Romanones. Most members of the governing élites were reluctant to take a gamble in the European quagmire. Furthermore, the ruling classes — court, church and army — had always been ideologically closer to the Central Powers than to the Allies. This feeling increased dramatically after the revolution and subse-

quent fall of the Tsar in Russia in March 1917. The most outspoken *Francophiles* in Spain, republicans and socialists, greeted the end of tsarism in Russia with jubilation. The veteran socialist leader Pablo Iglesias even suggested that the revolution had been conducted against the reactionary circles in Russia who sought a separate peace with Germany; he demanded that Spain should join forces with the cause of democracy in Europe and break off diplomatic relations with Germany.<sup>45</sup> By contrast, the collapse of the Russian monarchy sent waves of panic amongst Spanish ruling circles and particularly the king. Already smarting from the rejection of his mediation services in December, the attitude of the Allies in abandoning the Russian monarch to his fate and supporting the new provisional government meant that Alfonso firmly moved into the *Germanophile* camp.<sup>46</sup> Hence, paradoxically, at the same time that Romanones was considering aligning the country with the Allies, events in Russia were confirming the commitment to absolute neutrality of Spain's leading circles. Finally, the existing turbulent domestic situation led them to conclude that it was madness even to consider entry into a war for which, after all, Spain was neither militarily nor economically prepared and whose main national supporters were the enemies of the regime.

The crisis of April 1917 was the most dramatic, if not the last, time that Spain came to be directly involved in the Great War. From then on the king was determined to enforce strict neutrality regardless of Germany's contempt for Spanish neutrality and national sovereignty. As internal turmoil and unrest took centre stage over foreign affairs from the summer of 1917, Germany could continue its activities in Spain with impunity while blaming the Allies for domestic disturbances.

Indeed, unchecked inflation, shortages of basic commodities and worsening living standards fuelled labour upheaval and popular discontent. In August, the socialists led a revolutionary strike that was only put down by the army after days of brutal repression.<sup>47</sup> It was a magnificent propaganda coup for Germany, that could portray itself as the defender of the existing regime while the Allies were unfairly blamed with organizing the establishment of a republic that would side automatically with them in the war. The Entente diplomats claimed unsuccessfully to be alien to the internal chaos in which Spain found itself. Since the fall of the tsar, the *Germanophile* press had accused the British

ambassador, Arthur Hardinge — himself an extremely conservative figure — of seeking to organize an insurrection against the regime as his counterpart in Petrograd, George Buchanan, had done.<sup>48</sup> He even felt compelled to write an article entitled 'A Diplomat Friendly to the Allies' in which he sought to dispel the identification between their cause and republicanism, since there were several monarchies in the Allied coalition. Besides, what they wished for was a strong Spain, not one torn apart by civil strife that would only threaten the precious supply of minerals and other goods which were vital for their war effort.<sup>49</sup> Hardinge also wrote to the Spanish monarch denying in the strongest terms any contacts between the Allies and revolutionaries of the 'Lenin type well known by their avowed German sympathies and unpatriotic opposition to the war'. The British ambassador even promised his assistance to investigate the truth behind all the anti-Allied gossip.<sup>50</sup>

It was in vain. During the summer disturbances of 1917 all sorts of ludicrous rumours were spread, claiming that Entente agents were behind the unrest and that the Spanish revolutionaries were swimming in foreign gold.<sup>51</sup> The Spanish monarch himself could not restrain his temper. When he met the French ambassador for the first time after the crushing of the general strike, Alfonso accused France of encouraging and supplying gold to the revolutionary movement in Spain.<sup>52</sup>

In 1918, the Germans, freed from active fighting on the eastern front after signing the Brest-Litovsk Treaty with Bolshevik Russia, launched a massive offensive in the West. It was a desperate gamble, the last card in the dwindling German deck, aimed at finishing off Allied resistance before the weight of US reinforcements tilted the balance against them. In turn, this meant for Spain an increase in the havoc caused by German attacks against its industry and merchant fleet, sabotage and rebellion in Morocco. The complaints of the Allies on the inability of the Spanish authorities to curtail them kept piling up.<sup>53</sup>

In March, as a solution to the reigning chaos, a national coalition government, the most impressive cabinet ever in the Restoration era, came to office. Presided over by the veteran statesman Antonio Maura, it contained three former prime ministers, one of them Romanones, as well as the most outstanding monarchists of the period. Dubbed *Ministerio de Primateas* (Cabinet of Titans), it failed to live up to expectations. In foreign affairs, despite all the

glaring evidence of constant German aggression, they offered an image close to impotence and capitulation.

