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THE PEOPLE'S DICTATOR

THE LIFE OF GENERAL PRIMO DE RIVERA

Alejandro Quiroga



The People's Dictator

This book is the first major biography of General Miguel Primo de Rivera, dictator of Spain between 1923 and 1930, who played a key role in the shaping of a counterrevolutionary Europe in the interwar era.

Following new historiographical trends, this book combines biographical experiences of the dictator with a sociopolitical reading of the dictatorship to reflect on the configuration of national, political, and gender identities at individual and group levels. It challenges traditional readings of Primo de Rivera as a benign, non-ideological leader who established a paternalistic dictatorship, instead showing an astute and ambitious politician who created a nationalist, highly repressive, authoritarian regime profoundly influenced by Italian fascism. The monograph also explores Primo de Rivera's role as the creator of right-wing populism in Spain, who portrayed politicians and judges as enemies of the Spanish people, used 'fake news' in his propaganda machine, and presented himself as a charismatic leader ready to destroy the liberal elites.

This book is intended for scholars and students specialising in Spanish history and politics, along with those interested in nationalism, populism, far-right movements, Fascism, dictators and authoritarian regimes in twentieth-century European history.

Alejandro Quiroga is Professor of Spanish History at Newcastle University and Beatriz Galindo Distinguished Researcher at the Universidad Complutense de Madrid. His research focuses on twentieth- and twenty-first-century nationalisms and national identities in Europe.

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The People's Dictator

The Life of General Primo de Rivera

Alejandro Quiroga

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For Jaime



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‘You will understand that my position carries with it few flowers and many thorns, but when I consider how things are in Spain, how they will be and how they are outside of Spain, and see the love, more obvious every day, of the good people, I am reaffirmed in the task of continuing the struggle, no matter what the cost. I believe that I am not alone, but if I were, I would die fighting’.

Letter from General
Miguel Primo de Rivera to General José Sanjurjo,
2 July 1926



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subject of study, something particularly important if your subject is a dictator. My son León, for one, is a declared enemy of historical research and is much more interested in playing football with me than seeing me sat writing in front of a computer. Hopefully, one day he will enjoy reading this, but for the moment he understandably has other priorities. I must thank Carmina for the infinite patience that she has shown towards me and the constant support she has given me so that I was able to write this biography. Alongside her, everything is better, not just books, but also people.



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Introduction – Who and When

A few minutes after 8 o'clock in the evening on 28 January 1930, General Miguel Primo de Rivera got up from a meeting of the Spanish cabinet, over which he had presided, and made his way to the Royal Palace. He was about to submit his resignation. On arriving at the palace, Primo de Rivera declared to a group of reporters that he had to 'inform the King about a matter approved by the Government' and that his meeting with the monarch would be 'brief'.¹ It was indeed. By 8:45, Primo had resigned and the press was announcing that Alfonso XIII had chosen General Dámaso Berenguer to replace him as Prime Minister.² The news spread like wildfire. Shortly thereafter, festive demonstrations sprung up in Madrid and masses of people took to the streets of the city centre to celebrate the fall of the dictator. By 11:30 that evening, some 2000 people were gathered in the Puerta del Sol and the shout of 'Long Live the Republic!' was being directed towards the Plaza de Oriente.³ After several warnings and a few shots fired, the crowd dispersed, but an hour later some 4000 people were proceeding down the Calle de Alcalá towards the Buenavista Palace, the headquarters of the War Ministry and Primo de Rivera's residence. The mood was heated. The kiosk of the conservative newspaper *El Debate* on the Calle Alcalá was set alight, and several businesses had their windows smashed.⁴ A police battalion was placed in front of the Buenavista Palace. When the crowds approached the building, the security forces charged the crowd, leaving many bruised, battered and wounded.⁵ Primo de Rivera must have watched these incidents with astonishment and sadness. He had spent the last years of his life leading a dictatorship in Spain, a regime which he envisaged would save the fatherland from destruction and build a new country. Moreover, he was convinced he had achieved this.⁶ But in this moment of leaving power, he felt tremendously alone. Primo knew that his comrades-in-arms had abandoned him. He felt that the King had betrayed him, and he could see from the windows of the Buenavista Palace that the people were celebrating his departure in the streets.

The resignation of Primo de Rivera and the appointment of Berenguer put an end to more than six years of dictatorship in Spain, which had changed the country forever. The Primo de Rivera regime represents a fascinating period. It involved coups, a King who betrayed constitutional principles, deep

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connections with Italian fascism, colonial wars, military officers directing the entire government of the country, cold-blooded murders of trades unionists, unprecedented repression of opposition figures and student protest movements, enormous efforts towards nationalistic indoctrination, the political mobilisation of women, conspiracies of every kind, subversive attempts to overthrow the dictator, world economic crisis and profound social and cultural transformations. The dictatorship put an end to the Restoration System (1875–1923), and in many ways foreshadowed the later Franco regime.⁷ Even so, and despite significant advances in recent years, the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera remains one of the least explored periods in the history of twentieth-century Spain. This lack of attention to the period is in part a reflection of a degree of ignorance about Primo de Rivera himself. The number of biographical studies of the general pales in comparison to those dedicated to Francisco Franco. To some extent, this is logical, given the respective origins and longevity of the two dictatorships, but even so this hardly explains why, a century after his coup in 1923, there is still no substantial biographical monograph of Miguel Primo de Rivera.⁸

The present work is an attempt to address this historiographical gap. It is a biography of Primo de Rivera in which analysis of the individual allows us to explore the history of Spain during the Restoration Monarchy (1875–1923) and the dictatorship (1923–1930). In other words, what matters most about Primo de Rivera's trajectory is that it allows us to shine light on the broader periods in which he lived. Primo was not wrong when he declared in 1929 that he had reached 'the conclusion that dictatorships assume the form of those who lead them'.⁹ This book is therefore embedded in what has been termed a 'biographical turn', which in recent decades has come to regard biography as a genre which is not merely narrative, but rather a deeply explanatory one.¹⁰ This 'biographical turn' has prioritised the study of the interplay between the individual and their historical context. Seminal works of biography, such as Preston's study of Franco, or Kershaw's study of Hitler, have shown not only how historical context is key for understanding the individual, but also how those individuals are not so much shapers of the reality in which they live, but rather the products of the societies which they inhabit and in which they operate.¹¹ Certainly, the present study confirms the importance of the historical context in understanding its protagonist. Primo's experiences in the wars in Cuba, the Philippines and Morocco, for example, were crucial factors in prompting his ideological development and shaping his politics at different moments in his life. We must also analyse these shifting features, however, alongside international developments in this period, not least the spread of European imperialism, the First World War and Mussolini's ascent to power in Italy, all of which were essential in shaping the actions and thoughts of Primo de Rivera. In short, the aim here is to 'historicise' – to put into historical context – the life of Primo de Rivera, analysing the dialectical relationship between the distinct political, social and cultural worlds in which our subject lived at different moments in his life.

Much of the book is focussed on the years 1919–1930, a period shaped by the socio-political crisis endured across Europe after the First World War. As with Mussolini, Primo knew how to exploit this context of crisis.¹² His assumption of power, the support he received from broad swathes of social conservatives in Spanish society, and even his charisma, can only be understood within the context of the profound difficulties experienced by the Restoration political system at the time. Much like the Italian dictator, Primo presented himself as a regenerationist and a necessary alternative, who would put an end to a corrupt system controlled by an oligarchy of liberal *caciques* (local bosses).¹³ Much like Mussolini, Primo was presented as a providential being, a messiah destined to save the nation from oblivion. This book endeavours to deconstruct this image of a ‘great saviour of the fatherland’, understanding that the ‘greatness’ of Primo de Rivera, as with all historical figures, is itself a political and cultural construction.¹⁴ To humanise Primo de Rivera, in the sense of demythologising him, is to present a complex portrait of the dictator, although the resulting picture is not always coherent or consistent. As with the life of any person, that of Primo was by no means free from contradictions, changes of course or ambiguities.¹⁵ The question of who Primo de Rivera was must be answered with reference to when Primo de Rivera was. In other words, he changed according to the moment and his personal and historical context.

Demythologising Primo de Rivera involves two key tasks in the present study. On the one hand, it is necessary to unpick the image of a providential dictator which was built up by regime propagandists, and later, under the Franco regime, by Primo’s apologists. On the other hand, we must also dismantle the caricature which some of Primo’s critics constructed during the dictatorship of a drunken, womanising and gambling general. This image of Primo – often presented as part of a portrayal of a good-natured and pleasure-seeking man – presents a version of the general that is too ‘humanised’, something akin to a rascal who could not resist earthly pleasures. It is a caricature which has treated Primo with a certain degree of condescension and mockery, but it has also prevented us from acknowledging more sinister and cruel aspects of his personality. *Inter alia*, it has concealed, for example, that Primo oversaw the extrajudicial murders of trades unionists in cold blood, that he directed the mass imprisonment of political opponents in subhuman conditions, or that, as the leader of Spain’s government, he ordered chemical weapons to be dropped on the civilian population of Morocco.¹⁶

To question the caricature of Primo as a scoundrel does not mean that the Marques de Estalla was a stranger to gambling or women, although his fondness for alcohol is less certain. In truth, as we will see, some of Primo’s behaviour when it came to gambling bordered on addictive, while the general’s promiscuous sex life has been noted by many of his biographers. The present work thus addresses Primo’s private life and daily habits when they are useful for understanding his personality.¹⁷ The dictator’s fondness for gambling large sums on card games, for example, helps us to understand the ease with which,

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on occasions, he was willing to take high-stakes political risks, which ostensibly appeared to be completely unnecessary. On other occasions, the private and the public sphere overlapped, such as the time Primo worked in the Philippines as an aide-de-camp to his uncle, General Fernando Primo de Rivera y Sobremonte, who had sought his help in fighting the Tagalog insurgents. Analysis of the dictator's private life is also necessary because Primo's enemies used it to attack the dictatorship, and as such his supporters found themselves obliged to create a counter-image of the general as a devoted family man, Catholic, austere and with an extraordinary work-ethic. In other words, the private life of the dictator became a public political battlefield.

It is precisely in this overlap between the private and the public that we find the key to some fundamental features of Primo de Rivera and his dictatorship, not least with regard to national and political identities.¹⁸ Primo was both a nationalist and a nationaliser. His life was marked by a Spanish nationalist political culture which was regenerationist, authoritarian, monarchist and Catholic. Well beyond the patriotic feelings that might be expected of an officer in the Spanish Army, Primo developed an identity that was bound to a regenerationist *españolismo* (Spanish nationalism) which prospered at the turn of the century and after Spain's military defeat at the hands of the United States in 1898. It was, moreover, an *españolismo* that became steadily more antiliberal and authoritarian after the First World War. Much like many other officers, Primo came to the conclusion in these years that the Army had a duty to defend the *patria* (fatherland) from its internal enemies, which might include a broad spectrum from trades unionists and anarchists to Catalan and Basque nationalists, or indeed even the political elites of the Restoration Monarchy, as well as republicans and democrats of various persuasions. This regenerationist military nationalism was used to provide ideological justification for the *coup d'état* in 1923 and the dictatorship thereafter. It was a nationalism, moreover, which brought with it a desire to 'educate' Spaniards in patriotic values. Primo's dictatorship embarked upon a programme of nationalising the masses that was unprecedented in the history of Spain. Military officers, teachers, all manner of civil servants, priests, journalists, alongside members of Primo's official state party, the *Unión Patriótica*, as well as the national militia, the *Somatén*, carried out an enormous programme of nationalist indoctrination in barracks, schools, public meetings, town halls, churches and popular festivals. Authoritarian nationalism and the nationalisation of the people thus became defining features of the Primo de Rivera dictatorship.

Much the same could be said of populism. Primo was the first Spanish political leader who systematically used populist discourse while in power. From the moment of the *Manifiesto al País y al Ejército* (Manifesto to the Country and the Army) on the morning of 13 September 1923, Primo made a virtue of his 'anti-politics', which not only rejected professional politicians of all stripes but set itself in opposition to traditional political doctrines which were seen as partisan, damaging for the nation and the result of social disorder. Throughout the dictatorship, the Marques de Estella continued to present politicians

as a corrupt elite who acted against the interests of a ‘healthy people’. By contrast, he would govern for ‘Spain and the Spanish’ with an ‘apolitical’ dictatorship which stood above party politics.¹⁹ The institutions of the dictatorship were also presented as if built with a ‘healthy people’ in mind. Thus, the single party, the *Unión Patriótica* (Patriotic Union) was an ‘anti-party’ or an ‘apolitical’ party, while the *Somatén Nacional* was described as a ‘league’ of citizens, a ‘movement’ which brought together ‘respectable Spaniards’.²⁰ As with all far-right populism, that of Primo de Rivera involved a large dose of nationalism.²¹ The salvation of the fatherland was bound together with the regeneration of the people. The enemies of one were the enemies of the other. Oligarchs and *caciques* were choking the nation and suffocating the health of the people. According to Primo’s supporters, only a charismatic leader could bring about the salvation of the fatherland and the liberation of the people. As with other right-wing dictatorships in interwar Europe, the nationalist-populist discourse of Primo sought to overthrow the political elites of the liberal monarchy in order to guarantee the socio-economic *status quo* by means of an authoritarian regime. To put it another way, Primo de Rivera’s regime was a form of revolutionary play-acting in which the liquidation of a political system would in fact guarantee the continuity of the underlying socio-economic system.

Primo de Rivera was a politician in uniform. As a politician, he had a complex relationship with the truth. During his rise to power, he was able to call upon a vast network of support from very different groups while he was still Captain-General of Catalonia. To this end, like any good politician, he promised each group what he thought they wanted to hear. For example, Primo gained the support of the conservative Catalan nationalists by promising to strengthen the development of a healthy regionalism while guaranteeing a firm hand against workers’ movements. Simultaneously, Primo assured the nationalistic Spanish officers in the Barcelona garrison that his first measures once in power would be to move towards snuffing out Catalan nationalists. After he became dictator, Primo had little compunction in lying systematically. He would invent stories in his speeches to followers, firmly deny in the press that he would ever do things that he had in fact done, and ask the propaganda machinery of the regime to use ‘the bottomless well of the imagination’ if they found themselves lacking ‘truthful’ material.²² More often than not, Primo’s lies were strategic, that is to say, they were offered to obtain political advantage. Nonetheless, as with Italian fascism, and in a clear example of fabricating one ‘truth’ to replace the empirical truth, the Marqués de Estella insisted that his dictatorship was the truest form of democracy.²³ The regime would ultimately propagate lies systematically in the press with the aim of creating official ‘truths’, or what we have recently begun to refer to as ‘alternative facts’ and ‘post-truths’.

Primo’s difficult relationship with the truth and his obsession with propaganda requires us in this biography to compare what our protagonist said and what he did. The study will also combine chronological with thematic analysis.

6 *The People's Dictator*

Chapter 1 covers the long period from Primo's birth in 1870 to his being named as Captain-General of Valencia in 1920. This includes Primo's childhood within the bosom of an aristocratic family from Jerez, his mediocre record at the *Academia General Militar* (General Military Academy) and his meteoric rise through the ranks of the Army through battlefield merit, as well as the help of his uncle, General Fernando Primo de Rivera y Sobremonte. As would later be the case with Francisco Franco, Primo de Rivera was a man forged in the colonial wars. Unlike Franco, however, Primo directly experienced and was part of the loss of what remained of the Spanish Empire in 1898, something which marked him fundamentally thereafter. Primo fought in Cuba, the Philippines and Africa at various points in his life. In these colonial campaigns he learned the brutality of war, the use of civilians as wartime targets, and, after a training visit to the Western Front in France during the First World War, the lethal potential of chemical weapons. This chapter will also address Primo's private life, his love of gambling, his marriage to Casilda Sainz de Heredia and his relationship with his six children. As we shall see, Primo was a man of his time, who left the care of his children to the women of his family and did not seem particularly close to them. Primo was certainly interested, however, in politics and in his own professional advancement. Always at the side of his uncle, and close to the Conservative Party, Primo was making a name for himself among the Restoration elites and learning the ins-and-outs of a system which increasingly appeared to be in crisis. After years of disobedience and tensions with civilian authorities in defence of his own interests and those of the military, by 1920 Primo had reached the conclusion that the Army needed to intervene directly in the political system of the Restoration Monarchy.

Chapter 2 addresses Primo's time as Captain-General of Valencia, Madrid and Catalonia (1920–1923). These years proved decisive in his transformation into a military conspirator. In Valencia, Primo learned that the absence of the Civil Governor left a power vacuum which he, as Captain-General, could easily fill. Meanwhile, Primo realised that he could use his post to organise the extrajudicial murder of trades unionists without any consequences. The general spent little time as Captain-General in Madrid thanks to certain ideas he had espoused as a Senator, in which he suggested that Spain might one-day exchange Gibraltar for its territories in North Africa, a *faux pas* which would cost him his post in December 1921. His appointment in March 1922 as Captain-General of Catalonia placed the Marqués de Estella in a key post, from where he could plan a *coup d'état*. In Barcelona, at a time of profound social tensions, Primo de Rivera resumed his policy of murdering trades unionists, unleashed the region's militia, the *Somatén*, onto the streets, and mobilised armed thugs in the pay of the bosses, the infamous *Sindicatos Libres*, to fight anarchist workers. It was in Barcelona, too, that Primo began to form an alliance with the 'good people of order' to bring down the constitutional government and install a dictatorship. The *pronunciamiento* on 13 September 1923 was somewhat improvised, quite sloppily executed, and certainly very risky.²⁴ Nonetheless, the balance was tipped in favour of Primo de Rivera thanks to the support of the King, Alfonso XIII.

Chapter 3 is dedicated to the Military Directory (1923–1925). Here we address the formation and political development of a military regime, which removed the Civil Governors and replaced them with high-ranking military men, while creating the post of *delegado gubernativo* (Government Delegate), Army officers assigned to each judicial district in Spain to assume control of municipal politics and destroy the power of the local *caciques*. Meanwhile, control of the Ministry of the Interior was handed to General Severiano Martínez Anido, a close friend of Primo and a key figure in the brutal policies formulated to combat anarchism in Barcelona in the preceding years. A state of martial law remained in constant effect, as did blanket censorship, while the judiciary was decisively subordinated to the will of the Executive, not least in the case in which Primo de Rivera ordered the release of ‘La Caoba’, a well-known ‘madame’ and friend of the dictator, who had been arrested for drug dealing. This chapter explores how censorship and propaganda were used to silence opponents, while fomenting a nationalist, populist and regenerationist discourse from above, which was broadly embraced among large swathes of Spanish society. All of this took place within a deeply repressive system instituted by the dictator, which led to thousands being imprisoned, thousands more exiled, and many executed; a system without precedent in Spain up to that point. The chapter also addresses one of Primo’s major preoccupations in the first years of the regime, namely, the war in the Spanish Protectorate in Morocco. The initial retreat of Spanish troops to the so-called ‘Primo de Rivera Line’, the bombing of Riffian civilians with mustard gas and incendiaries and the ultimate success of the landing at Alhucemas with the support of France in September 1925 reveal an erratic and cruel, but ultimately successful, handling of the conflict by Primo de Rivera.

It was precisely this victory at Alhucemas which allowed Primo to create the Civil Directory in December 1925. Chapter 4 analyses the second phase of the dictatorship, a time in which Primo aimed to create a new, modern and authoritarian Spain, which would play a leading role in the counter-revolutionary struggle engulfing Europe after the First World War. This second period saw the continuation of censorship and repression of critics of the regime, as well as a ‘plebiscite’ on Primo’s rule, which in truth amounted to a gathering of signatures. This period also saw the creation of the ‘National Assembly’ in Spain, the first corporative chamber in twentieth-century Europe, as well as the implementation of a corporative model for the solution of labour disputes, influenced by Fascist Italy. Meanwhile, a new constitution was drafted, which strengthened executive power. Taken collectively, the measures amounted to a dictator who was forging a new and anti-liberal state. The construction of this new regime also involved an unprecedented investment in public works, the formation of state monopolies – largely in the hands of huge private companies – for telecommunications, tobacco and transport, as well as the amassing of huge public debt. The expansion of the state, the greed of regime officials, lack of oversight and Primo’s own despotic exercise of power all contributed to what was a profoundly corrupt regime. As with so many far-right,

self-proclaimed saviours of the fatherland who arrived promising to cleanse the stain of corruption from the nation, the Marqués de Estella presided over a regime that was awash with illegality, perpetrated not only by the dictator himself, but also ministers, civil servants from top to bottom, state intermediaries, members of the *Somatén* and the *Unión Patriótica*, and not least of all, military officers who had been appointed as Civil Governors and *delegados gubernativos*.

Chapter 5 details the propaganda campaign to create an image of the dictator as a charismatic figure. In so doing, this chapter offers a clear sense of the discrepancies between what Primo de Rivera said and what he did. As was the case with Miklós von Horthy in Hungary, Benito Mussolini in Italy and Józef Pilsudski in Poland during the 1920s, Primo de Rivera required a charismatic aura to justify his rule and to present himself as a *Caudillo* who would lead a process of national regeneration.²⁵ Chapter 5 explores the various propaganda devices used to construct this charismatic persona for the dictator, including the *Gabinete de Información y Censura de Prensa* (Press and Censorship Office), *La Nación* (the official newspaper of the regime), the *Junta de Propaganda Patriótica y Ciudadana* (Council for Patriotic and Civic Propaganda), the *Plus Ultra* agency (responsible for regime propaganda abroad), as well as dozens of local newspapers bought by the regime to serve as its mouthpiece in the provinces. Equally important, Primo's dictatorship engaged the most modern means of communication for propaganda, including radio and cinema. These new media rapidly became essential 'methods of charismaticization' throughout Europe, and Spain led the way in their deployment for this end. Inseparable from the construction of a charismatic national *caudillo*, the chapter also deals with the question of masculinities. Throughout the dictatorship, the official portrait of Primo as a providential leader often came to be associated with the image of a virile soldier, a good Catholic, and an excellent father and head of household. Primo thus became a role model for a 'national masculinity' that sought to restore social and sexual norms which were considered to be under severe threat during the 1920s. Nonetheless, the regime's acolytes faced difficulties in trying to sell this image of the dictator to the people, not least, as we have already noted, because Primo was notorious for his womanising and gambling.

Repression could do a great deal, but 'education' would prove even more important. Chapter 6 addresses the enormous endeavours of the regime to 'nationalise' the masses. From the First World War onwards, Primo was obsessed with the idea of nationalist indoctrination for the people. This was when he first proposed spreading nationalistic principles in barracks, schools and working-class neighbourhoods as a means of counteracting the processes of political and social change. Once in power, Primo mobilised military officers, teachers, civil servants, journalists, *upetistas* (members of the *Unión Patriótica*) and *somatenistas* (members of the *Somatén*), as well as priests, to disseminate patriotic, populist and authoritarian narratives throughout Spain. This process of nationalisation of the masses was accompanied by a fierce

repression of those considered to be ‘enemies’ of Spain, in particular Catalan nationalists and anarchists, but also including Basque nationalists, republicans, communists, and occasionally liberals, conservatives and socialists. Even so, and despite the enormous deployment of human and material resources to these ends, the results of these attempts to indoctrinate Spaniards to support an authoritarian, Catholic and monarchist form of *españolismo* proved disappointing. In truth, the regime’s indoctrination ‘from above’ instead bequeathed a ‘negative nationalisation’, which in fact strengthened popular support for Catalan and Basque nationalism, and, above all, for a form of Spanish nationalism which was democratic, laic and republican.

The dictatorship’s loss of social support is crucial to understanding the fall of Primo de Rivera in 1930. Chapter 7 thus examines the factors which brought about his downfall on 28 January 1930. Among the more significant explanations are tensions between the dictator and the King, Alfonso XIII, the gradual loss of confidence in Primo among sections of the Army, and the open opposition of other sectors of the military, not least the artillery corps. This chapter shows how Primo strained every sinew to cling to power, hoping to gather the support of the Captains-General against the King, and only eventually persuaded to leave power when his friend General Martínez Anido convinced him that there was no alternative. Even at this point, Primo planned to return to power quickly and began to make plans for another coup, this time with an avowedly republican bent, but his hopes of returning were immediately rebuffed by his former collaborators. In early February 1930, suffering from diabetes and distraught at what he saw as the betrayal of his comrades-in-arms, Primo de Rivera relocated to Paris, where he would die of an embolism on 16 March 1930. Despite the swift dismantling of the dictatorship by the government of Dámaso Berenguer, Primo’s ideological legacy and the continued influence of the regime’s political personnel could be seen across the spectrum of Spanish far-right groups during the Second Republic, the civil war and the subsequent Franco dictatorship.

Chapter 8 addresses the historiography and memory of Primo de Rivera, showing the different images of the dictator and his regime that have been constructed from his fall in January 1930 until the present day. Battles over the memory of the dictatorship began within days of the Primo’s death, when both critics and supporters of the Marqués de Estella published the first interpretations of the regime so as to argue the case for a political future that was either monarchist or republican. After the arrival of the Second Republic in April 1931, this struggle continued between liberals – who saw Primo as a repressive, arbitrary and despotic ruler – and the dictator’s former collaborators, who kept alive the far-right interpretation of a saviour of the nation, who had freed Spain from anarchism, the war in Morocco and economic chaos. Under the Franco regime, memories and interpretations of the Primo dictatorship progressed through different phases. During the Spanish Civil War and early years of Franco’s dictatorship, Primo was presented as a direct precursor to the regimes of Mussolini, Hitler and Franco. Later, in an attempt to

'defascistize' the Marqués de Estella, the Franco regime emphasised Primo's military and Catholic features. In the last years of the Franco regime, historians produced what they claimed to be 'scientific' studies of Primo. They were nonetheless largely dedicated to reproducing an image of Primo as a man of action, good-natured, friendly and paternalist, as well as loved by the people. It was, in other words, an interpretation not far removed from the hagiographies of the 1920s.

The final part of Chapter 8 looks at the political uses of the historiography on Primo and his representation in the press and on television in recent years. As we shall see, for the conservative press in Spain, the figure of Primo de Rivera has been used to defend the record of Juan Carlos I, who, unlike his grandfather in 1923, did not support the attempted military coup in 1981. These outlets have also attacked the Law of Historical Memory of the government of José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, presenting Primo instead as a benevolent (and practically liberal) dictator who did not shed blood. Meanwhile, television series such as *La Señora*, *El secreto de Puente Viejo* and *Las chicas del cable* have presented the 1920s as a time of fierce social conflicts and widespread corruption. Nor have these televisual representations of the period tried to idealise Primo de Rivera or his collaborators when they have been shown on screen. Finally, the chapter analyses the debate surrounding the statue to Miguel Primo de Rivera in Jerez de la Frontera, a monument which the associations for the recovery of historical memory have sought to have removed, something which the local town council has opposed.

As with any other historical figure, a study of Primo de Rivera obliges us to place his life into historical context and to engage in a dialogue between the individual and the present from which we are studying them. The book adopts a multifaceted perspective encompassing the life of the general, his dictatorship, his populist discourse and his nationalist policies. In contrast to certain traditional interpretations of Primo as a naïve man, lacking a clear ideology, and founder of a paternalist dictatorship far removed from Italian fascism, the present work shows Primo to be an astute, intelligent, ambitious and unscrupulous politician, who founded an authoritarian and nationalistic regime in Spain, which was profoundly repressive and enormously corrupt. In other words, it was much like other European dictatorships of the 1920s. Moreover, the book demonstrates how Primo was the pioneer of right-wing populism in Spain. The Marqués de Estella was the first leader to present himself as a messianic figure who would realise the will of the people, expose the professional politicians as corrupt elites who were parasites on the body of the nation, and use what we would perhaps refer to today as 'fake news' in his propaganda. In short, this book is a study of a man, a time and a place which were contradictory, convulsive and complex. But in looking at Spain as it was a 100 years ago, the book is also a study in the historical development of many aspects that are decisive in our own contemporary politics, not least of all populism, nationalism and corruption.

Notes

- 1 *La Vanguardia*, 29 January 1930.
- 2 *La Vanguardia*, 29 January 1930.
- 3 The Puerta del Sol marks the historic geographical centre of Madrid and a traditional gathering point for demonstrations and celebrations. The Plaza de Oriente stands in front of the Royal Palace.
- 4 Francisco Villanueva, *¿Qué ha pasado aquí?* (Madrid: Javier Morata, 1930), p. 185.
- 5 Francisco Villanueva, *¿Qué ha pasado aquí?* (Madrid: Javier Morata, 1930), p. 186.
- 6 Primo made this sentiment quite clear in his press declarations in the days after his resignation. See, for example, *La Nación*, 30 January 1930.
- 7 Following a period of political convulsion and the brief-lived Spanish First Republic (February 1873–December 1874), the Bourbon monarchy was restored in the person of Alfonso XII. The constitutional template was largely owed to the Conservative politician Antonio Cánovas and would provide a period of political continuity (if not necessarily social peace) in Spain for almost five decades. While ostensibly ‘democratic’ and involving elections, in truth the system rested upon tacit agreement between two parties, Liberal and Conservative, to ensure a peaceful and regular transition of power, the so-called ‘turno pacífico’.
- 8 Without doubt the best biography to-date is that of Xavier Casals, *Miguel Primo de Rivera y Orbaneja* (Barcelona: Ediciones B, 2004). The book is part of the *Cara y Cruz* collection, in which authors tackle a historical subject from opposing perspectives within the same volume. Thus, alongside Casals, the book also includes a study by Ramón Tamames which addresses the positive face of the Primo dictatorship from a fundamentally economic and social perspective.
- 9 *La Nación*, 29 December 1929.
- 10 On the ‘biographical turn’ see Barbara Caine, *Biography and History* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2018), pp. 1–2. On the analytical potential of contemporary biography see Colin J. Davis & Isabel Burdiel, ‘Introducción’, in Colin J. Davis (ed.), *El otro, el mismo. Biografía y autobiografía en Europa, siglos XVII-XX* (Valencia: Universitat de València, 2005), p. 25. On the ‘normalisation’ of biography in recent historiography, see Rafael Serrano García, ‘Biografías recientes para el siglo XIX español’, *Ayer*, 3 (2020), pp. 319–332.
- 11 Paul Preston, *Franco: A Biography* (London: Fontana, 1993); Ian Kershaw, *Hitler, 1889–1936: Hubris* (London: Penguin, 1998); Ian Kershaw, *Hitler, 1936–1945: Nemesis* (London: Penguin, 2000).
- 12 Ian Kershaw, *Personality and Power: Builders and Destroyers of Modern Europe* (London: Allen Lane, 2022), p. 58.
- 13 Denis Mack Smith, *Mussolini* (Madrid: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1989), pp. 81–103.
- 14 Lucy Riall, ‘The Shallow End of History? The Substance and Future of Political Biography’, *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 40:3 (2010), pp. 375–397; Paul Corner, *Mussolini in Myth and Memory. The First Totalitarian Dictator* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), pp. 23–26.
- 15 Manuel Pérez Ledesma & Isabel Burdiel, ‘Presentación’, in Manuel Pérez Ledesma & Isabel Burdiel (eds.), *Liberales, agitadores y conspiradores. Biografías heterodoxas del siglo XIX* (Madrid: Espasa Calpe, 2000), p. 14.
- 16 Francisco Romero Salvadó, *The Foundations of Civil War: Revolution, Social Conflict and Reaction in Liberal Spain, 1916–1923* (London: Routledge, 2008), p. 231; Sebastian Balfour, *Abrazo mortal. De la Guerra colonial a la Guerra Civil en España y Marruecos, 1909–1939* (Barcelona: Península, 2002), pp. 268–278.
- 17 Isabel Burdiel, ‘Historia política y biografía: más allá de las fronteras’, *Ayer*, 93:1 (2014), p. 71.

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- 18 Xosé Manoel Núñez Seixas & Fernando Molina (eds.), *Los heterodoxos de la patria. Biografías de nacionalistas atípicos en la España del siglo XX* (Granada: Comares, 2011); Fernando Molina, 'La nación desde abajo. Nacionalización, individuo e identidad nacional', *Ayer*, 90 (2013), pp. 39–63; Fernando Molina, *Mario Onaindía (1948–2003). Biografía patria* (Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 2012).
- 19 Miguel Primo de Rivera, *Del general Primo de Rivera: documentos originales y artículos inspirados por él* (Madrid: Junta de Propaganda Patriótica y Ciudadana, 1928), p. 7.
- 20 Eduardo González Calleja & Fernando del Rey Reguillo, *La defensa armada contra la revolución* (Madrid: CSIC, 1995), p. 181.
- 21 Rogers Brubaker, 'Populism and Nationalism', *Nations and Nationalism*, 26:1 (2020), pp. 50, 61.
- 22 María Rosa Cal Martínez, 'La Agencia Plus Ultra: un instrumento de propaganda de Primo de Rivera', *Melanges de la Casa de Velázquez*, 31:3 (1995), p. 184.
- 23 Federico Finchelstein, *A Brief History of Fascist Lies* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2020), pp. 75–84.
- 24 Literally 'pronouncement', the term denotes a military *coup d'état*. It derives from the succession of military uprisings in Iberia and Latin America in the nineteenth century, in which rebel officers would publicly 'pronounce' their opposition to an existing political order and a determination to replace it.
- 25 Vivian Ibrahim & Margit Wunsch (eds.), *Political Leadership, Nations and Charisma* (London: Routledge, 2012).

1 Rebel Without a Cause (1870–1920)

On the morning of 29 September 1929, Miguel Primo de Rivera was exultant. The dictator was in Jerez de la Frontera, the town of his birth, where he was going to take part in the inauguration of a statue in his honour. To receive its favourite son, the balconies of the city had been decorated with Manila shawls.¹ In the streets, a party atmosphere could be felt. At 12:30 precisely, a bugler's call announced the arrival of the dictator at the Plaza de Alfonso XII, where an equestrian statue of the Marqués de Estella – the work of Mariano Benlliure – stood covered by a gigantic Spanish flag. Gathered in the square were the civil and military authorities of the province, members of the town council, numerous government ministers; dignitaries from the *Unión Patriótica*, such as José María Pemán and José Pemartín; the King's son and Captain-General of Andalucía, Carlos de Borbón y Borbón; members of the local aristocracy, such as the Marqués de Salobral and Marqués de Domecq; members of Primo's family, like his sister María Jesús and his children, Carmen, Pilar and Miguel; as well as thousands of residents on foot. There followed a series of speeches from the Conde de Villamiranda (secretary of the organising committee for the event), the Marqués de Villamarta, Señor Rivero (the Mayor of Jerez) and finally, on behalf of 'all Spanish women', Doña María de la Calle. Primo took to the microphone to give thanks for this event held in his honour.² The dictator spoke of his bond with the city of his birth, saying that he had appealed to the Virgin of Mercy, the patron saint of the city, on the day of the military landings at Alhucemas in September 1925, and recalled his 'childhood steps' through the square, which had brought him into contact with 'all the most prestigious people', many of whom were now 'present at this event, a generation later, or perhaps two, men such as myself, strong and tough enough to serve their fatherland'.³ In the same vein, the Marqués de Estella declared with emotion that he had seen that very day, in the Plaza de Abastos, a group of 'modest women' who had 'served in his home, or to put it another way, lived happily together with [the Primo de Rivera] family'.⁴ The dictator was particularly emotional because, among these servants who had lived 'happily together' with his family, he had seen his nanny.

As on so many occasions throughout his life, Primo's words were intended to reinforce his image as a military hero who, despite coming from a well-to-do family, associated with the lower orders, with whom he had 'lived happily' since his childhood. As on so many other occasions, however, this image of a man of the people, both affable and generous, was nothing more than a propaganda construction with little basis in truth. Miguel María Luciano Francisco de Paula Ramón María del Rosario del Santísimo Sacramento Primo de Rivera y Orbaneja was born on 8 January 1870, into a family of the highest standing in the city of Jerez. His mother, Inés de Orbaneja y Pérez de Grandallana – born in Jerez in 1839 – came from a family of local landowners who were also large-scale property holders in Seville.⁵ His father, Miguel Primo de Rivera y Sobremonte – born in Seville in 1827 – came from a family of military officers and rose to the rank of Colonel in the General Staff after his service in the African war in 1859. For this officer from Seville, marriage to Inés de Orbaneja was a clear step upwards on the social ladder and placed him within the very selective elite of Jerez society. It was within this privileged social atmosphere that young Miguel, the future dictator of Spain, grew up. Miguel was the sixth child of 11, but from a very young age became his mother's favourite. 'Miguelito' (little Miguel), as he was known in the house, attended primary school at the Colegio San Luis Gonzaga and then the Instituto de Jerez de la Frontera, where he shared class with boys from the great wine-growing houses of the region, such as the Domecq, Permartín and Byass families.⁶ Miguel's childhood was spent among the family's 14 servants, at various country houses, and involved horse riding, as well as 'time for siesta, debating politics (*tertulia*) with friends, and wanting to stay up all night'.⁷

Nonetheless, the family's economic fortunes declined drastically at the start of the 1880s. Miguel's father, who had left the Army to take charge of the family's estates, did not handle the properties particularly well and invested in a series of ruinous business dealings. Given the refusal of Inés to sell any of the family land, they were instead forced to sell-off personal belongings, reduce the number of servants and move to a smaller house. The future dictator was pained by the social descent of his family which had prompted so many tears in his beloved mother and worries for his father.⁸ It is likely that the relative loss of status of the family contributed to the poor regard that Miguel would come to hold for his father, above all because he held him responsible for the family's poor turn in fortunes.

In a bid to alleviate the economic worries of the family, Miguel's parents decided to send him and his brother Pepe to stay with their uncle José, commander of the Invalids Corps, in Madrid. The two brothers arrived in the capital in April 1882 and took up schooling at the Instituto Cardenal Cisneros. After only two months, however, having observed the parades in honour of the Portuguese monarchs on the streets of Madrid, young Miguel decided to leave school and declared his intention to become an officer. The decision met with the fierce disapproval of his father, who wanted his son to become an engineer, but the future dictator, who was strongly influenced by the military family

atmosphere in which he had lived, stood up to his dad. His brother Pepe, two years older, decided to follow in the steps of Miguel, and both sat the exams for entry into the *Academia Militar de Infantería* in Toledo.⁹ Miguel's ambition to become an officer would doubtless have been strengthened when his uncle, Fernando Primo de Rivera y Sobremonte, returned to Madrid after serving three years as Captain-General of the Philippines. Indeed, from that point onwards, Fernando, the first Marqués de Estella, would become a key figure in the life of Miguel. The future dictator worshipped his uncle for the rest of his life. In the figure of his uncle, Miguel saw all the virtues of military and social achievement that he did not see in his own father. Young Miguel decided from the outset that his uncle was a man of action and political significance whom he should emulate, and he consciously sought to cultivate his uncle's affection. In short, as a young man Miguel regarded Fernando Primo de Rivera as a 'substitute father'. Moreover, this good relationship was reciprocal. Young Miguel became a 'substitute son' for the Marqués de Estella, who had the misfortune to have lost his only son when he was very young.¹⁰ The veteran officer acted as a protector for his nephew until his death in 1921. The career of Miguel cannot be understood without acknowledging the support and tutelage that his uncle offered him.

In the summer of 1884, Miguel passed the entrance exams ranked 70 out of the 191 who were admitted to the Military Academy in Toledo. His brother Pepe failed to pass. In a move that was illustrative of Miguel's personality, he asked his uncle to use his influence within the Army to ensure that Pepe could enter the Academy as well – something that it appears Fernando refused to do.¹¹ Although still a teenager, Miguel understood already that the rules did not apply equally to everyone. At the end of August 1884, Miguel Primo de Rivera entered the *Academia Militar de Infantería* in Toledo. He was 14 years old and proved a mediocre student. To judge by the family's own recollections, he was an impulsive child who was most definitely friendly, but prone to mischief, and someone who 'studied little'.¹² Indeed, the young cadet had to repeat the first year at the academy.¹³ In the next three years, Miguelito shone at horse riding but had serious difficulty passing his courses in mathematics and technical drawing. Struggling with his studies, Miguel decided to pay some of the other cadets to do his work for him. Emilio Barrera Luyando was one of these cadets who received money from Primo to complete some difficult technical drawings.¹⁴ This exchange of money for intellectual favours fostered a friendship that would last for many decades. Barrera became one of Primo's key men in Catalonia during the dictatorship. José Sanjurjo and José Cavalcanti, both part of the military coup in 1923, as well as Armando Montilla de los Ríos, were also classmates of Primo, and later involved in his dictatorship.