Throughout 1918 there were astonishing revelations of German activities in Spain. The highly influential *El Sol* exposed the infiltration of anarchist groups. Miguel Pascual, one of the leading anarchists in Madrid, confessed his meetings with the two secretaries of the German Embassy, Von Stohrer and Grimm, who financed operations to create unrest and organize strikes to interfere with the export trade to the Allies. According to Pascual, the centre of German spy activities was in Barcelona where even a former secretary of the anarcho-syndicalist trade union (CNT), Francisco Roldán and its press organ, *Solidaridad Obrera*, received German money.<sup>54</sup>

A new editorial staff of *Solidaridad Obrera*, under the able leadership of Angel Pestaña, published a shocking editorial providing evidence of the collusion of German intelligence with the local authorities in Barcelona. The most notorious of all was Manuel Brabo Portillo, Chief of Police. In fact, Portillo had been working for Germany since 1915 under the immediate orders of its two leading agents in the Catalan capital, Albert Honnermann and Friedrich Riggerbergh, and received a salary of fifty pesetas a day apart from expenses incidental to his services. His task was to provide information leading to the torpedoing of vessels and to organize disruption in the factories of those industrialists who were producing material for the Allied war effort. To those ends he made good use of confidants and several members of the police force. One of his most infamous deeds was the assassination in January 1918 of Josep Albert Barret, a leading metallurgist producing shells for France. The murder was carried out by anarchist gunmen under the orders of Eduardo Ferrer, police confidant and the anarchist president of the CNT's metallurgic trade union.<sup>55</sup>

*Solidaridad Obrera* stated that it was providing the information 'to whoever might be interested'. It appeared that the authorities were not. Faced with this mass of proof, the response of the government appeared as surrender when a law of espionage was hurriedly passed in July, effectively gagging the press. It forbade under severe penalties:

1. The furnishing to the agents of a foreign power information relating to the neutrality of Spain or of a nature to injure any other foreign power. The penalty will be imprisonment or a fine of between 500 and 20,000 pesetas.

2. The publication or circulation of any news which the government has prohibited as 'contrary to the respect due to the neutrality or security of Spain'; or the spreading of news of a nature to alarm Spaniards. The penalty will be imprisonment or a fine of between 500 and 100,000 pesetas.
3. The insulting or holding up to hatred or contempt the chief of a foreign state, or a nation, army or diplomatic representative, either by word of mouth or in print or picture. The penalty will be imprisonment or a fine of between 500 and 100,000 pesetas.

In judging the new law, *El Sol* commented that, 'henceforth, spies in Spain might be fined 20,000 pesetas, and those who expose them will have to pay 100,000 pesetas'.<sup>56</sup>

This baffling behaviour in foreign policy was the damning consequence of the fragility of a regime in which its governing oligarchy was left no room to manoeuvre by crown and armed forces. This was blatantly evident in the summer of 1918, when indiscriminate German attacks on Spain's merchant fleet reached such levels that it seemed that the government was prepared to act decisively. Yet words were not matched by deeds and from the brink of intervention, the government retreated once more. In fact, since the sinking of the first Spanish vessel, the *Isidoro* in August 1915, over seventy ships (some 120,000 tons, representing almost a quarter of Spain's merchant fleet) had been destroyed and over 100 Spanish sailors killed.<sup>57</sup>