Clearly, paying others to solve academic shortcomings is the behaviour of someone accustomed to privilege and cheating, but Miguel's poor educational performance has further significance. Just as with Hitler and Franco – fellow dictators with mediocre or poor school records – Primo developed a marked

distaste for those who stood out in academia, and in particular for intellectuals.¹⁵ Ultimately, according to his friend and the future *Unión Patriótica* ideologue, José María Pemán, Primo's life was 'characterised by a frenzy of patriotism and a lack of books'.¹⁶ Miguel's distaste for intellectuals – with an inferiority complex which occasionally mutated into fear – was the root of many disputes throughout his life with people such as Miguel de Unamuno, Vicente Blasco Ibáñez and Francesc Cambó. Like many other politicians on the far-right, Primo was uncomfortable around intellectuals and technical experts. As a result, and throughout his life, he cultivated a public persona that was steeped in false modesty, which claimed he was not very intelligent and was willing to learn from more illustrious minds.¹⁷ In truth, Primo detested the solutions that intellectuals and experts offered to complex issues, which clashed with his rash and simplistic views on how to solve various problems. As Salvador de Madariaga later said, Primo had the mind of a 'café politician', steeped in anti-intellectualism and a large dose of demagoguery.¹⁸

Young Miguel left the *Academia Militar de Infantería* as a second-lieutenant in March 1889.¹⁹ In keeping with his record of academic mediocrity, he was 78th place in his cohort.²⁰ From that point on, however, and always helped by his uncle Fernando, who could assign him posts at will, Primo rose rapidly in the Infantry Corps. His first posting was the Extremadura Battalion, conveniently situated in his birthplace of Jerez de la Frontera. In 1891, he was promoted to first-lieutenant through seniority, and the following year was made *aide-de-camp* to the Captain-General of Madrid, Arsenio Martínez Campos. Two years later he was sent to Africa where he was awarded the Cruz de la Orden de San Fernando (first-class) for heroism. In 1895, he was promoted to Major and returned to work for Martínez Campos, who by now was the general in charge of the Spanish forces in Cuba. In 1897, with the colonial campaign in Cuba still ongoing, Primo moved to the Philippines with his uncle Fernando, who was head of the Spanish Army in the Pacific. There, he rose to the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel, again in recognition of his military record rather than seniority. In 1898, Miguel returned to Spain, where he occupied various posts in Seville, Barcelona, Madrid and Cádiz. In 1908, he was promoted to full Colonel through seniority. In the years to come, Primo alternated between posts in the Peninsula and Africa, where he would fight against Rif insurgents on numerous occasions. His time in Morocco would also prove fruitful for his career. In 1912, Primo was promoted to Brigadier-General, and in 1914 to Major-General. The following year he was named as Military Governor of Cádiz, and in 1919 he was promoted to Lieutenant-General. In 1920, Primo de Rivera was named Captain-General of the III Military Region (Valencia).²¹

As noted, after leaving the military academy in 1889, Primo returned home with the Extremadura Battalion. In Jerez, the city of his birth, he passed a couple of relatively quiet years, taking part in social events at the Casino de Jerez and mixing within local aristocratic social circles. Meanwhile, in the regiment, Primo taught the recruits how to read and spent hours playing cards with his

comrades in the barracks. Above all, Primo liked to gamble on ‘three-card monte’.²² This is most likely the period when Primo developed the gambling habit that would stay with him for the rest of his life. Jerez soon felt very small to the young lieutenant, who came to see it as a city ‘where nothing ever happens’.²³ In July 1891, he returned to Madrid, this time as part of the Puerto Rican Light Infantry (*cazadores*) Battalion.²⁴ In the capital, Primo enjoyed life to the full in the cafés, dance halls and theatres. Thanks to his uncle Fernando, he was embedded in the social circuits of Madrid high-society.²⁵ It was in the Spanish capital, also, that Primo discovered his love of women. As Primo himself would later confess, when he had been at the military academy in Toledo he had been more interested in the city’s famous marzipan than in its women, but once he arrived in Madrid ‘my eyes were opened’ and ‘I made up for lost time’ courting women.²⁶ As one of his hagiographers would later put it during the dictatorship, ‘it is said that he has been a great womaniser, that he has loved a lot, but [...] it is also said that he has preferred fluttering to perseverance’.²⁷

At the urging of his mother, Primo returned to Jerez and joined again the *Regimiento de Infantería de Extremadura* on 1 February 1893. There he returned to card games, social occasions at the Casino and the social circuit of the local elites. But the quiet life of the young lieutenant was cut short in October 1893 when his regiment was mobilised to reinforce Spanish positions in Africa. In the summer, serious tensions had been bubbling in the area around Melilla after the Spanish had constructed a fort at Sidi Guariach, a sacred place for local Muslims. Despite the pleas of the Sultan and other Moroccan representatives, the Spanish government refused to move the site of the new fort and hostilities soon broke out. Primo arrived in Melilla with his regime on 16 October 1893. On 27 October, he saw combat for the first time while garrisoning the fort at Cabrerizas Altas. The defence was led by General Juan García Margallo, the Military Governor of Melilla. The general ordered two of the fort’s cannons to be taken outside the garrison to bombard enemy positions. On 28 October, García Margallo was killed by the rebels outside the fortress and Spanish soldiers retreated inside, with the artillery pieces falling into the hands of the enemy. Lieutenants Miguel Primo de Rivera and Eloy Caracuel volunteered to venture out and recover the cannons. Primo himself recalled the incident in the following way in 1930:

Lieutenant Primo de Rivera, supported by his comrades Caracuel and González Pascual, ensures that the troops respond and, defying death and leading eight soldiers, goes out from the esplanade. The Moors flee and the cannons are recovered. The bullets are amazed at such audacity and spare the lives of the brave men. The Press reports the heroic deed in striking terms and it produces quite the shock in Spain.²⁸

Not exactly lacking in modesty, Primo’s words of praise for his own exploits in the third person nonetheless had a point. The episode of the recovery of

the cannons was reported in fulsome terms, for example, in the magazine *La Ilustración Española y Americana*. As well as including a picture of the young Lieutenant Primo de Rivera, it described him as 'almost a child, he only graduated from the *Academia General Militar* in 1889'.²⁹ The piece went on:

His life-story begins now. The first chapter is over and in truth it could not be more splendid. The number of congratulations he has received from everywhere is enormous, doubtless the most flattering of which was sent to him on the 30th of October by his old instructors at the Military Academy. His name is popular in Spain and spoken everywhere with respect and excitement.³⁰

On 14 November, the Extremadura Battalion returned to Jerez. Primo's compatriots organised a huge reception to mark his return. He was welcomed at the station by the town band, the Soria Regimental Band playing the '*Marcha de Cádiz*' and dozens of onlookers who acclaimed the hero of Cabrerizas Altas. The local newspaper *El Guadalete* put out a special edition reporting the deeds of the young lieutenant and an open-air serenade was held in the city in honour of the Primo de Rivera family. For their own part, the family held a party in their house to celebrate the return of Miguel.³¹

Alongside fame, Primo's wartime feat in recovering the cannons brought with it a promotion and military decoration. On 11 January 1894, he was promoted to Captain by merit and awarded the 'Cross (first-class) of the Order of San Fernando, backdated to 28 October, in recognition of his heroic performance in the engagement against the Moors on 27 and 28 of said month'.³² The young *Jerezano* was delighted with the promotion, the medal, and his new-found fame, and saw them as just recognition of his bravery. Others, however, did not see things this way and explained the promotion and decoration as stemming from his family connections rather than his bravery. A few months after the events at Cabrerizas Altas, a story began to circulate in which Primo had killed García Margallo, in an act of justice upon learning that the general had been selling Spanish arms to the Riffians.³³ In truth, the rumour was nothing more than a hoax and was created to damage Primo's reputation, but it nonetheless gives us some idea how widespread the perception was by this point that corruption was rife among the Spanish Army in Africa.³⁴ Either way, when Primo recalled the death of García Margallo many years later, he placed the death of the general on 29 October instead of the date reported at the time, namely, 28 October. It is unlikely that Primo would have forgotten such a basic detail and it is possible that he deliberately placed the death of the general together with the recovery of the cannons, so as to emphasise his own heroism at volunteering for the mission while the commanding officer was yet alive.³⁵ What is certain is that García Margallo fell to Riffian bullets on 28 October 1893.

On 27 November, Fernando Primo de Rivera, the Marqués de Estella, was named Commander-in-Chief of the First Operations Corps in Africa.

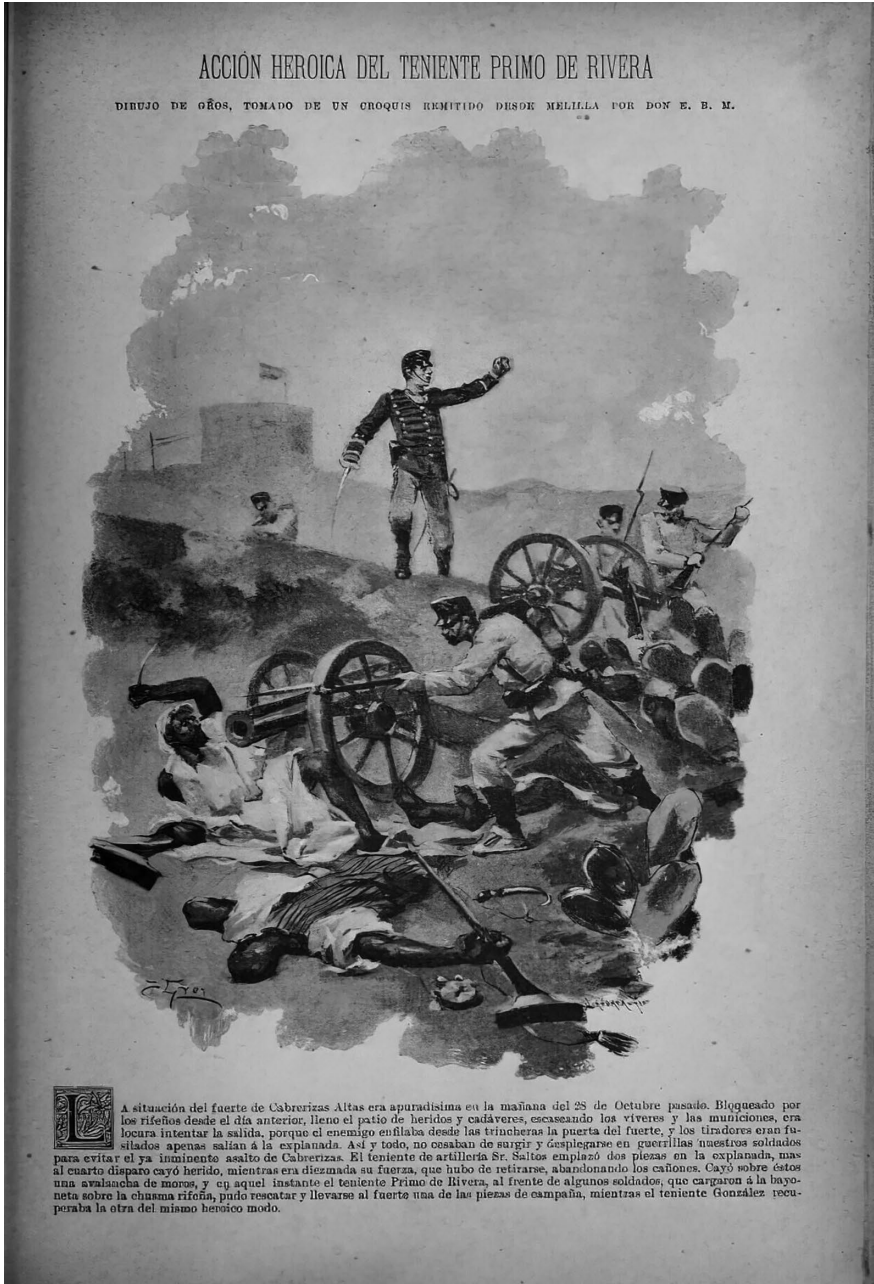


Figure 1.1 The young hero. Print of Lieutenant Miguel Primo de Rivera defending the Cabrerizas Altas Fortress in Spanish Morocco. Published in *La Ilustración Española y Americana*, 15 November 1893. Credit: Album.

The General called his nephew to serve as his *aide-de-camp*, and three days later Miguel arrived in Melilla. Primo remained in Africa until January 1894, when he returned to Madrid to join the Ciudad Rodrigo Light Infantry Battalion as a captain. A few weeks after Miguel's arrival in the capital, the wife of his uncle Fernando died. According to the recollections of family members, she was a woman who 'had not had a very happy married life given her husband's innumerable infidelities'.³⁶ Having become a widower, Fernando told his nephew that he was going to live with him. The bonds between the two men grew even stronger. In the months that followed, the young captain continued his 'political education' in Madrid. From his uncle Fernando and his good friend Arsenio Martínez Campos, Primo learned how the 'political generals' – that is to say, those officers who had influence with ministers, in parliament and in the Senate – exercised power. At the side of these two key figures in Restoration politics, Primo met leading politicians, both inside and outside of uniform, as well as the workings of the networks of the clientelist system and the ins and outs of the Royal Court.³⁷

It was in this environment of high-society salons and parties where Primo further developed his fondness for gambling. One of Primo's biographers recounts the story of a young Miguel winning 3000 pesetas playing cards on one occasion during this period. Upon returning home that evening, Primo came across a beggar, and after asking him about his life – to determine if the man were living on the street through necessity rather than as a result of vice – decided to give him a thousand pesetas.³⁸ Most likely the story was invented to create an image of a man with a big heart and worried about the poor from his earliest years, an image consciously fostered by regime propagandists during the Primo de Rivera dictatorship. Even so, the anecdote is interesting because it reveals a young captain who, aged just 24, was willing to stake several months' salary at the card table. Moreover, if the story of the beggar were indeed true, it is not without irony that Primo would question the morality of the poorest, while he himself was clearly very fond of gambling.

Within this framework of professional and social privilege, Miguel Primo de Rivera demonstrated certain rebellious tendencies towards the established order. In 1895, for example, aged just 25, he was one of the leaders of the so-called '*Tenientada*' (Lieutenants' attack). The *Tenientada* began on 13 March 1895, when a group of captains and lieutenants across the armed forces attacked the editorial office of *El Resumen*, a newspaper that had criticised officers who did not volunteer to fight in Cuba. The following day, 400 officers assaulted the offices of *El Resumen* (for a second time) and *El Globo*, which had criticised the violent action of the officers on the previous day and defended the right to free expression.³⁹ At *El Resumen*, the officers 'got into the stairway of the said offices, breaking the glass in the gate, shouting Long Live the Army!', before proceeding to the printing presses of the newspaper and breaking 'designs, samples and other tools, causing damage worth up to 8000 pesetas'.⁴⁰ At the offices of *El Globo*, the soldiers completely destroyed 'by hand all the windows, clocks, stamps, papers and various other objects that

they found as they went through' and injured the editor and various workers with sabre wounds to the arms, hands and head.⁴¹ The Spanish press was indignant at such vandalism and demanded that those responsible be punished by the military leadership. In a more moderate tone, the newspaper *El Día* wrote:

The aforementioned events merit a protest as energetic as their seriousness implies, and we believe that the Army is more interested than anybody in determining those responsible. And since we assume that the respectable military authorities do not need any exhortation to fulfil their duty, we limit ourselves to expecting from their rectitude an exemplary punishment for an incident belonging only in those countries who are not yet civilised.⁴²

The *Tenientada* was a crucial milestone in tensions between civil and military power in Spain during the Restoration, which would only get worse with the passage of time. In the event, the assailants were not sanctioned and their violence went unpunished. Moreover, this military vandalism had important political repercussions. The Liberal Prime Minister, Práxedes Mateo Sagasta, championed the freedom of the press and resigned in protest on 22 March. Meanwhile, General Martínez Campos sought to modify the Military Code in favour of officers should attacks or insults against the Army appear in the press. Antonio Cánovas, the new Conservative Prime Minister following the resignation of Sagasta, refused to support the changes and the Supreme Court supported his decision. For Primo de Rivera, the *Tenientada* resulted in a huge professional boost. Martínez Campos very much approved of the violent actions of the young lieutenant and requested him as his permanent *aide-de-camp*.⁴³ Primo had learned something very quickly about the Restoration System, namely, that military insubordination would not be punished, and indeed, could be very good for one's military career.

At the start of April 1895, Primo arrived in Cuba as ADC to Martínez Campos. He once again made a quick name for himself during operations and was awarded the María Cristina Medal a few days after arriving on the island.⁴⁴ In the following months, Primo fought in the East of the island against the rebels led by Antonio Maceo, which earned the young *jerezano* several mentions in despatches for his performance.⁴⁵ It is impossible to judge the extent to which these mentions were the result of Primo being ADC to the overall commander of Spain's Army of Cuba – and as such, almost to be expected – or genuine recognition of his wartime exploits. Either way, Primo returned to Spain in January 1896 and was promoted to Major (by merit) two months later, in recognition of his distinguished service in the Caribbean in the previous year.⁴⁶ He did not remain long in Spain. In May 1896, Primo returned to Cuba once again as 'Field Adjutant' to his uncle Fernando, who was now 'General-in-Chief of the First Army Corps'.⁴⁷ In 1896 and at the start of 1897, the young Major took part in campaigns in the provinces of Havana, Pinar

del Río and Santa Clara. Primo must have understood the precarious military situation in which Spain now found itself in Cuba. Nonetheless, in March 1897 he left Cuba once again to return to Spain. Fernando Primo de Rivera y Sobremonte had been named Captain-General of the Philippines and had recalled his nephew to be his 'Field Adjutant'.⁴⁸

Miguel arrived in Manila on 30 May 1897. His uncle was delighted to see him, arranging for a room at the Malacañan Palace, an impressive building on the banks of the Pasig River. The capital of the Philippines was peaceful, and the young major had time to mix with the great and good of the colony. However, the sense of tranquillity in Manila was somewhat deceptive. Since the rebellion in Cavite in August 1896, independentist fighters controlled various parts of the archipelago. Moreover, the situation had worsened for the Spanish after General Polavieja had ordered the execution of the Tagalog leader José Rizal in December 1896.⁴⁹ As in Cuba, Miguel quickly distinguished himself in combat. Following his involvement in a series of skirmishes with the rebels, Primo was promoted to Lieutenant-Colonel in 1897 in 'recognition of his conduct in combat at Río Juray on 14 June'.⁵⁰ As in Cuba, the young officer gained first-hand experience of fighting against insurgents, as well as the brutality of war and the suffering of a Spanish Army decimated by tropical diseases.

Meanwhile, Primo also learned the art of negotiation during his participation in the colonial wars. Both Martínez Campos and his uncle Fernando sought to negotiate agreements with the Cuban and Philippine rebels respectively, and Miguel acted as their right-hand man in both instances. In December 1897, Fernando entrusted his nephew personally to carry out peace negotiations with the Philippine independentists. According to the 'Service Record of Miguel Primo de Rivera', on '19 December he left Manila for the rebel camp at Biaknabatto, where he arrived without escort or any support on 21st, seeking to expedite and sign the proposals to be presented to both sides'.⁵¹ After several days in the rebel camp, where Miguel claimed that he left shouting 'the cry Viva España!', Primo led Emilio Aguinaldo and 39 other independentist leaders to the port of Sual, from where they left for exile in Hong Kong.⁵² Aguinaldo and his men decided in Sual to bring Primo with them to Hong Kong as 'guarantee for their safety'.⁵³ It would appear that the Filipinos did not exactly trust the Spanish. Upon arriving in the British colony, Primo gave the rebels the first payment they had been promised to leave, some 400,000 pesos, or half of the total agreed sum, and delivered a letter to Aguinaldo which confirmed that he was banned from returning to the Philippines.⁵⁴

Primo returned to Manila on 11 January 1898. A few days later, he began a search of several rebel camps, where he confiscated 'more than a thousand bladed weapons and 230 firearms'.⁵⁵ The Pact of Biak-na-Bató confirmed the cession of hostilities, the rounding up of arms and the departure of leading rebels from the islands in exchange for money and a blanket pardon for those accused of rebellion. As Primo de Rivera would later recall, the success of the negotiations awakened him to his calling for politics.⁵⁶ Things may have been

different had the agreement of Biak-na-Bató been put into practice, but some of the Filipino leaders had already refused to sign it. In February of 1898, when the sinking of the United States naval vessel *Maine* rekindled the war in Cuba, many of the Filipino nationalist leaders who had signed the pact, including Aguinaldo, decided to use the money they had received from the Spanish to buy arms and to start a new rebellion. If Primo had learned the art of negotiation during his time in the islands, he would also learn the art of treachery.

In the short term, both Miguel and his uncle Fernando were delighted with the agreement they had signed with the insurgents. Fernando recommended his nephew for the award of the ‘Mobilised Volunteers Medal’ for his ‘dangerous, crucial and delicate work leading to the surrender of the enemy and the achievement of peace, which he carried out with singular success and skill’.⁵⁷ Primo received the medal. Meanwhile, on 24 March Primo’s uncle offered him a further decoration, this time for his conduct in the Luzón campaign. Miguel remained as ADC for the Marqués de Estella ‘until 12 April, when he embarked for the Peninsula on the steamer León XIII’ with his uncle, who had been replaced by Basilo Augustín Dávila as Governor and Captain-General of the Philippines.⁵⁸ During the voyage, the young Lieutenant-Colonel was awarded yet another medal. On 4 May 1898, he received the ‘María Cristina Medal (second-class), in recognition of the success with which he conducted the difficult and important task of bringing the Filipino insurrectionary leaders back to legality’.⁵⁹ By the time that Miguel and his uncle had arrived back in Barcelona on 10 May, the Tagalog insurrection had spread throughout the archipelago and the Spanish Pacific Fleet lay on the floor of the Cavite Bay after a disastrous engagement with the US Navy.

The Disaster of 1898 – as it quickly became known in Spain – had a particularly fierce impact on Miguel Primo de Rivera. The loss of the colonies occurred alongside the death of his own father, who passed away in August 1898. Later hagiographers of Primo claimed that upon arriving in Jerez and seeing his mother covered in black crepe in mourning for her husband, Primo stated that she represented ‘the living image of Spain’, since both Inés de Orbaneja and the nation were tormented by the losses of this tragic year of 1898.⁶⁰ It is hard to know if Primo actually said these words about his mother, but whether true or not, it is certain that for Primo the personal loss was combined with the national loss. In that same month of August, Primo wrote to his uncle Fernando about his father ‘By taking him away from us, God takes from him the pain of seeing this fatherland which he loved so much being dismembered’.⁶¹ In some ways, Miguel’s marriage in 1902 to the Casilda Sáenz de Heredia – a native of Guipúzcoa in the Basque Country – did nothing more than exacerbate the pain of the defeat of 1898. Casilda was a member of one of the prominent Hispano-Cuban sugar families and her father had been the last Spanish mayor of Havana.⁶² Primo, who had fought doggedly to keep Cuba and the Philippines under Spanish rule, ultimately married a woman from a family who had been forced to return to the Iberian Peninsula as a result of the breakup of Spain’s empire.

The Disaster of 1898 also had a long-lasting effect on Primo. It is significant that the 'manifesto' with which he launched the coup on 13 September 1923 mentioned 'the scene of misfortunes and immortalities which began in 1898' as one of the motivations behind the uprising. Certainly, it suggests that the wounds of the Disaster had not healed for Primo, even a quarter of a century later.⁶³ Moreover, Primo shared with many of his comrades-in-arms the notion that the loss of the empire was the result of the incompetence of liberal politicians and parliamentarism. Seen from this viewpoint, what happened after 1898 was nothing more than the acceleration of a process of national disintegration that the Army would be forced to confront in 1923. To put it another way, it was this distorted view of the loss of empire which formed the ideological justification for the Primo de Rivera dictatorship 25 years later.⁶⁴

It was this 'pain of the colonial catastrophe' which prompted Primo to begin his career as a political commentator in 1898, when he began to write a series of articles for *El Liberal*.⁶⁵ Primo had already published articles for *El Guadalate* in Jerez before the Disaster of 1898, but the political vocation that his experiences in the Philippines had encouraged would lead him to write for several publications thereafter, including *La Correspondencia Militar*, *Revista Técnica* and *Memorial de Infantería*. At the height of 1913, Primo ventured into founding his own newspaper with a group of friends – *La Nación: Diario Monárquico Independiente* – at the same time as he was seeking to enter politics.⁶⁶ As we will see, the newspaper lasted barely three months, but can already see in this publication heavy doses of Spanish nationalism, imbued with Catholicism, authoritarianism and economic protectionism, which would later define the mentality of Primo's dictatorship in the 1920s. Primo's ambition to enter politics was similarly unsuccessful at this first attempt. Although he tried to win a seat as deputy for the districts of Torrijos and Écija – not seeming to mind whether he stood for the Liberal or the Conservative Party – he was unsuccessful. As such, Primo ended up returning to Africa to continue his rise through the ranks of the Army.⁶⁷

We can see in Primo's offerings to the press in the years after 1898 that he was developing ideas that were simultaneously nationalist, regenerationist and authoritarian.⁶⁸ As with so many other officers in the Spanish Army, he was incapable of contemplating any criticism of the armed forces for the loss of the colonies, which had been offered by various civilian politicians and journalists after 1898. Primo's flagrant disregard for liberty of expression, which he had already demonstrated amply during the *Tenientada*, became even more pronounced after his return to Spain. Given this, Joaquín Costa's notion of an 'Iron Surgeon' – something which, in many respects, Primo came to believe he embodied after September 1923 – and Costa's pseudo-scientific vocabulary were becoming key parts of Primo's thinking in this period.⁶⁹ Costa's ideas were woven together without too much ideological elaboration with notions of a new authoritarian military nationalism, which combined modernising ideas with conservative postulates. Along such lines of thinking, some Spanish officers suggested that Spain required a powerful economy, a regimented

society and a modern army, ready to face new imperialist adventures which would resolve the post-colonial crisis. To achieve these objectives, these officers called for profound reforms in the country, including an expansion of the arms industry, improvements to the educational system and an honest public administration.⁷⁰ According to these military regenerationists, such transformations could not be achieved under the inefficient bi-partisan system of the Restoration. In its place, they called for a strong government led by a general and not subordinate to parliamentary control.⁷¹

Primo's life after 1898 was not all about political disquisitions in the press and in the casinos. After a short period stationed in Seville, where he was President of the Military Casino, Primo returned to Madrid in November 1900.⁷² Enjoying a leave of absence in the capital, Primo resumed his place in Madrid high-society with 'astonishing [...] success with the ladies' and frequent visits to 'the salons of the Duquesa de Denia, the Marquesa de la Laguna, the Pardo Bazán and Pilar León'.⁷³ It was amidst this milieu of dance halls and theatres that he met Casilda Sáenz de Heredia. Primo, who was 31 years old, was struck by the young and rich aristocrat who was at that time only 21. According to his friendlier biographers, Primo began to follow her around Madrid and to write insistent letters to her.⁷⁴ The courtship soon became official. In November 1901, Primo asked his uncle Fernando if he would seek permission from his friends, the Sáenz de Heredia family, for him to marry Casilda as soon as possible. At the time, Miguel was stationed in Barcelona as head of the Alba de Tormes Light Infantry Battalion and was not prepared for anyone or anything to come between them in his absence.⁷⁵ The wedding date was set for 16 July 1902. The fact that Primo turned to his uncle for help with his girlfriend demonstrates his deep emotional dependence on the old general. It also shows how Miguel had learned the right strings to pull to get what he wanted within the complex clientelist system of the Restoration System.

In Barcelona, Primo had his first taste of suppressing workers. Whereas in Cuba and the Philippines, the enemy had been independentist insurgents, in Spain Primo would be fighting an 'internal' enemy of the nation. As is well known, the Restoration System routinely used the Army in the suppression of workers' movements.⁷⁶ For their part, following the loss of the colonies, Army officers came to see a crucial social role for themselves in guaranteeing the internal peace of the nation.⁷⁷ This was the background to the Barcelona strike in February 1902, led by anarchist unions who were fighting for a nine-hour working day. Action began with the metalworkers, cart drivers and bakers on 14 February. Three days later, the action had spread to every industrial sector and transformed the dispute into a general strike. With the police and *Guardia Civil* (Civil Guard) completely overwhelmed by events, the Civil Governor, with the help of the Práxedes Mateo Sagasta government in Madrid, declared martial law, suspended constitutional guarantees and transferred responsibility for public order to the Captain-General of Catalonia.⁷⁸ He promptly dispatched the Army onto the streets. As part of this action, Lieutenant-Colonel Primo de Rivera took command of his Light Infantry Battalion in the centre of

Barcelona. From 17 to 25 February, Primo assisted in 'maintaining the order threatened by the strikes' and was congratulated for his conduct in this regard in his service record.⁷⁹ The work could not have been easy. On the day Primo and his battalion were deployed for the first time, the fighting had left 12 dead and dozens more wounded.

Some 100,000 workers failed to attend work that week. The pickets brought industrial and commercial activity – as well as urban transport – to a complete standstill. The dispute left a deep impression among the city's inhabitants and left the employers in a state of fear.⁸⁰ Clashes were particularly brutal in the workers' neighbourhoods of Poblenou and Poble-sec, but in the city centre, where Primo's troops were stationed, the violence was much less pronounced. Even so, the general strike had been a graphic demonstration of the mobilising capabilities of the workers in Catalonia. The response of the Captain-General and the employers was to deploy the *Sometent* (Catalan militia) onto the street to quash the striking workers. This was in clear breach of the law, since the *Sometent* was a rural force which was expressly prohibited from entering the cities.⁸¹ After a week of fighting, the Army and the militia were able to put an end to workers' resistance. The use of the *Sometent* during the strike of 1902 must have left a strong impression on Primo, given that years later he would publicly call for the Catalan militia to be extended to the rest of Spain to combat the workers' movement. Not by chance, the creation of a *Somatén Nacional* (national militia) would be one of the first measures that Primo would announce after coming to power in September 1923.

On 1 June 1902, Lieutenant-Colonel Primo de Rivera 'requested certification of his single-status, which was sent the same day', and in July, he travelled to Madrid to be married to Casilda Sáenz de Heredia.⁸² According to the perverse and deeply sexist logic of one of Primo's hagiographers, the Lieutenant-Colonel married the young woman from Guipúzcoa 'imbued with the fine and sweet love of men who, having known many women, know better how to appreciate the spiritual qualities of the bride chosen for the eternal path'.⁸³ The ceremony took place on Wednesday 16 July in an oratory in a small hotel on the Paseo de la Castellana. The bride's father acted as the best man and the bride's mother as matron of honour, while Fernando Primo de Rivera acted as one of the witnesses. Dinner was held at Lhardy, a famous restaurant in the period which had become one of Primo's favourite spots in Madrid, and which would be a regular place for informal meetings of Primo's cabinets during the dictatorship. That evening, the newlyweds left for Barcelona on their way to Paris, where they would spend their honeymoon.⁸⁴

After their trip, the couple settled in Barcelona, where Miguel was still posted. Casilda quickly became pregnant and Primo asked to be moved to Madrid. On 16 March 1903, 'the request to be placed in voluntary reserve' was approved and the couple set-up home in the capital. Just over a month later, on 24 April, their first child was born. He was named José Antonio. The birth left Casilda in poor health and she convalesced for four months in one of the houses that her family owned in Alfaro (La Rioja). Despite Casilda's



Figure 1.2 Miguel Primo de Rivera and Casilda Sainz de Heredia with their sons José Antonio and Miguel in late 1904. Credit: Album.

difficulties after the birth of their first child and the medical advice that she should not have any more children, she gave birth to a second child, Miguel, in July 1904. The following summer the couple's first daughter, named Carmen, was born. In November 1907, Casilda gave birth to twins, Pilar and Ángela. On 9 June 1908, Casilda died after giving birth to her final son, Fernando. She was 28 years old (Figure 1.2).

During their six years of marriage, Miguel was very rarely at home. While stationed in Madrid – during his time on voluntary reserve as well as his later posts in the Ministry of War and General Staff between 1903 and 1906 – Primo combined his duties as an Army officer with private business matters. Alongside his friend and Captain of Engineers Eduardo Gallego Ramos, Primo founded a company to build parts for the construction of 'healthy houses' for workers, but business did not materialise and left them barely enough to cover costs.⁸⁵ During this time, Primo continued to live *de facto* with his uncle, while Casilda and the children lived with her parents. In 1906, Primo was posted to the Talavera Light Infantry Battalion in Algeciras. During the months that followed, Casilda and the ever-growing family alternated between Jerez and

Algeciras. It is hardly surprising that Primo's children later remembered him as an 'absent' parent since they hardly ever saw him.⁸⁶ According to one biographer of Primo, Casilda also experienced fits of jealousy, given her husband's persistent flirting with other women in Madrid high-society. In the eyes of Casilda, 'when Miguel entered a room, everybody turned from their conversations and the women were very attracted to him, who, in turn, offered a kind and generous word to all of them'.⁸⁷

Primo was more concerned about other forms of loyalty at this time. On 8 March 1906, during the debate over the Law of Jurisdictions in parliament, the Republican deputy Rodrigo Soriano Barroeta-Almadar criticised the generals who had led the wars overseas in 1898. Miguel's uncle, Senator Fernando Primo de Rivera, described as 'cowards' all those deputies who would accuse generals of enriching themselves in the colonial wars. Soriano understood the senator's allusion and wrote to Fernando Primo de Rivera to ask if he had been referring to him. Primo's uncle declined to respond. Fernando was now 74 years old and was not fit to fight a duel with anybody, but his nephew apparently demanded that the deputy make no further contact with his uncle. A few days later, Soriano sent another letter repeating his earlier question. This time, Miguel was furious. On 12 March, Miguel went to the Spanish parliament and punched Soriano on the nose. The mood was tense following the assault, since some deputies wanted to beat Primo, who was subsequently arrested in the Congress of Deputies.⁸⁸ Primo's uncle, as well as other military officers, proceeded to the offices of parliament where Miguel was being held to show him their support. José Canalejas, the speaker of the chamber, reprimanded Miguel for his behaviour. Primo 'protested his faith in Parliament and accepted its authority'.⁸⁹ Canalejas then called for a judge, who placed Miguel at the orders of his Captain-General. He was given one day of house arrest. As might be expected, most newspapers condemned Primo's behaviour. *La Correspondencia Militar* had a rather different view of the incident, however:

As to whether the Lieutenant-Colonel's actions warranted a general censure, there is also a mistake. Many in fact rejoice, and most do not care at all that the immunity of parliamentary noses is violated, especially in acts which are not related with the service or on its behalf.⁹⁰

The matter did not end there. On 15 March, Rodrigo Soriano and Miguel Primo de Rivera fought a duel with swords in the gardens of the estate of the Master of Arms, León Broutin. Gonzalo Queipo de Llano, one of the future leaders of the military rebellion in 1936, acted as one of Primo's seconds. At the start of the duel, Soriano wounded his opponent on the right cheek. On the second attack, Soriano lightly struck Primo on one of his nipples. On the third round, the Lieutenant-Colonel struck the deputy on the thumb of his right hand and the judges decided that the wound was sufficiently serious to call the duel to an end.⁹¹ The opponents formally reconciled on the spot and

both later lied to the judge declaring that there had been no fight.⁹² Although they took place regularly, duels were forbidden in Spain, and so Primo stated in court that ‘there had been no question of honour at stake’.⁹³ Indeed, Primo added that ‘for sport he had been shooting with various friends and in one of the volleys he had shamefully caused himself the light injuries that he now suffered’.⁹⁴ The two duelists displayed no small degree of cynicism, given that the incident was widely covered in the press. Indeed, when the judge asked for the press coverage of the duel from the newspapers *La Época* and *Heraldo de Madrid*, the owners answered that ‘the stories published had been gathered by editors in the Clubs and on the street, and as such their veracity cannot be affirmed’.⁹⁵ It seemed that everybody could play their part in this farce without any fear of consequences. The only thing that the incident had cost the future dictator was a delay of one day in the awarding of a further decoration, the Cruz de San Hermenegildo. Just as he had during the *Tenientada* in 1894, so in 1906 Primo found himself violently defending the honour of the Army against civilians. And just as it had been 12 years earlier, not only did Primo escape without any punishment for his actions, but his indiscipline and violence against civilian power were in fact rewarded. Either way, Primo never forgave the offence offered by Soriano to his uncle and to fellow officers. In 1924, by now dictator of Spain, he ordered that Soriano be deported to Fuerteventura alongside Miguel de Unamuno, for taking part on a republican meeting in the *Ateneo* (Atheneum) in Madrid.

The death of Casilda Sáenz de Heredia in June 1908 did nothing to strengthen the bonds between Primo and his children, but in a meaningful sense, it did reinforce Miguel’s ties to his uncle. After his wife’s death, Miguel left his six children in Jerez under the care of his sister, María Jesús, known in the family as Tía Ma (Aunt Ma). Meanwhile, Primo moved to Madrid. In September 1908, three months after becoming a widower, Primo became ADC to the Minister of War, his uncle Fernando.⁹⁶ Faced with the death of his wife, Primo sought refuge with his ‘substitute father’. In November that year, he was promoted to full Colonel by seniority.⁹⁷ A month earlier, the family had moved to Madrid. As well as bringing his children from Jerez, Primo brought his mother, Inés Orbaneja, together with his brother Sebastian and his sisters María Jesús and Inés, all of whom played the role of mother – and often of father – to the children of the future dictator. In April 1909, Miguel was posted to the recruitment and reserve detachment in Burgos.⁹⁸ He did not stay long. On 14 June, ‘at the command of the Chief of the Army General Staff, a service commission was granted to him for a period of two months, with the object of studying the military organizations in France, Switzerland and Italy’.⁹⁹ Colonel Primo de Rivera left for Paris on 1 July. There, he took full advantage of the women, the bars and the gambling dens. It would seem that ‘in France he learned how to enjoy life again after being widowed [...] and made many outings, often going out to shows, dinners and dances’.¹⁰⁰ Amidst the elegance of Paris, Primo the womaniser was also back, if indeed he had ever gone away. According to his great-granddaughter, ‘a young man and

strong at 39 years old; a worldly, likeable officer with a brilliant career, did not go unnoticed in the eyes of young French women.¹⁰¹

Primo had barely spent a month in Paris when he heard of the massacre at Barranco del Lobo in Morocco on 27 July 1909. He made an immediate request that he be sent to Melilla. War had resumed in Spain's Moroccan protectorate. More than 150 Spaniards had been killed by Riffian rebels on the outskirts of Melilla. Meanwhile, in Barcelona, a demonstration of recruits who refused to be sent to Africa turned into a popular revolt with wide social significance which shocked the country. Without stopping in Madrid, even to see his children, Primo arrived in Melilla on 1 August. The following day he led a column which left the city to protect the blockhouse at Velarde. There he saw a great deal of action, and as had become customary, was awarded a medal, this time the María Cristina Medal (second-class), granted for his heroism at Pico de Barbel in September 1909.¹⁰² Primo would not return to Spain for almost a year.

Despite Primo's continued separation from his children, they do not appear to have developed any resentment towards their absent father. Years later, José Antonio would complain about the constant moving of homes, but he greatly admired his father from a young age and continued to do so.¹⁰³ The future founder of the Falange regarded his father as an exceptional man, a stout patriot and an honourable figure, whose legacy had to be protected at all costs. A natural extrovert, Miguel Primo de Rivera was a loving father, but a strict one, who made his children call him 'father' and address him with the formal 'usted' form.¹⁰⁴ Primo also prided himself on punishing his children with 'arrests' in their bedrooms that lasted days.¹⁰⁵ Miguel went to great lengths to inculcate patriotic and military values in his children. When they were living in Madrid and their father was present, he took them to see the changing of the royal guard at the Palacio de Oriente and made them stand to attention in front of the flag.¹⁰⁶ Primo also imbued his children with Catholic values, although it is fair to say that his wife Casilda, and later the children's aunts, Ma and Inés, were primarily responsible for religious indoctrination of the children. Even so, Pilar Primo de Rivera's later attempt to whitewash the image of her father sometimes required her to lie. She implausibly claimed in her autobiography, for example, that her father 'never drank a drop of alcohol in his life, not even wine at mealtimes'.¹⁰⁷

The children's recollections of Primo tell us much about the process of idealisation of the father figure, but it tells us little about Primo's private life. Gambling and women were two passions that Primo devoted a great deal of time, energy and money to – and which are noticeable by their absence in the memoirs of his children. As we have seen, when he was a young lieutenant in his twenties, Primo had organised gambling games in the barracks. Over time, his love of gambling became a vice. His friend and gambling buddy Jacinto Capella put it clearly when he said that 'the only vice that overcame the dictator was gambling [...] he could not stop himself'.¹⁰⁸ Primo was a regular visitor to Madrid's most famous gambling houses, particularly La

Parisiana and the Rosales, and one night he managed to lose ‘six thousand *duros*’, that is, 30.000 pesetas.¹⁰⁹ According to his biographer (and friend of the family) Ana de Sagrera, Primo also ‘lost a large sum gambling’ over two nights at the Casino de San Sebastián.¹¹⁰ The heavy losses, the frequency with which he went to casinos, and Primo’s inability to restrain himself, suggest a man who was addicted to gambling, rather than someone who enjoyed the occasional bet.

Primo’s love of women was also noted by his hagiographers. Blaming the women themselves for the *Jerezano*’s womanising tendencies, Ana de Sagrera wrote that ‘nights he would gamble late into the evening, and women, who were always his weakness, found him easily’.¹¹¹ For his part, the *ABC* journalist Andrés Révész wrote of Primo with pride:

He has been quite the lover. He has loved women both high and low. Of the earliest little has emerged – he is very discreet in this regard [...] More democratically, now he is a widower he has a new relationship with a very pretty and very Madrileña woman, who flaunts here grace and poise as a waitress in a famous bar.¹¹²

Elsewhere the picture of Primo was not quite so affectionate, in particular if it came from a woman. The Barcelona aristocrat Dolores de Cárcer y de Ros, for example, recounted with a degree of bitterness:

When Miguel Primo de Rivera was Captain-General of Catalonia [...] I fell in love with him. Since he was a well-mannered man, he wanted to please me by pretending that he was also in love with me. But the truth is that, particularly when he was drinking, he only liked women from the lower orders, who seemed to be more enjoyable than us for the general.¹¹³

Beyond the sheer intensity of Primo’s pursuits and addictions, what is interesting is the degree to which they were common knowledge. Gambling, women and alcohol were all part of the public image that Primo was building for himself. One popular song which did the rounds during his dictatorship ran ‘Cards, women and the bottle/are the coat of arms/of the Marqués de Estella’.¹¹⁴ Given the popular image of Primo as a drinker, womaniser and gambler, it was going to be difficult to build a convincing picture of the dictator as a saviour of the fatherland, who would regenerate the nation with strict and Catholic moral principles.

While Primo’s image as a man living a wasteful existence was doubtless growing, his reputation as a wartime hero was nonetheless being strengthened. As we have seen, Primo had starred in the newspapers in 1893 after the recovery of the cannons outside of the fort at Cabrerizas Altas, near Melilla. In later years, military campaigns in Cuba and the Philippines had brought him a series of medals and promotions. The press had also reported his attack

on Soriano in parliament in 1906 and the subsequent duel between the men. Between 1909 and 1913, Primo spent long periods fighting in Africa, and once again his wartime exploits became stories for the Spanish newspapers. On 10 December 1909, for example, at the head of a column of three battalions, with cavalry and artillery sections in support, Primo captured and occupied the famous Mount Gurugú. For this action, he was awarded the Military Merit Cross third-class with red ribbon.¹¹⁵ On 20 September 1911, alongside his regiment, Primo was involved in a series of much-discussed actions when he cleared a group of Riffian rebels from Mount Taurirt, 'which fell after an eight-hour battle, with casualties of one officer killed and several wounded, and five enlisted men killed with twenty-four wounded'.¹¹⁶ On 7 October, in an operation on the left bank of the River Kert, Primo's column was attacked by Riffian troops. Several Spanish soldiers were killed following a deluge of enemy fire. Primo, meanwhile, was wounded in the foot and his horse was killed by enemy fire. To make matters worse, the Colonel has also broken his arm in several places. With the help of the local police, Primo was rescued and taken to the camp at Imarufen. From there he proceeded to Ishafen, before finally arriving at the Hospital del Buen Acuerdo in Melilla on 9 October.¹¹⁷ He would remain at the hospital until 2 November, when he embarked for Spain.¹¹⁸

Military successes and war-wounds brought with them further promotions. On 18 December, Primo was promoted 'to Brigadier-General for his outstanding performance and steady command in combat on 20 September in the heights of Taurirt, and in particular the distinguished endeavour of his regiment on 7 October taking the positions at Infratuata, in the course of which he was wounded'.¹¹⁹ Primo was the first officer in his cohort to become a general, showing that combat achievements and family contacts counted for more than intellectual ability in the Spanish Army under the Restoration System. In June 1914, Primo was promoted to Major-General by merit.

Primo also showed himself adept at making influential friends during his time in Africa. In 1909 and once again in 1913, for example, he served under the command of General Aguilera. In 1921, Aguilera would have Primo named as Captain-General of the first Military Region. Similarly, in 1910 Primo's regiment had been part of a battalion led by General Diego Muñoz Cobo, a man who would later be a crucial member for the success of the coup of 1923.¹²⁰ During his time in Africa, Primo also revived old friendships from the Military Academy in Toledo, including José Sanjurjo and José Cavalcanti – both key conspirators in 1923 – and Severiano Martínez Anido, who would serve as Primo's right hand throughout the dictatorship.¹²¹ It is telling that in these years Primo began to fantasise about leading Spain and to draw up fantasy cabinets. According to Eduardo Aunós, who would later become Primo's Minister of Labour, 'close friends' and 'comrades in arms' had mentioned that 'even during his time in Africa [...] he imagined himself as Head of the Government and filled notebooks with different ideas for who would be ministers [...] The dream of governing stayed with him from his earliest

childhood years.¹²² Years later, General Francisco Franco famously stated in an interview during the Spanish Civil War that ‘without Africa, I can scarcely explain myself to myself’. The same could certainly be said for Miguel Primo de Rivera.¹²³ Primo’s time in Africa not only brought with it a rapid rise to the rank of Major-General, but it allowed him to build ties with a series of officers who would later become fellow-conspirators. Perhaps most importantly, Africa awakened in Primo an ambition to rise to the height of political power in Spain.

Primo’s attempts to channel his political interests led him to establish a newspaper. At the end of 1912, he wrote to his extensive network of friends to ask for money and seek subscriptions. In a letter to a friend in San Sebastián, he explained his patriotic motives in founding a newspaper which aimed to pursue an ‘educative mission’.¹²⁴ Primo continued:

As you will see, good Javier, the task is difficult, but I am joined in this enterprise by prestigious and wholesome men. I have believed that we cannot leave Spain to be destroyed, that we have the duty to pass it on stronger to our children and this is my mission; now that I am not engaged in another war, I will engage in this one.¹²⁵

Primo’s newspaper – *La Nación. Diario Monárquico Independiente* – hit the streets for the first time on 15 February 1913. The newspaper had a conservative bent and sought to promote a deep sense of Spanish nationalism. From the outset, articles and editorials in *La Nación* employed a regenerationist discourse and standpoint, which dwelt on the lack of nationalist sentiment in Spain and the anti-patriotic activities of the political and media elites. One article entitled ‘Of Patriotic Feeling’ set the mood dramatically:

When the people are left to the mercy of a minority of imbeciles and bandits, of charlatans who love the sound of their own voice and journalists who have remained mute, it is because even the name of the country is unknown to them. It is because Spain has degenerated into a simple geographic accretion without ideals.¹²⁶

The use of regenerationist discourse had a clear mobilising intention. One editorial, for example, entitled ‘Spirit of Combat’, which was more than likely written by Primo himself, spoke of the need to mobilise the ‘great religious, monarchist and patriotic majority’ to confront the ‘diluting’ forces in Spain, namely, the anarchists and radical republicans under Alejandro Lerroux.¹²⁷ The piece concluded by calling for the mobilisation:

This must be one of the prime concerns for LA NACIÓN: to advise its friends and readers not to limit themselves to reading, listening and commenting, but also to get involved in public life. Let them fight for what they love, the only way to show that the love is sincere, the only

way to move towards the future based upon an irreplaceable foundation of conserving the present.¹²⁸

One fascinating aspect of this editorial is its inclusion of an explicit recognition of the need to imitate the tenacity and propagandistic methods of political enemies, in this case Alejandro Lerroux. The piece offered the following reflection:

Any conqueror, just like any propagandist, will have little success if he does not appear obsessed, constantly obsessed, by their ideals. Any *caudillo* (leader) has to define himself every day; every one of his followers must constantly define, translate, explain the doctrine, the personality, the character, the complete personality of the *caudillo*. To what does Alejandro Lerroux principally— almost exclusively — owe his political position and strength? To tenacity and perseverance. If he had confined himself from the outset to speaking in Parliament, Lerroux would be nothing, but he propagandised, he worked hard, he preached, he created — all sad and exhausting things — and he did not leave the side of his troops for one instant, living alongside them, and there he stands. What equal and countervailing action has there been?¹²⁹

It is hugely significant that Primo's newspaper, at the height of 1913, was suggesting so openly that it was necessary to follow the propagandistic style of the inventor of anticlerical populism in Spain.¹³⁰ While his dictatorship in the 1920s would develop a far-right populism, he was learning the tactics of '*caudillismo*' from his political enemies a full ten years before the coup of 1923.

La Nación also argued for the promotion of patriotism among Spaniards on a daily basis. One of the earliest issues contained an article called 'Spaniards. Be patriots! Be Protectionists!'; in which it asked men, and in particular women, to look for 'products made in Spain [...] even if they are of slightly lower quality, demand will perfect them in time'.¹³¹ The call to buy home-made products was accompanied by an interesting reflection on the quotidian nature of patriotism and its religious connotations, remarking 'don't forget that patriotism is practised in every act in life, and that whoever serves the Fatherland also serves God'.¹³² The article ended:

We do not go as far as asking that no foreign item is sold among us, since we still fail to produce so many things, but with government protection so that they are manufactured and the patriotism of citizens to buy them, we would all do more for Spain than saluting the flag, the sacred symbol of an idea, which, if not the overseer and director of all behaviour, would be little more than useless romanticism.¹³³

The article showed that its author understood perfectly that patriotism must be practised on a daily basis for it to be effective, something which academic studies

of nationalism have taken some years to theorise.¹³⁴ The writer demonstrates clearly that he comprehends the importance of awakening nationalistic sentiments with everyday activities. Moreover, the article in some ways anticipates the autarkic and nationalist economic policies that Primo would implement during his dictatorship, as well as the campaigns which would be launched by the regime to encourage the purchase of Spanish-made products, some of which were directed specifically towards women.¹³⁵

We can also see in the pages of *La Nación* a foretaste of Primo's 'abandonist' ideas relating to Spain's possessions in Morocco, which would cause him so many headaches in later years. In two anonymous articles – though both clearly written in Primo's journalistic style – the argument was advanced that Spain's colonisation in Morocco was an economic disaster, that Ceuta and Melilla, unlike Cuba, were not rich lands, and nor could they provide room for many colonists. Meanwhile, Spanish mines in the protectorate were not going to provide much in return. In short, the 150 million pesetas that it was costing Spain each year to maintain its hold in Africa 'mean certain ruin'.¹³⁶ These arguments against Spanish involvement in Morocco also contained elements of racism:

Speaking frankly, should we really care, or view it as our historic mission to civilise and humanise these ferocious beasts who populate the Rif?¹³⁷

The second article ended with words that demanded the sums so badly spent in Africa instead be invested in Spain:

Can Spain, is it in Spain's interests, should Spain support, should Spain tolerate twenty years of preparation to complete its dominion in Africa, in which, in addition to wars and incidents and diplomatic difficulties, THREE BILLION pesetas be spent in those territories, without any payback, either now or in the future, sharing, damaging the Treasury and the national credit, while ignoring so many warnings and problems that clamour at home for funds to solve? We offer no answer, but let us ask God for guidance in the deliberation of men.¹³⁸

La Nación was short lived. It ran for less than three months, and in the final month and a half, it was published in a bi-weekly magazine format. Even so, we can see in Primo's journalistic enterprise some of the elements that would become so pronounced during the dictatorship. First, we can note Primo's interest in journalism and the power of the written word as a means of political indoctrination. This would later be reflected in the Spanish press during Primo's dictatorship – tellingly, the official newspaper of the regime would be called *La Nación* – as well as various 'official notes' (*notas oficiosas*) penned by the dictator himself, which were obligatory inclusions in all of the daily newspapers. Second, and directly linked to the first, Primo understood that patriotic propaganda was an 'educative' task, which must be spread via numerous

avenues if it were to reach broad swathes of the population. This concept of patriotic education would be very much in evidence in the processes formulated by Primo during the dictatorship for the nationalisation of the masses.

It is fair to say that Primo went beyond the influences of the ideas of Joaquín Costa and the regenerationist discourses so evident in *La Nación*. Indeed, the general showed a genuine interest in the idea of using education to indoctrinate the masses. He believed very strongly in the importance of modernising the Army, which would require a general plan for education that would improve the quality of recruits as well as officers.¹³⁹ But Primo's thinking went beyond military training and proposed that the Army would itself indoctrinate the population in patriotic Spanish ideals. As early as 1905, he had said 'in Spain neither the school nor the pulpit [have] seen their principal mission to stoke the national soul' of Spaniards. In other words, the education system and the Church had failed in their task as patriotic educators.¹⁴⁰ In 1916, Primo openly advocated that the Army be used to foster patriotic ideals, both in schools and in the workers' centres, using modern techniques of propaganda such as cinema.¹⁴¹ Underlying these proposals is the idea of nationalising the masses as a bulwark against the growing left-wing militancy of the working classes. The nation would become the panacea against the revolution.

Primo seemed willing to offer opinions on any topic. In 1916, for example, when Primo was serving as Military Governor of Cádiz province, the *Diario de Cádiz* published an article by the general in which he outlined ideas for a comprehensive reform of secondary education. Primo proposed standardising the textbooks used in schools, calling for a national competition to select textbooks which would be used throughout the country and would be cheap. Alongside a reform of the curriculum aimed at simplifying it and adding more emphasis upon the history and geography of Spain, Primo believed that 'the main thing is that the textbooks have the length, orientation and clarity suitable to the state, taking account of the level of instruction and the age of the students'.¹⁴² In many respects, these proposals would anticipate the later policies of Primo's dictatorship. As we will see, the regime selected textbooks from those that had participated in the national competition 'Libro de la Patria' (Book of the Fatherland), a prize created in 1921. The dictatorship also imposed a single textbook for the entire country and reformed the curriculum, giving greater weight to the history and geography of Spain. Moreover, Primo's government had a clear view that the state should dictate the content of the curriculum for Spanish children and teenagers in order to nationalise them, which would bring the regime into conflict with the Church and the Catholic militants within the *Unión Patriótica*.

The years of the First World War saw Primo's career doing very well. In July 1914, he was promoted to Major-General and awarded the 'Grand Cross of Military Merit with red ribbon, for extraordinary services in the field in operations conducted around Tetuán'.¹⁴³ In October 1915, he was named Military Governor of Cádiz province. The post did nothing but stimulate Primo's dreams of political greatness. According to José María Pemán, Primo

fantasised about ‘becoming Head of Government’ during the lunches he held with family and friends in the Captaincy-General in Cádiz.¹⁴⁴ In fact, Primo had already pondered the idea of seeking a seat in parliament in 1913, the same year he had founded *La Nación*. It would seem that it was the Conservative leader Sánchez Guerra who suggested to Primo that he run for deputy for Algeciras, but Primo preferred to remain in command of the Light Infantry Brigade in the field and turned the offer down.¹⁴⁵ Having been named Military Governor of Cádiz, Primo’s interest in politics revived with a vengeance. Against the backdrop of the global conflict, Primo began to mull over the possibility of proposing to Britain that it exchange Gibraltar for Ceuta. He outlined this idea in various draft reports which he prepared while in Cádiz, believing that Britain would benefit from the exchange since she would achieve a ‘permanent alliance’ with Spain, and in Ceuta, a territory that was more economically promising and more easily defensible than Gibraltar.¹⁴⁶

The idea of swapping Gibraltar for Ceuta was neither new, and nor was it his. The notion had first been mooted several decades earlier by General Juan Prim, a man whom Primo admired. But Primo was only reinforced in the notion after a visit to the Western Front in France. By a Royal Decree of 21 December 1916, Primo was sent by the Spanish government to visit the British Army at Rouen and the French Army at Verdun.¹⁴⁷ The visit lasted until 1 February 1917 and would teach Primo a great deal. He was accompanied by his friend Severiano Martínez Anido and the Artillery General (and physicist) Ricardo Aranaz e Ibarra. At the front, the three men visited ‘numerous munitions factories’, as well as ‘manufacturing plants, hospitals and supply depots’.¹⁴⁸ The three men witnessed the brutality of trench warfare at its worst, including the effects of chemical weapons on soldiers. The report that the three Spanish generals prepared upon their return related in graphic detail the deadly use of artillery to create curtains of smoke and fire which allowed the infantry to advance, as well as the ‘considerable and innumerable casualties’ after battles.¹⁴⁹ General Aranaz himself had almost been killed when a shell exploded ‘very close’ to him at the front.¹⁵⁰

On the section of the front controlled by the British, the Spanish generals were hugely impressed by the precision of British artillery bombardment, the quality of the field hospitals and the discipline of the soldiers. They were also very impressed by the tanks. ‘Simple inspection of this machine convinces me it will be effective and simple to drive’, commented Martínez Anido after seeing a tank assault a trench.¹⁵¹ The sheer level of destruction in the battles did not pass Primo or his colleagues by. They recorded in the report how forests, towns and churches had been completely destroyed by shellfire. In the ‘Forest of Trône just a single tree is left standing, the rest having been cut to pieces by shrapnel’. The Spaniards were moved by the sight of ‘the remains of a German soldier who lay unburied with a foot and shinbone completely separated [from the corpse] and still wearing a boot and trouser leg’.¹⁵² Even so, it was a thrilling experience for the Spanish generals to be able to observe the spectacle of war. As the report recorded, ‘after heavy fire that lasted around an hour and a half, the shelling

eased off, leaving us very happy to have witnessed such a splendid spectacle of war, offering us the chance to get a sense of what modern warfare is about'.¹⁵³

On the French section of the Western Front, the Spanish generals were welcomed and guided around by General Philippe Pétain. He would go on to play a key role in the Franco-Spanish landings at Alhucemas in 1925, and later still become the dictator of Vichy France under Nazi tutelage during the Second World War. The meeting would mark the start of a friendship between Primo and Pétain which would last until the death of the Spanish general in 1930. Pétain proudly demonstrated his combined use of artillery and infantry on the battlefield and how to deploy chemical weapons against specific objectives. As the report remarked, it was common 'when acting against specific objectives, such as when pieces are used in counter-fire, to offset the effects of enemy artillery, you must use shrapnel and gas shells, seeking to target their effects on those manning the guns'.¹⁵⁴ Days earlier, the Spanish generals themselves had been forced to cancel a visit to Arras because the Germans had been using 'poison gases', but despite the cancellation they were learning a lot about the use of chemical weapons on land. It is possible that this was the moment when Primo and Martínez Anido first considered using this type of weapon in the Spanish protectorate in Morocco. Certainly, we can say that in the summer of 1923, when Martínez Anido proposed bombing civilian targets in the protectorate with poison gas, Primo agreed that it was a good idea. As we will see, Primo's regime launched dozens of bombings with chemical weapons upon towns and villages in North Africa.

Primo returned to his post as Military Governor of Cádiz enthused. He was convinced that Spain could gain something from the weakness that the European powers would experience after the war, particularly if, as he imagined, the war did not result in outright winners. On 27 March 1917, Primo made use of his inauguration speech at the *Real Academia Hispano-Americana de Ciencias y Artes* in Cádiz to float the idea publicly of swapping 'Gibraltar for Ceuta and perhaps other land in Africa if necessary'.¹⁵⁵ For Primo, the domestic strengthening of the Spanish nation had to take priority over colonial adventures. Regaining Gibraltar would be to recover a piece of Spain that had been in foreign hands for too long. Moreover, Primo argued, in clearly regenerationist terms, the African campaigns were devouring resources that were vital for building schools and roads in Spain.¹⁵⁶ Primo was fully aware that the speech would cause a stir. To ensure that the message reached those for whom it was intended, the general sent advance copies of his speech to his uncle Fernando. He also sent a copy to Juan Loriga y Herrera-Dávila, the Conde de O Grove and tutor, secretary and assistant to the King, Alfonso XIII, thus making certain that the monarch knew of its contents.¹⁵⁷ Primo badly miscalculated, however. Both the government and senior military hierarchy regarded the speech as unacceptable. As for the King, he signed the order for Primo's dismissal as Military Governor of Cádiz the day after the speech was delivered.¹⁵⁸

The dismissal both shook and angered Primo in equal measure. He genuinely believed that the exchange of Gibraltar for Ceuta would be beneficial for

Spain. Indeed, despite the damage it had already caused him, in November 1921, Primo would return to the theme with an ‘abandonist’ intervention in the Spanish Senate. This time, as we will see in the next chapter, Primo’s remarks led to his dismissal as Captain-General of the first Military Region. The incident gives us some indication, however, of Primo’s stubbornness and difficulty in learning from political mistakes. Back in 1917, Primo was sure that his ‘abandonism’ had broad support. Years later, he would say of the speech ‘I had picked up in the country [...] a very extensive support for abandoning Morocco, and to my mind the pain in the spiritual order in the nation could be lessened by the recovery, by exchange, of Gibraltar’.¹⁵⁹ The Moroccan question was starting to have a direct bearing on Spanish politics and would continue to do so well into the dictatorship in the 1920s.¹⁶⁰

Following his dismissal, Primo moved in April 1917 to the house of his uncle Fernando in Robledo de Chavela, a town in Madrid province in the Sierra Oeste, some 63 kilometres from the capital.¹⁶¹ He wanted to remain close to his uncle while awaiting a new posting. At that time, the Moroccan war and the system of promotions in the Army, among other issues, had created a deep sense of grievance in parts of the officer corps. In the autumn of 1916, officers of the Barcelona garrison had formed so-called *Juntas de Defensa*, which in practice represented a form of trade union for the military. The *Juntas* offered a long list of professional grievances and advanced claims for higher pay. By April 1917, the *Juntas* had spread throughout the Army in Spain and a national *Junta Central de Defensa* had been established in Barcelona to coordinate military protests, led by Colonel Benito Márquez Martínez. The Liberal administration of Manuel García Prieto was determined to shut down the *Juntas* and the Minister of War, General Francisco Aguilera, ordered their dissolution. In an act of open indiscipline, however, the *Juntas* refused to disband and instead on 1 June offered further demands, including the release of their comrades imprisoned in the Montjuïc Castle. King Alfonso, who had at first been on the side of his government, changed sides on the issue, fell in support of the *Juntas* and disavowed the actions of the government. García Prieto and his ministers were left with little choice but to resign collectively. The King had tipped the scales in favour of the military over the government.¹⁶² Once again, tensions between civil and military authority had ended with a victory for the latter, and from that point onwards the praetorian intervention of the Army in Restoration politics would only increase.

The new government, led by the Conservative Eduardo Dato, named General Fernando Primo de Rivera – by that time in his eighties – as its new Minister of War. The minister immediately asked his nephew Miguel to act as intermediary with the *Juntas* and to seek an agreement with them, which, in effect, would bring about their dissolution. Miguel had at first regarded the *Juntas* as ‘improper, illegal, inopportune and isolated’.¹⁶³ Once he began work as the minister’s contact with the *Juntas*, however, his view of the latter improved somewhat. This softening of Miguel’s attitude was certainly helped by the fact that his uncle had quickly moved to regulate the *Juntas* and offer

them legality. Meanwhile, in the summer of 1917, certain members of the *Juntas* (*junteros*) had suggested to Miguel might exercise a form of leadership over them. Miguel was certainly prepared to do so and wrote to the members of the Barcelona *Junta* committing himself to them. They responded to Miguel by praising him and his uncle for fulfilling 'the hopes of regeneration' and stated that the salvation of the country involved cooperation with the military leadership and the *Juntas*, and 'even civilians, now that the feelings of the Army and the Nation have become one'.¹⁶⁴

The regenerationist and interventionist thinking of Miguel was clearly mirrored in the beliefs of the *Juntas*. Tremendously vain, Primo was delighted with the praise he was receiving from Barcelona. Even so, the good relations that Primo and his uncle Fernando enjoyed with the *Juntas* did not last long. In September 1917, when the *Juntas* began to criticise Dato's government for maintaining martial law and blanket censorship, Miguel's reaction was to stigmatise them as partisans seeking to divide the Army. In October 1917, Benito Márquez continued to criticise the government and argued the case for military interventionism in politics. By 17 October, Fernando Primo de Rivera had been dismissed as Minister of War, and two days later, Miguel formally broke his ties with the *junteros*.¹⁶⁵ 'Political abstention [of officers'] must be total', he wrote to Márquez.¹⁶⁶ It is not that Miguel was against the idea of the Army intervening in politics in the autumn of 1917. Rather, he was not prepared to countenance it if it involved a criticism of his uncle Fernando, the archetype of 'top brass' within the Restoration System. 'The Mummy', as the *junteros* maliciously referred to Fernando Primo de Rivera, was therefore a brake on the interventionist instincts of Miguel and a guarantee that despite his regenerationist discourse about the salvation of the fatherland, such transformations could only be made from within the framework of the Restoration System. Nonetheless, Fernando's role as a check upon Miguel was only effective so long as the former was a member of the government. Once Fernando was gone, Miguel Primo de Rivera's duty to defend the *status quo* would diminish.

Fernando's dismissal as Minister of War was accompanied by the restitution of constitutional guarantees as the *junteros* had demanded, which must have been particularly painful for Miguel.¹⁶⁷ The fact that his uncle's replacement, Juan de la Cierva, had achieved what Miguel had not been able to achieve, namely, the submission, albeit partial, of the *Juntas* to the government, must also have been a blow. His uncle's political marginalisation represented his own political marginalisation in no small measure. Miguel would endure a difficult few months. 'The whole national body is sick with laxity and weakness [and my] spirit is hardly any better', he wrote in a letter to his family.¹⁶⁸ In any case, his spirits would be lifted on 5 July 1918 when the government of Antonio Maura named him as General in command of the first Division (Madrid) and head of the Tactical Commission.¹⁶⁹ In his new position, Primo would support the honour courts that the *junteros* had established to expel a group of officers who were studying at the *Escuela Superior de Guerra* and who had refused to join the *Juntas*. Primo was not arguing in favour of the *Juntas*, but

he did believe that the matter should be dealt with exclusively by the military; the Army must act with ‘spiritual homogeneity’.¹⁷⁰ Indeed, unity of purpose in the Army would be one of his chief concerns up until the coup of 13 September 1923 and remain one of his greatest headaches when dictator.

Unity within the Army was also crucial for any military intervention in the social question, that is to say the repression of the workers’ movement. The need to maintain ‘unity in the face of the revolutionary plans of all classes’ was frequently emphasised, for example, in his correspondence with Martínez Anido at the end of 1919.¹⁷¹ At that time, Martínez Anido was Military Governor of Barcelona and alongside the Captain-General of Catalonia, Joaquín Milans del Bosch, was unleashing a brutal persecution of the anarchist movement.¹⁷² Martínez Anido was also showing a fundamental disdain for the authority of the government in Madrid and would entrust the responsibility for solving the nation’s problems onto the Army. In one letter to Primo, for example, he wrote that ‘the responsibility has fallen to us to solve the nation’s problems; with God’s guidance and strongly united we can devote all our energies to complete our tasks with flying colours’.¹⁷³ As for the remedy for the ills of the fatherland, Martínez Anido was in no doubt that it involved the declaration of martial law, even though everybody was fully aware that he, Milans del Bosch and members of the boss-class were already organising the extrajudicial murder of trades unionists.¹⁷⁴

Indeed, the methods deployed by the military in Barcelona were one of the reasons that the coalition government of Manuel Allendesalazar felt forced to dismiss Milans del Bosch from his post in February 1920. The declaration of martial law in Catalonia without the permission of the central government, and the Captain-General’s backing of a lockout that had begun in November 1919 – which, it is worth remembering, was illegal – placed Milans del Bosch in a very difficult situation in the eyes of the Spanish government.¹⁷⁵ While it is certainly the case that the fall of Milans del Bosch was prompted by the machinations of the Conde de Romanones, it is also true that at root this was a struggle between civil and military power.¹⁷⁶ Martínez Anido attempted to forestall the dismissal of the Captain-General and write to Primo to intervene, ‘hoping that with the prestige you enjoy you can take all steps to avoid perhaps disastrous consequences which would result in taking mistaken action’.¹⁷⁷

We do not know if Miguel did anything to prevent the dismissal of Milans in Catalonia, but it is certain that he would have spoken to his uncle about the matter. In any case, Milans finally left Barcelona in mid-February 1920.¹⁷⁸ His dismissal represented a victory for civil over military authority and this did not sit well with Primo and his uncle. The day before Milans’s replacement, Valeriano Weyler, arrived in Barcelona as the new Captain-General, Fernando Primo de Rivera wrote to the King telling him to suspend the constitution and institute a temporary dictatorship led by a civilian, but supported by the military.¹⁷⁹ In his missive to Alfonso, the octogenarian general stated that Milans had been the victim of ‘a political intrigue or obsession’ at a moment when ‘the fruits of his labour were beginning to be felt in the tranquillity and normality of public order and production’.¹⁸⁰ Within the Army, Fernando Primo de Rivera

informed the King, it was now openly spoken of 'vetoing certain politicians, and perhaps all of them', something which was also desired by 'the great mass of the citizens who, disgusted with politics, long to see the Fatherland prosper and be elevated'.¹⁸¹ Fernando Primo de Rivera proposed the following:

Without changing the constitutional regime of Spain, but suspending it for a period of time, you could move to create a government of experts, which, under the leadership of a man of integrity and character, could get to work by means of decrees which would have the force of law, correcting in Spain everything that is out of control: discipline, starting with the military, as well as the social, economic and cultural problem.¹⁸²

The dictatorship would have to be in place for at least two years, and once over 'general elections would offer their endorsement of this type of government, or instead hand it back to the parties, reorganised and purified in the meantime', for the men of the political old-guard could no longer return to exercise power. The tasks which the dictatorial Executive would have to address would include, *inter alia*, 'the generalisation of culture as the essential bedrock of patriotism and citizenship'; regulation based upon charity, justice and discipline in the relationship between employers and workers; the 'lowering of the cost of living through housebuilding', limiting of exports and prohibition of stockpiling; increased state incomes through the creation of taxes proportionate to incomes; and the 'moralisation of public life', banning politicians from being on the boards of directors of state companies.

The letter was signed by Fernando Primo de Rivera, but given the closeness of the relationship between uncle and nephew, it is hard to believe that Miguel did not play a decisive influence when writing it. What is certain is that many of the ideas in the missive would eventually be put into practice during the dictatorship of Miguel. The proposal for a temporary dictatorship was in some ways a logical next step from Miguel's gradual drift away from civilian politicians in the preceding years. While in 1912, Miguel had believed that the intervention of the Army into politics was an 'unfortunate development', because it should be devoting itself entirely to 'ensuring success in the war', by 1916 he had come to think that 'in exceptional circumstances' the Army ought to take charge of guaranteeing public order.¹⁸³ By 1919, after the success of the Bolsheviks in Russia and against a backdrop of revolutionary shocks throughout Europe, Primo had come to the conclusion that in these 'times of uncertainty', the principal task of the Army was 'the defence of the Fatherland and the flag', which he saw as synonymous with 'the specific mission of defending the social order'.¹⁸⁴

As was the case in so many other European countries, the political and social cataclysm occasioned by the First World War sharpened Primo's militaristic, nationalistic and authoritarian tendencies. As late as 1920, Primo did not yet to consider himself the 'iron surgeon' that his hero Joaquín Costa had call for to regenerate the nation, but the ideological foundations that would justify

military intervention to save the Fatherland were now well established. Years of disobedience and tensions with civil authority in the name of the corporative interests of military officers, and above all, the quest for personal professional advancement, from the privileged and protected position guaranteed by his uncle Fernando, had led Miguel to the conclusion that it was necessary for the military to intervene directly in politics. With his posting as Captain-General of the third Territorial Region (Valencia) in July 1920, Primo began to consider that he might indeed be the patriotic messiah that Spain needed.

Notes

- 1 *La Nación*, 30 September 1929.
- 2 *La Nación*, 30 September 1929.
- 3 *La Nación*, 30 September 1929.
- 4 *La Nación*, 30 September 1929.
- 5 ‘Los comentarios de Primo de Rivera y Orbaneja sobre su abuela paterna, la marquesa de Sobremonte y las veintisiete casa que poseía en Sevilla’, *Diario de las Sesiones de Cortes del Senado*, 104 (6 December 1921), p. 2168.
- 6 Xavier Casals, *Miguel Primo de Rivera. El espejo de Franco* (Barcelona: Ediciones B, 2004), pp. 130–131.
- 7 Ana de Sagrera, *Miguel Primo de Rivera. El hombre, el soldado y el político* (Jerez: Ayuntamiento de Jerez de la Frontera, 1973), pp. 7–9. For the quotation, see p. 8.
- 8 Ana de Sagrera, *Miguel Primo de Rivera. El hombre, el soldado y el político* (Jerez: Ayuntamiento de Jerez de la Frontera, 1973), pp. 17–19.
- 9 Ana de Sagrera, *Miguel Primo de Rivera. El hombre, el soldado y el político* (Jerez: Ayuntamiento de Jerez de la Frontera, 1973), pp. 20–21.
- 10 Xavier Casals, *Miguel Primo de Rivera. El espejo de Franco* (Barcelona: Ediciones B, 2004), p. 134.
- 11 Ana de Sagrera, *Miguel Primo de Rivera. El hombre, el soldado y el político* (Jerez: Ayuntamiento de Jerez de la Frontera, 1973), pp. 22–23.
- 12 Ana de Sagrera, *Miguel Primo de Rivera. El hombre, el soldado y el político* (Jerez: Ayuntamiento de Jerez de la Frontera, 1973), p. 13.
- 13 ‘Hoja de Servicios de Miguel Primo de Rivera y Orbaneja’, Archivo General del Ejército de Segovia (hereafter AGES), carpeta 1, p. 10.
- 14 Ana de Sagrera, *Miguel Primo de Rivera. El hombre, el soldado y el político* (Jerez: Ayuntamiento de Jerez de la Frontera, 1973), p. 37.
- 15 Franco graduated 251st in a cohort of 312 cadets. See Enrique Moradiellos, ‘Francisco Franco. El military prudente que llegó a ser caudillo providencial’, in Alejandro Quiroga & Miguel Ángel del Arco Blanco (eds.), *Soldados de Dios y Apóstoles de la Patria. Las derechas españolas en la Europa de entreguerras* (Granada: Comares, 2010), p. 245. Hitler received marks ranging from ‘bad to mediocre’ in secondary school and was forced to repeat a year after failing mathematics and natural history. See Ian Kershaw, *Hitler, 1889–1936: Hubris* (London: Penguin, 1998), p. 16.
- 16 José María Pemán, *Mis almuerzos con gente importante* (Barcelona: Dopesa, 1970), pp. 17–18.
- 17 Michael Crick, *One Party After Another: The Disruptive Life of Nigel Farage* (London: Simon and Schuster, 2022).
- 18 Paul Preston, *A People Betrayed: A History of Corruption, Political Incompetence and Social Division in Modern Spain, 1874–2018* (London: William Collins, 2020), p. 183.
- 19 Hoja de Servicios de Miguel Primo de Rivera y Orbaneja’, AGES, carpeta 1, p. 1.

- 20 'D. Miguel Primo de Rivera y Orbaneja. Academia General Militar. Alférez de Infantería. Ministerio de Guerra, 27 marzo 1889', AGES, carpeta 3, p. 8.
- 21 Hoja de Servicios de Miguel Primo de Rivera y Orbaneja', AGES, carpeta 1, pp. 1–10.
- 22 Ana de Sagrera, *Miguel Primo de Rivera. El hombre, el soldado y el político* (Jerez: Ayuntamiento de Jerez de la Frontera, 1973), p. 49.
- 23 Ana de Sagrera, *Miguel Primo de Rivera. El hombre, el soldado y el político* (Jerez: Ayuntamiento de Jerez de la Frontera, 1973), p. 50.
- 24 Ana de Sagrera, *Miguel Primo de Rivera. El hombre, el soldado y el político* (Jerez: Ayuntamiento de Jerez de la Frontera, 1973), p. 51.
- 25 Xavier Casals, *Miguel Primo de Rivera. El espejo de Franco* (Barcelona: Ediciones B, 2004), p. 137.
- 26 Ana de Sagrera, *Miguel Primo de Rivera. El hombre, el soldado y el político* (Jerez: Ayuntamiento de Jerez de la Frontera, 1973), p. 43.
- 27 Andrés Révész, *Frente al dictador* (Madrid: Biblioteca Internacional, 1926), p. 45.
- 28 General X, 'Marruecos 1893–1925', in E. Gabas Giner (ed.), *Yunque y martillo. Páginas para la historia* (Madrid: Rafael Caro Raggio, 1930), p. 16. 'General X' was a pseudonym of Miguel Primo de Rivera y Orbaneja. The general in charge of the operation, Juan García Margallo, is the great-grandfather of José Manuel García-Margallo, who served as Spanish Foreign Minister under the government of Mariano Rajoy.
- 29 *La Ilustración Española y Americana*, no. XLII, 15 November 1893, p. 295.
- 30 *La Ilustración Española y Americana*, no. XLII, 15 November 1893, p. 295.
- 31 Rocío Primo de Rivera, *Los Primo de Rivera. Historia de una familia* (Madrid: Esfera de los Libros, 2005), p. 86.
- 32 Hoja de Servicios de Miguel Primo de Rivera y Orbaneja', AGES, carpeta 1, p. 13.
- 33 Xavier Casals, *Miguel Primo de Rivera. El espejo de Franco* (Barcelona: Ediciones B, 2004), p. 140.
- 34 Stanley G. Payne, *Los militares y la política en España contemporánea* (Paris: Ruedo Ibérico, 1968), pp. 56–57.
- 35 General X, 'Marruecos 1893–1925', in E. Gabas Giner (ed.), *Yunque y martillo. Páginas para la historia* (Madrid: Rafael Caro Raggio, 1930), p. 16.
- 36 Rocío Primo de Rivera, *Los Primo de Rivera. Historia de una familia* (Madrid: Esfera de los Libros, 2005), p. 88.
- 37 Xavier Casals, *Miguel Primo de Rivera. El espejo de Franco* (Barcelona: Ediciones B, 2004), p. 140.
- 38 Andrés Révész, *Frente al dictador* (Madrid: Biblioteca Internacional, 1926), p. 46.
- 39 Ana Mancera Rueda, *Prensa Española ante la Guerra de Cuba, 1895–1898* (Valencia: Tirant lo Blanch, 2022), pp. 139–141.
- 40 *El Día*, 16 March 1895.
- 41 *El Día*, 16 March 1895.
- 42 *El Día*, 16 March 1895.
- 43 Xavier Casals, *Miguel Primo de Rivera. El espejo de Franco* (Barcelona: Ediciones B, 2004), pp. 142–143.
- 44 The medal was conferred for the action on 16 April 1895, where he distinguished himself in skirmishes against the rebels. See 'Hoja de Servicios de Miguel Primo de Rivera y Orbaneja', AGES, carpeta 1, pp. 13–14.
- 45 For the mentions in despatches, see 'Hoja de Servicios de Miguel Primo de Rivera y Orbaneja', AGES, carpeta 1, pp. 14–16.
- 46 'Hoja de Servicios de Miguel Primo de Rivera y Orbaneja', AGES, carpeta 1, pp. 14–17.
- 47 'Hoja de Servicios de Miguel Primo de Rivera y Orbaneja', AGES, carpeta 1, p. 16.
- 48 'Hoja de Servicios de Miguel Primo de Rivera y Orbaneja', AGES, carpeta 1, p. 17.

- 49 Maria Dolores Elizalde Pérez-Gruoso, 'Filipinas en el marco del imperio español en el siglo XIX', *Estudis. Revista de Historia Moderna*, 45 (2019), pp. 93–116.
- 50 'Hoja de Servicios de Miguel Primo de Rivera y Orbaneja', AGES, carpeta 1, p. 18.
- 51 'Hoja de Servicios de Miguel Primo de Rivera y Orbaneja', AGES, carpeta 1, p. 19.
- 52 'Informe de Miguel Primo de Rivera sobre la comisión de servicio de entrega de armas de los rebeldes', febrero de 1898, AGES, carpeta 4, pp. 11–19. For the quotation, see p. 13.
- 53 'Hoja de Servicios de Miguel Primo de Rivera y Orbaneja', AGES, carpeta 1, p. 19.
- 54 Emilio Aguinaldo, *Reseña verídica de la revolución filipina* (Barcelona: Linkgua Digital, 2022), pp. 10–11; Informe de Miguel Primo de Rivera sobre la comisión de servicio de entrega de armas de los rebeldes', febrero de 1898, AGES, carpeta 4, p. 14.
- 55 'Hoja de Servicios de Miguel Primo de Rivera y Orbaneja', AGES, carpeta 1, p. 19.
- 56 Eduardo Aunós, *El general Primo de Rivera* (Madrid: Alhambra, 1944), p. 28.
- 57 'Hoja de Servicios de Miguel Primo de Rivera y Orbaneja', AGES, carpeta 1, p. 20.
- 58 'Hoja de Servicios de Miguel Primo de Rivera y Orbaneja', AGES, carpeta 1, p. 20.
- 59 'Hoja de Servicios de Miguel Primo de Rivera y Orbaneja', AGES, carpeta 1, p. 21.
- 60 Ana de Sagra, *Miguel Primo de Rivera. El hombre, el soldado y el político* (Jerez: Ayuntamiento de Jerez de la Frontera, 1973), p. 107.
- 61 Javier Tusell Gómez, *Radiografía de un golpe de estado: el ascenso al poder del general Primo de Rivera* (Madrid: Alianza, 1987), p. 30.
- 62 Ana de Sagra, *Miguel Primo de Rivera. El hombre, el soldado y el político* (Jerez: Ayuntamiento de Jerez de la Frontera, 1973), p. 114.
- 63 For the manifesto, see Jordi Casassas i Ymbert, *La Dictadura de Primo de Rivera – textos* (Barcelona: Anthropos, 1983), pp. 81–85.
- 64 Sebastian Balfour, *The End of the Spanish Empire, 1898–1923* (Oxford: OUP, 1997), pp. 230–231.
- 65 For mention of the colonial disaster as inspiration for the articles, see *El Pensamiento de Primo de Rivera. Sus notas, artículos y discursos* (Madrid: Sáez Hermanos/Junta de Propaganda Patriótica y Ciudadana), p. 169.
- 66 *El Pensamiento de Primo de Rivera. Sus notas, artículos y discursos* (Madrid: Sáez Hermanos/Junta de Propaganda Patriótica y Ciudadana), p. 169.
- 67 Javier Tusell Gómez, *Radiografía de un golpe de estado: el ascenso al poder del general Primo de Rivera* (Madrid: Alianza, 1987), pp. 32–33.
- 68 Geoffrey Jensen, 'Military Nationalism and the State: The Case of *fin-de-siècle* Spain', *Nations and Nationalism*, 6:2 (2000), pp. 257–274.
- 69 Alejandro Quiroga Fernández de Soto, 'Miguel Primo de Rivera. La espada y la palabra', in Alejandro Quiroga & Miguel Ángel del Arco Blanco (eds.), *Soldados de Dios y Apóstoles de la Patria. Las derechas españolas en la Europa de entreguerras* (Granada: Comares, 2010), p. 42.
- 70 Sebastian Balfour, *The End of the Spanish Empire, 1898–1923* (Oxford: OUP, 1997), p. 171.
- 71 Sebastian Balfour, 'The Lion and the Pig: Nationalism and National Identity in *fin-de-siècle* Spain', in Clare Mar-Molinero & Ángel Smith (eds.), *Nationalism and the Nation in the Iberian Peninsula* (Oxford: Berg, 1996), pp. 107–117.
- 72 'Hoja de Servicios de Miguel Primo de Rivera y Orbaneja', AGES, carpeta 1, p. 22.
- 73 Ana de Sagra, *Miguel Primo de Rivera. El hombre, el soldado y el político* (Jerez: Ayuntamiento de Jerez de la Frontera, 1973), p. 114.
- 74 Emilio Rodríguez Tarduchy, *Psicología del dictador y caracteres más salientes morales, sociales y políticos de la dictadura española* (Madrid: Junta de Propaganda y Ciudadana, 1929), p. 23.
- 75 Ana de Sagra, *Miguel Primo de Rivera. El hombre, el soldado y el político* (Jerez: Ayuntamiento de Jerez de la Frontera, 1973), p. 117.

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- 77 Sebastian Balfour, *The End of the Spanish Empire, 1898–1923* (Oxford: OUP, 1997), pp. 164–180.
- 78 Soledad Bengoechea Echaondo & Gemma Ramos Ramos, 'La patronal catalana y la huelga de 1902', *Historia Social*, 5 (1989), pp. 77–96.
- 79 'Hoja de Servicios de Miguel Primo de Rivera y Orbaneja', AGES, carpeta 1, p. 22.
- 80 Ángel Duarte, 'Ente el mito y la realidad. Barcelona 1902', *Ayer*, 4 (1991), pp. 166–167.
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- 83 Miguel Herrero García, *El General D. Miguel Primo de Rivera* (Madrid: Purcalla, 1947), pp. 45–46.
- 84 Ana de Sagrera, *Miguel Primo de Rivera. El hombre, el soldado y el político* (Jerez: Ayuntamiento de Jerez de la Frontera, 1973), p. 118.
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- 87 Ana de Sagrera, *Miguel Primo de Rivera. El hombre, el soldado y el político* (Jerez: Ayuntamiento de Jerez de la Frontera, 1973), p. 121.
- 88 *La Correspondencia Militar*, 13 March 1906.
- 89 *Heraldo de Madrid*, 13 March 1906.
- 90 *La Correspondencia Militar*, 13 March 1906.
- 91 *La Correspondencia Militar*, 16 March 1906.
- 92 Ana de Sagrera, *Miguel Primo de Rivera. El hombre, el soldado y el político* (Jerez: Ayuntamiento de Jerez de la Frontera, 1973), pp. 123–124.
- 93 *Heraldo de Madrid*, 16 March 1906.
- 94 *Heraldo de Madrid*, 16 March 1906.
- 95 *Heraldo de Madrid*, 16 March 1906.
- 96 'Hoja de Servicios de Miguel Primo de Rivera y Orbaneja', AGES, carpeta 1, p. 26.
- 97 'Hoja de Servicios de Miguel Primo de Rivera y Orbaneja', AGES, carpeta 1, p. 26.
- 98 'Hoja de Servicios de Miguel Primo de Rivera y Orbaneja', AGES, carpeta 1, p. 26.
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- 100 Rocio Primo de Rivera, *Los Primo de Rivera. Historia de una familia* (Madrid: Esfera de los Libros, 2005), p. 143.
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- 102 'Hoja de Servicios de Miguel Primo de Rivera y Orbaneja', AGES, carpeta 1, p. 29.
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- 109 Jacinto Capella, *La verdad de Primo de Rivera: intimidades y anécdotas del dictador* (Madrid: Imprenta Hijos de T. Minuesa, 1933), p. 28.
- 110 Ana de Sagrera, *Miguel Primo de Rivera. El hombre, el soldado y el político* (Jerez: Ayuntamiento de Jerez de la Frontera, 1973), p. 176.
- 111 Ana de Sagrera, *Miguel Primo de Rivera. El hombre, el soldado y el político* (Jerez: Ayuntamiento de Jerez de la Frontera, 1973), p. 178.