On 13 July the steamer *Ramón de Larriñaga*, bringing oil from New York, was torpedoed on entering Spanish waters and some of its sailors were machine-gunned when floating in the water. The brutality was such that Maura wrote: 'The limits of Spanish patience have been reached . . . This last example of contempt and brutality will have to be solved by the government without further delays.'<sup>58</sup> On 10 August, the government sent a note of protest to Germany warning that from then onwards, in the event of any fresh torpedoing, the tonnage sunk would automatically be replaced by an equal amount from the German and Austrian vessels which had sought refuge in Spanish ports at the outbreak of the war.<sup>59</sup> The Maura cabinet was devastated when Germany responded that the seizure of any of its ships would constitute *causa belli* and within one month its submarines torpedoed five other Spanish vessels. The German ambassador's excuse that there had not been enough time to give new instructions to all the submarines might be sincere and yet raised the question of what the old instructions were. The impotence of the national govern-

ment was amply illustrated when, in the council of ministers of 31 August, the minister of marine expressed the opposition of king and army to any hasty decision that might endanger the country's neutrality.<sup>60</sup>

During the following weeks, the dynamism shown in the note of the previous month all but vanished. The happiness that greeted the news that the Spanish government was to seize six German vessels soon evaporated, when it emerged that far from being a show of strength, this amounted almost to an act of charity on Germany's part. In fact, the ships would not be confiscated by Spain but borrowed as soon as the German embassy decided which ones to lend and their final status left to legal negotiation.<sup>61</sup> Seeking a conciliatory approach with Germany after its proven record of disdain and violence towards Spain smacked of weakness, if not capitulation.<sup>62</sup> Furthermore, this new retreat was taking place at a moment in which nearly everybody else on the continent but Alfonso and the staunchest *Germanophiles* in Spain, was aware that the tide was turning on the battlefields and the Central Powers were very close to defeat. Romanones mournfully noted:

By all compensation we reached an agreement with Prince Ratibor by which the German government offered six of their ships interned in Spain . . . but all the legal questions . . . were postponed for future negotiations and to be eventually decided by arbitrage. This took place on 24 October; a month after Bulgaria had sued for peace, after Germany and Austria-Hungary had approached President Wilson; after the proclamation of the Austro-Hungarian Emperor Charles putting an end to the war, after Turkey had done the same . . .

The defeat of the Central Powers was not admitted when it was already a fact . . .<sup>63</sup>

Seemingly vindicated in his pro-Allied foreign policy, the Count was again appointed prime minister in December. On a personal level, he had the satisfaction of expelling his past nemesis, now the defeated German ambassador, Prince Ratibor.<sup>64</sup> In the international arena, there was little he could do. Romanones rushed to France, where he met US President Wilson and French Prime Minister Clemenceau. Hopes for mediation in a peace conference were a distant dream and Spain was not even invited to attend.<sup>65</sup> He could only obtain the promise that Catalan demands for self-determination would not be raised and that the six ships lent by Germany would remain in Spanish hands. They

were all given the name *España* and numbered from one to six.<sup>66</sup> However, the numerous ships interned in Spanish ports, some eighty four German and twenty three Austrian, were not used to restore the battered Spanish merchant fleet but by a clause of the armistice were taken over by the Allies. It was the just reward for Spain's role in the war. Neutrality had spared the country from the maelstrom of the conflict. Yet if in 1914 a neutral stance seemed a logical and pragmatic policy, four years later it appeared as the capitulation of an oligarchic state dominated by *Germanophile* institutions, or as the Count had implied, 'A Fatal Neutrality'.

### Notes

1. P. Gual Villalbi, *Memorias de un industrial de nuestro tiempo* (Barcelona 1923), 102–3, 118–19.

2. M. Tuñón de Lara, *Poder y sociedad en España, 1900–31* (Madrid 1992), 187.

3. I. Bernis, *Consecuencias económicas de la guerra* (Madrid 1923), 95–6; J. Harrison, *The Spanish Economy in the Twentieth Century*, (London 1985), 38–40; J.M. Jover and G. Gómez Ferrer, 'En los umbrales del siglo XX. Expansión económica, crisis social', J.M. Jover et al., *España: Sociedad, política y civilización, Siglos XIX–XX* (Madrid 2001), 491–3.