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- 113 Xavier Casals, *Miguel Primo de Rivera. El espejo de Franco* (Barcelona: Ediciones B, 2004), p. 154.
- 114 Xavier Casals, *Miguel Primo de Rivera. El espejo de Franco* (Barcelona: Ediciones B, 2004), p. 155.
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2 The Forging of a Conspirator (1920–1923)

On the morning of 15 July 1920, Miguel Primo de Rivera arrived in Valencia as the new Captain-General of the III Military Region. The general was happy. He was pleased with the reception that the local authorities had organised for him and he used the occasion to meet local journalists, before heading to the Captaincy-General to take formal command in his post.¹ That same afternoon, Primo visited the Basilica de la Virgen de los Desamparados (Our Lady of the Forsaken) alongside the Military Governor of the Province.² After the visit, the two generals probably discussed the workers' unrest in the city. When Primo took up his post, Valencia was a powder-keg. After Barcelona, the city was experiencing the most bitter labour conflicts in the whole of Spain. According to official statistics, between January 1917 and January 1921, there were 47 people killed and 94 injured in social conflicts.³ Primo had a quick taste of this situation. A few days after his arrival, the mayor of Catarroja, a municipality to the south of Valencia, was killed by 'some unionists of a communist revolutionary bent', and two weeks later, the carriage of the Conde de Salvatierra came under gunfire in the Grao district of the city, resulting in the death of the former Civil Governor of Barcelona and his sister, as well as serious injuries to his wife.⁴ Primo sensed 'an atmosphere of pessimism and demoralisation throughout the city', and among the local elites 'a terrible fear that I considered unfitting my prestige as the leading military authority'. As such, he resolved to act decisively.⁵

Years later, Primo would say that his time as Captain-General of Valencia was what convinced him definitively of 'the need to intervene in Spanish politics through different means to those usually used'.⁶ Primo learned two important lessons during his time in the city. The first was that the absence of a Civil Governor for the province left a power vacuum that the Captain-General could easily fill. Recalling his time in Valencia, Primo would write:

The post of Civil Governor had been vacant for some time, which was fortunate, because in agreement with the secretary of the Civil Governor and the Colonel of the *Guardia Civil*, we took some measures that were just the ticket for Valencia, and thanks to these [measures] we put an end to terrorist attacks.⁷

The second lesson that Primo learned in his new post was that the extra-judicial murders of trades unionists – which had been orchestrated since 1919 in Barcelona by Generals Milans del Bosch and Martínez Anido – could also be applied without difficulty in Valencia.

Primo went on to apply a policy in Valencia that was euphemistically referred to as a ‘firm hand’. In practice this meant having no problem feigning the attempted escape of prisoners so that they could be killed in cold blood, the so-called ‘*ley de fugas*’. On 8 January 1921, for example, the Civil Governor of Valencia, Salvador Muñoz, a man well-known for always supporting the police version of events when the *ley de fugas* was ‘applied’, was attacked by a group of anarcho-syndicalists while leaving a theatre. The attackers fired 12 shots into Muñoz’s car. The governor escaped uninjured, although one of his bodyguards was wounded in the attack. The vengeance of the authorities was swift and brutal. On 18 February, the *Guardia Civil* killed an anarcho-syndicalist in the city, claiming that he had been trying to flee.⁸ On 24 February, the *Benemérita* (Civil Guard) mortally wounded two other syndicalists while they were transferred from the police headquarters to the Model Prison in Valencia. According to the official version of events, a group of armed anarchists had tried to liberate their imprisoned comrades during the transfer, whereupon the prisoners tried to escape and were taken down. As could be expected in such police frame-ups, according to the authorities all the anarchists who had tried to rescue their comrades managed to escape without a trace.⁹

Primo did not see any problem with such illegal activities and indeed wanted to outline his antiterrorist policies to the Prime Minister, Eduardo Dato. In a letter dated four days after the death of the first syndicalist, Primo openly championed the case for killing members of the workers’ movement without due process, opining ‘a raid, a prisoner transfer, an attempt to escape and some shots will begin to solve the problem’.¹⁰ According to Primo, there was no other way to deal with syndicalism, since ‘ordinary justice and legislation’ within the constitution were ‘ineffective’.¹¹ In case Dato had not grasped the message, Primo wrote again to the Prime Minister five days later. In this new missive, the Captain-General of Valencia insisted that syndicalist terrorism could only be defeated by state terrorism and requested that the posts of civil governors instead be occupied by military officers. The following month, the artillery general Rafael Ripoll was named as Civil Governor of Valencia province. A few days later, Ripoll travelled to Barcelona to meet with Martínez Anido.¹² Primo’s letters to Dato, and the Prime Minister’s subsequent fulfilment of Primo’s request, demonstrated that Dato supported the killing of syndicalists and was minded to give the military all they considered necessary to continue the ‘dirty war’. The letters are also revealing of Primo’s morality. There can be no doubt that he was advocating state terrorism involving the extra-judicial killing of trade unionists in cold blood.

Primo complemented his ‘anti-terrorist’ policies by mobilising a Valencia version of the *Somatén* – a civil guard similar to that in Catalonia, which had been founded just a few months before the general took up his post in

the city.¹³ As he would later do in Catalonia, so here Primo deployed the local *Somatén* as support for the Army, using them to repress workers and to break strikes. Primo was also conscious of the importance of visuals – the need to ‘conquer the streets’. He reviewed the troops and the *Somatén* in the streets, in order to create the sense of a public space that was under military control. In almost everything relating to the social question, Primo’s reference point and guide was Martínez Anido in Barcelona. Thus, when Martínez Anido and General Miguel Arlegui y Bayonés – Chief of Police in Barcelona – staged a parade of civic guards through the streets of the Catalan capital to honour their own labours, Primo delightedly sent members of the Valencia *Somatén* to participate in the event, which brought together more than 40,000 armed men from around the country.¹⁴ Primo also experimented in Valencia with a form of politics of reward, which he first piloted with workers who refused to take part in strikes. In June 1921, for example, he decided to award the medal of Isabel la Católica to some workers who had refused to take part in a walk-out, thus rewarding strike-breakers with governmental recognition.¹⁵

Primo did not forget to enjoy himself during his stay in Valencia. As well as attending the occasional get-together at the Casino de la Agricultura, he gained a degree of notoriety for visiting bars, theatres, casinos and cabarets.¹⁶ Indeed, Primo gambling addiction almost managed to bankrupt him during his time in Valencia. As he would later confess to his friend Jacinto Capella in March 1923, ‘I had no money, because I had gambled it all away in 1920, when I was Captain-General of Valencia’.¹⁷ Primo notoriety as a ‘lothario’ was also strengthened during his posting in the city.¹⁸ The writer Vicente Blasco Ibáñez, for example, recounted a story he was told in Valencia, in which people were outraged by Primo because ‘he was found with a showgirl in the box of a small theatre, doing in public view what others would only dare to do behind closed doors’.¹⁹ This tale of a Captain-General and the showgirl having sex in the box of a theatre is probably nothing more than baseless gossip, but the anecdote nonetheless suggests that Primo was not only becoming more politically important in this period. The general was also constructing an image for himself as an affable, womanising and popular man. This image of a rascally general, beloved by the people, would be developed much more intensively during the subsequent dictatorship. Both before and after the coup of 13 September 1923, the flattering representation of Primo – often bordering on caricature – served to conceal the brutality of a general who organised the murder of syndicalists without any hint of remorse.

As well as unleashing state terrorism during his stay in Valencia, Primo was developing his ideas for an authoritarian government. As we saw in the previous chapter, in February 1920, his uncle, General Fernando Primo de Rivera, had written to Alfonso XIII recommending the installation of a dictatorial regime under military oversight. In March 1921, Miguel wrote to his uncle Fernando and detailed his plans for a future Conservative government:

I think there is no political education in Spain from above or below to govern with groups bound together by a programme [...] I think,

therefore, that parties are necessary, two or three at most: conservatives, liberals and radicals, without for the moment being able to think of any government other than that of the former, and even that strengthened in its efforts against revolutionary and terrorist syndicalism [...] What is important, at the moment, is to make the governing Conservative Party strong and united, and it must govern for a long time; as long as this parliament should last, which must be at least three years. Only then can they carry out the work of economic reconstruction and the reestablishment of social order, both of which are currently in ruins.²⁰

Primo further suggested that it would be sensible to create a directory of Conservatives, led by his uncle, which would appoint the Head of Government. The new Executive, continued Primo, would have as its principal objective the ‘elimination of terrorism and revolutionary syndicalism’, for which it would pass a special law, which would introduce summary justice and avoid the meddling of juries.²¹ Developing his theme of the authoritarian nature of the new government, Primo demanded that the right to strike be taken away from public sector workers, but balanced by an eight-hour working day for all Spaniards.²² The formation of a directory led by Fernando Primo de Rivera and the rebuilding of the Conservative Party made much sense to Miguel, who, in January 1921, had been elected as Senator for Cádiz Province on the Conservative ticket. But any plans for a Conservative government led by his uncle Fernando would be cut short by the latter’s death in May 1921. Fernando had been almost 90 years old. At a stroke, Miguel had lost his greatest political and professional sponsor, someone who had guided and protected him for decades, and who had acted almost as a father for most of his adult life. Even so, Fernando Primo de Rivera left one last gift for his nephew. The old general included in his will that the title of Marqués de Estella would go to Miguel. Deeply moved by the death of his uncle, Primo took charge of the funeral, which was attended by the highest echelons of Spanish society, including the King, the full cabinet, parliamentary deputies, senators, Captains-General, representatives of the Church, a detachment of *Guardia Civil*, a guard of honour and hundreds of onlookers.²³

On 8 June 1921, just a few days after the death of his uncle, Miguel was named Captain-General of the First Military Region, based in Madrid.²⁴ Primo was not too enamoured with the posting. As he would state several years later, he had been called to take the post ‘against his wishes’, in order to replace Francisco Aguilera, who was moving to the *Consejo Supremo de Guerra y Marina* (Supreme Court of the Army and Navy). Aguilera had recommended Primo because he had served under him in Morocco and Madrid and appeared the best man for the job.²⁵ Nobody could know at this point that just five years later General Aguilera would lead an insurrection against Primo, who was, by that time, dictator of Spain. It is telling that the prospect of spending more time with his family – who, after all, lived in Madrid – was not mentioned by

the new Captain-General as a reason to accept the new posting enthusiastically. As we have already seen, however, Primo was hardly a family man.

Having barely started his new assignment, rumours were soon running rife among the troops about a military disaster in Morocco, at Annual. At the end of July, Primo wrote in the standing orders for his men that since soldiers were likely to hear stories 'motivated by weakness' on the streets, his officers had to tell them the truth. According to this version of reality, not only had most of the soldiers in Morocco not fled in disarray in the face of the enemy, as was being suggested. On the contrary, they had 'known on this occasion to keep their military honour and further decorate the history of the Army and Navy with glorious deeds'.²⁶ What Primo was in-effect attempting was to combat rumours with 'official' lies, which enjoyed a veneer of truthfulness precisely because they came from the government. This standing order presaged the 'official notes' that Primo would later use in his dictatorship – official notices that newspapers would be obliged to print – which were used frequently to counter rumours and 'fake news'.

Within days of publishing the standing order for the upholding of the honour of Spanish soldiers in Africa, Primo was himself directly affected by the military debacle at Annual. On 6 August 1921, his younger brother Fernando fell in defence of Monte Arruit, having been gravely wounded by a grenade. Miguel set off for Morocco that same evening. Two days later, he arrived in Melilla with his brother's widow, María Cobo de Gúzman y Moreno, who was known in the family as Marichu.²⁷ Spanish soldiers in the city were waiting for orders to move to relieve around 3000 comrades who were desperately defending the position at Monte Arruit. On 9 August, however, General Dámaso Berenguer, fearful that the Riffians might even take Melilla, ordered the surrender of Monte Arruit, even though 25,000 Spanish reinforcements had arrived in the city from Spain that very day to begin an offensive. After surrendering and throwing down their arms, practically every one of Spanish soldiers at Monte Arruit had their throats cut by the Riffians. In less than three weeks, the Spanish had lost more than 12,000 men and practically all the territory that they had controlled outside of Melilla.²⁸ Profoundly shaken by events, Miguel returned to Spain with Marichu. He had lost his favourite brother, and someone who Miguel considered his mentoree.²⁹ Marichu, meanwhile, had been left a widow with 3 children at the age of just 30.

If Annual proved anything to Primo, it was that Spain must quit Morocco at the first practical opportunity. On 25 November 1921, Primo restated his 'abandonist' ideas in his first speech in the Spanish Senate. Having made mention of his uncle and brother as glorious servants of the Fatherland now recently deceased, the new Marqués de Estella repeated part of his speech from 1917 that had cost him the post of Military Governor of Cádiz:

I think I have made it clear that I do not propose a hasty abandonment from Africa, a flight, but rather moving away from a direction that

I sincerely and loyally believe is bad for the Fatherland, taking with us the possible advantages of the efforts and sacrifices made, compensating them by obtaining that which more than anything embodies the national will, reclaiming for the nation all the attributes and circumstances of its dignity, and simultaneously facilitating the development of its aspirations and interests within a state of internal moral strength, respect and consideration abroad, without which neither individuals nor communities can lead a gallant and happy life.³⁰

Immediately thereafter, Primo explained the importance of Gibraltar, arguing that a future departure from Morocco ought to be done for strategic reasons. Primo asked the senators to imagine the unfortunate position Spain would find itself in if it had to confront a ‘nation which had a regular navy’, precisely because it was obliged to maintain an important military presence on the other side of the Strait.³¹ Showcasing a medical language so common to regenerationist thinking, Primo added that arguing his abandonist policy had hindered the action of Spanish governments in Morocco was tantamount to ‘accusing the doctor of killing the patient because he offered a grave diagnosis’.³²

Just as in 1917, Primo’s abandonist speech was going to cost him his job. On 26 November, the day after his speech in the Senate, the Minister of war, Juan de la Cierva y Peñafiel, sacked Primo as Captain-General of the I Region.³³ The following day, the minister explained in the Senate that he had been forced to order the dismissal because governments had to know that they had ‘the support of their freely appointed officials’.³⁴ Even so, De la Cierva described Primo as a ‘friend’, and spoke of the ‘fondness, which is very old and which I will always have’ for the Marqués de Estella and reaffirmed Primo’s ‘merits’ and ‘loyalty’.³⁵ For his part, Primo declared in the Senate that he respected and accepted the government position, but that he did not share it.³⁶ In the same debate, Primo was criticised by the Conservative Marqués de Valero de Palma, who accused the Marqués de Estella of betraying the memory of the Spanish conquistadors in America for proposing a withdrawal from Africa. Primo replied that he had the Cross of San Fernando (First-Class) awarded on military merit, that he acknowledged Cortés, Pizarro, Almagro and Legazpi as ‘true pillars of national glory’, but that they were now living ‘in the twentieth century’ and that he himself was not an ‘imperialist’.³⁷ ‘I simply do not share the idea of the greatness of the Fatherland and the advantage to its strength in shows of imperialism’, he declared.³⁸ Primo’s nationalism seemed to have practical limits. He sought instead to concentrate efforts on the internal reconstruction of Spain, rather than weakening the nation in colonial adventures.

Primo’s response to the Marqués de Valero de Palma also highlighted a habitual characteristic in his speeches in the Senate, which he would later repeat without fail during the dictatorship, namely, a display of false modesty. The general frequently referred to himself in the Senate as a ‘modest voice’, someone who was afraid of boring his fellow senators with his inexpert words

and his 'very poor erudition'.³⁹ Moreover, Primo also presented himself as someone

averse to all display and notoriety, without denying for a moment the esteem of the Spanish people which I am honoured to enjoy; I believe that showmanship is a weakness, and popularity, when sought, by playing to the crowd, would be unfitting for a gentleman.⁴⁰

By the end of 1921, then, Primo was clearly crafting his political image, one in which he was viewed as a war hero, a deeply modest man, who considered it populist to play to the crowd, but who appreciated the admiration of the Spanish people.

In his Senate speeches, we can also observe Primo the journalist, a key feature in his political personality that would later become more pronounced after the coup of September 1923. During the same debate in the Senate with the Marqués de Valero de Palma, Primo mentioned an article he had published in the Conservative newspaper *ABC* on 14 August 1921, rousing Spanish soldiers who were going to Morocco to punish 'a savage race [...] because we are men, and because if we don't, our wives, our mothers, our sisters and our lovers will despise us'.⁴¹ Aside from the clear sense of 'colonial masculinity' and the highly orientalist representation of Riffians as subhuman that can be gleaned from Primo's words, the Senator for Cádiz wanted to make clear that he had improved as a 'journalist' in the 'short time' he had been Captain-General, and 'without the vanity of even having to appear as author'.⁴² But Primo went further in defending himself. He ended his speech with some reflections on the support he had received from his 'comrades' in the Army, which in truth sounded more like a veiled threat. Should anybody imagine his posture on Morocco might have demoralised Spanish troops, he declared:

No, nobody has thought that, and in the Army, not one of my comrades who have known me for so long; if they had thought that, they would not have offered me from Friday until today such continuous proof of their esteem, which can only be interpreted as affection if they had indeed been in disagreement with me. And the Senate should not think that it ever crosses my mind that this proof of affection could lead to ideas or thoughts for a specific action. No; because the Army does not offer such tendentious statements, nor would I accept them. It is kind of a good comrade to consider the difficulty in which he finds another comrade.⁴³

The 'specific action' that Primo referred to cannot be anything other than a potential *coup d'état*. Moreover, the fact that the Marqués de Estella felt it necessary to deny a conspiracy, despite nobody asking him to do anything of the sort, suggests a degree of sabre rattling at the end of a tumultuous year, which had seen the monarch himself publicly criticise the parliamentary system in his famous speech in Córdoba in May 1921. A week after his comments about

the ‘special action’, Primo once again raised the spectre of a possible military coup in the Senate, before again denying that one was going to take place. In a debate over the responsibility for the disaster at Annual and the revival of the *Juntas de Defensa*, Primo accused the ‘constitutional machinery’ of ‘getting in the way’ and described the *Juntas* as a protest movement ‘against an entire century of perverse customs of favouritism and peddling influence’.⁴⁴ Returning to his beloved medical and regenerationist language, he went on:

I am certain that, as the causes of the illness disappear, the patient will be cured, and I believe that the esteemed doctors, who are so abundant in this place, to the honour of the Chamber, will agree that these diseases of the blood, of internal origin, are not cured by ointments or cauterisation, but rather by cleansing agents, and as we purify, I believe that the bad humours will depart. The Army, the Army leadership, who have the best intentions, are ready to act; and thus, in a few years Spain will be free of a disease which threatened to get worse, and in other times would have filled the streets with blood.⁴⁵

Seven days later, Primo insisted that his work was that of ‘the most modest of generals’ who

assist Governments, and even more so those, like this one, carrying such heavy burdens, but doing so with such high spirits, who offer men such a solid example of selflessness, and who have, therefore, all of our support and affection.⁴⁶

Since such emphatic support for the government had not been sought – and had been offered in such an exaggerated manner – this intervention must have left a shadow of doubt over Primo de Rivera’s loyalty. Meanwhile, the Marqués de Estella was presenting himself as a right-wing officer, but one who was free from party and with his own ideas. On 14 December 1921, Primo offered further reminder of this stance in a heated debate with the *Maurista* Antonio Goicoechea, President of the *Liga Africanista Española* (Spanish Africanist League).⁴⁷ It would prove to be the last time that Primo would address the chamber. In defence of his ‘abandonist’ views on the Moroccan question, the *Jerezano* declared:

I pride myself on being practically a man of the parties of the right, a convinced monarchist and a fervent Alfonsine, I am proud of the titles that His Majesty has kindly bestowed upon me and that I belong to the social class in which I reside, and being invested as a Spanish soldier, I have been able to maintain this position, which is independent from general political groupings of the towns, parties and politics. It is nothing new in our contemporary history, in which notable generals and illustrious magnates think as such.⁴⁸

At the end of 1921, Primo saw himself as an untypical man of the right, a famous and independent general, removed from politics and political parties, someone who held his own abandonist ideas about Morocco, was critical of the clientelism of the Restoration System and had in mind the possibility that the Army might intervene in the parliamentary system. Even so, at this point, Primo was still far from being the instigator of a military coup, as he would become by September 1923. Nor, at this point, would he have been able to lead a conspiracy. In truth, in December 1921 the Marqués de Estella found himself in a difficult political position, having been relieved as Captain-General of the I Region (Madrid) and attacked from all sides by Conservative senators for his stance on Spanish colonialism in Africa. Moreover, the death of his uncle had left Primo without his greatest political champion. Nonetheless, shortly thereafter, lady luck smiled once again on Miguel Primo de Rivera. On 8 March 1922, the government of Antonio Maura fell, resulting in his replacement as Prime Minister with the Conservative Rafael Sánchez Guerra. Within days, the new Prime Minister had named Primo as Captain-General of the IV Military Region (Catalonia). The decision would prove fateful for Primo, and in no small way to the history of Spain as well. To celebrate his posting, Primo went to dinner with his cousin Sancho and his friends Jacinto Capella, Clemente and Robador. At dinner, they order Primo's favourite dishes, American-style lobster and pigeon. The general told his friends that he liked Barcelona better than Madrid and that he was delighted to be posted there. Primo also mentioned that he had bankrupted himself through gambling, which meant that his cousin Sancho had to pick up the bill for dinner.⁴⁹

Primo's posting as Captain-General of Catalonia in March 1922 placed him in a privileged position. It was here that the idea of leading a potential coup began to mature. Primo was very clear from the outset what kind of policy he intended to pursue in Barcelona. Within 24 hours of arriving in the city, he met with Martínez Anido – who was then Civil Governor of Barcelona province – presumably to draw up battle plans for actions against the anarchists of the *Sindicato Único*.⁵⁰ The following day, Primo reviewed the members of the Barcelona *Sometent*, a civic guard under military supervision created in January 1919 with the support of the right-wing Catalanist *Lliga Regionalista*, the Spanish nationalists of the *Unión Monárquica Nacional (UMN)* and the Carlist movement, and financed by the city's economic elites.⁵¹ From the Captaincy-General of Barcelona, with the help of Martínez Anido and General Miguel Arlegui (Head of the Barcelona police), and with the backing of a large part of the Catalan employers, Primo strengthened the parapolice networks which were tasked with the murder of anarchists, while promoting the *Sindicatos Libres*, yellow-trade unions which included members of the *Sometent*.⁵² The virulent anti-Catalanism and radical anti-communism of the *Sindicatos Libres* was much to Primo's tastes. This might explain why Primo kept his own personal archive of *La Protesta*, one of the newspapers of this rather peculiar far-right workers' movement, which was financed by Barcelona businessmen.⁵³

Alongside social conflict, Primo also encountered a heavy dose of nationalist conflict in Barcelona. Catalan nationalism was experiencing a period

of renewal in the early-1920s, following the failure of the campaign for an autonomy statute between 1918 and 1919. At the start of June 1922, young members of the *Lliga*, disaffected with the direction of the party, alongside republican Catalan nationalists, founded the *Acció Catalana*, a grouping that sought the creation of an independent or federal Catalan republic, along the lines of those fighting for the nationalist cause in Ireland.⁵⁴ On 18 July 1922, other minority groupings within the Catalanist spectrum founded *Estat Català*, which had an open independentist programme. Nonetheless, it is fair to say that the moderately Catalanist *Lliga Regionalista* remained the largest body. This restructuring of Catalanist politics was also preceded by a reshaping of Spanish nationalism in Catalonia. In November 1918, for example, the *Liga Patriótica Española* (LPE) had been founded, which brought together followers of Maura, Lerrouxist republicans, Carlists and officers from the Barcelona garrison. The LPE embodied the most populist branch of Spanish nationalism, specialising in street fighting and *pistolerismo* (gun law) against radical Catalanists.⁵⁵ This Spanish-nationalist ‘shock force’ courted the support of the working classes through assemblies, street meetings and a series of publications characterised by highly demagogic rhetoric. In the Spring of 1919, the LPE was said to have thousands of members, and while the exact number is difficult to estimate, what was clear is that Spanish nationalism in Barcelona was a cross-class phenomenon.⁵⁶

In a similar vein, from February 1919, the *Unión Monárquica Nacional* (UNM) emerged in Catalonia and did so in direct opposition to the *Lliga*’s campaign for an autonomy statute. This new group brought together liberals and conservatives and was led by upper-class Spanish nationalists in Barcelona. It also enjoyed support from sections of the middle classes and thus improved the electoral fortunes of the monarchists in Catalonia.⁵⁷ Finally, the so-called ‘military party’, that is to say, the officer corps of the Captaincy-General in Barcelona, came to play a key role in the restructuring of Spanish nationalism in the region. From at least 1917, officers from the garrison had constituted a power base that was partially autonomous from the government in Madrid.⁵⁸ It had been the Captaincy-General that had driven the creation of the *Sindicato Libre* in 1919, mobilised the *Sometent* to break strikes, and which had ordered officers and NCOs in civilian clothes to go into battle with guns and physical violence against the more radical Catalan nationalists. In short, by the time Primo took charge as Captain-General in March 1922, the military ‘lobby’ in Barcelona had deeply anti-worker and anti-Catalan nationalist roots. Moreover, it was operating in a quasi-autonomous fashion from the central government in Madrid.⁵⁹

In 1930, Primo said the following about the nationalist question in Catalonia:

During my time in Catalonia, it was not so much terrorism, which had been so bad, that bothered me. It was separatism, which, cloaked in the guise of moderate demands for autonomy, integrated autonomy,

regionalism, Catalan solidarity and other such disguises, was creating disaffections and rancour against the rest of Spain and against the unity of the Fatherland that I want to assume went far beyond the wishes and even the forecasts of those who, with their imprudent and unceasing homilies, and already embarked on this most dangerous path, could not avoid the collapse that threatened the unity of the Fatherland, spreading the virus to other regions.⁶⁰

For all the emphasis that Primo placed upon the nationalist question, it nonetheless seems clear that his chief priority while Captain-General of Barcelona, and what came to earn a broad social backing among the Catalan elites, including prominent Catalanists, was the dirty war against anarchism.⁶¹ From the outset, the so-called 'healthy elements' in Barcelona – bosses, monarchists, leading members of the *Lliga* and members of the *Sometent* – were happy with the policy of murdering anarchists that Primo instituted. In short, the social question clearly took priority over the nationalist question. Even so, and despite the words just quoted, Primo distinguished perfectly well between regionalists, autonomists and independentists and had no qualms about cultivating the support of broad swathes of the Catalanist movement after his arrival in Barcelona. According to Josep Puig I Cadafalch, the President of the *Mancomunitat* – a Catalan authority with a measure of devolved power conceded by the Spanish state, which operated between 1914 and 1925 – Primo 'did not miss an opportunity to praise what we most esteem; he showed his fondness for the Catalan language by offering words [in Catalan] in his speeches to members of the *Somatén*'.⁶² Meanwhile, when they met at the Teatro del Liceo in Barcelona, Primo gave the leader of the *Lliga*, Francesc Cambó, the impression that he considered him to be the general's superior, referring to him as 'dear leader'.⁶³

Primo knew perfectly well how to ingratiate himself with Barcelona high society, playing the role of an affable man prepared to listen to everybody, and ready to defend the privileges of the upper classes with violence.⁶⁴ Since his arrival, he had attended the soirées held by the Catalan bourgeoisie, such as those in the famous salons of Baroness Maldà, in which he was encouraged to use a firm hand against the workers' movement.⁶⁵ The Marqués de Estella went often to the city's Lyceum (*Liceo*), where he could combine his love for theatre with a chance to socialise and engage in politics. Primo also betrayed his capricious side in Barcelona, not least when he ordered the patio annex to the formal dining hall of the Captaincy-General be remodelled in the style of his native Jerez.⁶⁶ Meanwhile, there is no reason to think that Primo's gambling addiction and his fondness for women were in any way less marked during his time in Barcelona.⁶⁷ Indeed, as we have already seen, some Catalan aristocrats complained about Primo's drunken tastes for women from the lower-classes during these years.

Meanwhile, Primo fully grasped his role was that of protector of the 'counter-terrorist' networks set up by Martínez Anido and Arlegui. In August 1922, following the resumption of anarchist attacks, the *Diputación de Barcelona*



Figure 2.1 Signed picture of General Miguel Primo de Rivera in the early 1920s. Credit: Album.

(provincial council), under the control of the *Lliga Regionalista*, offered an ‘energetic protest’ at what they considered to be the ineffectiveness of the police. As Civil Governor, Martínez Anido offered his resignation to the Prime Minister José Sánchez Guerra. However, Primo de Rivera made it clear to the Prime Minister in a threatening tone that he could not sack Martínez Anido.⁶⁸

Primo was throwing himself into a characteristic tactic of the 'military party' of overstepping the mark with Madrid and forcing the central government to be complicit with his policy in Catalonia. He was hardly alone in this particular instance. Joining the Captain-General in demanding from Madrid that Martínez Anido remain in post were the *Fomento del Trabajo Nacional* (the most important employers' organisation in Spain), the Chambers of Commerce, the Catalan Employers' Federation, the Banking Association and the *Unión Monárquica Nacional*. Ultimately, Sánchez Guerra confirmed that the Civil Governor would stay in post.⁶⁹

With renewed backing for himself and his murderous practices, Martínez Anido resumed planning for further violence alongside Arlegui. On 25 August, gunmen from the *Sindicato Libre* attacked the anarchist leader Ángel Pestaña in Manresa. Pestaña was hit several times and taken to the local hospital badly wounded. Arlegui then ordered a group of gunmen to finish Pestaña off. The doctors and nurses at the hospital in Manresa stood guard to prevent the attackers from killing Pestaña and the gunmen decided to wait at the entrance.⁷⁰ In the end, only the personal intervention of the Minister of the Interior in Madrid, Vicente Piniés, forced Martínez Anido and Arlegui to withdraw the gunmen from the hospital. The attempt on Pestaña and the impunity of the gunmen became the subject of debate in the Spanish Cortes. The socialist leader Indalecio Prieto made the accusation in parliament that Martínez Anido was behind the shooting, as well as many other incidents involving members of the *Sindicato Libre*. Once again, the Civil Governor was threatened with the sack and once again Sánchez Guerra kept him in post.⁷¹

Martínez Anido resolved to restore some credibility and to do so he prepared a fake assault upon his own life. On the night of 23–24 October, four anarchist gunmen were set up by police informers. Three anarchists were killed in a police ambush, but a fourth survived for several hours, albeit badly wounded, after being subjected to the *ley de fugas*. The man was able to tell a judge that he and his comrades had been tricked by police infiltrators, who had persuaded them that they were going to make an attempt against Martínez Anido, and who had then shot them in cold blood. On the evening of 24 October, the Director General of Security, Millán Millán de Priego y Bedmar, sacked Miguel Arlegui. That same afternoon, Prime Minister Sánchez Guerra had a bitter exchange on the telephone with Martínez Anido, in which the Civil Governor offered confused accounts of what had happened, while denying that either he or Arlegui had anything to do with the death of the anarchists in the ambush the previous night, or in the attack against Pestaña. The following day, Martínez Anido tendered his resignation in solidarity with Arlegui, as indeed the Prime Minister had hoped he would do. Francesc Cambó tried to persuade Martínez Anido to reconsider and remain in his post, but the Civil Governor was not prepared to change his mind. The King himself threatened not to sign the order for the dismissal and warned Sánchez Guerra of the possible repercussions with the Army if it went ahead. The monarch is said to have told the Prime Minister that 'I have to say, you have balls the size of the Toledo Cathedral'.⁷²

The dismissals of Arlegui and Martínez Anido managed to ease the regime of terror the two officers had unleashed in Catalonia, but it certainly did not end it. Many were pleased with the removal of the generals whose murderous practices had become infamous throughout Spain. Miguel de Unamuno, for example, described Martínez Anido as ‘an epileptic who paid mercenary killers with money arising from turning a blind eye to illegal gambling’, while the novelist Vicente Blasco Ibáñez regarded Arlegui as a ‘demented alcoholic’ responsible for more than 500 killings in Barcelona.⁷³ For his part, Martínez Anido maintained his ‘denialist’ approach. After the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera, he would declare that he had never used the *ley de fugas* in his campaign against the anarchist movement.⁷⁴ For Primo, the removal of Martínez Anido signalled the loss of an ‘important collaborator’.⁷⁵ Ironically, however, Primo would benefit from the removal of his friend. Martínez Anido was replaced in the post of Civil Governor by a civilian, and this led the Catalan employers to feel that Primo was the only one who could carry forward the work started by Milans del Bosch and Martínez Anido. Effectively, the general had come to be seen as a counter-revolutionary bulwark in Catalonia. In future, if they had problems, the employers would turn to the Military Headquarters rather than the Civil Governor of Barcelona.

Such problems did not take long to arrive. In the Spring of 1923, the dismissal of several tram drivers affiliated to the CNT led to the calling of a general strike among transport workers in Barcelona. By the start of May, the city was completely paralysed. Dozens of factories and stores were forced to close through lack of supplies, while the streets were filling up with refuse. Violence also became a key feature of the dispute. Anarchist militants soon began to murder employers and scab workers, while many trade unionists themselves became victims of right-wing gunmen. For his part, Primo ordered the reinstatement of police and soldiers who had led the ‘dirty war’ in Barcelona and had left the city after the fall of Arlegui and Martínez Anido. Meanwhile, the employers, led by the *Fomento del Trabajo Nacional*, accused the new Civil Governor, Salvador Raventós, of supporting the anarchist *Sindicato Único* and declared that Primo de Rivera was their only hope.⁷⁶ Similarly, the Carlist press began a campaign against Raventós, criticising his lack of action and opposing the negotiated end to the strike which the Civil Governor had proposed.⁷⁷ The shooting in the back of two *somatenistas* at the Les Corts stadium while watching a football match proved to be the last straw.⁷⁸ The employers published a letter demanding strong measures from the government and the sacking of Raventós as Civil Governor.

Primo de Rivera played his hand extremely well during the strike, so much so that he became, practically, the viceroy of Catalonia. At the start of the conflict, he declared that the Army could not remain passive in the face of events and proceeded immediately to mobilise members of the *Sometent*, whom he reviewed in public for good measure.⁷⁹ Primo strongly believed that the strike could be partially overcome by showing strength on the streets. Accordingly, he organised military parades through the streets of Barcelona, in what was

nothing less than a demonstration of force for the striking workers and an attempt to mobilise the masses behind the employers.⁸⁰ Primo also used the Army to drive cars and trucks during the strike and to guard branches of banks during the day – with the *Sometent* taking over guard duties at night – both to break the strike and to appease the well-to-do in the city.⁸¹ The Captain-General also tried to persuade the central government to declare martial law in the region so that he could organise the repression of workers while constitutional guarantees were suspended. Madrid refused to accede, however.⁸² Tension between civil authority in Madrid and military authority in Catalonia soon reached such a level that, within ten days of the start of the strike, Primo had to deny that the Barcelona garrison was preparing to launch a coup.⁸³ Astute, and with a keen sense for any political opportunity, Primo took advantage in the days following the dismissal of Civil Governor Raventós to meet with dozens of business owners and small traders, who flocked *en masse* to the Barcelona General Captaincy to ask for the general's protection.⁸⁴

The arrival of Francisco Barber as the new Civil Governor did not change much. As with Raventós, Barber supported a negotiated settlement to the strike and found himself openly opposed, both by the business owners and by Primo himself. On 7 June, negotiations between the employers, the unions and the government broke down.⁸⁵ Two days later, Barber was booed, insulted and jostled by a crowd at the funeral of José Franquesa Sardany, a Carlist, *somatenista* and member of the *Sindicato Libre* who had been killed by anarchists. Primo intervened and had the Civil Governor hurried to his car. Barber fled the scene, while Primo was left behind to receive cheers, applause and *vivas* directed towards him, Spain and the Army. If Primo's ego needed any confirmation that he was someone much appreciated among the city's conservative classes, this was the definitive proof.⁸⁶ From that point onwards, Primo began to think of himself not only as the perfect man to solve the crisis in Barcelona but also that of the country at large, even if the latter required a *coup d'état* to achieve. Years later, he would write about the situation caused by the transport strike:

What to say about the state of mood of those, that only in me could they place their confidence and urge me to do something, to proceed as I would, but in such a way as to liberate Catalonia from the catastrophe that so clearly threatened it?⁸⁷

During the first days of June, Primo established contact with General Francisco Aguilera, a man whom the *Jerezano* admired and who held a very dim view on the new liberal government of Manuel García Prieto. From the correspondence between the two generals, it is clear that they were already mulling over the possibility of a coup, although at this stage nothing was planned. Nor was it clear who might lead such a rebellion, nor the form of government that would be created after any successful uprising. Aguilera and Primo agreed to meet in Madrid to continue plotting whenever the next occasion presented itself.⁸⁸

Ironically, it was the coalition government of Manuel García Prieto, the Marqués de Alhucemas, which unwittingly facilitated the meeting between Primo and Aguilera in the third week of June. In light of the continuing deterioration of the situation in Barcelona, Primo and Barber had been called to Madrid for discussions.⁸⁹ Well aware that Primo had the support of the employers and all of the Conservative classes in Barcelona, García Prieto dared not sack Primo, but he had no such problem in dismissing Barber. With the removal of the Civil Governor, Madrid had effectively confirmed the victory of the military faction in Barcelona. Primo took advantage of his stay in Madrid to see General Aguilera once more. Nonetheless, to the disgust of Primo, Aguilera refused to participate in any kind of insurrection against the government and advised the Marqués de Estella against getting embroiled in plotting coups.⁹⁰ According to Primo's account, Aguilera told him 'Miguel, you are delirious; you have slept badly, you are very young and rash, and you don't understand that it is going to be a disaster; I cannot follow you down this path nor can I help you'.⁹¹ Primo proceeded to meet with the Military Governor of Madrid, Juan O'Donnell y Vargas (Duque de Tetuán), and the so-called 'quadrilateral' of officers who were spending their days plotting to put an end to the constitutional order, namely, generals José Cavalcanti, Antonio Dabán, Federico Berenguer and Leopoldo Saro. The four men began to see Primo as a serious candidate to lead an uprising, among other reasons because he was the highest-ranking officer, and because Primo himself seemed keen to lead the coup.⁹² Primo also took advantage of his time in the capital to meet with the King. We do not know if the Marqués de Estella mentioned or even hinted to Alfonso XIII about his plans for a coup. It is nonetheless almost certain that he described to the King in minute detail – as he would have done for anybody who cared to listen – the difficult situation in Catalonia, while presenting himself to the monarch as the only person capable of solving the crisis by military means.

Primo returned to Barcelona on 23 June a happy man. He had won the battle with Barber – and by implication over civil authority – and had now become the leader of the conspiracy. Upon arriving at the *Estació de França*, Primo was welcomed as a hero by a 'huge crowd', who gave him a 'deafening and enthusiastic round of applause'.⁹³ The crowd also shouted slogans against civilian authority and the government. Waiting for Primo as he left the train were all of the 'healthy forces' in the city, including the mayor, Fernando Fabra i Puig, the Marqués de Alella, generals from the Barcelona garrison, the interim Civil Governor, Ángel de Vera, as well as

Chief Prosecutor don Gonzalo Fernández de la Mora, the Chief of Police don Juan Oller, the mayor's assistant Señor Maynés, the Head of the City Police don Manuel Ribé, the full councils of the *Fomento del Trabajo Nacional*, Chambers of Commerce of Industry and Property, the banks, the Catalan Agricultural Institute of San Isidro, the Compañía Transatlántica, the Employers' Federation, the Guilds' Association and

all of the corporations and economic entities, as well as an enormous showing from the members of the *Somatén*.⁹⁴

After greeting all those present, Primo was to be taken by car to the Captaincy-General. The problem, however, was that

the public who had filled the station and the areas around it surrounded the vehicle in such a way that it could barely move; it was in such a fashion, and moving with great difficulty, given the enormous gathering of people, who were cheering the Marqués de Estella and the Army ceaselessly, that he arrived at the Captaincy-General.⁹⁵

Primo was moved by the show of popular support, and without doubt it would have reinforced his desire to lead a coup. Having arrived at the headquarters, he was compelled to go twice onto the balcony to acknowledge the hundreds in the ‘crowds who applauded him without pause, the sound of many “vivas” for the brave general and the army, as well as for Catalonia, Barcelona and Spain’.⁹⁶ Primo next met with the officers of the garrison and the leaders of the *Sometent* to get up-to-date on the transport strike. He then left for a few minutes to talk to reporters, who, aware of the political significance that Primo was acquiring and the rumours of a *coup d'état* that were swirling around Barcelona, asked the general if he still sided with the government:

Seemingly annoyed by the question, the Marqués de Estella took a few moments to answer, before saying that the Minister of the Interior had approved his handling [of the post] in parliament, adding finally that he was not a politician, that he would always fulfil his duty and that he would fight in every way for the return to peace that the people long for.⁹⁷

In truth, Primo was lying shamelessly to the journalists. Since his arrival in Barcelona as Captain-General he had been working tirelessly to gather support for a coup, which he had already decided he would lead. Indeed, Primo planned the uprising with General José Sanjurjo, Military Governor of Zaragoza and well-known *Africanista*, and with the colonels in command of Barcelona, who were closely tied to the *Juntas*.⁹⁸ The steps taken by Primo and the Quadriateral in turn brought General Aguilera to speed up his own candidature to lead a civic-military uprising. Aguilera was accused of having impeded – in his role on the *Consejo Superior de la Guerra y la Marina* – Dámaso Berenguer's appeal being sent to the Senate, following charges over the latter's role in the disaster at Annual. When Aguilera went to the Senate on 5 July to explain his inaction, Sánchez Guerra slapped him. Following the altercation, a humiliated and shaken Aguilera made a very poor showing in the Senate. Meanwhile, Sánchez Guerra was transformed into the chief defender of civilian authority, while Aguilera's prestige collapsed in the eyes of the military establishment and in

the eyes of public opinion. Primo saw an opportunity to remove a potential rival as head of the uprising and wrote to Cavalcanti:

As to what you tell me about how the downfall [of Aguilera] we now require his complete removal from the indispensable pursuit of our patriotic task. Man overboard without a lifeline.⁹⁹

In the days following his visit to Madrid, Primo combined conspiratorial activities with his efforts to end the transport strike. He stepped up the involvement of the Army in guaranteeing transport facilities in Barcelona, ordering still more soldiers to drive trucks and protect them. On 28 June, Primo ordered a raid on the general headquarters of the anarchist *Confederación Nacional del Trabajo* (CNT), which resulted in the arrest of 18 anarchist leaders. On 12 July, the anarchists declared the end of the strike. The dispute had left 22 dead and 32 wounded and had involved over 140,000 workers.¹⁰⁰ Primo had defeated both the anarchists and the civil government of Barcelona, but it had required a bloody repression, as well as the extensive involvement of the Army and the *Sometent* to break the strike, to say nothing of the mass arrest of the CNT leadership. The lesson that Primo took from his victory in the strike was that there was no need to respect either civilian authority or constitutional guarantees.

The end of the strike did not mean the end of social tension, however. The summer of 1923 was marked by a series of attacks on banks, hotels and businesses orchestrated by anarchists. Just a month after the end of the transport strike, the military authorities notified Madrid about the detonation of numerous explosives and the discovery of numerous bombs in Barcelona.¹⁰¹ On 5 August, for example, the police raided the *Círculo Anarquista* in Sants, where they discovered ‘eight revolvers, four pistols, five ammunition clips, three sabres, two pieces of gunpowder fuse, and almost a thousand glass tubes used to contain acids for bomb making’.¹⁰² Seventeen anarchists were arrested. The judge sent ‘the glass tubes found in said centre, which it is believed are used for bomb making’ to the Artillery Ordinance.¹⁰³ The report sent from the Captancy-General to the Ministry of the Interior in Madrid stated that ‘For the first time, *Solidaridad Obrera* believes the truth of the reports of the police and adds that this freedom to carry such arms and explosives in union premises should no longer continue’.¹⁰⁴ It is difficult to know if what the report claimed – that the anarchists had renounced the practice of keeping arms in their premises – was true or an exaggeration. Nonetheless, it led those in Madrid to believe that Primo was winning the war against the anarchists. Even if this were true, Primo did not want to lose momentum, and so he maintained a fierce repression against the anarchist movement and continued to use the Army and *Sometent* to patrol the streets of Barcelona both day and night.¹⁰⁵ That summer, when the rumour began to circulate in Barcelona that Madrid was considering the eventual abolition of the *Sometent*, Primo rapidly published a manifesto in which he unequivocally disavowed the idea.

The Captain-General achieved his desired outcome with this public declaration, and all the forces of 'order' in Barcelona were happy to support his manifesto.¹⁰⁶

Throughout July and August, Primo was also spending time consolidating support for his insurrectionary plan. Cunningly, he was saying to each political group, businessman or military officer what they wanted to hear. This has sometimes been used as proof that Primo did not have a pre-determined political ideology, since in the months prior to the coup the Marqués de Estella was seeking support from extremely diverse political positions, on the basis that a dictatorship would solve their particular problems.¹⁰⁷ Primo promised the more Spanish-nationalist sections of the business class, for example, that he was going to put a stop to anarchism and Catalan separatism. Following the political stance of the *UMN*, the general promised to promote a 'healthy regionalism' as a counterforce to the Catalanism of the *Lliga Regionalista*. But the insurrectionist conspiracy in Barcelona also had an important component of men belonging to the *Lliga*, to whom Primo was prepared to promise greater autonomy for Catalonia, as well as the longed-for 'social peace' and a raising of protective tariffs.¹⁰⁸ Among those joining the conspiracy at that time were the Viscount Cussó, President of the *Fomento del Trabajo Nacional*, as well as Puig i Cadafalch, the President of the Mancomunitat, who hoped that the coup would result in the continuation of the repressive policies against the working classes and an increase in autonomy for Catalonia.¹⁰⁹ Nor was this civilian backing for a coup any secret. Already in June, the Radical deputy Emiliano Iglesias had denounced in parliament 'all those forces offering "vivas" when around the Marqués de Estella, cheering him on and telling him [...] "You will be dictator"'.¹¹⁰

Primo was equally politically adept when seeking support from military officers, telling each part of the Army what they wanted to hear. To Godofredo Nouvilas, a colonel in the Barcelona garrison as well as a leading *juntero*, he promised an end to concessions for Catalanists. For General López Ochea, by contrast, who had both republican and Catalanist tendencies, Primo told him before the coup that the military would assume power only until it proved possible to form a more effective civilian government. To General Mercader y Bomplata, a devoted 'palace man', he said that an uprising was necessary to save the monarch.¹¹¹ In a similar fashion, Primo had to convince the *Africanistas* in the Army that his previous 'abandonist' posture as regards Morocco was a thing of the past. And so he did. At the start of August, Primo met with a group of generals in the Military Casino in Madrid to publicly support the colonial offensive planned by Martínez Anido, who had been placed in command at Melilla the previous month. The bellicose generals were complaining about the wasteful inactivity of the government, and in a threatening tone declared that they were not going 'to tolerate being a puppet in the hands of opportunistic politicians any longer'.¹¹² If some *Africanistas* – not least those in the Quadrilateral – had held doubts about Primo as leader of the uprising for his previous abandonist tendencies, the 'conversion' of the Marqués de

Estella towards colonial interventionism in August 1923 put an end to such doubts.

At this stage, Primo was not, as he would later claim after the fall of his dictatorship, conspiring ‘openly and with little discretion’. It is nonetheless clear that the existence of conspiratorial networks in Madrid and Barcelona was by now common knowledge.¹¹³ At the end of August, for example, the acquittal of a corporal who had led a mutiny in Málaga against the embarkment of troops for Melilla was said to have enraged Primo, who sent a telegram of protest on 29 August. We do not know how genuine this outrage was, but the effect of the protest was to strengthen his new colonialist persona. Primo now decided to step up his conspiratorial activities. Two days after the telegram, Primo called a meeting of the military leaders in Barcelona for consultations. It would appear that Primo had decided to act, even if he knew he would need the support of the Quadrilateral to do so. After the government crisis of 3 September, which ended in the dismissal of ministers who opposed Martínez Anido’s plan in Morocco – Miguel Villanueva, Joaquín Chapaprieta and Rafael Chinchilla – General Saro informed the King that the Army was planning to put an end to the existing system.¹¹⁴

These manoeuvres were hardly news to Alfonso. Early in 1923, the King had himself toyed with the notion of becoming a dictator but was advised against the idea for fear that it could seriously compromise the crown.¹¹⁵ Having ruled out leading a dictatorship, the monarch nonetheless still wished for a military regime. Parliament’s investigation of the Annual ‘disaster’ and the criticism Alfonso received from certain members of the Cortes, who considered the King partly responsible for the military debacle of 1921, did nothing but increase the monarch’s contempt for civilian rule.¹¹⁶ In June, the King was informed that his royalist generals of the Quadrilateral were plotting a coup.¹¹⁷ In late August, General Cavalcanti told Alfonso that ‘a coup d’état was inevitable and that they were going to establish a dictatorship to prevent a catastrophe in Spain’.¹¹⁸ Alfonso asked the conspirators to keep him informed of developments. When General Saro reiterated the military plotters’ intentions on 3 September, the King thought it best to make a getaway and returned to his vacation residence in San Sebastián.¹¹⁹

At this point, Primo was intelligent in his actions. That very 3 September, he telegraphed the Minister of War, Luis Aizpuru, asking to meet with him in Madrid.¹²⁰ Aizpuru immediately authorised the Marqués de Estella to travel to the capital.¹²¹ It is likely that the minister thought that Primo was going to talk to him about the situation in Catalonia, but Primo was actually looking for an excuse to travel to Madrid and to meet with fellow conspirators to fix a date for the *coup d’état*. This is indeed what happened. On 7 September, Primo met in the capital with generals Berenguer, Saro, Dabán, Cavalcanti and Juan O’Donnell y Vargas, the Duke of Tetuán. Primo informed them of the support he had gathered among prominent civilians and military officers, and the conspiring generals agreed that the uprising would begin in Barcelona within a week. Madrid, where the Duke of Tetuán was Military Governor,

would then follow.¹²² Upon his return to Barcelona on 9 September, Primo communicated to his most trusted officers in the garrison his intentions to rise against the government on the 14th. They appeared delighted at the prospect.¹²³ The night before the coup, Primo also met with the President of the *Fomento del Trabajo Nacional*, Viscount Cussó, the businessman and member of the *Lliga* Juan Antonio Güell y López (Count Güell), as well as Josep Maria Milà i Camps, member of the Barcelona Association of Bankers and a parliamentary deputy for the *UMN*. In short, Primo was taking care to address a representative group of the economic and political elites of the city and was sure to read to them the manifesto he had prepared to launch once the uprising began.¹²⁴ Primo also informed the President of the *Mancomunitat*, Josep Puig i Cadafalch, of his plans for an insurrection.¹²⁵

The fact that the Marqués de Estella was informing his civilian and military allies of his plans only served to accelerate the rumours of a military uprising which were, by now, circulating freely around the city of Barcelona. Nonetheless, Primo tried to maintain a certain veneer of normality in the days leading up to the coup. Thus, on his return from Madrid on the evening of 9 September, Primo announced to reporters that he had been speaking with the Minister of Public Works, Manuel Portela Valladares, about sending a new Civil Governor to Barcelona.¹²⁶ On 12 September, the press office of the Captaincy-General issued a release saying that Primo was due to visit Tarragona on 23rd to conduct a public review of the *Somatén* in the city.¹²⁷ On the same day, Primo communicated to the interim Civil Governor in Barcelona that he, alongside other leading generals in the city, was planning to go to the station the following day to welcome the Minister of Development for his visit to the International Furniture Exhibition.¹²⁸

Primo was thus behaving as though nothing was planned for 14 September, the date assigned for the uprising. Nonetheless, a combination of events and the *Jerezano's* own impatience resulted in a change to the plans agreed at the meeting in Madrid on 7 September. On 11 September 1923, during the celebrations of the Catalan national day (*la Diada*), the police led a charge with batons and sabres against a crowd gathered around the statue of Rafael Casanova.¹²⁹ The justification offered for the police action was the unfurling of a Catalan flag and shouts from those present against Spain and in favour of the Riffian rebels. Ultimately, the ceremony degenerated into violent clashes between Catalanists on the one side, and Spanish nationalists and the police on the other. This open battle resulted in 30 wounded and 24 Catalan nationalists placed under arrest.¹³⁰ Meanwhile, that same afternoon, senior members of *Acció Catalana*, led by Antoni Rovira i Virgili, held a banquet with members of the Basque Nationalist Party (*Partido Nacionalista Vasco*, PNV), as well as Galician nationalists from the *Irmandades de Fala* and *Irmandade Nazionalista Galega*. After the dinner and a long session of folkloric dancing and poetry recitals, the leaders of the respective Catalan, Basque and Galician nationalist groups founded the so-called 'Triple Alliance' and demanded full political sovereignty for their territories.¹³¹ By the afternoon of 11 September,

the indignation and rage of the officers of the Barcelona garrison at such demonstrations of sub-state nationalism were more than evident. Most felt compelled to respond to what they considered to be unacceptable provocations by separatists who were determined to destroy the Spanish nation. Primo read the situation quickly and clearly, and seeing that the mood among his comrades-in-arms had been ‘extraordinarily whipped up’, began to consider the possibility of bringing forward the coup to the night of 12–13 September.¹³²

On the afternoon of 11 September, Primo sent a note to all the Captain-Generals, with the exception of Diego Muñoz Cobo (Madrid), whom he did not trust, and Valeriano Weyler (Balearic Islands), whom he had sounded out unsuccessfully about joining the conspiracy. In the note, the Marqués de Estella informed his comrades that he would shortly make them ‘a very important proposition’.¹³³ He added in a typewritten sheet:

I beg you most urgently to grasp the extraordinary importance of the meaning of the words in the attached card, which will be abundantly clear when you receive the accompanying proposition prepared with the agreement of 15 leading comrades and approved by important groups disposed to assist it categorically on a day that is very close, just a few hours after you receive it, I shall signal the crucial moment to you by telegraph with the words “I reiterate to Your Excellency and your officers your orders”. My greetings to you, my fellow officers.¹³⁴

There can be no doubt that Primo was informing his fellow generals of the coup he was preparing to launch within a few hours. That same afternoon, Primo wrote to Cavalcanti criticising the lack of enthusiasm he detected from the Quadrilateral, informing him that he was now prepared, and that proclamations ‘signed in my own hand, are already sent throughout Spain; so it no longer matters to me’.¹³⁵ Keenly aware of the importance of the moment, and perhaps thinking of the events at the Casanova statue that same lunchtime, he added ‘what matters to me is not to allow public feeling to cool, that is what will help us; the others will get on board’.¹³⁶ That same day, 11 September, Primo wrote to Martínez Anido, who was at that time in San Sebastián with the King. Primo sent to his friend some copies of his manifesto to distribute among the generals stationed in Guipuzcoa once the coup was launched.¹³⁷ Primo spoke of the importance of geography to the uprising and showed his certainty of success for the coming insurrection:

Barcelona is key and if I sought a postponement here it would lead to our ignominious failure. I believe there will never be a movement so pure, gallant, national and organised. There will be civilian adherents in all parts of the country and no military force will oppose us. There will be cuckoos in the nest and those who are lukewarm, but we will nonetheless give our everything as we always did under fire. A hug and “Viva España”!¹³⁸

On the morning of 12 September, Cavalcanti and Saro met with Muñoz Cobo. The Captain-General of Madrid seemed somewhat ambiguous, but, later that afternoon, he did inform them that he was not going to oppose the uprising.¹³⁹ The Quadrilateral had a free hand. That same morning, news reached the Prime Minister, Manuel García Prieto, confirming the conspiratorial plans of Primo and the Quadrilateral. The Prime Minister then met with the Minister of War, General Luis Aizpuru, the Minister of the Interior, Martín Rosales Martel, the Marqués de Almodóvar del Valle and the Minister of Public Works, Manuel Portela Valladares. García Prieto also informed Santiago Alba, the Foreign Office Minister and supposed strong man in the cabinet, who was in San Sebastián, as well as the King himself. Instead of dismissing the conspirators immediately, the cabinet decided to send Portela Valladares to Barcelona in a bid to prevent the imminent uprising. The pretext would be that the minister was going to the city to represent the government at the International Furniture Exhibition. The Liberal government still believed that the coup was planned for the morning of 14 September, and that a massive reception and show of popular support for the minister on the morning of 13 September might yet thwart the intentions of the plotters. Moreover, General Aizpuru had told García Prieto that it was not necessary to sack Primo de Rivera, because he himself would call 'Miguel' and would change his mind about the coup.¹⁴⁰ Aware that the government knew about the plot and was sending Portela Valladares to try and stop the insurrection, while Aizpuru did the same in a telephone call to Barcelona, Primo felt there was nothing else for it than to bring forward the coup for that very night of 12 September.¹⁴¹ Even at this late stage, however, Primo had no news on how Muñoz Cobo would react in Madrid. If the coup met resistance in the Spanish capital, then its prospects for success would be dramatically reduced.

In the early afternoon of 12 September 1923, the tension at the Captaincy-General in Barcelona was immense. Primo waited impatiently for news from his fellow conspirators in Madrid, to know if he could proceed with his plan to bring forward the coup by 24 hours. At around 4 o'clock in the afternoon, Primo received the telegram from the capital which he had been waiting for. It read: 'Meeting held; all is well. Doctor aware of all the details of the illness and has consulted Dr Luis. Agreed to bring forward the operation.'¹⁴² The wire was a coded signal that the meeting held that morning between Cavalcanti, Saro and Muñoz Cobo had been a success. Primo exchanged another couple of telegrams with the plotting generals in Madrid, assuring them that 'After delivery, I am resolved to operate tonight'. He proceeded to inform Martínez Anido and then set the wheels in motion for the coup.¹⁴³

Primo ordered all generals and field commanders of the Barcelona garrison to report to the Captaincy-General at 9:30 that evening. He planned to inform them that the coup would be launched at 2 o'clock the following morning. Primo then hurriedly drafted a series of orders to be implemented should the coup encounter any opposition in Barcelona. Among the measures to be taken was the 'mobilisation of the Somatén throughout Catalonia

with the aim of supporting the new regime', and the 'disbanding of workers' societies'.¹⁴⁴ In these highly charged moments, the Marqués de Estella also gave some thought to his family, ordering 'to my house in Madrid, a special guard and protection for my children until everything returns to normal'.¹⁴⁵ As the afternoon turned into evening, Primo contacted numerous Captains-General throughout the country to ensure that the coup was not going to face any opposition from his comrades-in-arms. In particular, he feared a possible military response from either Aragón or Valencia. Aragón worried Primo less because he felt he could count on the support of José Sanjurjo, who was then Military Governor of Zaragoza, but he nonetheless made a special effort to gain the support of General Zabalza, who was in command of the Military Region in Valencia.¹⁴⁶ On that afternoon of 12 September, Primo could not be certain that everything was ready, but he decided to proceed with the coup in any case.

At 9:30 that evening, just as Primo had ordered, the generals and commanders of the Barcelona garrison arrived at headquarters to receive instructions. Primo ordered the colonels to inform their officers about the coup, and he ordered the generals to deploy troops at two in the morning. At midnight, Primo sent a general telegram to the military governors of the provincial capitals in Catalonia to inform them that the coup had been launched and to request that they did not notify their officers. Next, Primo wrote to the Minister of War telling him that he was leading a coup 'to drag Spain from its abjection, ruin and anarchy'.¹⁴⁷ By two in the morning, Primo had gathered four of the editors of Barcelona's newspapers at his headquarters.¹⁴⁸ Aware that the success of the coup also depended on the court of public opinion, Primo told them of his declaration of martial law and handed them his 'Manifesto to the Nation and the Army', so that they could publish it in full and without changes or commentary.

The manifesto was Primo's letter of introduction to the Spanish people. It justified the use of force against the constitutional government as the only way to save 'the Motherland from a dishonourable end'.¹⁴⁹ In his meeting with the press at the Captaincy-General, Primo had declared that his coup had been launched with the intention of dissolving the Cortes and establishing a new government. This would involve 'a new administrative, governmental, judicial and possibly military division of Spain', as well as the promotion of the Spanish language and the persecution of the 'unhealthy Catalan feelings of hostility towards Spain that has so neglectfully and criminally been allowed to develop at school, at the pulpit and at the university by the abominable politicians of the old regime'.¹⁵⁰ In his press statements, Primo also offered a threatening message for anyone who was considering standing up to the conspirators:

We have no plans to shoot people, but, if the courts pass such a sentence, we will execute it, have no doubt, and if someone rebels against us, our regime will repay them quickly and dearly, it is natural, given our love for Spain, that we will defend it by any means necessary.¹⁵¹

While Primo was meeting with journalists, the troops were leaving their barracks and occupying the telephone exchange on the Calle Aviñón, as well as the Central Post Office, the Treasury Building and other official buildings in Barcelona. They encountered no opposition.¹⁵² At 3:30 in the morning, Primo telephoned the interim Civil Governor in Barcelona, Miguel de Vera, to inform him about the uprising. Twenty minutes later, he had a copy of his Manifesto hand delivered to the Civil Governor. Shortly after four in the morning, General Losada, the Military Governor of Barcelona, was placed in charge of the civilian administration. At five, soldiers from the Montesa cavalry regiment left headquarters to affix Primo's declaration of martial law in the streets and squares of the city.¹⁵³ At six, a speech by Primo was read to the soldiers of the garrison, in which he congratulated them on the patriotism and discipline they had shown at this hour of 'coming to the aid of Mother Spain'.¹⁵⁴ Adding a touch of hyperbole to the heroic sacrifice involved in his coup, he added 'For my part, I prefer to leave to my children a uniform riddled with bullet holes, like Don Diego de León, than a livery that is a sign of servility to those who lay waste to my Fatherland'.¹⁵⁵ The Marqués de Estella was beginning to feel more at ease after the high tension of the moment. All was going well. Primo controlled Catalonia and had achieved this without incident. He expected the King to remove the government within a matter of hours.

While all of this took place, the government met in Madrid with the intention of crushing the insurrection. García Prieto telephoned the King twice to inform him of the seriousness of the situation. In response, Alfonso XIII told the Prime Minister that he was exaggerating, that he should try to speak to Primo to talk him down, and that the insurrection was unlikely to succeed. Following the monarch's advice, the government entrusted the Minister of War to contact Primo to try and convince him to back down. Given Primo's refusal, Aizpuru officially dismissed him as Captain-General of Catalonia, but by this time, at 2 in the morning, Primo had already cut the communication lines with Madrid.¹⁵⁶ The minister's efforts to persuade 'Miguel' not to proceed with the insurrection had come to nought. Primo contacted the King in the early morning of 13 September to declare his loyalty to the throne and his contempt for Alfonso's ministers, whom he said should be thrown from a window.¹⁵⁷ Primo wanted to assure Alfonso that he had no reason to doubt his loyalty, nor that of those who had risen up, while putting pressure on the monarch to put an end to constitutional government. After receiving Primo's message, the King, who had now become the arbiter of the situation, began to show hints of his true nature. Alfonso asked General Milans del Bosch, Chief of his Military Household and a friend of Primo, that he take soundings of the situation in garrisons throughout the country. He then went to bed, leaving orders that he was not to be disturbed. When García Prieto tried to call him again, Alfonso would not come to the phone.¹⁵⁸ That same evening in Madrid, the generals who comprised the Quadrilateral formed an interim administration, in the hope that the King would offer the definitive endorsement of the coup so they could form a new 'civil' and 'constitutional' cabinet.¹⁵⁹

The day of the coup must have been a long one for Miguel Primo de Rivera. In the morning, he received confirmation that the uprising had not found military backing outside of Catalonia, save for the garrison at Zaragoza, which had already agreed to take part. In Madrid, Muñoz Cobo had placed himself, *de facto*, on the side of the plotters by not fulfilling his duty and assisting the government of García Prieto. But nor had he declared martial law and brought troops onto the streets to support the rebellion. Everything now depended on the King, who responded very calmly. After waking at 9:30 that morning, he sent for Santiago Alba, who had resigned the previous night at around 10 o'clock. Displaying his customary flippancy in the face of a serious situation, the King commented to Alba that, if Primo were to be given power, 'the greatest torture for him would be to have to deal with such a peacock every day'.¹⁶⁰ The monarch decided not to travel immediately to Madrid, delaying his departure until the evening, and in the meantime, he would find out what was going on in the various barracks. Milans del Bosch was collecting information from several of the Captain-General, which, for the most part, were combining loyalty to the King with backing for the coup.¹⁶¹

In Barcelona, given the lack of word from the King, Primo was becoming nervous. He sent a series of telegrams to the Military Governor of Guipúzcoa, to Martínez Anido and to Alfonso himself, but at first, he received no reply. At around 3:30 in the afternoon, Primo decided to attend the opening of the International Furniture Exposition. Given that he was in the midst of a coup d'état – the outcome of which remained uncertain – this might appear a slightly surreal course of action. Primo wanted to take in the feel of the streets after his coup, however, and in doing so he found a very favourable response. According to *La Vanguardia* newspaper, the people of Barcelona launched 'spontaneous demonstrations of support for General Primo de Rivera which left in do doubt the cordial interest with which our city was watching his efforts'.¹⁶² Meanwhile, the newspaper reported a plethora of supporters 'marching' to the Captaincy-General throughout the day to 'congratulate the Marqués de Estella'. They included

the *Fomento del Trabajo Nacional* and the council of the Barcelona *Somatén* [as well as] the mayor Señor Marqués de Alella; the former senator don Emilio Junoy, don José Milá y Camps, don José Muntadas, don Agustín Traillad, Baron Güell, don Enrique de Génova, the Marqués de Foronda, Viscount de Cuso (sic), don Manuel Giraudier, don Rafael Espiso, don José Minguell, don Víctor Roslch, don Antonio Vila, don Jacinto Tord and Señor Campmany, corporals from the *Somatén* and the executive board of the Barcelona Stock Exchange.¹⁶³

In short, the Catalan elites had turned out *en masse* to show their support for 'their' rebel general. Things got even better for Primo in the late afternoon, when he received a telegram from the King entrusting him to maintain order in Catalonia and confiding in Primo that he would be leaving for Madrid

that evening.¹⁶⁴ It was not open support for the coup, but it did encourage Primo de Rivera to continue with the uprising. The Marqués de Estella acted quickly and immediately sent telegrams to all of the Captain-General, to Military Governors of the IV Region, as well as to journalists.¹⁶⁵ He wanted to give the impression that the coup had now secured the definitive backing of the King.

Meanwhile, the government was seeking support and gauging its ability to respond. Portella Valladares, whom, as we have seen, was travelling to Barcelona to try to stop the uprising, was informed in Zaragoza of the situation in the Catalan capital and decided to return to Madrid. On the morning of 13 September, he proposed removing all authority from Primo and ordering his arrest, but the majority of the cabinets were not prepared to contravene the orders of the King not to dismiss the Marqués de Estella. When García Prieto's cabinet asked General Muñoz Cobo to arrest the generals in the Quadrilateral in Madrid, he refused to comply, stating that he would only do so if he received orders signed by Alfonso XIII.¹⁶⁶ If there had been any lingering doubts about the position of the Captain-General of Madrid, they were now gone. The government had lost military authority in Madrid. The mobilisation of other garrisons loyal to the government against Primo, such as that in Valencia, led by Captain-General Zabalza, was a horrible prospect, since it would involve pitting officers against each other. Moreover, the cabinet knew that it did not have sufficient strength to proceed, given the ambiguous nature of the responses from most of the military regions. The government thus had little option but to wait for the decision of Alfonso XIII (Figure 2.2).

The King arrived in Madrid at 9 o'clock on the morning of 14 September 1923. He was received at the *Estación del Norte* by his cabinet. Alfonso XIII lied to Prime Minister García Prieto on the platform and told him that he knew nothing about the progress of the coup. In the Palacio de Oriente, the King told the Prime Minister that he had to consult with his military advisers about the situation. García Prieto understood what the monarch was really saying and presented his resignation at 11 that morning.¹⁶⁷ Alfonso next informed Muñoz Cobo of his approval for Primo's uprising but added that he was going to mull over how best to resolve the crisis with the leaders of the two political parties.¹⁶⁸ The King was looking to buy time. It is possible that he was considering setting up a directory led by himself, although it is also possible that the King simply wanted to offer the appearance of constitutional normality as power was handed over to Primo de Rivera. What is certain is that this attempt to steer a *coup d'état* through the conventional channels of any government crisis under the Restoration System provoked the ire of both Primo and the generals in the Quadrilateral. They warned the King that if he did not hand over power to Primo de Rivera there might well be bloodshed.¹⁶⁹ Furious, the generals of the Quadrilateral travelled to the Royal Palace, and the monarch swiftly changed course.¹⁷⁰ At 1:15 in the afternoon, Alfonso named an interim directory led by Muñoz Cobo and composed of the generals of the



Figure 2.2 King Alfonso XIII arrives in Madrid and addresses Prime Minister Manuel García Prieto the day after Primo de Rivera's coup, 14 September 1923. The King's support for Primo de Rivera was crucial for the success of the coup. Credit: Alfonso.

Quadrilateral, while waiting for the arrival of Primo de Rivera from Barcelona to take charge of the government of the country. The King then summoned the Marqués de Estella to travel to Madrid while Muñoz Cobo declared martial law in the capital. The coup had triumphed.

Notes

- 1 *La Vanguardia*, 16 July 1920; *La Acción*, 15 July 1920; *Oro de Ley*, 31 July 1920. At 1600 hours Primo telegraphed Madrid to confirm to the Ministry of War that he had taken command in the region. See Primo to Minister of War, 15 July 1920. Archivo Militar de Segovia (hereafter AGMS), expediente Primo de Rivera y Orbaneja, carpeta 6, 'Viaje a Inglaterra, Francia, Alemania, 1920', p. 16.
- 2 *La Vanguardia*, 16 July 1920.
- 3 'Valencia. Resumen numérico de los atentados cometidos en esta provincial desde el año de 1917 hasta la fecha 31 enero de 1921', Archivo Histórico Nacional (hereafter AHN), serie A del Ministerio de la Gobernación.
- 4 Miguel Primo de Rivera, *La obra de la dictadura. Sus cuatro últimos artículos* (Madrid: Sáez Hermanos, 1930), p. 8.
- 5 Miguel Primo de Rivera, *La obra de la dictadura. Sus cuatro últimos artículos* (Madrid: Sáez Hermanos, 1930), pp. 8–9.
- 6 Miguel Primo de Rivera, *La obra de la dictadura. Sus cuatro últimos artículos* (Madrid: Sáez Hermanos, 1930), p. 8.

- 7 Miguel Primo de Rivera, *La obra de la dictadura. Sus cuatro últimos artículos* (Madrid: Sáez Hermanos, 1930), p. 8.
- 8 Francisco J. Romero Salvadó, *The Foundations of Civil War: Revolution, Social Conflict and Reaction in Liberal Spain, 1916–1923* (London: Routledge, 2008), pp. 230–231.
- 9 *La Vanguardia*, 26 January 1921.
- 10 Francisco J. Romero Salvadó, *The Foundations of Civil War: Revolution, Social Conflict and Reaction in Liberal Spain, 1916–1923* (London: Routledge, 2008), p. 231.
- 11 Francisco J. Romero Salvadó, *The Foundations of Civil War: Revolution, Social Conflict and Reaction in Liberal Spain, 1916–1923* (London: Routledge, 2008), p. 231.
- 12 Francisco J. Romero Salvadó, *The Foundations of Civil War: Revolution, Social Conflict and Reaction in Liberal Spain, 1916–1923* (London: Routledge, 2008), p. 231.
- 13 Fernando del Rey Reguillo, *Propietarios y patronos. La política de las organizaciones económicas en la España de la restauración 1914–1923* (Madrid: Ministerio de Trabajo y Seguridad Social, 1992), pp. 626–682.
- 14 Eduardo González Calleja & Fernando del Rey Reguillo, *La defensa armada contra la revolución: una historia de las guardias cívicas en España* (Madrid: CSIC, 1995), pp. 101–102.
- 15 Telegram from Primo de Rivera to Minister of War, 1100 hours, 10 June 1921. AGMS, expediente Primo de Rivera y Orbaneja, carpeta 6, ‘Viaje a Inglaterra, Francia, Alemania, 1920’, p. 58.
- 16 For Primo’s nighttime visits to the Casino de la Agricultura, see Miguel Primo de Rivera, *La obra de la dictadura. Sus cuatro últimos artículos* (Madrid: Sáez Hermanos, 1930), p. 9.
- 17 Jacinto Capella, *La verdad sobre Primo de Rivera. Intimidaciones y anécdotas* (Madrid: Imprenta Hijos de Tomás Minuesa, 1933), p. 22.
- 18 Andrés Révész, *Frente al dictador* (Madrid: Biblioteca Internacional, 1926), p. 44.
- 19 Vicente Blasco Ibáñez, *Por España y contra el rey* (Sevilla: West Indies, 2020), p. 77.
- 20 Miguel Primo de Rivera y Orbaneja to Fernando Primo de Rivera y Sobremonte, Valencia, 14 March 1921, Archivo Javier Tusell, carpeta 1921.
- 21 Miguel Primo de Rivera y Orbaneja to Fernando Primo de Rivera y Sobremonte, Valencia, 14 March 1921, Archivo Javier Tusell, carpeta 1921.
- 22 Miguel Primo de Rivera y Orbaneja to Fernando Primo de Rivera y Sobremonte, Valencia, 14 March 1921, Archivo Javier Tusell, carpeta 1921.
- 23 *La Acción*, 24 May 1921.
- 24 ‘Real decreto nombrando Capitán general de la primera Región al Teniente general D. Miguel Primo de Rivera y Orbaneja, que lo es de la tercera Región’, *Gaceta de Madrid*, 160 (9 June 1921), p. 963.
- 25 Miguel Primo de Rivera, *La obra de la dictadura. Sus cuatro últimos artículos* (Madrid: Sáez Hermanos, 1930), p. 9.
- 26 Ana de Sagrera, *Miguel Primo de Rivera: el hombre, el soldado y el político* (Jerez de la Frontera: Ayuntamiento de Jerez de la Frontera, 1973), pp. 197–198.
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- 28 Jorge Martínez Revete, *El vuelo de los bruites. El desastre de Annual y la guerra del Rif* (Barcelona: Galaxia Gutenberg, 2021); Juan Pando, *Historia secreta de Annual* (Madrid: Temas de Hoy, 1999).
- 29 Ana de Sagrera, *Miguel Primo de Rivera: el hombre, el soldado y el político* (Jerez de la Frontera: Ayuntamiento de Jerez de la Frontera, 1973), p. 199.

- 30 *Diario de las Sesiones de Cortes del Senado*, no. 99, 25 November 1921, p. 2039.
- 31 *Diario de las Sesiones de Cortes del Senado*, no. 99, 25 November 1921, p. 2040.
- 32 *Diario de las Sesiones de Cortes del Senado*, no. 99, 25 November 1921, p. 2040.
- 33 The dismissal, signed by the King on 26 November 1921, can be found in AGMS, expediente Primo de Rivera y Orbaneja, carpeta 6, 'Viaje a Inglaterra, Francia, Alemania, 1920', p. 82.
- 34 *Diario de las Sesiones de Cortes del Senado*, no. 100, 29 November 1921, p. 2054.
- 35 *Diario de las Sesiones de Cortes del Senado*, no. 100, 29 November 1921, p. 2054.
- 36 *Diario de las Sesiones de Cortes del Senado*, no. 100, 29 November 1921, p. 2055.
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- 38 *Diario de las Sesiones de Cortes del Senado*, no. 100, 29 November 1921, p. 2052.
- 39 *Diario de las Sesiones de Cortes del Senado*, no. 100, 29 November 1921, p. 2052; *Diario de las Sesiones de Cortes del Senado*, no. 104, 6 December 1921, pp. 2165, 2170.
- 40 *Diario de las Sesiones de Cortes del Senado*, no. 100, 29 November 1921, p. 2052.
- 41 *Diario de las Sesiones de Cortes del Senado*, no. 100, 29 November 1921, p. 2053.
- 42 *Diario de las Sesiones de Cortes del Senado*, no. 100, 29 November 1921, p. 2054. On colonial masculinities, see Gemma Torres, 'La nación viril. Imágenes masculinas de España en el africanismo reaccionario después de la derrota de Annual (1921–1927)', *Ayer*, 106:2 (2017), pp. 133–158. On the representation and orientalisation of Moroccans, see Josep-Lluís Mareo Dieste, *El 'moro' entre los primitivos. El case del Protectorado español en Marruecos* (Barcelona: Fundació La Caixa, 1997); and Eloy Martín Corrales, *La imagen del magrebí en España: una perspectiva histórica, siglos xvi-xx* (Barcelona: Bellaterra, 2002).
- 43 *Diario de las Sesiones de Cortes del Senado*, no. 100, 29 November 1921, p. 2054.
- 44 *Diario de las Sesiones de Cortes del Senado*, no. 104, 6 December 1921, p. 2167.
- 45 *Diario de las Sesiones de Cortes del Senado*, no. 104, 6 December 1921, p. 2167.
- 46 *Diario de las Sesiones de Cortes del Senado*, no. 107, 13 December 1921, p. 2242.
- 47 The term was used to describe the (mainly young) members of the Conservative Party who had followed the former Prime Minister, Antonio Maura, following his dismissal in 1909.
- 48 *Diario de las Sesiones de Cortes del Senado*, no. 108, 14 December 1921, p. 2259.
- 49 Jacinto Capella, *La verdad sobre Primo de Rivera. Intimidades y anécdotas* (Madrid: Imprenta Hijos de Tomás Minuesa, 1933), pp. 21–22.
- 50 *El Correo Catalán*, 24 March 1922. The *sindicatos únicos* were an attempt to create unions which brought together workers in a given area who were working in different jobs, but within the same industry.
- 51 *El Correo Catalán*, 25 March 1922.
- 52 Eduardo González Calleja, *El máuser y el sufragio. Orden público, subversión y violencia política en la crisis de la Restauración 1917–1931* (Madrid: CSIC, 1999), pp. 116–216; Pere Foix, *Los archivos del terrorismo blanco. El fichero Lasarte, 1910–1930* (Madrid: La Piqueta, 1978).
- 53 Xavier Casals, *Miguel Primo de Rivera. El espejo de Franco* (Barcelona: Ediciones B, 2004), pp. 168–169.
- 54 Enric Ucelay-Da Cal, 'Entre el ejemplo italiano y el irlandés: la escisión generalizada de los nacionalismos hispanos 1919–1922', *Ayer*, 63:3 (2006), pp. 84–85, 108.
- 55 Xavier Casals Meseguer & Enric Ucelay-Da Cal, 'El fascio de las Ramblas. Los orígenes catalanes del fascismo español' (Barcelona: Pasado y Presente, 2023), pp. 164–175.
- 56 Javier Moreno Luzón, 'De agravios, pactos y símbolos. El nacionalismo español ante la autonomía de Cataluña (1918–1919)', *Ayer*, 63:3 (2006), pp. 146–147; Enric Ucelay-Da Cal, 'Liga Patriótica Española', in Isidre Molas (ed.), *Diccionari de les parts polítiques de Catalunya. Segle XX* (Barcelona: Enciclopèdia Catalana, 2000), pp. 177–178.

- 57 Josep Puy i Juanico, 'La Unión Monárquica Nacional frente al catalanismo de la Lliga, 1918–1923', *Estudios de Historia Social*, no. 28–29 (1984), pp. 471–472; Javier Moreno Luzón, 'De agravios, pactos y símbolos. El nacionalismo español ante la autonomía de Cataluña (1918–1919)', *Ayer*, 63:3 (2006), p. 146.
- 58 Enric Ucelay-Da Cal, *Història de la Diputació de Barcelona*, vol. 2, 1898–1931 (Barcelona: Diputació de Barcelona, 2007), p. 217.
- 59 Xavier Casals, 'Auge y declive del "partido militar" de Barcelona (1898–1936)', *Iberic@l*, no. 4 (2013), pp. 168–170.
- 60 Miguel Primo de Rivera, *La obra de la dictadura. Sus cuatro últimos artículos* (Madrid: Sáez Hermanos, 1930), p. 10.
- 61 Francisco J. Romero Salvadó, *The Foundations of Civil War: Revolution, Social Conflict and Reaction in Liberal Spain, 1916–1923* (London: Routledge, 2008), p. 285.
- 62 Xavier Casals, 'Auge y declive del "partido militar" de Barcelona (1898–1936)', *Iberic@l*, no. 4 (2013), p. 173.
- 63 Xavier Casals, 'Auge y declive del "partido militar" de Barcelona (1898–1936)', *Iberic@l*, no. 4 (2013), p. 173.
- 64 Àngel Duarte Monserrat, "'La iniciativa ha sortit de Barcelona": Catalunya i el golpe de Estado de Miguel Primo de Rivera', in Antonio Robles Egea (ed.), *A plena luz del dia. El golpe de Estado del General Primo de Rivera (1923)* (Granada: Editorial Universidad de Granada, 2023), pp. 137–139.
- 65 Jordi Casassas i Ymbert (ed.), *La dictadura de Primo de Rivera (1923–1930): textos* (Barcelona: Anthropros, 1983), p. 22.
- 66 Mariano Rubio y Bellvé, *El Palacio de la Capitanía General de Cataluña* (Barcelona: Publisher unknown, 1930), pp. 51–52.
- 67 Andrés Révész, *Frente al dictador* (Madrid: Biblioteca Internacional, 1926), pp. 45–46.
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- 70 Ramón Garriga, *Juan March y su tiempo* (Barcelona: Planeta, 1976), p. 152.
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- 72 González Calleja, *El máuser y el sufragio. Orden público, subversión y violencia política en la crisis de la Restauración (1917–1931)* (Madrid: CSIC, 1999), pp. 212–213.
- 73 For Unamuno's comment, see Manuel María Urrutia León, 'Miguel de Unamuno y "España con honra" (1924–1925)', *Cuadernos de la Cátedra Miguel de Unamuno*, 47:1 (2009), p. 202. For the description of Arlegui, see Vicente Blasco Ibáñez, *Por España y contra el rey* (Sevilla: West Indies, 2020), pp. 104–105.
- 74 *Unión Patriótica*, 15 May 1930.
- 75 Miguel Primo de Rivera, *La obra de la dictadura. Sus cuatro últimos artículos* (Madrid: Sáez Hermanos, 1930), p. 10.
- 76 Francisco J. Romero Salvadó, *The Foundations of Civil War: Revolution, Social Conflict and Reaction in Liberal Spain, 1916–1923* (London: Routledge, 2008), p. 286.
- 77 For a flavour of the Carlist press campaign, see *El Correo Catalán*, 4 May 1923, 8 May 1923, 10 May 1923, 12 May 1923, 16 May 1923, 19 May 1923.
- 78 *La Vanguardia*, 29 May 1923.
- 79 *El Correo Catalán*, 8 May 1923.
- 80 *El Correo Catalán*, 17 May 1923, 18 May 1923.
- 81 *La Vanguardia*, 23 June 1923.