4. The so-called Liberal or Restoration monarchy began with the return of the Bourbon Dynasty to the throne after a military coup in December 1874. Despite being formally based on constitutional and parliamentary practices, political power was monopolized by a governing oligarchy embodied by two monarchist parties, Liberals and Conservatives, whose hegemony was based on widespread electoral falsification and patronage. This systematic alternation in office was known as *turno pacífico*, or peaceful rotation. This governing class was linked with the ruling social and economic classes: agrarian interests, banking and financial concerns, railway companies and state monopolies whose administrations, boards or interests they represented.

5. Unlike the large amount of contemporary literature on this subject, there is a dearth of more recent scholarly studies. F. Díaz Plaja, *Francófilos y Germanófilos* (Barcelona 1973) deals mainly with cultural aspects. A more comprehensive study of Spain's ideological divisions aroused by the war is G. Meaker, 'A Civil War of Words', in H.A. Schmitt, ed., *Neutral Europe between War and Revolution, 1917–1923* (Charlottesville, VA 1988). A short but interesting account of the fierce struggle between the German ambassador and the Liberal leader Count Romanones is J.L. Martínez Sanz, 'El enfrentamiento Romanones-Ratibor', *Hispania*, Vol. 154 (1983). Good local studies on Catalonia and the Great War are A. Balcells, 'Los Voluntarios Catalanes en la Gran Guerra (1914–1918)', *Historia* Vol. 16 (May 1986); D. Martínez Fiol, *El Catalanisme I la Gran Guerra, 1914–18* (Barcelona 1988); and D. Martínez Fiol, *Els Voluntaris Catalans a la Gran Guerra*,

1914–1918 (Barcelona 1991). An ambitious work on German intervention is R.M. Carden *German Policy Toward Neutral Spain, 1914–18* (New York 1987). However, the absence of Spanish primary sources and reliance on only German and, more baffling, American documents, led to some contradictory conclusions. Finally, based on a more exhaustive analysis of Spanish and British archives is F.J. Romero Salvadó, *Spain 1914–18. Between War and Revolution* (London 1999).

6. The negotiations of Spain with the Triple Alliance can be found in Archivo del Palacio Real, *Diplomacia* (hereafter APR), 13, 2 and 7.

7. J. Connelly Ullman, *The Tragic Week, a Study in Anticlericalism in Spain, 1875–1912* (Cambridge 1968). For the Moroccan adventure, see S. Balfour, *Deadly Embrace* (Oxford 2002) and P. La Porte, *La atracción del Imán* (Madrid 2001).

8. A split within the Conservative Party took place in October 1913. Antonio Maura, then Conservative leader, refused to alternate in office with the Liberals and was abandoned by the bulk of the party led by Eduardo Dato. A minority of mostly young conservatives followed Maura.

9. G. Maura and M. Fernández Almagro, *Por qué cayó Alfonso XIII* (Madrid 1948), 472–3.

10. On Maura's backing for the government, see Biblioteca de la Real Academia de la Historia (hereafter BRAH), *Archivo Eduardo Dato* (hereafter AD), Maura to Dato, 27 August 1914; for the socialists, see Fundación Pablo Iglesias, papers of Amaro del Rosal, *Historis de la UGT*, AARD–330–2, August 1914, and *El Socialista*, 4 August 1914. For the Catalan nationalists, see *La Veu de Catalunya*, 19 August 1914.

11. J.B. Culla i Clara, *El republicanisme lerrouxista a Catalunya, 1901–1923* (Barcelona 1986), 311–15; D. Martínez Fiol, 'Lerrouxistas en pie de guerra', *Historia 16*, Vol. 174 (1990), 24–6.

12. *El Diario Universal*, 19 August 1914.

13. A recent excellent biography of Romanones is J. Moreno Luzón, *Romanones. Caciquismo y política liberal* (Madrid 1998).

14. S. Former Muñoz, *Canalejas y el partido liberal democrático* (Madrid 1993), 38.

15. On Romanones's U-turn, see *El Imparcial* (4 September 1914); years later he acknowledged the authorship of the article in his works *Notas de una vida* (Madrid 1999), 379 and *Las responsabilidades del antiguo régimen, 1875–1923* (Madrid 1924), 77.