- 82 González Calleja, *El máuser y el sufragio. Orden público, subversión y violencia política en la crisis de la Restauración (1917–1931)* (Madrid: CSIC, 1999), p. 223.
- 83 *La Vanguardia*, 13 May 1923; *El Correo Catalán*, 15 May 1923.
- 84 This succession of visits is recorded in *El Correo Catalán*, 31 May 1923, 1 June 1923, 2 June 1923, 3 June 1923. See also *Le Veu*, 2 June 1923.
- 85 *La Vanguardia*, 8 June 1923.
- 86 *La Vanguardia*, 10 June 1923.
- 87 Miguel Primo de Rivera, *La obra de la dictadura. Sus cuatro últimos artículos* (Madrid: Sáez Hermanos, 1930), p. 10.
- 88 Javier Tusell Gómez, *Radiografía de un golpe de estado: el ascenso al poder del general Primo de Rivera* (Madrid: Alianza, 1987), pp. 74–75.
- 89 Telegram from Minister of War, Luis de Aizpuru, to Primo de Rivera, 17 June 1923. AGMS, expediente Primo de Rivera y Orbaneja, carpeta 6, ‘Viaje a Inglaterra, Francia, Alemania, 1920’, p. 58.
- 90 Javier Tusell Gómez, *Radiografía de un golpe de estado: el ascenso al poder del general Primo de Rivera* (Madrid: Alianza, 1987), p. 75.
- 91 Miguel Primo de Rivera, *La obra de la dictadura. Sus cuatro últimos artículos* (Madrid: Sáez Hermanos, 1930), p. 12.
- 92 Javier Tusell Gómez, *Radiografía de un golpe de estado: el ascenso al poder del general Primo de Rivera* (Madrid: Alianza, 1987), pp. 77–79.
- 93 *La Vanguardia*, 24 June 1923.
- 94 *La Vanguardia*, 24 June 1923.
- 95 *La Vanguardia*, 24 June 1923.
- 96 *La Vanguardia*, 24 June 1923.
- 97 *La Vanguardia*, 24 June 1923.
- 98 Eduardo González Calleja, *La España de Primo de Rivera: la modernización autoritaria, 1923–1930* (Madrid: Alianza, 2006), p. 41. The term *Africanista* relates to an increasing divide within the Spanish army in this period between those officers whose martial and nationalistic identity had been forged during active (and dangerous) service in Morocco, and those officers (*Peninsulares*) who had served principally on the mainland in relative safety.
- 99 Francisco Alía Miranda, *Duelo de sables: el general Aguilera de ministro a conspirador contra Primo de Rivera, 1917–1931* (Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 2014), p. 137.
- 100 Francisco J. Romero Salvadó, *The Foundations of Civil War: Revolution, Social Conflict and Reaction in Liberal Spain, 1916–1923* (London: Routledge, 2008), pp. 287–288.
- 101 ‘Bombas y petardos – 1923–1930’, AHN, Gobernación, legajo 17A, expediente no. 7.
- 102 *La Vanguardia*, 7 August 1923.
- 103 *La Vanguardia*, 8 August 1923.
- 104 Barcelona, 7 August 1923. ‘Bombas y petardos – 1923–1930’, AHN, Gobernación, legajo 17A, expediente no. 7.
- 105 Francisco J. Romero Salvadó, *The Foundations of Civil War: Revolution, Social Conflict and Reaction in Liberal Spain, 1916–1923* (London: Routledge, 2008), p. 288.
- 106 Eduardo González Calleja & Fernando del Rey Reguillo, *La defensa armada contra la revolución: una historia de las guardias cívicas en España* (Madrid: CSIC, 1995), p. 159.
- 107 The notion that Primo de Rivera had no clear ideology was put forward as soon as the dictatorship fell by the general’s opponents as a means of attacking him. Dionisio Pérez, for example, commented in the introduction to one collection of the dictator’s official papers that Primo’s writings revealed ‘the mental inanity, the absence and lack of solidity of ideas, the lack of political faith deriving from

- a guiding framework, doctrine or goal, in contrast to the case of Mussolini'. See Dionisio Pérez, *La Dictadura a través de sus Notas oficiosas* (Madrid: Compañía Ibero-Americana de Publicaciones, 1930), p. 17.
- 108 Soledad Bengoechea & Fernando del Rey Reguillo, 'El capitalismo catalán y Primo de Rivera: en torno a un golpe de estado', *Hispania*, XLVIII:168 (1988), pp. 289–307; Juan Jacob Calvo & Mercè Jordà Olives, 'Hacia la dictadura: Primo de Rivera en la Capitanía General de Cataluña', *Profesor Nazario González: Una historia abierta* (Barcelona: Universitat Autònoma-Publicacions de la Universitat de Barcelona, 1998), pp. 438–449.
 - 109 Enric Ucelay-Da Cal, *Història de la Diputació de Barcelona*, vol. 2, 1898–1931 (Barcelona: Diputació de Barcelona, 2007), p. 187.
 - 110 Xavier Casals, *Miguel Primo de Rivera. El espejo de Franco* (Barcelona: Ediciones B, 2004), p. 169.
 - 111 Carolyn Boyd, *La política pretoriana en el reinado de Alfonso XIII* (Madrid: Alianza, 1990), p. 311.
 - 112 Shlomo Ben-Ami, *Fascism from Above: The Dictatorship of Primo de Rivera in Spain, 1923–1930* (Oxford: OUP, 1983), pp. 32–33.
 - 113 Miguel Primo de Rivera, *La obra de la dictadura. Sus cuatro últimos artículos* (Madrid: Sáez Hermanos, 1930), p. 12.
 - 114 Eduardo González Calleja, *La España de Primo de Rivera: la modernización autoritaria, 1923–1930* (Madrid: Alianza, 2005), p. 42.
 - 115 Javier Moreno Luzón, *El rey patriota. Alfonso XIII y la nación* (Madrid: Galaxia Gutenberg, 2023), p. 395.
 - 116 Francisco Alía Miranda, *La dictadura de Primo de Rivera (1923–1930)* (Madrid: Catarata, 2023).
 - 117 Ignacio Olabarri Gortazar, 'Problemas no resueltos en torno al pronunciamiento de Primo de Rivera', *Revista de Historia Contemporánea*, 7 (1996), pp. 223–248.
 - 118 Javier Moreno Luzón, *El rey patriota. Alfonso XIII y la nación* (Madrid: Galaxia Gutenberg, 2023), p. 397.
 - 119 José Luis Gómez Navarro, 'El rey en la dictadura', in Javier Moreno Luzón (ed.), *Alfonso XIII: un político en el trono* (Madrid: Marcial Pons, 2003), p. 347.
 - 120 Telegram from Primo de Rivera to Minister of War, 3 September 1923. AGMS, expediente Primo de Rivera y Orbaneja, carpeta 6, 'Viaje a Inglaterra, Francia, Alemania, 1920', p. 138.
 - 121 Telegram from Primo de Rivera to Minister of War, 3 September 1923. AGMS, expediente Primo de Rivera y Orbaneja, carpeta 6, 'Viaje a Inglaterra, Francia, Alemania, 1920', p. 139.
 - 122 Miguel Primo de Rivera, *La obra de la dictadura. Sus cuatro últimos artículos* (Madrid: Sáez Hermanos, 1930), pp. 12–13; Carolyn Boyd, *La política pretoriana en el reinado de Alfonso XIII* (Madrid: Alianza, 1990), p. 310.
 - 123 Francisco J. Romero Salvadó, *The Foundations of Civil War: Revolution, Social Conflict and Reaction in Liberal Spain, 1916–1923* (London: Routledge, 2008), p. 288.
 - 124 Artur Perucho, *Catalunya sota la Dictadura* (Barcelona: Proa, 1930), p. 18; Maximiliano García Venero, *Historia del nacionalismo catalán*, vol. 2 (Madrid: Nacional, 1967), p. 308.
 - 125 Artur Perucho, *Catalunya sota la Dictadura* (Barcelona: Proa, 1930), p. 19.
 - 126 *La Vanguardia*, 11 September 1923.
 - 127 *La Vanguardia*, 13 September 1923.
 - 128 *La Vanguardia*, 13 September 1923.
 - 129 Rafael Casanova (1660–1743) was a Catalan jurist who had supported the Hapsburg claimant during the War of Spanish Succession and led the defence during the Siege of Barcelona in 1714. In the late nineteenth century, Casanova became an icon of Catalan nationalism, and the statue erected in his honour in Barcelona in 1888 became a focal point for Catalanist gatherings and demonstrations.

- 130 *La Vanguardia*, 12 September 1923.
- 131 *La Vanguardia*, 12 September 1923.
- 132 Miguel Primo de Rivera, *La obra de la dictadura. Sus cuatro últimos artículos* (Madrid: Sáez Hermanos, 1930), p. 13.
- 133 Javier Tusell Gómez, *Radiografía de un golpe de estado: el ascenso al poder del general Primo de Rivera* (Madrid: Alianza, 1987), p. 138.
- 134 Javier Tusell Gómez, *Radiografía de un golpe de estado: el ascenso al poder del general Primo de Rivera* (Madrid: Alianza, 1987), p. 138.
- 135 Javier Tusell Gómez, *Radiografía de un golpe de estado: el ascenso al poder del general Primo de Rivera* (Madrid: Alianza, 1987), p. 143.
- 136 Javier Tusell Gómez, *Radiografía de un golpe de estado: el ascenso al poder del general Primo de Rivera* (Madrid: Alianza, 1987), p. 143.
- 137 Gerardo Muñoz Lorente, *La dictadura de Primo de Rivera* (Almuzara: Cordova, 2022), p. 97.
- 138 Javier Tusell Gómez, *Radiografía de un golpe de estado: el ascenso al poder del general Primo de Rivera* (Madrid: Alianza, 1987), p. 144.
- 139 Gerardo Muñoz Lorente, *La dictadura de Primo de Rivera* (Almuzara: Cordova, 2022), p. 103.
- 140 Javier Tusell Gómez, *Radiografía de un golpe de estado: el ascenso al poder del general Primo de Rivera* (Madrid: Alianza, 1987), pp. 157–162.
- 141 Miguel Primo de Rivera, *La obra de la dictadura. Sus cuatro últimos artículos* (Madrid: Sáez Hermanos, 1930), pp. 13–14.
- 142 Javier Tusell Gómez, *Radiografía de un golpe de estado: el ascenso al poder del general Primo de Rivera* (Madrid: Alianza, 1987), p. 163.
- 143 Javier Tusell Gómez, *Radiografía de un golpe de estado: el ascenso al poder del general Primo de Rivera* (Madrid: Alianza, 1987), p. 164.
- 144 Javier Tusell Gómez, *Radiografía de un golpe de estado: el ascenso al poder del general Primo de Rivera* (Madrid: Alianza, 1987), p. 173.
- 145 Javier Tusell Gómez, *Radiografía de un golpe de estado: el ascenso al poder del general Primo de Rivera* (Madrid: Alianza, 1987), p. 173.
- 146 Julio López Iníguez, ‘El primoriverismo valenciano: origen y funcionamiento de sus élites militares (1923–1930)’, *Saitabi. Revista de la Facultat de Geografia i Història*, 68 (2018), pp. 210–211.
- 147 Javier Tusell Gómez, *Radiografía de un golpe de estado: el ascenso al poder del general Primo de Rivera* (Madrid: Alianza, 1987), p. 192.
- 148 *ABC*, 14 September 1923.
- 149 Jordi Casassas i Ymbert (ed.), *La dictadura de Primo de Rivera (1923–1930): textos* (Barcelona: Anthropos, 1983), pp. 81–85.
- 150 *La Vanguardia*, 14 September 1923.
- 151 *La Vanguardia*, 14 September 1923.
- 152 *La Vanguardia*, 14 September 1923.
- 153 *La Vanguardia*, 14 September 1923.
- 154 *La Vanguardia*, 14 September 1923.
- 155 *La Vanguardia*, 14 September 1923.
- 156 Francisco Hernández Mir, *Un crimen de lesa patria. La dictadura ante la historia* (Madrid: Compañía Iberoamericana de Publicaciones, 1930), pp. 60–61. For the cutting of telecommunications, see *La Vanguardia*, 14 September 1923.
- 157 Ramón Villares & Javier Moreno Luzón, *Restauración y Dictadura*, in Josep Fontana & Ramón Villares (eds.), *Historia de España*, vol. 7 (Barcelona: Crítica, 2009), p. 497.
- 158 Ramón Villares & Javier Moreno Luzón, *Restauración y Dictadura*, in Josep Fontana & Ramón Villares (eds.), *Historia de España*, vol. 7 (Barcelona: Crítica, 2009), pp. 497–498.
- 159 Eduardo González Calleja, *La España de Primo de Rivera: la modernización autoritaria, 1923–1930* (Madrid: Alianza, 2005), p. 43.

- 160 Javier Tusell & Genoveva García Queipo de Llano, *Alfonso XIII. El rey polémico* (Madrid: Taurus, 2001), p. 428.
- 161 Javier Tusell Gómez, *Radiografía de un golpe de estado: el ascenso al poder del general Primo de Rivera* (Madrid: Alianza, 1987), pp. 206–207.
- 162 *La Vanguardia*, 14 September 1923.
- 163 *La Vanguardia*, 14 September 1923.
- 164 Javier Tusell Gómez, *Radiografía de un golpe de estado: el ascenso al poder del general Primo de Rivera* (Madrid: Alianza, 1987), pp. 207–208.
- 165 *La Vanguardia*, 14 September 1923.
- 166 Shlomo Ben-Ami, *Fascism from Above: The Dictatorship of Primo de Rivera in Spain, 1923–1930* (Oxford: OUP, 1983), p. 62.
- 167 *La Acción*, 14 September 1923.
- 168 Archivo del Congreso de los Diputados, Sección 18, Responsabilidades Políticas, 1927–1930, *Comisión de Responsabilidades*, legajo 615, folio 8.
- 169 Carolyn Boyd, 'El rey-soldado: Alfonso XIII y el ejército', in Javier Moreno Luzón (ed.), *Alfonso XIII: un político en el trono* (Madrid: Marcial Pons, 2003), p. 236.
- 170 *La Acción*, 14 September 1923.

3 The Military Directory (1923–1925)

Miguel Primo de Rivera had a very busy day on 15 September 1923. At 9:40 in the morning – his express train from Barcelona having been delayed by 20 minutes – the Captain-General of Catalonia arrived in Madrid. As the Marqués de Estella disembarked, hundreds of people who were waiting at Atocha station applauded him while shouting ‘Long live the Redeemer of the Fatherland, Spain and the King, and down with the politicians!’¹ The generals who had made up the provisional Military Directory – Muñoz Cobo, Cavalcanti, Saro, Daban and Berenguer – were there to meet Primo, who made his way through the station only with difficulty, given the crowds of sympathisers who wanted to embrace him. Arriving at the passenger lounge in the station, Primo greeted one-by-one the military officers of the Army High Command who had come to welcome him to Madrid. Among those generals was his old friend Severiano Martínez Anido, who had supported the coup from San Sebastián and had travelled to Madrid the previous day. Minutes later, Primo and Cavalcanti were spirited away by car to the Captaincy-General. In an atmosphere of heady patriotic fervour, soldiers and civilians continued to shout ‘vivas’ to Primo de Rivera, Alfonso XIII and Spain until the car disappeared from view.²

There were further rounds of greeting and well-wishing for Primo from the senior echelons of the Army at the Captaincy-General. On this occasion, however, it was Martínez Anido who was first to speak to his comrade-in-arms. The order of greeting did not go unnoticed by the assembled journalists, who asked Martínez Anido as he left the building if Primo had chosen him to head the Ministry of the Interior. The veteran soldier denied this.³ Seven days later, Primo would name Martínez Anido as the Under-Secretary at the ministry. Since the department officially had no minister at this time, Martínez Anido was effectively acting as Minister and would do so until he was formally appointed as such in December 1925.⁴ He would serve as Primo’s right-hand man throughout the dictatorship. At the Captaincy-General, Primo also met with the generals of the Quadrilateral and Muñoz Cobo to inform them that he would dispense with their services in a future dictatorial government. The provisional directory would be dismantled once the King handed power to the Marqués de Estella.⁵

After the meetings at the military headquarters, Primo next went to the Ministry of War, where he met briefly with the titular minister, Luis Aizpuru. Primo informed Aizpuru that he would not remain in post and recommended he take two or three days' leave to visit his family in San Sebastián before deciding upon his political future.⁶ Having finished his meeting, Primo made haste to the Royal Palace, where he arrived promptly at midday. Significantly, Primo travelled to his appointment with Alfonso in the Prime Minister's official car. Primo spent just over an hour with the King in what became a somewhat tense meeting. Alfonso told Primo that he would like to swear him in as Prime Minister before the Minister of Justice.⁷ The King was trying to maintain etiquette and make his concession of power to Primo appear as much as possible like any other ministerial crisis under the Restoration System. For his part, Primo wanted to be sworn in as President of a military directory. He fully understood the King's manoeuvre and reminded him of what he had already stated in his telegram from Barcelona the previous day, namely, that he was hoping 'to forge a revolution under the seal of the monarchy', but that if the monarch opposed, he would seek alternative means.⁸ Ultimately, the two men reached an agreement. Primo would be sworn in as Prime Minister, but he would lead a military directory rather than a typical government.

Primo was in ebullient mood when he left his meeting with the King. Surrounded by journalists in the hallway of the palace, he inadvertently offered a glimpse of who was in charge:

Tonight, at eight, I will return to the Palace to get the King's signature for the first decrees, or rather the first draft decrees. If His Majesty the King approves, I will give you notice of these measures.⁹

Primo also declared the dissolution of the provisional directory and added that he would lead a new Military Directory, which enjoyed 'the confidence of the King and the country'.¹⁰ The new government would be provisional, but Primo was intentionally vague when it came to specifying just how long it would be in place. He expected it would be 'fifteen, twenty days; as long as it takes for the country to find men who can govern'.¹¹ From the outset, Primo left open the possibility for staying in power once the Military Directory had performed its role and declared that he would have 'no difficulty leading' any future government that replaced the one he had just formed.¹² And even while he was still Captain-General of Barcelona, Primo explained that the new directory would be formed by a brigadier general from each of the regions and branches of the armed forces, and that ministries would be taken care of by 'the oldest and most distinguished civil servants in each ministry'.¹³

When Primo returned to the Captaincy-General, he insisted that the military would only temporarily hold power in Spain, but that he might stay for longer as the head of a 'definitive government'. He declared to the press that 'if the country looks to me to lead it I will respect its decision whatever that may be', thus making it clear, at the same time, that the power to choose

governments lay in the country and not the King.¹⁴ From the Captaincy-General, Primo returned to the Ministry of War to see Aizpuru once again and to have lunch with him, the Minister for the Navy, Admiral Aznar, as well as generals Berenguer, Saro and Muñoz Cobo. At around 4 o'clock in the afternoon, Primo moved to his new office at the Buenavista Palace, where he received senior civil servants who were going to be placed in charge of ministries, among whom was Fernando Espinosa de los Monteros at Foreign Affairs and Millán Millán de Priego at the Interior Ministry.¹⁵ Shortly after five, Primo returned to talk with the journalists. 'We have come to bring about radical transformation and to root out the old Spanish politics, as the Spanish people wish', Primo stated. 'There are some things that have ended in Spain forever'.¹⁶ This transformation would take a nationalistic form:

I was afforded a farewell in Barcelona that I could not have dreamt of. Prominent Catalans, men from this Barcelona that is said to be separatist, offered the most intense and enthusiastic "vivas" for Spain that I had ever heard. "If you succeed, separatism will be at an end", they told me. And they shouted "Long Live the King! Long Live Spain!".¹⁷

Asked if he planned to dissolve parliament, Primo was also blunt:

Naturally. If the Spanish deputies were expressions of the will of the regions, one could count upon the help of some parliamentarians, as Mussolini does in Italy. But what would happen in Spain? It would lead to a noisy and sterile debate, at the end of which every deputy would vote with the head of their group, and nothing will have moved forward.¹⁸

The Marqués de Estella also took the opportunity to accuse Santiago Alba – the Foreign Minister in the government of García Prieto – of corruption and theft. According to Primo, Alba had signed 'commercial treaties in league with capitalist elements for his sole personal benefit', he had 'set traps for his own ends' and stolen secret funds meant for the war in Morocco.¹⁹ Alba's conduct was nothing less than 'the straw that broke the camel's back and which drove us to act', in other words, the root of the *coup d'état*.²⁰ The representation of Alba as the epitome of the worst features of the Restoration political system gives us a good sense of Primo de Rivera's profound dishonesty. The Marqués de Estella knew perfectly well that Alba was one of the least corrupt politicians in the Restoration System, but he was also aware that Alba was particularly hated by the *Africanista* officers for his 'civilianising' policy in Morocco.²¹ By denouncing Alba in public, Primo was offering red meat to a group he would need to make his dictatorship function. Primo also knew that Alba was particularly disliked by the Catalan economic elites after he had sought to impose a tax on the multimillionaire businessmen created through the conditions of Spain's neutrality in the First World War. As such, taking aim at the Liberal politician was a means of consolidating support for Primo among the industrialists of the

new regime. Primo's targeting of Alba was also motivated by personal rancour. Primo believed, wrongly, that Alba's *caciquismo* manoeuvrings in favour of a Liberal candidate years before had prevented him from obtaining an electoral seat for the province of Cádiz.²² His treatment of Alba showed that personal vengeance might happily coincide with creating scapegoats to strengthen his political power.

Having concluded his statements to the journalists at 6 in the afternoon, Primo met once again with the members of the provisional directory and began preparing the decrees that would establish his dictatorship. At 7:50, Primo arrived at the Royal Palace in mess dress uniform with an adjutant who was carrying a bulky folder of papers for the King to sign. Ten minutes later, the Minister of Justice, López Muñoz, as the King's senior notary, swore in Primo as President of the Council of Ministers, in the presence of Alfonso, General Milans del Bosch, the Marqués de la Torrecilla, the Marqués de Zarco, and the senior officer of the Royal Guards, Álvarez Ayuca. After the ceremony, Primo met again with Alfonso XIII so that the King could sign the papers he had prepared for him. This time the meeting was brief. Alfonso took less than 20 minutes to sign all the papers that Primo presented to him, including the creation of a military directory which would comprise eight brigade generals, as well as the Marqués de Magaz, a rear-admiral, as representative for the Navy. At 20:30, Primo left the palace and explained to journalists how the new government was going to work. 'I will sign and attend the King every day, as the sole leader and President of the said Directory', he informed them.²³ Primo was now officially in charge of the country. He had left to one side those generals who had helped his coup to succeed in Madrid, and he had won the battle against the King over his exact powers. Less than 12 hours after his arrival in the capital, Primo was now head of a directory comprised exclusively of military officers. He had fulfilled his dream and become dictator of Spain.

We might speculate on what sort of dictatorship Primo de Rivera sought to institute on that day of 15 September 1923. One of the royal decrees prepared by Primo that day stated that the dictatorship would 'constitute a brief parenthesis in the constitutional progress of Spain', and Primo's own declarations stressed the temporary nature of his regime. This has led many to believe that Primo launched the coup with only a temporary dictatorship in mind.²⁴ Nonetheless, in this initial moment of power, Primo was intentionally ambiguous about the possible duration of the new regime. As we have seen, he left open the possibility of continuing as head of a 'definitive government' once the Military Directory had fulfilled its function of doing away with the old politics, and once Spain had produced 'men not contaminated by the vices' of the Restoration System who could therefore lead the country.²⁵ Alongside the ambiguity in his declarations, there were also contradictions in his proposals. Primo promised to carry out 'a radical transformation and to root out the old Spanish politics', an enormous undertaking which, manifestly, would not be achievable by a dictatorship lasting only a few weeks. We might see this deliberately ambiguous and contradictory discourse as not so much a result of

Primo's improvisation, but rather as a message which was sure to please the various social, civilian and military groups who had welcomed the coup with such enthusiasm. Some observers quickly understood the impracticality of a short dictatorship. Just three weeks after the coup, for example, the British Foreign Minister, George Curzon, was already warning that 'the military are going to face difficulties when it comes leaving power' in Spain, for all their promises to bring about a 'transition from dictatorship to democracy'.²⁶

Beyond Primo's own declarations on the subject – often confused and occasionally incoherent – we must focus on his actions if we are to obtain a fuller picture of his intentions in the first days of his dictatorship. If we stick to the facts, the notion that Primo was considering a return to 'constitutional normality' after a few weeks looks less likely. Certainly, Primo stepped into his new role as head of government with gusto. In the first days of his regime, Primo declared martial throughout Spain, chose Martínez Anido as his right-hand man and Minister of the Interior, dismissed all civil governors and replaced them with high-ranking military officers. Primo also created the post of *delegado gubernativo* (government delegate), military officers assigned to every district of Spain with orders to oversee municipal politics and break the power networks of the *caciques*.²⁷ The administration of the state was thus placed, *de facto*, in military hands. From the height of the Council of Ministers down to the most local districts, and replacing civil government in every province of Spain, power now fell into the hands of the military. Meanwhile, the Military Directory announced a law against the *caciques*, which was intended to further erode the power base of the old politicians and improve the public administration. The Royal Decrees of 18 September and 1 October reorganised the state apparatus according to the principles of efficiency, simplification and economic austerity so dear to Primo, and so popular among Army officers, at least in theory.²⁸ The decrees set out the immediate dismissal of all those civil servants who held two posts concurrently and included strong sanctions for those who were absent from their post without justification. Clearly, such measures did not mean an end to *caciquismo* within the state apparatus, but certainly they represented a propagandistic success for the government. The wave of citizen complaints against municipal politicians and civil servants and the excellent reception of these laws in the press suggest that broad sectors of Spanish society were delighted to witness the sacking, and occasionally the imprisonment, of the old Restoration elites.²⁹

In line with the militarisation of the country, four days after the coup Primo created the *Somatén Nacional* in an attempt to provide the regime with a civil militia, in case of future problems with public order.³⁰ The Marqués de Estella thus fulfilled the promise he made in his 'manifesto' of 13 September 1923 that he would extend the armed Catalan militia to the whole of Spain. As we have seen, this was a measure that Primo had been demanding from the civilian leaders of the Restoration since 1919. Nonetheless, the extension of the *Somatén* to every Spanish province should not be seen as a mere replica of the way the Catalan militia functioned. The regime's model effectively militarised

the militia and brought the *Somatén* under the direct control of the Army. The Royal Decree of 17 September set out that each Captain-General in the army had to choose a 'Commander of the *Somatén*' from among his own generals.³¹ Similarly, each Captain-General had to select officers in the reserve who could serve as auxiliaries in the local militias.³² For their part, the officers were tasked with organising local branches of the *Somatén* and appointing the senior corporal in each area. As with the *delegados gubernativos*, the creation of the *Somatén* was coordinated by Martínez Anido from the Ministry of the Interior. Martínez Anido supervised the work of the Captains-General and the local commanders of the *Somatén* in each region and demanded that the officers appointed as replacements for the civil governors mobilise the *delegados* to organise and inspect the militia's branches in the smaller towns.³³ The *delegados* thus became the principal link between the commanders of the *Somatén* in the cities and those in the rural areas. The *Somatén Nacional* remained under military authority throughout the dictatorship.³⁴

On 18 September 1923, the day after the creation of the national *Somatén*, the military *junta* approved the so-called 'Decree against Separatism'. In its preamble, the new law described separatist actions and propaganda as one of the greatest problems facing the nation.³⁵ Displaying once more his love of scientific language, to say nothing of his fondness for exaggeration, Primo described the separatist threat as a 'virus' of such magnitude that it threatened the safety of both the Spanish state and the Spanish people.³⁶ The first article of the decree placed all crimes against the security and unity of the nation under military jurisdiction, whether such crimes be verbal or written. Article two outlined the various prison sentences for individuals who propounded separatist doctrines, whether in schools or political meetings, and allowed for the death penalty in the case of armed uprisings. In short, within the first 72 hours of his dictatorship, Primo had changed the Law of Jurisdictions and placed all crimes against the nation under military jurisdiction, something which many within the armed forces had been clamouring for since 1906. With the new legislation against separatism, the notion that the Army was protector of the nation was offered juridical status.

This process of militarisation in Spain undertaken by Primo de Rivera took place against a backdrop of a state of exception which, over time, was set to become permanent. With the Constitution of 1876 suspended and martial law instituted, the Marqués de Estella created a system of prior censorship for all publications, and from January 1924, also initiated censorship of telephones and telegraphs as well.³⁷ What set the regime's use of censorship apart was that both its scope and duration were without precedent in Spain. It is well known, for example, that governments during the Restoration period frequently imposed censorship, in particular during period when martial law was in effect. Under Primo, however, this was expanded into an indefinite and much more elaborate system. Less than two days into his dictatorship, Primo met all the directors of the Madrid newspapers and told them that prior censorship was necessary as the 'effective and vigorous defence' of a Directory whose

members were politically little more than ‘new-borns’.³⁸ Primo also promised them that the censorship would gradually disappear as the dictatorship went on, something which, of course, never happened.³⁹ Ultimately, censorship was not simply a question of protecting the regime and its leader from criticism, it was also a question of principle. Primo regarded freedom of expression as a decadent right and believed that control of the means of communication was necessary to avoid the emergence of harmful ideas among the population. In his opinion, the media’s role was to promote patriotic ideas, and as such, newspapers dedicated to publishing any other type of content would be banned.⁴⁰

The dictator created the *Negociado de Información y Prensa* (Bureau for News and the Press), which would later be renamed the *Gabinete de Información y Censura de Prensa* (Office for News and Press Censorship), with the specific aim of banning ‘all forms of rebellion and opposition’.⁴¹ Heavily centralised and under the direct and exclusive control of Primo, the Bureau enjoyed sweeping powers. It had the ability to remove entire paragraphs from press articles, introduce official commentary and corrections in newspaper editorials, prohibit articles in their entirety, impose economic sanctions on newspapers and even close them down completely. Its remit covered all public utterances, including those of the King. Running alongside this, Martínez Anido ordered the military officers named as civil governors to make full use of the ‘extraordinary opportunities offered by the suspension of [constitutional] guarantees and martial law’ and to punish severely anybody who questioned the Military Directory, whether in the press or in private conversations.⁴² In December 1923, Primo also personally intervened in the matter and prepared some ‘Instructions for *Delegados Gubernativos*’, in which he requested officers be ready

to impose the appropriate punishment when the machinations of the old *caciques* lead to the propagation of announcements, or to verify works which, prohibited by this Directory in circulars sent to the Governors, could damage the success of the regime of honour and justice that good patriots wish to impose.⁴³

From the beginning, Primo and Martínez Anido were very clear that the regime could only be built upon a public opinion which was perpetually muzzled.

Similarly, Primo and his number two began a process of militarising the civil administration of the country. Between October and December 1923, a total of 1009 *delegados gubernativos* were appointed, with orders to inspect and purge the judiciary, town halls and schools, something that has been described as an attempt by Primo to achieve ‘total control of society’.⁴⁴ With the Cortes dissolved and both legislative and executive powers in the hands of the dictator, control of the administration of justice became one of the primary goals of the regime. Accordingly, meddling in the work of judges and the purging of dissenting magistrates became commonplace on the part of civil governors, military governors and the *delegados gubernativos*.⁴⁵ Meanwhile, the Directory

gave itself the power to overturn sentences that it did not agree with.⁴⁶ At the same time, Primo de Rivera created a Council for the Inspection of Judicial Authority, the goal of which was 'to examine, revise and decide upon cases and proceedings of any nature that have been initiated in the last five years'.⁴⁷ On 3 October 1923, the Directory also created a special military junta to oversee judicial proceedings and the supposed irregularities committed by parliamentary deputies and senators in the previous five years. At the start of January 1924, Martínez Anido ordered the *delegados* to send him 'confidential reports' on the judges 'who, through leniency or negligence, are weakly supporting government actions'.⁴⁸ On 5 April 1924, the government created Councils for the Purification of Municipal Justice in the territorial courts to review cases that had been opened against judges, lawyers and municipal secretaries. These councils were composed of *delegados* and members of the regime's new single-party, the *Unión Patriótica* (UP), and had the power to dismiss those officials under investigation.⁴⁹

Above all, it was the actions of Primo in the Caoba scandal which left the public in little doubt as to the level of esteem that the dictator held for judicial independence. At the end of January 1924, the Marqués de Estella contacted Judge José Prendes Pando, asking him to release a well-known madam nicknamed 'la Caoba' (the redhead), who was accused of dealing drugs. Not only did the magistrate refuse to do so, but he also made public the fact that Primo had intervened. By the start of February, the story was circulating openly around Madrid and Primo called upon the press to defend la Caoba, complaining that she had been imprisoned thanks to an anonymous and baseless denunciation. Primo also accused Prendes Pando of slandering him and showing his written request 'in public gatherings and circles, referring to it as a recommendation, and adding that this was how they were written under the old regime'.⁵⁰ Primo was genuinely outraged by the incident. He demanded that the judge be punished, but the head of the Supreme Court, Buenaventura Muñoz, refused to do so. Primo's rage grew still further, and he decided to retaliate. Prendes Prado was subsequently expelled from the judiciary and Buenaventura Muñoz forced into early retirement.⁵¹ Meanwhile, those who criticised the dictator's actions in public would also find themselves punished. On 17 February 1924, for example, the former parliamentary deputy Rodrigo Soriano, whom, as we have seen, had fought a duel with Primo in 1906, mentioned the case of la Caoba during a talk at the Madrid Atheneum, where he was discussing the responsibility of the King for the disaster at Annual.⁵² On 20 February, Primo ordered Soriano be sent into exile on Fuerteventura and that the Atheneum be closed down.⁵³ The 'la Caoba' incident offered an early display of Primo de Rivera's capricious and vengeful personality.

Repression of critics would be a constant from the moment that Primo assumed power. Fines, imprisonment and exile became the preferred tools of a dictatorship determined to silence any type of dissent. Such punishments were imposed arbitrarily and without any form of judicial protection. A good example of how far the regime was prepared to go in its persecution

of dissidents – and its complete lack of regard for the fundamental rights of Spanish citizens – was the case of Ángel Ossorio y Gallardo. The Conservative politician was arrested, imprisoned and fined 5000 pesetas for ‘libelling’ the Directory in a private letter to Antonio Maura, which had been intercepted by the Police. Another notorious case of repression concerned the arrest – and later exile to Fuerteventura – of the renowned philosopher and intellectual Miguel de Unamuno at the start of 1924. In a private letter, Unamuno had criticised the dictatorship and made comments on the Caoba case.⁵⁴ Other prominent victims included the former Prime Minister, Rafael Sánchez Guerra; the former Liberal ministers Niceto Alcalá Zamora, the Marqués de Cortina and the Conde de Romanones; the Professor and militant socialist Luis Jiménez de Asúa; the journalist Francisco de Cossio; and the lawyer Arturo Casanueva. Nor did the dictatorship shy from clashing with professional associations, such as the Barcelona School of Lawyers, or academics in the Spanish university system, trade unions, members of the Catalan clergy, newspapers such as *El Heraldo de Madrid* or *El Liberal*, all of which frequently fell afoul of the regime. To this list could be added state bodies, such as town councils, the Catalan Mancomunitat, and even the Postal and Telegraph Service.⁵⁵ Although Primo always presented such actions as an attempt to eradicate *caciquismo* and the old politics, in truth they were evidence of an indiscriminate appetite to control various forms of social life in Spain, that is to say, when they were not simply motivated by an arbitrary desire for revenge against all manner of opponents. In short, as Eduardo González Calleja has suggested, this authoritarian behaviour ‘demonstrates the existence of a genuinely repressive regime beyond the boundaries of pre-existing legality’.⁵⁶

To oversee the repression, Primo entrusted the two men who had conceived and prosecuted the dirty war against the workers’ movement in Barcelona. The appointment of Martínez Anido as Under-Secretary in the Interior Ministry was complemented by the nomination of General Miguel Arlegui as Director-General of Public Order on 27 September 1923. Arlegui was given command of the re-established *Dirección General de Seguridad* (Security Police) and the dictatorship spent enormous sums in modernising and expanding the work of the police forces. Martínez Anido considered the investment to be vital, given that he oversaw ‘a police force which finds out about things after the concierges do’, only learned about plots from the newspapers, and even then ‘only for those [police] who knew how to read’.⁵⁷ The elevation of Martínez Anido and Arlegui allowed Primo to convey a sense of continuity in the repressive policies that had been so well received by the Catalan economic elites in previous years.⁵⁸ The two men certainly did what was expected of them. During the Military Directory, police repression was characterised by *agents provocateurs*, fake plots, as well as very real cases of torture and murder, all of which had long-since happened in Barcelona.⁵⁹ Meanwhile, the number of executions following sentences of death shot up during the dictatorship, from a figure of 8 executions in the period 1920–1923, to 18 executions in 1924 and first months of 1925. It would certainly seem that the repression of

the anarcho-syndicalist movement had some effect. So-called 'social attacks' fell from 819 in 1923 to just 18 in 1924.⁶⁰

Alongside the Police and Civil Guard, it is worth remembering that much of the repressive work of the dictatorship in its first two years was carried out by army officers in their roles as civil governors, and above all by the *delegados gubernativos*. Primo himself sent orders to civil governors to persecute politicians, to maintain 'the state of emergency with energy and effectiveness' and not to tolerate 'either in the press or in private conversations anything that damages our prestige, which will grow with the most energetic measures against those who feel safe because of who they are or what they represent'. In this circular to the officers tasked with running the civil administration at the end of October 1923, Primo concluded that 'The health of the nation demands from yourselves the most energetic and prompt action'.⁶¹ Meanwhile, from the moment he arrived in the Ministry of the Interior, Martínez Anido spearheaded alongside the civil governors a network of repression against those considered to be enemies of the regime, chief among whom were anarchists, republicans, liberals, Catalan nationalists and various small communist groups. The civil governors were happy to comply and embarked on a campaign of imprisonments and exile for opponents, as well as seizures of books and pamphlets considered to be critical of the dictatorship, fines for publishing houses and newspapers, the closure of headquarters of political parties, and the creation of spy networks throughout Spain.⁶²

Similarly, under the auspices of the Ministry of the Interior, the *delegados gubernativos* conducted thousands of inspections of courts, schools, local administrations and public institutions. Spurred on by an avalanche of anonymous denunciations received from citizens from all over the country, the delegates were quick to imprison municipal councillors and local *caciques* with scant consideration of the case.⁶³ Their inspections resulted in dozens of arrests – and on occasion suicides – as well as the return of large sums of money stolen from the public purse.⁶⁴ It did not take long, however, for the situation to descend into chaos. On 1 January 1924, Martínez Anido sent out 'secret instructions' to the civil governors and *delegados* with new guidelines for the inspection of town councils.⁶⁵ He urged caution when dealing with the *caciques*, since if they were later freed by the judges, the public image *delegados* might suffer. The request was widely flouted. Four weeks later, Martínez Anido was forced to insist upon the need to reduce the number of arrests, deportations and fines imposed by the delegates.⁶⁶ Once again, he argued that mass arrests were damaging the image of the *delegados* in the eyes of the public and insisted that in all cases where denunciations had been anonymous, delegates should conduct an investigation and not proceed immediately to arrest. Once again, it seems that the *delegados* paid little heed to the instructions. In the following months, Martínez Anido repeatedly claimed that local authorities were not following the guidelines set by ministers for the arrest of suspects and insisted that the number of arrests should be reduced.⁶⁷

True to their belief in how the country should be governed, the repressive system conceived by Primo and Martínez Anido to put a stop to *caciquismo*

and destroy the political class of the Restoration System adopted a hierarchical and militarised structure. Even so, the sheer scale of anonymous denunciation suggests that many citizens harboured a genuine desire to end a system which they had come to see as profoundly corrupt. It is likely that a good number of denunciations were motivated by a simple desire for revenge or were a way of settling old scores among neighbours, but there can be no doubt that many ordinary people initially saw the dictatorship as an opportunity to bring about a genuine political transformation in Spain. The fact that the end of the Restoration political class and the *caciques* could only be achieved through a system that was so deeply unjust, opaque and illiberal as the anonymous denunciations that the regime was encouraging, did not seem to be a problem to the thousands of Spaniards who informed on their fellow citizens. In other words, the notion that the regeneration of the nation would make use of a deeply repressive system based upon anonymous denunciation was not only conceived and promoted by the new military elites from above, but it was also broadly shared by a large number of Spaniards from below.

Collectively, the repressive apparatus of mass imprisonment and deportations, the interference with judicial process, the capricious and arbitrary punishments, the attempt to secure total control of the public administration, and the concentration of all power in the hands of the Marqués de Estella, bequeaths a picture of Primo de Rivera as a genuine despot. It is an image far removed from the caricature of an affable dictator who did not much know what he was doing and would improvise his course of action erratically. From the moment he assumed power, Primo de Rivera was an autocrat. Nonetheless, he also understood very quickly that in order to maintain his dictatorship he would need a certain degree of popular support. The backing of Alfonso XIII and the collaboration of various factions within the Army could prove useful in putting the regime in place, but, as with all modern dictatorships, repression alone was not going to be sufficient to consolidate a new authoritarian system. Primo's regime began from a relatively favourable position. His coup had been well received by various political and social groups. On the right, Social Catholics, Carlists, Catholic integristas, *Mauristas* and the Catalanists of the *Lliga Regionalista* all applauded Primo's coup and supported his creation of a military dictatorship.⁶⁸ Though each group had its own motives for doing so, all wanted to see the new regime as a suitable vehicle to further their own politics, albeit under the auspices of the military. Even some intellectuals and liberal newspapers, such as *El Sol*, declared their sympathy for what they thought would be a temporary dictatorship.⁶⁹ Meanwhile, the chambers of commerce and industry, the Spanish Employers' Federation, numerous professional organisations, as well as the Catholic Church, made their support for Primo's coup public. The fact that both the peseta and shares in Spanish businesses rose sharply and immediately after the coup also says much about the confidence of the upper and middle classes in the new authoritarian regime from the outset.⁷⁰

Naturally, the situation was very different with respect to the workers' movement. The *Sindicatos Únicos*, the federation of anarchist groups, and the

still-miniscule Spanish Communist Party called for a revolutionary general strike and formed a 'Committee of Action Against War and the Dictatorship', but their efforts were swiftly suppressed and had little impact.⁷¹ Despite their initial failure in stalling the coup, the anarchists, in their various factions, would go on to constitute the major – indeed perhaps the only – workers' opposition to the dictatorship from the first to the last days of the regime. Through strikes, attempted insurrections, propaganda and violent direct action, the anarchist movement fought the dictatorship on many fronts, although without much success.⁷² Counter-insurgency operations and large-scale repression of the anarchist movement pursued by the regime's security apparatus diminished the anarchists' capacities for action and mobilisation. As during the Restoration period, such measures included torture, murder and arbitrary arrests.⁷³ Nonetheless, anarchism contributed fundamentally to the formalisation of an insurrectional logic during the dictatorship. Gradually, other groups would adopt such a logic, including republicans, leftists, Catalanists, liberals and even some conservatives. It was a logic which would eventually wear down not only the Primo de Rivera regime but also the Spanish crown itself.

Following the coup of 1923, Spain's principal socialist party, the PSOE (*Partido Socialista Obrero Español*), opted not to follow the anarchist-communist opposition and decided to wait upon events.⁷⁴ By October 1923, however, some socialists were beginning to accept posts in town councils, and from the start of 1924, the socialist UGT union (*Unión General de Trabajadores*), led by Francisco Largo Caballero, deepened its collaboration with the dictatorship by accepting official posts from the regime.⁷⁵ Meanwhile, there were sectors of the middle and lower-middle classes who were not linked to the labour movement, and who had long-since adopted the nationalist and regenerationist discourse now espoused by the dictatorship. Many such people viewed the arrival of Primo de Rivera with hope, since he seemed to speak their language.⁷⁶ Teachers, members of agricultural cooperatives, shopkeepers and various professional associations across Spain declared their support for Primo publicly.⁷⁷ Just three months after the coup, the reports of the Italian Ambassador in Madrid spoke of 'almost unanimous' approval of Primo's actions among Spaniards.⁷⁸

From the very beginning, the dictator was aware of the need to maintain a direct line to public opinion. In order to survive, the regime would need to secure a degree of popular backing, and to that end, Primo would use the weapons of political propaganda and mobilisation of the masses, in many ways following the examples recently set in Fascist Italy.⁷⁹ In terms of propaganda, Primo transmitted his ideas and plans for government through constant press statements, rallies and articles which he would write for the daily newspapers linked to the regime, and above all with the so-called 'official notes'. The 'notes' were essentially press releases, which appeared up to twice per week. Their inclusion was mandatory in all Spanish newspapers and collectively represented an ongoing dialogue which the dictator would maintain with the public throughout his regime. The term dialogue is appropriate, since frequently the

letters and petitions that ordinary citizens sent to Primo made reference to the ‘official notes’ that had been published days before.⁸⁰ Not by chance, one of the first official notes was directed ‘to Spanish workers’. In it, Primo expressed his delight for the warm reception he had received from ‘the Spanish people, especially the workers’ and asked that in their ‘patriotism’ they would increase their productivity and distance themselves from the unions.⁸¹ ‘Then we will be able to say with truth that the regeneration has been initiated by the people and the Army in unison’, he concluded with a heavy dose of populism.⁸²

From the start, the work of propaganda was centralised in the Bureau for News and the Press.⁸³ Ultimately, this made sense, since propaganda and censorship were two sides of the same coin. Primo’s speeches and official notes were swiftly published in various books and pamphlets and the Bureau for News and the Press began to coordinate the flow of news from the regime both in Spain and abroad. Meanwhile, the Spanish government paid journalists in various corners of the world to try and ensure a positive image of the dictatorship in the international press.⁸⁴ The dictatorship also used public money to buy more than 60 regional newspapers, which subsequently came under direct government control. On 19 October 1925, the regime founded its own official organ, the daily newspaper *La Nación*. Among its principal shareholders was the Catalan magnate Conde de Güell, who donated 200,000 pesetas for the creation of the newspaper. Other leading figures from Spain’s socio-economic elites who were involved in the enterprise include Josep Maria Milà i Camps, José Cruz Conde, Pedro de Icaza y Aguirre, Federico de Echevarría and Ignacio Bauer, as well as several aristocrats, like the Conde de Guadalhorce (Rafael Benjumea), the Marqués de Foronda (Mariano de Foronda) and the Conde de los Andes (Francisco Moreno Zuleta). Each of these men contributed sums ranging from 5000 to 10,000 pesetas.⁸⁵ Primo’s first pick to manage the newspaper was José Rico Parada, a lieutenant-colonel in the General Staff and the Head of the Bureau for News and the Press. Later the newspaper would be headed by Manuel Delgado Barreto, the old director of the *Maurista* newspaper *La Acción*, and one of the most pronounced enemies of parliamentarism in Spain at the time. Shortly after its founding, *La Nación* boasted a circulation of 55,000 copies.⁸⁶

The regime had little shame in using state structures and public funds to create propaganda on its behalf. Meanwhile, provincial assemblies and town councils also became platforms for the regime to promote itself. To take just one example, in 1925, the Department of Public Education for the Barcelona *Diputación* (provincial council) subsidised the children’s magazine *Alegria* to the tune of 600 pesetas, with the declared intention of bringing it to the kids and ‘infiltrating in their tender souls the purest feelings of Religion and Patriotism’.⁸⁷ In the same year, the department purchased and distributed to public libraries numerous copies of *El Sometent a través de la Historia* (The *Somatén* throughout History), at the request of its author, D. J. Peres Unzueta; subsidised the Women of *Unión Patriótica* with 300 pesetas; purchased 50 copies of the *Revista Hispano Americana* at the suggestion of its

director, Fernando Peraire; and bought 100 copies of the books *El Somatenista español* and *El haber del Directorio*, at the suggestion of the author, J. Fontán Palomo.⁸⁸ As we can see, the propaganda operation of the regime created a market for patriotic literature which was promoted by public institutions, as well as incorporating ideas from members of both civil and military society in the dictatorship's campaign of nationalistic indoctrination.