16. Romero Salvadó, op. cit., 60.

17. Meaker, op. cit., 2.

18. Gual Villalbí, op. cit., 102–4.

19. There was a vast contemporary literature on the subject. For instance, A. Posada, *Actitud ética entre la guerra y la paz* (Madrid 1923); H. Cenamor Val, *Los españoles y la guerra: neutralidad o intervención* (Madrid 1916); L. Ballesteros, *La guerra europea y la neutralidad española* (Madrid 1917); and L. Araquistáin, *Entre la Guerra y la revolución* (Madrid 1917). For more recent works see Díaz Plaja, op. cit., 14–32; Meaker, op. cit., 9–37; Romero Salvadó, op. cit., 9–17. Also see Public Record Office (hereafter PRO), Foreign Office (hereafter FO) 371/2471/73963 and 371/2760/20756, Secret Reports, 29 July 1915 and 17 April 1916.

20. In all his interventions in parliament (10 May, 6 June, 13 October and 4 November 1916) Romanones stressed his commitment to official neutrality and asked for the patriotic support of the chamber.

21. BRAH, *Archivo Romanones* (hereafter AR), II I A, Romanones to León y Castillo, 25 January, 23 February, 23 March and 30 June 1916; and to Alfonso Merry del Val, 24 January and 14 June 1916; also see Archivo General de la Administración, *Asuntos Exteriores* (hereafter AGA), 77–7046, March–April 1916.

22. FO 371/2711/29361, Grey to Arthur Hardinge, 10 February 1916, in which Grey informs Hardinge of León y Castillo's meeting with the French prime minister; AR, II I A, León y Castillo to Romanones, 5 and 14 February, 27 March 1916.

23. According to Romanones (*Notas*, op. cit., 386), Dato claimed that the German ambassador had offered Tangier, Gibraltar and Portugal in exchange for Spanish support in the war. FO 371/2472/144697, 5 October 1915, indicates that the Spanish monarch said exactly the same thing to the Bishop of Southwark; FO 371/2472/159874 provides confirmation of German offers by Leopoldo Romeo, the pro-Allied editor of *La Correspondencia de España* (28 October 1915); FO 371/2761/31988, confidential report about German offers, 17 March 1916.

24. FO 371/2412/65976, confidential report on king's approach to Russian ambassador, 25 May 1916.

25. AR, II I A, León y Castillo to Romanones, 17 July 1916 and AGA, Paris, 95–5947, July 1916. French protests about German submarine activities in AGA, Paris, 95–5946, September–October 1916; English protests in APR, 16, 231, 2, Foreign Office to Spanish Foreign Minister, Amalio Gimeno, 1 July 1916. A full description of the affair of the U–35 appeared in *El Imparcial*, 24 June 1916. According to Carden, op. cit., 111–24, it was the Spanish monarch who suggested the visit of a German submarine to make an enormous impression upon public opinion and 'above all I would like to see Romanones' face when he hears of it'. It says much about the *Francophile* position that, according to the author, the king held.

26. Carden, op. cit., 100–2, provides ample evidence of how the German espionage and sabotage network took off by the summer of 1915.

27. A summary of German subversive activities in AR, 63, 46, April 1917, it was reproduced in Romanones, *Notas*, 399–410. Also see FO 371/3372/118836, report from political intelligence department, 6 July 1918. On German agents in Morocco see AGA, Paris, 95–5960, February–October 1917 and AR, 40, 9, 6, report of German activities in Morocco, 1916–17. On the pro-German activities of colonial authorities in Guinea, see FO 371/2762/229041, Grey to Hardinge, 14 November 1916 and FO 371/2762/26062, secret report, 23 December 1916.

28. In 1916 alone Germany spent 500,000 pesetas for the manipulation and control of the Spanish press. Examples of publications receiving financial aid are: the right-wing *La Acción*, *El ABC*, *El Correo Español* and *La Nación*; the leading Catholic journal *El Debate*; Liberal papers such as *El Día* and *La Mañana*; the CNT's organ *Solidaridad Obrera*; and the Republican *España Nueva*. A full account can be found in Archivo Histórico Nacional. *Gobernación*, 48A, 13, 2 February 1919. Also FO 395/117/23798, October 1917, secret report underlining the superiority of German propaganda over that of the Allies.

29. J. Pando, *Un Rey para la esperanza* (Madrid 2002), 17, 21–6; V. Espinos Moltó, *Alfonso XIII, espejo de neutrales* (Madrid 1977), 191–203.

30. APR, 12,911, 22, the kaiser to the Spanish monarch (undated, December 1916).

31. For Romanones's clash with the king see, in BRAH, *Archivo Natalio Rivas* (hereafter ANR), 11–8903 (5 December 1916); also FO 371/2762/256871, Hardinge to Balfour, 14 December 1916.

32. *La Nación*, 26 December 1916.

33. *EL País*, 9 January 1917; FO 371/3033/23605, Hardinge to S. Balfour, 23 January 1917.

34. AR, II I A, León y Castillo to Romanones, 6 February 1917; F. Calbetón to Romanones, 17 February 1917; AR, 42, 1, Merry del Val to Romanones, 7 February 1917.

35. AR, II I A, Romanones to Spanish embassy in Berlin (28 March 1917).

36. AR, II I A, Romanones to León y Castillo, 3 and 6 February 1917.

37. AR, II I A, León y Castillo to Romanones, 10 February 1917. See also FO 371/3035/39928, Confirmation of Spanish territorial demands to France, 20 February 1917 and PRO, Cabinet Papers (CAB), 23/2. War Cabinet, discussion of Spain's approaches to France, 8 March 1917.

38. FO 371/3035/75548, Vaughan, secretary at the British Embassy in Madrid, to Balfour, 12 April 1917, and 76696, 13 April 1917. Romanones admitted to the French ambassador that after the last sinking there was no alternative but to break off relations with Germany; CAB, 24/7, GT.198, March 1917, and FO 371/3035/75549, 12 April 1917. The British Foreign Office was not averse to the achievement of some kind of closer bond by treaty between Spain and Portugal, but was unsure about Spanish reliability to control an extended Morocco. Concerning Gibraltar, no promises were to be made and in the meantime an inter-departmental committee was to study the potential exchange of Gibraltar for Ceuta. There were suggestions that Spanish Guinea could be extended and Spain handed back control of its former Pacific colony of the Caroline Islands. CAB 23/2/115, appointment of an interdepartmental committee to report on the issue of exchanging Gibraltar for Ceuta. The committee was chaired by Lord Curzon and was formed by two Foreign Office officials, Sir Eyre Crowe and Lord Drogheda, one from the Admiralty, Rear-Admiral Hope, and one from the War Office, Major General Maurice (6 April 1917).

39. AR, II I A, León y Castillo to Romanones, 14 April 1917.

40. AR, II I A, Romanones to León y Castillo, 14 April 1917.

41. A draft version of the note which should have been delivered to Germany and a complete list of some of the most infamous outrages committed by Germany on Spanish soil can be found in AR, 63, 46, April 1917; the fall of Romanones is covered in AR, 40, 1, 9, April 1917.

42. *La Acción*, 21 April 1917.

43. *La Epoca*, 19 April 1917.

44. *España*, 118 (26 April 1917). Romanones himself described perfectly the volatile inclinations of the king: initially leaning towards the Allies and in overall agreement with the spirit of 'Fatal Neutralities' (*Notas op. cit.*, 379) but soon changing sides, impressed by the Germans' military machine and their territorial offers (384).

45. *El Socialista*, 6 April 1917.

46. The British Military Attaché, Jocelyn Grant, stressed that after the March Revolution in Russia the Spanish monarch was firmly in the *Germanophile* camp: FO 371/3033/ 96857, 5 May 1917; FO 371/3033/92539, Hardinge to Balfour, 7 May 1917 on the king's sacking of his prime minister under the influence of the

German Military Attaché, Colonel Kalle, and the pro-Austrian court.