Much as the Bureau for News and the Press worked to prohibit any form of criticism and publicise the work of the Directory, so Primo and Martínez Anido also used the civil governors and *delegados* as a means of controlling public discourse and spreading propaganda. From the very first days of the regime, government circulars asked civil governors to act 'against those who propagate false news and cause alarm' and not to tolerate 'either in the press or in private conversations anything that damages the prestige of the Directory and its labours'.⁸⁹ Meanwhile, the *delegados* were charged with organising hundreds of 'acts of patriotic affirmation' throughout Spain, while implementing governmental campaigns to encourage nationalistic, militaristic and authoritarian ideas among both children and adults.⁹⁰ When the regime founded its newspaper *La Nación* in October 1925, it was no surprise that Martínez Anido orchestrated a campaign from the Ministry of the Interior to gather subscribers via the civil governors and *delegados*.⁹¹

The dictatorship's propaganda should be understood as more than a simple publicity machine designed to sing the praises of Primo and the Military Directory. Rather, it was a crucial tool in the ambitious programme of mass education of the population. As we have seen, Primo had theorised since the First World War that a programme of indoctrination of the masses was necessary to create good patriots. These ideas would now be put into practice. The creation of a militarised 'new citizen' became a priority for the dictator, who believed strongly that an authoritarian form of Spanish nationalism was the best cure for leftist and democratic ideas.⁹² The creation of the *delegados gubernativos*, the *Somaten Nacional* and the *Unión Patriótica* all responded to various needs, but each of these new institutions had something in common, namely, that they acted as 'educators'. The *delegados* were assigned the task of creating a 'new citizenry' in towns and villages by propagating the militaristic nationalism that had been spread through Spanish barracks in the last years of the Restoration System.⁹³ These officers thus organised massive patriotic demonstrations and parades in support of the regime, as well as launching campaigns to encourage morality, physical education and patriotic duty in towns throughout the country. Martínez Anido certainly understood their role. In one circular to the civil governors, for example, he wrote in somewhat grandiose terms that the *delegados* had to be 'not just good but the best; to excel themselves; to create a new Fatherland'.⁹⁴ In a similar vein, Primo explained to the *delegados* that the future of 'this regime that seeks to regenerate the Fatherland' was dependent on their work.⁹⁵ Meanwhile, in-keeping with his populist leanings, the dictator decreed that the *delegados* should help 'the poor and the middle class' and ensure that the cost of basic staples be kept down.⁹⁶

All levels of the regime, and in particular the dictator, were dedicated from the start to propagating a regenerationist, populist and nationalistic discourse. From the moment of his ‘Manifesto of 13 September’, constantly reappearing in the Spanish press thereafter, Primo hammered home the idea that his dictatorship was an apolitical movement of national salvation, which came to destroy the elites of the ‘old politics’ and liberate a ‘healthy people’ and thus bring about the revival of the nation. With a degree of intellectual superiority, some historians have looked down on Primo and criticised him for his lack of a university education, the simplicity of his ideas and for having transformed topics of everyday Spaniards’ conversations in bars and cafes into the ‘principles of government’.⁹⁷ Such readings of Primo tend to banalise the authoritarian nature of the regime’s policies and present a highly caricatured image of the dictator as ‘inherently good-natured’. Nonetheless, the fact that Primo’s rhetoric replicated the subjects discussed in bars and cafés tells us much about the potential popularity of the regime’s discourse.⁹⁸ Clearly, Primo de Rivera was not a political theoretician who developed a coherent doctrine, though nor were most of the interwar European dictators. Even so, the Marqués de Estella was certainly an intelligent politician who knew how to fashion a discourse that was widespread throughout Spanish society, with the aim of securing support for his dictatorship.

This certainly worked well for the dictator. As we have seen, nationalistic and regenerationist discourse had become hegemonic among broad sectors of the middle classes, and some within the lower-middle classes, who welcomed the military coup. The massive participation in the system of anonymous denunciations of *caciques* and former politicians, to say nothing of the thousands of messages of support, letters of thanks and petitions sent to Primo and the *delegados*, all serve to demonstrate the active backing of these social sectors for the dictatorship. Although the motives behind petitions and denunciations might be very varied, citizens would habitually tend to justify their action as attempts ‘to save the country from the *caciques*’, claiming they were acting as ‘good Spaniards’ and repeating the notion that Primo de Rivera had begun a new era of ‘national regeneration’.⁹⁹ Indeed, this appropriation of official language by ordinary citizens is evidence of the success of the regime’s propaganda.¹⁰⁰ Moreover, recent studies have demonstrated how Primo’s repetition of these regenerationist, nationalistic and populist ideas throughout Spanish society prompted many citizens to get behind the regime. Ironically, this identification with the regime had its origins in the small space that the dictatorship allowed for citizens to influence the political decisions of the regime. The petitions passed straight up to the dictator, civil governors and *delegados*, the creation of local pressure groups and press campaigns to obtain better public services or the construction of new infrastructure, all came hand in hand with a regenerationist discourse. Ultimately, they linked the fulfilment of demands with the regime’s policy of development, which inevitably involved the expansion and modernisation of the state.¹⁰¹ The dictatorship thus ended up giving the impression to thousands of citizens that they could benefit from the new structures that the regime promised to bring as part of its programme of

national regeneration, and in this way, the government established a series of ideological bonds with various sectors within the population.

A further crucial ideological feature in the regime's discourse was that of 'anti-politics'. Primo's constant insistence that politicians could be dismissed as a corrupt elite who acted against the interests of a 'healthy people' represented an unprecedented demagogic and populist content for government rhetoric in Spain.¹⁰² From the moment the 'Manifiesto of 13 September' appeared, regime anti-politics did not simply reject politicians and *caciques* of any stripe.¹⁰³ The regime was equally opposed to political doctrines, which were presented as partisan, divisive and leading to social disorder. In place of divisive partisan ideologies, Primo offered the unity of patriotism. In place of the class struggle, Primo spoke of governing for 'Spain and the Spanish'.¹⁰⁴ This is not to suggest, of course, that this discourse of anti-politics was anything other than profoundly ideological, containing as it did stark populism, regenerationist Spanish nationalism, a defence of the socio-economic *status quo* and an authoritarian form of politics. Nonetheless, the dictator constantly tried to present his work as apolitical, arguing simplistically that his government stood beyond the system of party politics that had characterised the Restoration.¹⁰⁵ The 'anti-politics' discourse of the Directory was used time and again when referring to the *Somaten Nacional*, which was described as an 'organisation', 'league', 'movement' or 'group'.¹⁰⁶ In a similar vein, the dictator defined the *Unión Patriótica* as an 'anti-party', an 'apolitical' party and a 'league of citizens', which brought together all 'good Spaniards' for the salvation of the nation, in place of the 'dogmatism' of the traditional political parties.¹⁰⁷ The aim was to present the militia and the single-party as bodies emerging from a healthy people, not having been contaminated by the Restoration political parties. As with Mussolini during the first years of his regime, Primo's commitment to the discourse of anti-politics and national regeneration served as the ideological justification for the dictatorship.

The founding of *Unión Patriótica* in April 1924 has traditionally been seen as the moment in the Military Directory when Primo moved from a policy of destroying the old Restoration System towards the construction of a new regime.¹⁰⁸ Certainly, the creation of the official party, alongside the approval by decree of the Municipal Statute on 8 March 1924, ended the hopes of those who still thought the dictatorship would be temporary and short-lived. In truth, by this point, Primo had already indicated on numerous occasions that he had no interest in returning to any form of constitutional 'normality'. In November 1923, for example, when the leaders of Parliament and Senate petitioned the King that he complied with article 32 of the Constitution of 1876 and convene the Cortes, Primo was enraged. The dictator published an official note, in which he explained that his work was 'completely apolitical' and advised the parliamentarians

to get used to the idea of being away from power for at least months rather than days, and understand that while the country, through its

organs of cultural production and labour, through its healthy elements, does not suggest an opportune moment to convene [parliament] and listen to them, we will remain loyal to our convictions and resolute in our conduct.¹⁰⁹

On 21 January 1924, Primo congratulated himself in another official note of ‘having unleashed a revolution, which will now begin to consolidate its gains’.¹¹⁰ There would be no return to the constitutional past.

It was in this period between November 1923 and January 1924 that Primo had what we might term the phase of fascist temptation. Although Primo had already declared his sympathies for Italian fascism on the very day of the coup in 1923, it was his official visit to Italy in November 1923 alongside Alfonso XIII which strengthened his admiration for Mussolini and helped the Marqués de Estella to contextualise his dictatorship within the broader European context.¹¹¹ Accordingly, when Primo de Rivera met Mussolini at an official lunch in the Palazzo Venezia, the Spanish dictator compared his own rule in Spain to Italian fascism, arguing that they were parallel movements of national salvation.¹¹² Meanwhile, in his eagerness to see common features, Primo presented the *Somaten* and the Italian fascist militia as twin redemptive institutions of European civilisation.¹¹³ Impressed by the Duce, Primo declared with pride to the press that his regime would follow the fascist example.¹¹⁴ When the official delegation returned to Spain on 1 December, Primo could see that his praise of fascism had raised enormous hopes. At the port of Barcelona, before the full array of the Catalan political elite, the dictator and the King were welcomed by around 300 blue shirts of the *Federación Cívico Somatenista* (FCS) – a proto-fascist group also known as ‘La Traza’ (The Trace) – formed into 12 squads, and with arms raised in the Roman salute.¹¹⁵ After Alfonso XIII and Primo de Rivera had disembarked, the 12 squads of the FCS followed the royal procession through the streets of the city.

The warm and theatrical welcome that the blue shirts offered the dictator and the King was in some ways a performance geared towards their own self-promotion. The leaders of the proto-fascist group had held conversations with Primo and Martínez Anido in late October 1923 with the idea of transforming the FCS into the official party of the regime. They were now anxious to show the dictator that they were capable of mobilising popular support.¹¹⁶ Primo was initially delighted with the idea of using the FCS as his principal power base from which to build a national *primoriverista* party, which, to some extent, might work along the lines of the Italian *Partito Nazionale Fascista*. The leaders of the FCS had good links with the far-right officers of the Barcelona garrison, something Primo was well aware of, and they had shown their loyalty to the regime from the outset. Nonetheless, the dictator changed his mind at the end of January 1924. A further meeting of Primo and the leaders of the FCS did not lead to the creation of the official party which Primo yearned for.¹¹⁷ To be sure, the FCS had followers in Barcelona – although very few – but the organisation was practically unknown outside the city.

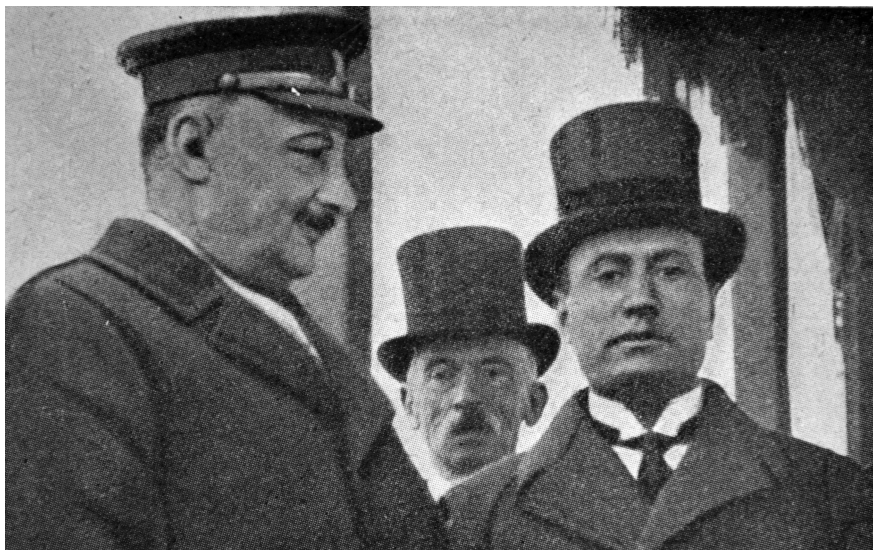


Figure 3.1 Primo de Rivera meets Mussolini in Rome. November 1923. Credit: Album/Universal Images Group/Universal History Archive.

The larger ambition of creating an official party capable of mobilising all sectors of society would require the participation of other conservative groups. When the *Unión Patriótica* was eventually created in Barcelona in April 1924, the blue shirts of the FCS formed a part of it, but there were also members of the *Unión Monárquica Nacional* (UMN) and other groups from a broad political spectrum, ranging from former liberals to moderate Catalan regionalists.¹¹⁸ The more purely fascist option had been put to one side in order to found a party that could make room for various viewpoints.

In the hope of securing broad popular support for his party, Primo chose to listen to the offers from the leaders of Social Catholicism in Spain. From the start of November 1923, *El Debate*, the principal newspaper of the Social Catholics, had started to question the effectiveness of the FCS as a possible base upon which to build a new, official party for the regime, given that the FCS boasted hardly any support outside of Catalonia.¹¹⁹ At the same time, Ángel Herrera, the leader of the Social Catholics, had formed a commission with the specific aim of founding a new party that would channel popular support on behalf of the regime.¹²⁰ On 30 November 1923, in Valladolid, members of *Acción Católica Nacional de Propagandistas* (ACNP) and the *Partido Social Popular* created the *Unión Patriótica Castellana* as an alternative group that might become the official party of the dictatorship.¹²¹ In the following weeks, new branches of the group appeared throughout the north of Castille. In April 1924, Primo decided to unify this Social Catholic political movement and made the UP the official party of the regime. The implications of this decision were clear. In opting for the Social Catholics over the proto-fascists of the

FSC, the dictator sought to benefit from the proven abilities for propaganda and mass mobilisation of the former, and in so doing to achieve the integration of broader sections of Spanish society into the *primorriverista* project.

Events would subsequently prove that Primo had chosen wisely. Throughout 1924, the leaders of the *Confederación Nacional Católica Agraria* (CNCA) – among them a young José María Gil Robles – mobilised their members and founded dozens of branches of UP in both Old and New Castile.¹²² Nonetheless, the fact that Primo de Rivera was inclined towards the Social Catholics does not mean that he failed to offer the military a key role in the creation of this new institution. As he had with the creation of the *Somatén Nacional*, so now the Marqués de Estella instructed civil governors and *delegados* to support this new institution of the dictatorship. On 5 April 1924, Primo issued a circular urging the *delegados* to concentrate their efforts on the creation of the UP. Three weeks later, Primo ordered the *delegados* to invite citizens to organise the new party through the creation of municipal and provincial committees.¹²³

In the first months, the *delegados* were not able to keep pace with the demands placed upon them. In August 1924, the Ministry of the Interior sent out new guidelines for the formation of the UP in every Spanish province, highlighting the need to step up propaganda efforts and to be watchful for ‘former politicians’ who were trying to infiltrate the new party.¹²⁴ The regulations prepared jointly by Primo and Martínez Anido established a system through which the authorities would form local organisational commissions, including members from all social classes. These commissions would elect a local committee for the UP, which in turn sent representatives to the District Committee (*Comité del partido judicial*). Afterwards, the members of the District Committee chose delegates to be sent to the Provincial Committee, a body which was directly responsible to the National Council of the UP in Madrid. Two features of the official directives of August 1924 are significant. First, the absence of regional committees in what was, to all intents and purposes, a pyramidal structure for the UP was directly linked to the regime’s conception of the nation. In highlighting the direct link between the provincial committees and the National Council of the UP, the regime was bypassing representation at a regional level, thus undermining the notion of the region itself. The second crucial feature is that the new guidelines bestowed upon the civil governors the power to impose any person, or remove any members from, any of the committees, while all mayors became directors (*vocales*) of their respective District Committees of the UP. Accordingly, the top-down approach used in creating the UP led to the enmeshing of the party into state structures.

Despite clear features of conservative, Catholic and militaristic Spanish nationalism that the UP acquired from the outset, Primo de Rivera continued to insist throughout the period of the Military Directory that all ideologies and all social classes were welcome within the official party.¹²⁵ In a letter to the provincial leaders of the UP in November 1925, for example, the dictator

reminded them precisely of the need to maintain ambiguous ideological principles to facilitate the inclusion of citizens from diverse political perspectives.¹²⁶ As was the case with the *Somatén*, there was a genuine attempt to involve the middle and lower-middle classes in a UP which would be controlled from the Interior Ministry. Primo created a party with an inter-class mission, which sought to appeal to all citizens with a calculatedly populist discourse, but without having to pay the any price in terms of democratisation or social change. Moreover, the creation of the UP corresponded with the dictator's desire to legitimise the perpetuation of an illegal regime.¹²⁷ The party sought to be the living proof of public support for the dictatorship. In other words, Primo aimed to achieve a 'popular' legitimacy which would supersede the legal legitimacy he could not obtain through the parliamentarism of the constitutional system.

This is not to say that the dictator fulfilled his ambition, however. The UP attracted members from diverse backgrounds and was the 'school' for a new political class, but it retained a conservative and elitist slant, far removed from the 'apolitical' and inter-class party that Primo had proclaimed. Martínez Anido quickly realised that the party in Madrid was too conservative and religious. In April 1924, he wrote to his 'beloved Leader and friend' to suggest to Primo that the party needed to find a certain balance between 'right-wing and left-wing elements', as had happened in 'Valencia, Orense and other provinces'.¹²⁸ The 'most right-wing' nature of the Madrid UP was causing problems with public opinion, according to Martínez Anido, and 'certain sectors previously on-board are beginning to express a state of mind that is not very helpful to us and could lead to the failure of the *Unión Patriótica*'.¹²⁹

The Military Directory also began significant changes in the structures of the state. The idea of building a modern, efficient and authoritarian state as a vehicle for the regeneration of the country was part of the very nature of the military nationalism that had grown strongly among Spanish officers in the first two decades of the twentieth century. However, the territorial structure that this state ought to have in order to modernise was still open to debate. Primo had come to power as a defender of administrative autonomy for the regions. On the morning of 14 September 1923, he had written his first programme, which included 'a new administrative, governmental, judicial and possibly even military division of Spain'.¹³⁰

Following a very similar line to that of 'Maurismo' in earlier years, Primo championed the creation of regional departments which would fulfil administrative functions throughout the country. This new division of Spain would lead to the development of 'strong' regions, but, Primo was sure to warn, 'without loosening or even challenging patriotic ties'.¹³¹ The initial idea was to create new regions with the aim of rendering the provincial power networks of the *caciques* ineffective but also to establish the same state of administrative autonomy in all of the Spanish regions, not least since Primo disliked the 'special character' that had accrued to the Catalan Mancomunitat.¹³² In this initial form of regionalism, Primo was less interested in regional freedoms

than by the standardisation of legislation and the minimisation of Catalan peculiarities within the structure of the state. In a sense, it was a form of ‘café para todos’ – ‘coffee for everyone’, a later nickname for the regional settlement of Spain’s current constitution – which also included the usual populist flourish of the Marqués de Estella, who made it clear that the new regions would be well furnished ‘with their own resources’, but at the same time would save public expenditure on ‘office space and personnel’ and relieve ‘the central administration of the State’ in important public services.¹³³ In his first months in power, Primo weighed up the various options for the territorial reorganisation of the state. At the start of October 1923, for example, he declared to a committee of representatives from the three Basque provincial administrations his intention ‘to suspend these 49 small provincial administrations into which the country is divided’ and create ‘10, 12 or 14’ regional administrations.¹³⁴ It is telling that among these plans put forward were the division of Catalonia, which would involve creating Valencian region including Tarragona, and an Aragón region which would include Lérida.¹³⁵

Primo presented the regional issue as a complex problem, to which he had personally dedicated ‘a great deal of time to the study of solutions that other nations such as Italy, Belgium, etc, have offered’.¹³⁶ Within a few weeks, however, the dictator completely abandoned his plans for territorial reorganisation of the regions and began the restructuring of the state at a municipal level. The creation of a new municipal statute was entrusted to the young *Maurista* José Calvo Sotelo, at that time Director General of Administration, who put together a team with a group of social Catholics including Gil Robles and the Conde de Vallellano. After several weeks of deliberation under the direct supervision of Martínez Anido, Calvo Sotelo’s young team prepared the Municipal Statute, which was approved by the Military Directory on 8 March 1924. The new law reflected an organic conception of Spain, in which the municipalities were complete and unabridged ‘human societies’, which in turn formed the ‘natural foundation’ of the State.¹³⁷ Having set out that a third of the members of a municipal council would be chosen by corporations, the Municipal Statute had the dubious distinction of reintroducing – the first time since the end of the *Ancien Régime* in Spain – the principle of corporative representation. The stated objective was to insert the ‘natural’ character of the Spanish people to municipal government, as well as reasserting the organic dimension of the nation.¹³⁸

Nonetheless, the Municipal Statute bestowed the right to vote to widows and single women over the age of 23. Recognising that the ‘original source of all municipal sovereignty emanates from the people’, the Statute extended the rights to be:

Electors and eligible candidates, not only to men, but also to female heads of families, whose exclusion from an electoral roll which, seeking to be expansive, accommodates the illiterate, constitutes a genuine ignominy [...] For the same reason we reduced the electoral age to

23 years, which in almost all parts of Spain confers full civil rights, although for the purposes of eligibility to stand for election the age will now be 25.¹³⁹

Calvo Sotelo's Municipal Statute gave women the vote for the first time in Spanish history, albeit in an extremely limited fashion, not least since it excluded married women, that is to say the majority of Spanish women over the age of 23. Meanwhile, 'female heads of family' older than 25 years old – in other words, mostly widows and orphans with minors under their guardianship – were now also eligible to stand as councillors.¹⁴⁰ The new statute thus mixed elements of corporative representation, which was returning to Europe after decades of proportional representation, with votes for women, which was very slowly advancing in some European countries after the First World War. Despite all of this, the recognition of these rights was nothing more than theoretical. The Municipal Statute was not applied in its entirety, there were no elections, and in the purest distillation of the regime's style, civil governors retained the power to create, dissolve and change town councils at their whim throughout the dictatorship.¹⁴¹

The next stage in the regime's attempt at national regeneration via a transformation of the state was the promulgation of the Provincial Statute on 21 March 1925. Once again, Calvo Sotelo and his team were responsible for drawing the statute up. As had been the case with the Municipal Statute, so now they claimed to be staying loyal to the principles of democratisation and decentralisation, but this did not stop them from introducing corporative representation and strengthening the power of the state.¹⁴² The Statute highlighted the role of the provinces as an historical reality and as a link between the municipalities and the state. The municipalities, which were considered the natural foundations of the state, were represented at provincial level by a *Diputación* (Council), which in turn answered to the civil governors.¹⁴³ Since the civil governors were appointed directly from Madrid, it is clear that this new state structure handed indisputable power to the central government. The authoritarian policies of the regime only confirmed the centralist nature of the Provincial Statute. As with the Municipal Statute, the Provincial Statute was never implemented fully, and the Military Directory gave civil governors the power to suspend, sanction and hand-pick members of the *diputaciones*.¹⁴⁴

Moreover, in drawing a direct link between the provinces and the state, the Provincial Statute eliminated the region as an intermediate link in this chain. Indeed, the new legislation specifically prohibited the creation of any form of association between provinces. On the same day that the Provincial Statute came into effect, the Catalan Mancomunitat was abolished. In private, Primo acknowledged that the intention was that there would never again be an regional institution in Spain. In a letter dated 2 April 1925, Primo wrote to his friend General Milans del Bosch, now Civil Governor of Barcelona, that in the preparation of the new Provincial Statute the 'chapter which dealt with the Region was examined by us and caused no end of problems so that in the end nothing could be done'.¹⁴⁵ Primo's conversion to 'provincialism' and his

abandonment of the regionalist discourse of the first days of his dictatorship were also explained in public. In an official note accompanying the promulgation of the Provincial Statute, the dictator explained his abandonment of 'historical regionalism'. The Marqués de Estella acknowledged that in 1923 he had believed that regional decentralisation was a good strategy for 'strengthening the bonds of Spanish national unity', but the poor functioning of the Mancomunitat had forced him to change his mind.¹⁴⁶ According to Primo, Catalan institutions worked to spread anti-Spanish sentiments and exalted pro-Catalan feelings, which in turn fed the independentist ambitions of the people there. According to this logic, an administrative division of the state based upon regions would lead to the glorification of regional peculiarities, and as such, 'undo the great work of national unity'.¹⁴⁷ As Primo crudely put it in a letter to the Catalanist leader Francesc Cambó, the ideas of the masses were 'simplistic' and could not hope to understand the subtle difference between promoting love of a region and encouraging love of the nation.¹⁴⁸ The idea of the region, Primo insisted, had to be silenced for at least a quarter of a century so that the problem of Catalanism would go away.¹⁴⁹

Given that he had made so much of his pro-regionalist credentials to the Carlists and followers of the *Lliga* in Barcelona before the coup, it is reasonable to ask what had changed for Primo to prompt him to abandon these ideas. It is difficult to assess the degree of Primo's sincerity in comments made in private to members of the Catalan conservative elite in the days before the coup of 13 September 1923, given that, as we have seen, the Marqués de Estella was telling each political group what they wanted to hear at the time to secure their support for his uprising. Once in power, Primo spoke in vague terms about some possible reforms which might lead to equality between the regions. On the other hand, the Mancomunitat was in Primo's sights from the first moment. Following the coup, the Mancomunitat was placed under military supervision. Its cultural and educational institutions were swiftly purged and the Industrial University was forced to close down.¹⁵⁰ Roman Sol, the cultural councillor of the Mancomunitat and member of the nationalist *Acció Catalana*, was jailed.¹⁵¹ The situation grew steadily more tense as time went by. The President of the Mancomunitat, Josep Puig i Cadafalch, who had gone to France over Christmas in 1923, decided to delay returning to Catalonia. In January of 1924, Primo held a series of meetings with members of the *Lliga* who were alarmed at the repressive measures instituted by the dictatorship. The meetings were useful to Primo in that they allowed judge the weakness of the Catalanists and the strength of his own position as dictator. Accordingly, at that point, Primo decided to assume complete control of the Mancomunitat. On 18 January 1924, he named General Carlos Losada y Canterac interim President of the body. On 24 January, Losada, who was also Civil Governor of Barcelona, ordered all schools and cultural centres funded by the Mancomunitat that classes must be taught exclusively in Spanish.¹⁵² A week later, at the behest of Primo, Losada appointed Alfons Sala i Argemí as President of the Mancomunitat, a post which the leader of *Unión Monárquica Nacional* would retain until the abolition of the body in March 1925.

In December 1924, Calvo Sotelo, still in post as General Director of the Administration, wrote to the dictator asking him not to abolish the Mancomunitat, fearing it would only increase support for Catalanism and serve to boost opposition to the regime in the region.¹⁵³ Primo replied that he had 'a degree of distrust over the Catalan character and its unreliable patriotism', that he considered the Mancomunitat an institution that was 'dangerous, given that the Catalans will always grasp any means of having a special institution, so as to consider themselves something special and not completely bound to Spain'.¹⁵⁴ Later, Primo would make his complete break from the *Lliga Regionalista* official, describing its members as 'disruptive forces' who were working in opposition to national unity.¹⁵⁵ Primo's old allies, who had praised him when he arrived in Madrid as dictator as the means to defuse independentism in Catalonia, were now fatherland's 'enemy within'.

In some ways, the dissolution of the Mancomunitat was the climax of an anti-Catalan policy that had begun in the first days of the dictatorship with the 'Decree Against Separatism', which had led to mass arrests of those suspected of holding openly nationalist views and the imprisonment of numerous civil servants, teachers and priests throughout 1924.¹⁵⁶ The decree additionally led to a dispute over regional languages and their political use. The *Mauristas*, for example, applauded the new guidelines and believed that the Decree would help to snuff out sub-state nationalisms in Spain.¹⁵⁷ The newspaper *El Ejército Español* declared that the new law showed Primo's gift for statesmanship and prophesied that the decree would lead to the demise of the Mancomunitat as a 'State within a State'.¹⁵⁸ The Social Catholics were more cautious, however. *El Debate* praised the measure but argued that its only objective was to combat separatism and not to endanger the regionalist policies that Primo had promised to introduce.¹⁵⁹

In Catalonia, the Decree Against Separatism alarmed some sectors of the local bourgeoisie. On 30 November 1923, the President of the *Sociedad Económica Barcelonesa de Amigos del País*, Francesc Puig i Alfonso, alongside a group of Catalan businessmen, sent a letter to the King demanding the withdrawal of the decree. In the letter, Puig argued that Catalan was a language as Spanish as Castilian, and quoting Menéndez Pelayo, reminded Alfonso XIII that it would be useless to try and impose a language if it relied upon the prohibition of another.¹⁶⁰ Primo took the matter personally and wrote an open letter in response to Puig six days later. In it, the dictator roundly denied that the state was attacking Catalan and accused the Catalan regionalists of discriminating against Castilian Spanish in Catalonia, particularly since 1898, the moment in which 'the nonsense of preaching that Catalans were spiritually different than all the other Spaniards got worse'.¹⁶¹ As in the 'Manifesto of 13 September', so here the trauma of 1898 appeared once again in Primo's writings as connected to the dissolution of the nation. It was for this reason, the dictator argued, that the state had to protect the 'common language' from such attacks and to ensure all citizens could use Castilian Spanish. Similarly, according to Primo, the state was obliged to defend symbolic representation

of the nation and indoctrinate its citizens in patriotic values, to which end it must prohibit any symbols or education hostile to Spain.

The regime applied itself fully to the task. As Primo himself would say, the regime's greatest wish was that Spanish feeling would strengthen in the region 'for the good of Catalonia'.¹⁶² To achieve this goal, the dictatorship used a combination of legislation, repression and policies of nationalisation. It is significant that just 48 hours after the military coup, General Losada would publish an edict imposing the display of the Spanish flag on all public buildings and prohibiting the exhibition of any other emblem, whether regional or local.¹⁶³ On 19 September 1923, General Emilio Barrera, the new Captain-General of Catalonia after Primo had risen to Head of the Military Directory, published another edict, this time reminding residents of Barcelona that Spain was now under martial law and that as such crimes against national security fell under military jurisdiction. Among the possible crimes against the fatherland mentioned were verbal or written attacks against Spain, its flag, its anthem or any other type of national symbol, as well as the mocking of, or refusal to obey the orders of, army officers or *somatenistas*.¹⁶⁴ Meanwhile, policemen were sent to bars, cafés and theatres to inform those in charge, as well as any customers, that it was prohibited to sing 'Els Segadors', the national anthem of Catalonia. In the following months, Losada and Barrera launched an indiscriminate repressive campaign against all those they considered to be Catalanists. Scores of cultural associations were closed down and civil servants accused of being Catalanists were dismissed or sent to prison.¹⁶⁵

One of the most infamous, and ridiculous, cases of repression was that affecting Barcelona football club, which was forced to use Castilian in its official documents and to remove the Catalan flag from its stadium, Les Corts. The regime's impositions did not go down well with many of the club's supporters who, in June 1925, booed the Spanish national anthem before a charity match between Barcelona and a team from the British Royal Navy. In reprisal, the military authorities closed Les Corts for six months and obliged the President of FC Barcelona, Hans Gamper, to resign. To replace Gamper, the regime chose Arcadi Balaguer, a personal friend of the dictator and member of the Barcelona business elite. During his time as President (1925–1929), Balaguer made a determined effort to disassociate the club from its Catalanist connotations.¹⁶⁶ As in other cases, however, the regime's policy of punishment had counterproductive results, given that many Catalans saw such penalties as a direct attack upon the football club. The number of registered members of FC Barcelona grew considerably under the dictatorship, as a clear act of opposition to the military regime.¹⁶⁷

The repression was also extended to the Catalan Church, which, despite its support for the military coup in 1923, was considered a propagator of Catalanist ideas. After his return from Italy in December 1923, Primo warned priests that those who spread ideas contrary to the principles of authority and Spanish patriotism would pay a high price, as they had in Fascist Italy under Mussolini. The state, Primo threatened, would show no hesitation in dealing

with such matters.¹⁶⁸ Meanwhile, General Emilio Barrera, a good friend of the dictator, warned the clergy on numerous occasions throughout the dictatorship that the spreading of Catalanist ideas constituted an enormous 'sin' and appealed to the parishioners to show their contempt for those 'traitors to Spain' who worked against the nation 'from the pulpit'.¹⁶⁹ Words were followed by actions from the earliest days of the dictatorship. On 21 September 1923, for example, orders were given to dissolve throughout Catalonia the *Pomells de Joventut*, Catholic youth groups with regionalist leanings and controlled by the Catholic Church. In the weeks following the coup of September 1923, numerous regionalist priests were imprisoned, and at the end of the year, the Catholic Academy at Sabadell was closed down.¹⁷⁰ The regime's steps against the Church in Catalonia continued inexorably throughout 1924. In February, for example, the Capuchin Order in Barcelona received a fine of 500 pesetas for allowing a group of children to assist in the Mass wearing white hoods, the symbol of the *Pomells de Joventut*. In June, Father Carreras, from the Catholic Academy in Sabadell, was sent into exile. In July, Father Fuster was arrested in Girona and fined 500 pesetas for 'overstepping his religious duties', and in the same month the procession at Montserrat, a highly charged symbolic site for Catalanists, was prohibited by the regime.¹⁷¹ The dictatorship maintained a fierce repression against Catholic institutions and the clergy in the following years, which involved the arrest and exile of priests, the censorship of publications, the closure of Catholic associations and the purging of teachers who had given classes in Catalan.¹⁷²

If the regime's 'enemy within' might encompass a broad conglomeration of Catalanists, Basque Nationalists, anarchists, republicans, communists, liberals and conservatives from the Restoration System, as well as parts of the Carlist movement, the external enemy was much easier to define. It could be found in Morocco and was personified in the leader of the self-proclaimed Riffian Republic, Muhammad Ibn 'Abd el-Krim El-Jattabi. Primo knew that his regime depended in no small part on trying to resolve the Moroccan question. The 'Manifesto of 13 September' had promised a 'dignified, swift and sensible' exit from the question of the Spanish protectorate in Morocco. In the presentation of his programme for government, on 14 September, Primo declared that the problem of Africa would be resolved 'with arms and diplomacy in tandem', but that the matter had to be removed from public discussion because this would only benefit the enemy.¹⁷³ Primo did not remove the subject of the war in Morocco from public debate, however. It continued to be deeply unpopular and was used by the dictator himself as a tool of propaganda. Nonetheless, he was correct in his prediction of the combination of arms and diplomacy.

The correctness of his prediction should not lead us to believe, however, that Primo had a clear plan for how to solve the Moroccan crisis in September 1923. As a matter of fact, Primo's actions in regard to Morocco were somewhat erratic. We know, for example, that in the summer of 1923 the general had placed his long-held *abandonista* tendencies behind, when he travelled to

Madrid and expressly supported the plan of Martínez Anido to launch massive aerial bombing of rebel villages using incendiary bombs and poison gas.¹⁷⁴ This earned him the backing of the *Africanista* officers and the more interventionist sections of the Peninsular officer class for the coup of 13 September 1923. Once in power, Primo initially continued the policies that had been used by the Restoration governments, namely, using poison gas against the civilian population of Morocco, negotiating secret deals with the rebel leaders, and trying to persuade France to disrupt the traffic of weapons through its own protectorate in Morocco, which were ending up in the hands of the Riffian rebels.¹⁷⁵ Meanwhile, Primo de Rivera sought to centralise the command of operations, and in January 1924 gave the Spanish High Commissioner in Morocco, Luiz Aizpuru, widespread civil and military powers, only answerable to Primo's own authority. At the same time, an Office for Morocco was created in Madrid to coordinate the myriad branches of administration in the protectorate, which was accountable directly to the dictator.¹⁷⁶

This period of centralisation and militarisation, which by now had become a *modus operandi* of the dictator, coincided with the resumption of attacks by Abd el-Krim against Spanish positions at Tizzi Azza, Xauen and the Western Rif. General Aizpuru proposed a counterattack with an advance in the Eastern part of the protectorate, but the idea for an offensive was countermanded by Primo de Rivera, who ordered a retreat to the historic Spanish enclaves and thus the surrender of territory to the insurgent tribes. The regime's withdrawal was later presented as a masterful strategic decision intended to leave the French flank unprotected, so that the Riffians attacked the Gallic positions which would, in turn, allow Spain to forge an alliance with France and definitively destroy Abd El-Krim and his Riffian Republic.¹⁷⁷ The most extensive studies of the retreat have shown us, however, that Primo's decision was based on a combination of pragmatism and 'semi-abandonist' thinking. For all the later mythical claims of Primo's grand strategy, he was not initially seeking a collaboration with the French.¹⁷⁸ Indeed, the regime's ploy worsened the Spanish military situation and enraged many *Africanista* officers, among them Francisco Franco, who criticised Primo as an *abandonista*.¹⁷⁹

At the start of July 1924, the military situation was so dire that the Marqués de Estella had to rush to Morocco. After meeting with the French general Chambrun, Primo visited the encampment of the Spanish Legion at Ben Tieb on 19 July, accompanied by his trusted General Sanjurjo. On this visit, several lieutenant-colonels, including Franco, complained bitterly about the dictator's proposed tactics and presented their resignations. Primo was not moved by the protest. The following month, he made a secret offer to the British Ambassador to exchange Ceuta for Gibraltar. He remained implacable in his policy of retreat from Morocco.¹⁸⁰ Between September and December 1924, more than 300 positions were evacuated in the eastern part of the protectorate, including the city of Xauen, in order to build the so-called 'Primo de Rivera Line', running parallel to the coast.¹⁸¹ The cost of the retreat was terrible, with more than 1500 killed, some 460 missing in action and almost 6000 injured.¹⁸²

By the start of 1925, Spain remained in control of just Ceuta, Melilla, Tetuán and Larache. Three-quarters of the Spanish zone in Morocco was now in the hands of the rebels.

Primo's correspondence with his most trusted aides shows that, by April 1925, the dictator was clear that the Bay of Alhucemas must be taken 'by hook or by crook', so that more troops could be evacuated from Morocco and so money could be saved for the Spanish exchequer.¹⁸³ The bay was a strategic point from which to launch Primo's new plan, namely, a line of Spanish control running along the coast between Ceuta and Melilla, in return for self-government for the Riffians in the rest of the Protectorate. In a letter to General Juan O'Donnell y Vargas, the Duque de Tetuán and Minister of War, Primo de Rivera, spoke of the need to reach an agreement with the rebels, so as to bring about 'the submission of the Riffians, in exchange naturally for allowing them to govern themselves, but recognising the Protectorate and permitting our control and handing over their arms according to our terms'.¹⁸⁴ Primo also wrote to Admiral Magaz, the Minister of the Navy, to tell him that he had not 'become an *Africanista*, not by any means', but that it was necessary to negotiate with Abd El-Krim so that the Riffian leader would allow Spain to disembark troops at Alhucemas without any opposition.¹⁸⁵

The dictator also considered that it would be advisable to exchange Spanish possessions in Cabo Juby and Rio de Oro with France 'for territories in continental Guinea', even though Primo did not trust the French, believing that they were 'very opportunistic and when you give them an inch they will immediately take a mile'.¹⁸⁶ To some extent, Primo's thoughts reflected an anti-French sentiment, which was quite widespread in Spain. According to the French Ambassador in Madrid, it could 'be felt everywhere when politics is discussed'.¹⁸⁷ The contempt was certainly mutual. For the French Ambassador in Spain, Primo did not seem 'in all truth, a man of the highest calibre', but a dictator with a 'simplistic' mind, who led an insignificant country in the international community, given Spain's political and military weakness. Nonetheless, he felt the dictatorship would prove a good thing for Spaniards, who were primitive beings, incapable of sustaining a democracy. Spain required a firm hand to control a people who were, at root, 'bloodthirsty and bestial'.¹⁸⁸ French diplomacy was a mirror image, marked by a Hispanophobia that was widespread in French society, and which contained a somewhat orientalist view of the Spanish as 'big children', unpredictable, inconsistent, difficult to handle, uneducated, passionate, primitive, and capable of any sort of madness.¹⁸⁹

Ultimately, it would be a series of factors outside of Primo de Rivera's control that would change his African policy. The final result was that Spain did not negotiate with Abd El-Krim, but instead reached an agreement with France. In April 1925, frontier skirmishes between tribes resulted in the entry of 4000 soldiers of Abd El-Krim into the northern sector of French Morocco. The French authorities were perturbed by the ease with which their defences had fallen, and swiftly began negotiations with the Spanish to conduct a joint



Figure 3.2 Francisco Franco, Miguel Primo de Rivera, José Sanjurjo and Leopoldo Saro in the Rif War in 1925. Credit: Album. Archivo ABC.

military campaign. On 25 July, Spain and France signed an agreement for military cooperation. The Franco-Spanish understanding was also helped by a further factor outside of Primo's control, namely, the appointment of Philippe Pétain as commander of the French Protectorate in Morocco in the summer of 1925. The Marqués de Estella had met Pétain in 1917 on a visit to the Western Front during the First World War and held the French Marshal in high esteem. Primo, who appointed himself as sole commander of the Spanish colonial army in October 1924, achieved a good degree of understanding with his friend Pétain. On 19 August 1925, combined bombing operations commenced against rebel positions. On 8 September, Spanish troops disembarked on several beaches in the Bay of Alhucemas.¹⁹⁰ By 2 October, José Sanjurjo's forces had taken Axdir, the Riffian capital. Abd El-Krim fled and reorganised his forces to fight on from other positions, but the so-called Riffian Republic was beginning to disintegrate rapidly. On 27 May 1926, the Riffian leader surrendered to the French, fearing possible reprisals had he surrendered to the Spanish. Following the surrender of Abd El-Krim, his supporters continued to resist for more than a year in the Central Rif, Gomara and Yebala, before finally succumbing to Franco-Spanish forces.¹⁹¹ On 10 July 1927, at Bab Taza, General Sanjurjo announced that the war was officially over.