47. On the revolutionary strike of August 1917, see Romero Salvadó, *op. cit.*, 120–31; J.A. Lacomba, *La crisis española de 1917* (Málaga 1970), 237–84; J. Serrallonga, ‘Motines y revolución. España, 1917’, *Ayer*, no. 4 (1991), 182–91.

48. *El Día*, 28 May 1917, *La Acción*, 30 May 1917.

49. *La Epoca*, 4 June 1917.

50. APR, 15,982, 25, Hardinge to Emilio de las Torres, the king’s secretary, 4 July 1917.

51. FO 185/1346/433 and /438, Hardinge to Balfour, 24 and 31 August 1917.

52. FO 185/1346/469, Hardinge to Balfour, 24 September 1917.

53. French protests in AGA, Paris, 95–5976, March–October 1918.

54. *El Sol*, 4–7 March 1918. See also *España*, 152 (7 March 1918): ‘German Terrorism in Spain!’. FO 371/3373/44846 and /54288, 9 and 14 March 1918, in which Hardinge informs Balfour of the connections between anarchists and Germans. On 26 January 1918 *El Parlamentario* accused the former CNT secretary, Francisco Roldán, of being on Germany’s payroll. German manipulation of *Solidaridad Obrera* is recognized by Angel Pestaña, *Lo que aprendí en la vida*, Vol. 1, (Murcia 1971), 55.

55. Despite the overwhelming evidence against Portillo, and the numerous witnesses (workers, policemen, experts, etc.) testifying against him, the case was dismissed and the chief of police released in December 1918. In 1919, he took over the new and infamous role of leading a group of gunmen in the dirty war against the CNT. He was killed in September 1919. On his spy activities, see *Solidaridad Obrera*, 9 June 1918; *El Parlamentario*, 12, 26, 28 and 29 June 1918; and *El Sol*, 12 and 14 June 1918. See AR, 16, 25, ‘The Portillo Affair’; FO 371/3375/118036, report by the British consul at Barcelona, 5 July 1918.

56. *El Sol*, 4 July 1918.

57. *Algunos datos sobre la guerra submarina* (Madrid 1918), 45–7.

58. AD, Maura to Dato, 28 July 1918.

59. F. Soldevilla, *El año político de 1918* (Madrid 1919), 226–8.

60. The Liberal deputy Natalio Rivas wrote that in order to defend neutrality, the king was prepared to sack all his ministers: ANR, 11–8906, 31 August 1918. For the king’s veto of a breach of relations with Germany, see AM, 272, 1, Dato to Maura, 7 September 1918 and Romanones, *Notas*, *op. cit.*, 423–4.

61. The mail between Prime Minister Maura and his Foreign Minister Dato reflected an attempt to square the circle or achieve a delicate equilibrium between the determination to obtain some redress after the ultimatum of August and avoiding a diplomatic rupture with Germany. The staunch *Germanophile* Spanish ambassador to Berlin, Polo de Bernabé, certainly helped to undermine his government’s position. The compromise of accepting the ‘loan’ of six German vessels dismayed the Western chancelleries. See AD, Maura to Dato, 5 and 9 September, 3 and 18 October 1918 and Polo to Dato, 31 August and 6 September 1918. AM, 255, 1, Maura to Dato, 29 September 1918; 255, 6, Maura’s notes, 11–18 October 1918; and 255, 10, Maura to Prince Ratibor, 10 and 14 October, and Ratibor to Maura, 13 October 1918. AM, 272, 1, Dato to Ratibor, 8 September 1918, Dato to Polo 28 September 1918 and Maura to Ratibor, 14 October 1918. The French foreign minister blamed Alfonso XIII for the weakening of the government’s response to Germany: FO 371/3374/153920, British ambassador, Paris, to Balfour, 9 September 1918.

62. This is stressed by the leading Conservative deputy and several times minister Manuel Burgos y Mazo, *El verano de 1919 en Gobernación* (Cuenca 1921), 50.

63. Romanones, *Responsabilidades*, op. cit., 93–4.

64. Martínez Sanz, op. cit., 422–4.

65. Romanones, *Notas*, op. cit., 431–2.

66. AR, 19, 8, Minister of Supplies Baldomero Argente to Romanones, 7 January 1919.

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