The Spanish Army paid a high human price for the dictatorship's war in Africa, but Primo rarely seemed concerned for the lives of Spanish soldiers who had fallen in combat. After the landings at Alhucemas, for example, Primo ordered two detachments of the Foreign Legion and a *tabor* (battalion) from Melilla to conduct the hazardous work of 'cleaning up' the Riffian rear-guard knowing 'full well' that, at the very least, they would 'lose 25 per cent of their troops'.¹⁹² Primo showed no remorse for ordering such a deadly mission, instead being more interested in bringing operations to a close as swiftly as possible.¹⁹³ Only on one occasion did the Marqués de Estella show any sign of humanitarian regret, when considering the possibility of bombing rebel positions where Spanish prisoners were being used as human shields. In a letter to his friend the Marqués de Magaz, dated 5 October 1925, the dictator spoke of having 'an emotional problem that is difficult to resolve', because the Spanish air force had asked him if they ought to bomb Riffian artillery positions, 'despite being certain that the said prisoners were encamped alongside them'.¹⁹⁴ We do not know what Primo's decision was in this particular case – in the letter he spoke of how he would wait for the arrival of General Ignacio María Despujol y Sabater to consult with him on the matter – but it is clear that the dictator found himself in similar positions on numerous occasions. The use of prisoners as human shields was routine among the Riffian rebels, but the bombing missions did not cease.¹⁹⁵ Indeed, the dictatorship noticeably increased the number of bombing sorties in Morocco in comparison to previous governments during the Restoration period. In 1924, according to a report of the Under-Secretary of the Ministry of War, the bomb factories 'were working day and night', so much so that the Artillery Factory in Seville was producing '350 bombs a day'.¹⁹⁶ The dictatorship also expanded the use

of poison gas – in particular the use of mustard gas – as well as incendiary bombs, both of which were used not only to attack military positions but also civilian targets.¹⁹⁷ Spanish pilots thus bombed villages and marketplaces, either on market days or the day beforehand. This was done in the knowledge that – given the tendency of mustard gas to linger – the target site would remain contaminated for two to three weeks.¹⁹⁸ The systematic use of mustard gas against a non-combatant population – which provoked burning of the skin, inflammation of the eyes, blindness, vomiting, and of course choking – gives us a good sense of how little Primo cared about the civilian victims of his war in Africa.

Even though combat operations did not end in Morocco until 1927, Primo decided to squeeze political credit from the victory at Alhucemas almost immediately. On 6 October 1925, less than a month after the landings, a Royal Decree bestowed upon the dictator the *Gran Cruz Laureada de San Fernando*, the highest military honour in the Spanish Army. Meanwhile, with no hint of embarrassment, regime propaganda compared the dictator's military genius to that of Napoleon.¹⁹⁹ Upon returning from Africa, Primo delayed his arrival in Madrid to visit numerous towns in Andalucía and attend the celebrations that were being held in his honour. In the Spanish capital, homages to the dictator and military parades took place among the crowds who filled the streets.²⁰⁰ It was in this atmosphere of patriotic elation and personal popularity for the dictator that Primo felt it was timely to announce his intentions to create a Civil Directory, which would renew and perpetuate his dictatorship. It is difficult to pinpoint the precise moment that the Marqués de Estella took the decision. Primo had declared on numerous occasions in the first two years of the dictatorship that his tenure in power would only be temporary. He had also made it clear, however, that any future civilian government would not entail a return to the Restoration System and that the *Unión Patriótica* would inherit power. In so doing, Primo was reserving for himself the option of leading the new government.²⁰¹

What is certainly clear is that Primo had been thinking about the installation of a new government once the military situation improved in Morocco. In June 1925, Primo had already begun to confide in his closest colleagues that 'for my part, as soon as the decisive phase in Morocco is over, I will return to Spain to begin the genuine reorganisation of the country, which will take another couple of years.'²⁰² During that summer, Primo gave himself the chance to publicly mull over the remit of any future civilian government.

That same summer of 1925, he allowed himself to think aloud in public over what should be the remit of a future civilian government. 'The essential task of the first civilian government is formulated: cultural, economic and social', he declared. 'In short order it must banish illiteracy and give vigour and standardisation to primary schooling, prestige and fairness to secondary education', as well as 'changing the tax system, which is rightly the subject of so many complaints'. The government would have to bring about agrarian reform, but needless to say 'without loss nor infractions upon the right of property holders'.²⁰³ After Alhucemas, it became an open secret that the

creation of a Civil Directory would entail a continuation of the Primo Rivera dictatorship. On 9 November, Primo wrote that the new government would be inspired by the 'same principles upheld by the [Military] Directory'.²⁰⁴ On 2 December, the Marqués de Estella made public the fact that he had asked the King's permission to create a government of *Unión Patriótica*, led, of course, by Primo himself.²⁰⁵ The same day, Alfonso XIII replied that he was 'persuaded to continue the work of salvation in which the Directory has made so much progress' and authorised Primo to form a new government.²⁰⁶

An assessment of the dictatorship's first two years makes it clear that Primo's regime cannot be likened to conservative liberalism, as some historians have claimed.²⁰⁷ As we have seen, Primo's actions were distinctly authoritarian and populist. *Inter alia*, we can point to the fact that the Marqués de Estella maintained martial law in Spain for two years after his military coup; indefinitely suspended fundamental rights granted in the Constitution of 1876; kept the Spanish Cortes closed; declared he was fulfilling a popular mandate to stamp out corrupt political elites; claimed that it was the duty of the state to indoctrinate citizens politically; prohibited opposition groups; censored any form of criticism of the regime from the very first day; unleashed a largely arbitrary political repression which resulted in the imprisonment of hundreds of opponents; created a system of anonymous denunciations and formed police networks to spy on any number of citizens; subordinated judicial authority to his own whim; and undertook an unprecedented purge of Spanish public servants.

By 1925, Primo de Rivera's dictatorship sat at the forefront of European authoritarian systems. In other dictatorships which began in the 1920s, regimes maintained some form of parliamentary framework and the power of leaders remained limited by constitutional rules and coalition governments. In Hungary, for example, the pioneer of a counter-revolutionary dictatorial regime in interwar Europe, Admiral Miklós Horthy came to power as part of a coalition of conservatives and the far-right in 1920.²⁰⁸ Unlike Primo, in the first years of Horthy's regime, parliament remained open; multi-party elections, while not free and fair, were nonetheless held; and the judiciary retained a degree of independence.²⁰⁹ The situation was similar in Bulgaria. The coup of June 1923 was led by General Ivan Valkov of the Military Union and supported by King Boris III, but it resulted in a coalition of civilian politicians from the right and far-right, with the express intention of dismantling the agrarian reform enacted by the leftist parties in the years before.²¹⁰ For the first few years, the Bulgarian regime was led by the radical Aleksandar Tsankov. As in Hungary, elections, although clearly fraudulent, were still held, and Parliament remained sitting, even though the regime launched a brutal repression against its opponents.²¹¹ In Spain, by contrast, it is clear that Primo had no intention of handing power to a civilian after the coup of 13 September 1923, much less holding elections or reopening the Cortes during his Military Directory.

If we compare Primo de Rivera's Military Directory with the first years of Mussolini's power, it is unquestionable that the Spanish regime was much more authoritarian, repressive and anti-liberal than the Italian regime. It is worth remembering that the construction of the Italian Fascist regime was a

gradual process and that in its first phase, Mussolini was limited by a series of factors that never affected Primo de Rivera. The Marqués de Estella assumed total power in Spain after his military coup. In Italy, by contrast, from October 1922 to the start of 1925, Mussolini governed with the support of various conservative parliamentary groups and numerous business associations, in what came to be known as the period of ‘liberal fascism’.²¹² Only from January 1925 did Mussolini begin to suppress political opponents in a systematic fashion and try to subordinate the various associations that had supported his government into the Fascist movement.²¹³ In Spain, from 15 September 1923, Primo de Rivera led a military government that stood outside institutional norms, and accumulated power to himself which Mussolini could only dream of at that time.²¹⁴ The *Duce* had to negotiate several coalition governments with the old liberal politicians to remain in power. Primo, meanwhile, kept parliament closed and led a government of military officers who answered only to him. While the *Duce* only definitively imposed censorship in 1925, the Marqués de Estella imposed the strictest press restrictions from the first day of the regime. The Spanish dictator also persecuted his political enemies with hardly any form of legal restraint, while the Italian leader had to change liberal legislation to give legal sanction to the repression of opposition.²¹⁵ In short, Mussolini’s transformation of a liberal state into a dictatorship was a gradual process, aided in no small part, of course, by the public violence conducted by his fascist militias. Primo, by contrast, governed like an autocrat from his first day in power and put an end to the liberal Restoration System in Spain using a state institution, the Spanish Army. In December 1925, when Mussolini was still hoping to consolidate his dictatorship, Primo had already decided to launch a new phase of his regime with the creation of a Civil Directory.

Notes

- 1 *La Vanguardia*, 16 September 1923.
- 2 *La Vanguardia*, 16 September 1923.
- 3 *La Vanguardia*, 16 September 1923.
- 4 Expediente de Severiano Martínez Anido, Estado Mayor General del Ejército, 0186, AGMS, 1a M 2030, exp. 13, p. 4.
- 5 *El Sol*, 16 September 1923.
- 6 *La Vanguardia*, 16 September 1923.
- 7 Javier Tusell Gómez, *Radiografía de un golpe de estado: el ascenso al poder del general Primo de Rivera* (Madrid: Alianza, 1987), pp. 246–247.
- 8 Carolyn P. Boyd, *La política pretoriana en el reinado de Alfonso XIII* (Madrid: Alianza, 1990), p. 316. The telegram ‘confirming that the movement was not launched against the king, so long as he is not opposed’, in Gabriel Cardona, *Alfonso XIII. Rey de espadas* (Barcelona: Planeta, 2010), p. 209.
- 9 *La Vanguardia*, 16 September 1923.
- 10 *La Vanguardia*, 16 September 1923.
- 11 *El Sol*, 16 September 1923.
- 12 *El Sol*, 16 September 1923.
- 13 *La Vanguardia*, 16 September 1923.
- 14 *La Vanguardia*, 16 September 1923.
- 15 *El Sol*, 16 September 1923.
- 16 *La Vanguardia*, 16 September 1923.

- 17 *La Vanguardia*, 16 September 1923.
- 18 *La Vanguardia*, 16 September 1923.
- 19 *La Vanguardia*, 16 September 1923.
- 20 *La Vanguardia*, 16 September 1923.
- 21 Carolyn P. Boyd, *La política pretoriana en el reinado de Alfonso XIII* (Madrid: Alianza, 1990), p. 314.
- 22 Paul Preston, *A People Betrayed: A History of Corruption, Political Incompetence and Social Division in Modern Spain* (London: HarperCollins, 2020), p. 162.
- 23 *La Vanguardia*, 16 September 1923.
- 24 Royal Decree of 15 September 1923, published in *Gaceta de Madrid*. Javier Tusell stands out among those who defend the idea of a 'parenthesis'. See Javier Tusell Gómez, *La crisis del caciquismo andaluz, 1923–1931* (Madrid: Cupsa, 1977). For differing interpretations of the Primo de Rivera dictatorship, see Chapter 8 below.
- 25 Royal Decree of 15 September 1923, published in *La Gaceta*.
- 26 'Statement on the Foreign Relations of His Majesty's Government by Marquess Curzon of Kedleston at 10 Downing Street, 5 October 1923', The National Archives/Public Record Office (hereafter PRO), Foreign Office Files (hereafter FO) 185/1743, dossiers 1920–1923, no. 1037–1055.
- 27 For the Royal Decree creating the delegados gubernativos, see *La Gaceta*, 21 October 1923. Various instructions to the delegados can be seen in the royal decrees of 20 October 1923, 9 December 1923 and 20 March 1924. See also the letters from Primo to the delegados on 5 April 1924 and 24 April 1924 in Archivo General de la Administración del Estado (hereafter AGA), Subsecretaría Sección de Orden Público, Interior, caja 149. For the instruction from the Ministry of the Interior, see for example 'Prevencciones que para el mejor desempeño de sus cargos deben tener presentes los delegados gubernativos', 7 December 1923, AGA, Subsecretaría Sección de Orden Público, Interior, caja 149. See also the telegram from Martínez Anido to the delegados, 1 January 1924. 'Telegrama de Martínez Anido a los delegados', 4 January 1924, AHN, Presidencia del Gobierno, legajo 331, caja 1.
- 28 *La Gaceta*, 19 September 1923, 2 October 1923.
- 29 For the multiple denunciations from members of the public in the first three months of the dictatorship, see AHN, 'Circulares, varios y provincias', carpetas 1 & 2, Gobernación Serie A, legajo 18 A.
- 30 For the royal decree of 17 September 1923 creating the Somatén, see *La Gaceta*, 18 September 1923.
- 31 Royal Decree 17 September 1923, article 3, *La Gaceta*, 18 September 1923.
- 32 Royal Decree 17 September 1923, article 4, *La Gaceta*, 18 September 1923.
- 33 A large number of reports from Captains-General around Spain to Martínez Anido about the formation of the Somatén can be found in AHN, Presidencia del Gobierno, legajo 442. See also AHN, Gobernación (Estado), Serie A, legajo 59.
- 34 As late as January 1926, Martínez Anido was insisting on the necessity of the *delegados* keeping a close watch on the members of the Somatén. See 'Subsecretario de Gobernación a los gobernadores civiles', 27 January 1926, AGA, Interior, legajo 149.
- 35 Royal Decree 'Against Separatism', 18 September 1923, in *La Gaceta*, 19 September 1923.
- 36 Royal Decree 'Against Separatism', 18 September 1923, in *La Gaceta*, 19 September 1923.
- 37 Manuel Rubio Cabeza, *Crónica de la dictadura* (Madrid: Sarpe, 1986), p. 124. Technically, Primo did not suspend the whole Constitution of 1876, only those constitutional articles (4, 5, 6, 9 and 13) which referred to guarantees and fundamental rights.
- 38 Dionisio Pérez, *La Dictadura a través de sus Notas oficiosas* (Madrid: Compañía Ibero-Americana de Publicaciones, 1930), p. 29.

- 39 Dionisio Pérez, *La Dictadura a través de sus Notas oficiosas* (Madrid: Compañía Ibero-Americana de Publicaciones, 1930), p. 28.
- 40 Miguel Primo de Rivera, *El pensamiento de Primo de Rivera* (Madrid: Sáez Hermanos / Junta de Propaganda Patriótica y Ciudadana, 1929), pp. 166–171.
- 41 Celedonio de la Iglesia, *La censura por dentro* (Madrid: CIAP, 1930). The quote is from pp. 75–76. On the regime's censorship, see also Francisco Villanueva, *La dictadura militar: II tomo de "Obstáculos tradicionales"* (Madrid: Morata, 1930), pp. 146–162; Gabriel Santonja, *Del lápiz rojo a lápiz libre. La censura previa de publicaciones y sus consecuencias editoriales durante los últimos años del reinado de Alfonso XIII* (Barcelona: Anthropos, 1986).
- 42 See the circulars from Martínez Anido to the civil governors, 10 October 1923 and 27 October 1923. AHN, Gobernación, Serie A, legajo 18A.
- 43 Miguel Primo de Rivera, 'Instrucciones a los Delegados Gubernativos', 10 December 1923. AGA, Subsecretaría Sección de Orden Público, Interior, caja 149.
- 44 Carlos Ernesto Hernández Hernández, '¿Regeneración o reconstrucción? Reflexiones sobre el Estado bajo la dictadura primorriverista (1920–1930)', *Historia Contemporánea*, 17 (1998), p. 346. The names, units and postings of all delegates were determined in December 1923. See AGA, Interior, caja 149, carpeta 15.
- 45 Emilio Javier de Benito Fraile, 'La independencia del Poder Judicial durante la dictadura de Primo de Rivera (1923–1926). Realidad o ficción', *Anuario de historia del derecho español*, 85 (2015), p. 365.
- 46 Primo de Rivera, *La obra de la Dictadura. Sus cuatro últimos artículos: 1.º Génesis de la Dictadura: 2.º Constitución y labor del Directorio: 3.º La Dictadura civil: 4.º Fin de la Dictadura española* (Madrid: Junta de Propaganda Patriótica y Ciudadana/Imprenta Sáez Hermanos, 1930), p. 19.
- 47 Emilio Javier de Benito Fraile, 'La independencia del Poder Judicial durante la dictadura de Primo de Rivera (1923–1926). Realidad o ficción', *Anuario de historia del derecho español*, 85 (2015), p. 365.
- 48 'Martínez Anido a los gobernadores civiles', 5 January 1924. AHN, Gobernación, Serie A, legajo 17A, caja 2.
- 49 González Calleja, *La España de Primo de Rivera. La modernización autoritaria, 1923–1930* (Madrid: Alianza, 2005), pp. 64, 68.
- 50 Dionisio Pérez, *La Dictadura a través de sus Notas oficiosas* (Madrid: Compañía Ibero-Americana de Publicaciones, 1930), p. 43.
- 51 Rafael Salazar Alonso, *La Justicia bajo la Dictadura* (Madrid: Zeus, 1930), pp. 21–26.
- 52 Genoveva García Queipo de Llano, *Los intelectuales y la dictadura de Primo de Rivera* (Madrid: Alianza, 1988), pp. 51–68.
- 53 Dionisio Pérez, *La Dictadura a través de sus Notas oficiosas* (Madrid: Compañía Ibero-Americana de Publicaciones, 1930), pp. 47–48.
- 54 Colette Rabaté & Jean-Claude Rabaté, *Unamuno contra Miguel Primo de Rivera. Un incesante desafío a la tiranía* (Madrid: Galaxia Gutenberg, 2023), pp. 31–37. For Unamuno's later exile in Hendaye (August 1925–February 1930) and the attitude of the Primo de Rivera dictatorship towards him, see Stephen Roberts, 'Vigilancia y clandestinidad. La vida secreta de Unamuno en Hendaya', in Gabriel Insausti (ed.), *Unamuno en Hendaya* (Valencia: Pre-Textos, 2021), pp. 275–295.
- 55 A fairly detailed review of the regime's repression against liberals, in the form of imprisonments, deportations, fines and closure of newspapers, can be found in Francisco Villanueva, *La Dictadura Militar. Tomo II de Obstáculos Tradicionales. Crónica documentada de la oposición y la represión bajo el directorio 1923–1926* (Madrid: Morata, 1930), pp. 113–184.
- 56 González Calleja, *El máuser y el sufragio. Orden público, subversión y violencia política en la crisis de la Restauración (1917–1931)* (Madrid: CSIC, 1999), p. 284.

- 57 González Calleja, *El maúser y el sufragio. Orden público, subversión y violencia política en la crisis de la Restauración (1917–1931)* (Madrid: CSIC, 1999), p. 285.
- 58 Jordi Casassas i Ymbert, *La Dictadura de Primo de Rivera (1923–1930). Textos* (Barcelona: Anthropos, 1983), pp. 121–122.
- 59 González Calleja, *El maúser y el sufragio. Orden público, subversión y violencia política en la crisis de la Restauración (1917–1931)* (Madrid: CSIC, 1999), p. 287.
- 60 Ramon Villares and Javier Moreno Luzon, *Restauración y dictadura* (Barcelona/Madrid: Crítica/Marcial Pons, 2009), pp. 514–517.
- 61 ‘Circular a los gobernadores civiles firmada por Primo de Rivera’, 27 October 1923. AHN, Fondos Contemporáneos, Gobernación, Serie A, legajo 18A.
- 62 Numerous examples of arrests, exiles, closures of party headquarters, networks of surveillance and the seizure of books can be found in the correspondence between Martínez Anido and the civil governors. See AHN, Fondos Contemporáneos, Gobernación, Serie A, legajos 18A & 40A.
- 63 Masses of denunciations can be found in AHN, Gobernación, Serie A, legajo 18A, carpetas 1 & 2.
- 64 González Calleja, *La España de Primo de Rivera. La modernización autoritaria, 1923–1930* (Madrid: Alianza, 2005), p. 65. At a local level, according to the calculations of Melchor Fernández Almagro in 1933, there were 815 inspections of town councils, which found irregularities in 379 cases, with 152 municipal secretaries dismissed. Melchor Fernández Almagro, *Historia del reinado de Alfonso XIII* (Barcelona: Montaner y Simón, 1977), p. 352.
- 65 For Martínez Anido’s guidelines, see ‘Instrucciones reservadas que los Sres. Gobernadores civiles y Delegados gubernativos deberán tener presentes en sus misiones inspectoras de los Ayuntamientos’, 1 January 1924. AGA, Interior, caja 149.
- 66 Real Orden Circular, 27 January 1924, in *La Gaceta*, 29 January 1924.
- 67 For the demand for moderation in the number of arrests, see ‘Martínez Anido a los gobernadores civiles’, 2 February 1924; Martínez Anido a los gobernadores civiles, telegrama circular’, 20 August 1924. AHN, Gobernación, Serie A, legajo 17A, caja 2. On the provincial deportations and the authority of civil governors over the delegados, see ‘Gobernador Civil de Granada a Martínez Anido’, 22 August 1924; ‘Peticiónes adicionales de moderación en Martínez Anido a todos delegados’, 8 March 1925. AGA, Interior, caja 149; ‘Martínez Anido a Gobernadores Civiles’, 29 January 1926. AHN, Gobernación, Serie A, legajo 17A, caja 2.
- 68 Jordi Casassas i Ymbert, *La Dictadura de Primo de Rivera (1923–1930). Textos* (Barcelona: Anthropos, 1983), pp. 87–107.
- 69 David Morales Díaz, ‘El golpe de Estado de Primo de Rivera a través de la prensa nacional. Un análisis comparativo’, *Revista Historia Autónoma*, 12 (1988), p. 177.
- 70 González Calleja, *La España de Primo de Rivera. La modernización autoritaria, 1923–1930* (Madrid: Alianza, 2005), pp. 47–50.
- 71 Carmen González Martínez, ‘La dictadura de Primo de Rivera: una propuesta de análisis’, *Anales de Historia Contemporánea*, 16 (2000), pp. 350–351.
- 72 Antonio Elorza Domínguez, ‘El anarcosindicalismo español bajo la dictadura (1923–1930), La genesis de la Federación Anarquista Ibérica’, *Revista de Trabajo*, 39–40 (1972), pp. 123–477; Antonio Elorza Domínguez, ‘La CNT bajo la Dictadura (1923–1930) (II)’, *Revista de Trabajo*, 44–45 (1973–1974), pp. 311–617; Antonio Elorza Domínguez, ‘El anarcosindicalismo español bajo la Dictadura (1923–1930) (III). Conclusion’, *Revista de Trabajo*, 46 (1974), pp. 161–463.
- 73 González Calleja, *El maúser y el sufragio. Orden público, subversión y violencia política en la crisis de la Restauración (1917–1931)* (Madrid: CSIC, 1999), pp. 306–344; Jesús Cirac Febas & José Luis Ledesma, *Manuel Buenacasa: militancia, cultura y acción libertarias* (Caspe: Centro de Estudios Comarcales del Bajo Aragón-Caspe, 2005), pp. 122–125; Pedro Vallina, *Mis Memorias* (Sevilla:

- Centro Andaluz del Libro y del Libre Pensamiento, 2000), pp. 279–285; Francisco Villanueva, *La dictadura militar: II tomo de “Obstáculos tradicionales”* (Madrid: Morata, 1930), pp. 76–77.
- 74 *El Socialista*, 15 September 1923, 17 September 1923, 18 September 1923, 19 September 1923.
- 75 Ángeles Fínque Jiménez, *La intervención del socialismo en la dictadura de Primo de Rivera (1923–1930)* (Madrid: Bubok Publishing, 2021), pp. 55–68. José Andrés-Gallego, *El socialismo durante la dictadura 1923–1930* (Madrid: Giner, 1977), pp. 127–134.
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- 77 For a flavour of these declarations, see AHN, Presidencia del Gobierno, legajo 331, caja 1, 1923 & 1924.
- 78 Juan Avilés Ferré, ‘Un pálido reflejo del fascismo: la dictadura de Primo de Rivera en los informes diplomáticos italianos’, *Pasado y Memoria. Revista de Historia Contemporánea*, 16 (2017), p. 71.
- 79 Rosa Martínez Segarra, ‘La Unión Patriótica’, in Javier Tusell, Feliciano Montero & José María Marín (eds.), *Las derechas en la España contemporánea* (Madrid: UNED, 1993), p. 169.
- 80 Primo de Rivera to Sanjurjo, 2 July 1926, in José Manuel y Luis de Armiñán (ed.) *Epistolario del dictador: la figura del general Primo de Rivera, trazada por su propia mano* (Madrid: Javier Morata, 1930), p. 365, Richard Gow, *Citizenship and Self-representation in the Public Letters Sent to General Primo de Rivera in Spain* (Unpublished PhD Thesis, Trinity College Dublin, 2018), p. 86.
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- 82 *El Sol*, 29 September 1923.
- 83 Lluís Costa Fernández, ‘Comunicación y propaganda durante la dictadura de Primo de Rivera (1923–1930)’, *Historia y Comunicación Social*, 8 (2013), p. 389.
- 84 Among the reproductions of Primo de Rivera’s speeches and notes, see *Honor, Patria, Justicia: prologado por Benito Mussolini* (Madrid: Imprenta y Encuadernación de Julián Espinosa, 1923); *Discursos del Excmo. Sr. D. Francisco Bergamín, Presidente de la Academia [de Jurisprudencia] sobre Tribunales de Comercio, y del Excmo. Sr. D. Miguel Primo de Rivera* (Madrid: Tallares de la Editorial Reus, 1924); *Discurso leído por El Excmo. Señor D. Miguel Primo de Rivera y Orbaneja en la Solemne Apertura de los Tribunales* (Madrid: Talleres de la Editorial Reus, 1924); *Disertación ciudadana. Destinada a mantener la comunicación entre el gobierno y los ciudadanos sobre algunos aspectos de la vida pública* (Madrid: Sans Calleja, undated); *Actuación ciudadana que corresponde al Ejército* (Madrid: Juan Pérez Torres, 1927); *Del General Primo de Rivera: documentos originales y artículos inspirados por él* (Madrid: Junta de Propaganda Patriótica y Ciudadana, 1929), pp. ix–xi; *Mirando al futuro* (Madrid: Junta de Propaganda Patriótica y Ciudadana, 1929). On the regime’s propaganda apparatus outside of Spain, see Rosa Cal, ‘La agencia Plus Ultra: un instrumento de propaganda de Primo de Rivera’, *Mélanges de la Casa de Velázquez*, 31:3 (1995), pp. 177–195.
- 85 ‘La Nación. Relación de los principales accionistas’, Archivo Javier Tusell (hereafter AJT), carpeta 1925.
- 86 José Luis Gómez-Navarro Navarrete, ‘Unión Patriótica: análisis de un Partido del poder’, *Estudios de Historia Social*, 32–33 (1985), p. 156.
- 87 ‘Propuesta de Antonio Robert, diputado Ponente de Instrucción Pública a la comisión de Instrucción Pública de la Diputación de Barcelona’, 12 August 1925. Arxiu Històric de la Diputació de Barcelona (hereafter AHDB), legajo no. 4176, Departamento de Instrucción Pública, 1925, expediente 23, Sección Femenina de la Unión Patriótica de Terrasa.

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- 92 Alejandro Quiroga Fernández de Soto, 'Educación para la ciudadanía autoritaria. La nacionalización de los jóvenes en la Dictadura de Primo de Rivera', *Historia de la educación*, 27 (2008), pp. 87–93.
- 93 *La Gaceta*, 21 October 1923.
- 94 'Previsiones que para el mayor desempeño de sus cargos deben tener presentes los delegados gubernativos', 7 December 1923, AGA, Subsecretaría Sección de Orden Público, Interior, caja 149.
- 95 Primo de Rivera, 'Instrucciones a los Delegados Gubernativos', 10 December 1923, AGA, Subsecretaría Sección de Orden Público, Interior, caja 149.
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- 97 Javier Tusell, *Historia de España en el siglo XX. Del 98 a la proclamación de la República*, vol. 1 (Madrid: Taurus, 1998), p. 453.
- 98 On the notion that Primo was 'inherently good-natured', see Javier Tusell, *Historia de España en el siglo XX. Del 98 a la proclamación de la República*, vol. 1 (Madrid: Taurus, 1998), p. 453.
- 99 Richard Gow, *Citizenship and Self-representation in the Public Letters Sent to General Primo de Rivera in Spain* (Unpublished PhD Thesis, Trinity College Dublin, 2018), pp. 139–140.
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- 101 Joel Baker, "Anti-Politics", *Infrastructure Policy and Civil Society Mobilisations in Spain under the Primo de Rivera Dictatorship (1923–1930)* (Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Sheffield, 2020), pp. 289–295.
- 102 For a definition of populism in-keeping with the dictatorship's discourse, see Cas Mudde & Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser, *Populism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: OUP, 2017). On the synergies between populism and nationalism, see Rogers Brubaker, 'Populism and Nationalism', *Nations and Nationalism*, 26:1 (2020), pp. 44–66.
- 103 *ABC*, 14 September 1923.
- 104 Miguel Primo de Rivera, *Del general Primo de Rivera: documento originales y artículos inspirados por él* (Madrid: Junta de Propaganda Patriótica y Ciudadana, 1928), p. 7.

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- 106 Eduardo González Calleja & Fernando del Rey Reguillo, *La defensa armada contra la revolución. Una historia de las «guardias cívicas» en la España del siglo XX* (Madrid: CSIC, 1995), p. 181.
- 107 Miguel Primo de Rivera, *Del general Primo de Rivera: documento originales y artículos inspirados por él* (Madrid: Junta de Propaganda Patriótica y Ciudadana, 1928), pp. 1–7.
- 108 María Teresa González Calbet, *La Dictadura de Primo de Rivera* (Madrid: El Arquero, 1987), pp. 278–279.
- 109 Miguel Primo de Rivera, *El pensamiento de Primo de Rivera* (Madrid: Sáez Hermanos / Junta de Propaganda Patriótica y Ciudadana, 1929), p. 29.
- 110 Miguel Primo de Rivera, *El pensamiento de Primo de Rivera* (Madrid: Sáez Hermanos / Junta de Propaganda Patriótica y Ciudadana, 1929), p. 26.
- 111 *La Vanguardia*, 14 September 1923.
- 112 *ABC*, 22 November 1923.
- 113 *ABC*, 22 November 1923.
- 114 Both of Primo's speeches in the Palazzo Venezia and his comments to the French newspaper *L'Information* are in *ABC*, 22 November 1923.
- 115 *El Debate*, 1 December 1923; 2 December 1923.
- 116 *El Debate*, 31 October 1923; 3 November 1923.
- 117 María Teresa González Calbet, *La Dictadura de Primo de Rivera* (Madrid: El Arquero, 1987), p. 131.
- 118 On the various UP groups in Barcelona, see Enric Ucelay-Da Cal, 'La repressió de la Dictadura de Primo de Rivera', in *II Jornades de debat. El poder de l'Estat: evolució, força o raó* (Reus: Centre de Lectura de Reus, 1993), pp. 170–172.
- 119 *El Debate*, 3 November 1923.
- 120 María Teresa González Calbet, *La Dictadura de Primo de Rivera* (Madrid: El Arquero, 1987), p. 131.
- 121 *El Debate*, 2 December 1923; 7 December 1923.
- 122 Castillo, *Propietarios muy pobres: sobre la subordinación política del pequeño campesinado (la Confederación Nacional Católica-Agraria), 1917–1942* (Madrid: Servicios de publicaciones agrarias, 1979), p. 344; Shlomo Ben-Ami, *Fascism from above: The Dictatorship of Primo de Rivera in Spain 1923–1930* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), p. 127. Gil Robles would emerge under the Second Republic as the leading figure of the Catholic Right and head of the CEDA party, though his failure to secure victory in the elections of February 1936 severely dented his prestige.
- 123 'Primo de Rivera a gobernadores civiles y delegados, 25 April 1924', in Marqués de Casa Ramos, *Dos años de directorio military. Manifiestos, disposiciones oficiales, cartas, discursos, órdenes generales al ejército, etc.* (Madrid: Renacimiento, 1926), pp. 546–549.
- 124 'Instrucciones para la organización de la Unión Patriótica', in Marqués de Casa Ramos, *Dos años de Directorio Militar. Manifiestos, disposiciones oficiales, cartas, discursos, órdenes generales del Ejército, etc.* (Madrid: Renacimiento, 1926), pp. 654–656.
- 125 For the fluid ideology and inter-class nature of the party, see for example the manifesto of the UP in Madrid at the start of 1924, in Enrique Díaz Retg, *Páginas para la Historia. Hacia la España nueva: pasado, presente y porvenir del Directorio Militar* (Madrid: Sucesores de Rivadeneyra, 1925), pp. 139–156. The book was published under the pseudonym 'Mask'.
- 126 Primo's letter is in Manuel Rubio Cabeza, *Crónica de la Dictadura* (Barcelona: Nauta, 1974), pp. 168–169.
- 127 Enric Ucelay-Da Cal, 'La repressió de la Dictadura de Primo de Rivera', in *II Jornades de debat. El poder de l'Estat: evolució, força o raó* (Reus: Centre de Lectura de Reus, 1993), pp. 162–163.

- 128 'Carta de Martínez Anido a Primo de Rivera', 16 April 1924, AJT, carpeta, 1924.
- 129 'Carta de Martínez Anido a Primo de Rivera', 16 April 1924, AJT, carpeta, 1924.
- 130 For the programme, see Dionisio Pérez, *La Dictadura a través de sus Notas oficiosas* (Madrid: Compañía Ibero-Americana de Publicaciones, 1930), pp. 23–24.
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- 132 Dionisio Pérez, *La Dictadura a través de sus Notas oficiosas* (Madrid: Compañía Ibero-Americana de Publicaciones, 1930), p. 24.
- 133 Dionisio Pérez, *La Dictadura a través de sus Notas oficiosas* (Madrid: Compañía Ibero-Americana de Publicaciones, 1930), p. 23.
- 134 *La Vanguardia*, 12 October 1923.
- 135 Alejandro Quiroga, *Making Spaniards. Primo de Rivera and the Nationalization of the Masses (1923–1930)* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2007), p. 45.
- 136 *La Vanguardia*, 12 October 1923.
- 137 The quotation is from the preamble to the Statute. *La Gaceta*, 9 March 1924, no. 69, pp. 1218–1222.
- 138 William Genieys, *Les Élités Espagnoles Face à L'État* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1997), pp. 108–109.
- 139 *La Gaceta*, 9 March 1924, no. 69, p. 1219.
- 140 *La Gaceta*, 9 March 1924, no. 69, p. 1219.
- 141 María Teresa González Calbet, *La Dictadura de Primo de Rivera* (Madrid: El Arquero, 1987), pp. 244–245.
- 142 The Provincial Statute is in *La Gaceta*, 21 April 1925, no. 80, pp. 1446–1483.
- 143 José Calvo Sotelo, *Mis servicios al Estado* (Madrid: Instituto de Estudios de Administración Local, 1974), pp. 56–58.
- 144 María Teresa González Calbet, *La Dictadura de Primo de Rivera* (Madrid: El Arquero, 1987), pp. 244–245.
- 145 José Manuel y Luis de Armiñán, *Epistolario del dictador: la figura del general Primo de Rivera, trazada por su propio mano* (Madrid: Morata, 1930), p. 71.
- 146 Official Note, 21 March 1925, in Primo de Rivera, *El Pensamiento*, pp. 102–105.
- 147 Official Note, 21 March 1925, in Primo de Rivera, *El Pensamiento*, p. 103.
- 148 The letter is partially reproduced in Primo de Rivera, *El Pensamiento*, p. 30.
- 149 See, for example, the official notes of 21 March 1925 and 2 June 1925, reproduced in Primo de Rivera, *El Pensamiento*, pp. 100–103, and in *La Nación*, 22 October 1925.
- 150 Jordi Casassas i Ymbert, *La Dictadura de Primo de Rivera (1923–1930). Textos* (Barcelona: Anthropos, 1983), pp. 151–152.
- 151 Manuel Rubio Cabeza, *Crónica de la dictadura* (Madrid: Sarpe, 1986), p. 123.
- 152 *La Vanguardia*, 25 January 1924.
- 153 'Calvo Sotelo to Primo de Rivera', 2 December 1924, AJT, carpeta 1924.
- 154 'Primo de Rivera to Calvo Sotelo', 12 December 1924, AJT, carpeta 1924.
- 155 Miguel Primo de Rivera, *El pensamiento de Primo de Rivera* (Madrid: Sáez Hermanos / Junta de Propaganda Patriótica y Ciudadana, 1929), p. 31.
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- 157 *La Acción*, 19 September 1923.
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- 163 Losada's edict is in *La Vanguardia*, 19 September 1923.
- 164 Barrera's edict is in *La Veu*, 20 September 1923.
- 165 González Calleja, *El maúser y el sufragio. Orden público, subversión y violencia política en la crisis de la Restauración (1917–1931)* (Madrid: CSIC, 1999), pp. 344–387.
- 166 Alejandro Quiroga, 'Football and Politics in Modern Spain: FC Barcelona and Real Madrid in Historical Context', in Eduardo Ledesma and Elena Delgado (ed.) *The Routledge Hispanic Studies Companion to Twentieth and Twenty-First Century Spain: Ideas, Practices, Imaginings* (London: Routledge, 2025), p. 311–312.
- 167 Alejandro Quiroga, *Football and National Identities in Spain. The Strange Death of Don Quixote* (Palgrave: Basingstoke, 2013), p. 28.
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- 170 González Calleja, *El maúser y el sufragio. Orden público, subversión y violencia política en la crisis de la Restauración (1917–1931)* (Madrid: CSIC, 1999), p. 357.
- 171 Enric Ucelay-Da Cal, 'La repressió de la Dictadura de Primo de Rivera', in *II Jornades de debat. El poder de l'Estat: evolució, força o raó* (Reus: Centre de Lectura de Reus, 1993), p. 172.
- 172 Josep Maria Roig Rosich, *La Dictadura de Primo de Rivera a Catalunya. Un assaig de repressió cultural* (Barcelona: Publicacions de l'Abadia de Montserrat, 1992), pp. 373–432; Joan Bonet I Baltà, 'L'Església catalana perseguida per la Dictadura de Primo de Rivera', in Joan Bonet (ed.), *L'Església catalana* (Barcelona: Publicacions de l'Abadia de Montserrat, 1984), pp. 335–352.
- 173 Dionisio Pérez, *La Dictadura a través de sus notas officiosas* (Madrid: Compañía Ibero-Americana de Publicaciones, 1930), pp. 22–23.
- 174 Sebastian Balfour, *Deadly Embrace. Morocco and the Road to the Spanish Civil War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 138.
- 175 Francisco Hernández Mir, *Del desastre a la Victoria (1921–1926). El Rif por España* (Madrid: Fernando Fe, 1927), pp. 103–122; Francisco Hernández Mir, *La Dictadura en Marruecos. Al margen de una farsa* (Madrid: Morata, 1930), pp. 86–89. The use of poison gas is admitted by Primo in a letter to the Marqués de Magaz on 10 September 1925, reproduced in José Manuel y Luis de Armiñán (ed.) *Epistolario del dictador: la figura del general Primo de Rivera, trazada por su propia mano* (Madrid: Javier Morata, 1930), p. 265.
- 176 González Calleja, *La España de Primo de Rivera. La modernización autoritaria, 1923–1930* (Madrid: Alianza, 2005), p. 111.
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- 178 Susana Sueiro Seoane, 'El mito del estratega. Primo de Rivera y la resolución del problema de Marruecos', *Cuadernos de Historia Contemporánea*, 16 (1994), pp. 113–129.
- 179 Paul Preston, *Franco: Caudillo de España* (Barcelona: Debolsillo, 2002), pp. 70–72.
- 180 González Calleja, *La España de Primo de Rivera. La modernización autoritaria, 1923–1930* (Madrid: Alianza, 2005), p. 113.

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- 182 Shannon Earl Fleming & Ann K. Fleming, 'Primo de Rivera and Spain's Moroccan Problem, 1923–1927', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 13:1 (1977), p. 89.
- 183 Primo's letter to the Duque de Tetuán, dated 12 April 1925 in Tetuán, is in José Manuel y Luis de Armiñán (ed.) *Epistolario del dictador: la figura del general Primo de Rivera*, trazada por su propia mano (Madrid: Javier Morata, 1930), p. 101.
- 184 José Manuel y Luis de Armiñán (ed.) *Epistolario del dictador: la figura del general Primo de Rivera*, trazada por su propia mano (Madrid: Javier Morata, 1930), p. 101.
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- 187 Ángel Herrerín & Susana Sueiro Seoane, '¿Quantité négligeable o rival terrible?: la imagen francesa de la España primorriverista', *Pasado y Memoria*, 16 (2017), p. 7.
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- 190 For an account of the landings at Alhucemas, see Vicente Pedro Colomar Cerrada, *Primo de Rivera contra Abd el Krim. La pacificación de las cabilas, 1923–1927* (Madrid: Buena Tinta, 2013), pp. 181–200; Ramón Díez Rioja, *El desembarco de Alhucemas. La operación definitiva del colonialismo español en Marruecos (1911–1925)* (Unpublished PhD thesis, Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, 2019).
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- 192 Letter from Primo to Marqués de Magaz, 10 September 1925, in José Manuel y Luis de Armiñán (ed.) *Epistolario del dictador: la figura del general Primo de Rivera*, trazada por su propia mano (Madrid: Javier Morata, 1930), p. 268.
- 193 Letter from Primo to Marqués de Magaz, 10 September 1925, in José Manuel y Luis de Armiñán (ed.) *Epistolario del dictador: la figura del general Primo de Rivera*, trazada por su propia mano (Madrid: Javier Morata, 1930), p. 268.
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- 195 Sebastian Balfour, *Deadly Embrace. Morocco and the Road to the Spanish Civil War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 140.
- 196 Informe del subsecretario del Ministerio de Guerra, 'Situación general de la fábricas militares al iniciarse las operaciones en 1924', AJT, carpeta 1924.
- 197 Daniel Fernández Macías, *Franco 'nació en África': el africanismo y las Campañas de Marruecos* (Tecnos, Madrid, 2019) pp. 306–310.
- 198 Maria Rosa de Madariaga & Carlos Lázaro Ávila, 'Guerra química en el Rif (1921–1927)', *Historia*, 16:324 (2003), pp. 50–87.
- 199 Mask (pseudonym of Enrique Díaz Retg), *Páginas para la Historia. Hacia la España nueva: pasado, presente y porvenir del Directorio Militar* (Madrid: Sucesores de Rivadeneyra, 1925), p. 189.
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- 201 For example, in the official note of 16 December 1923, it states that the Directory has no aspirations 'to govern for the six or seven years that would be indispensable'

- for completing the work of ‘regeneration and prosperity’ that it had begun. See Dionisio Pérez, *La Dictadura a través de sus Notas oficiosas* (Madrid: Compañía Ibero-Americana de Publicaciones, 1930), p. 40. Other mentions of a future civilian government and the handing of power to Unión Patriótica are contained in the official notes of 23 June 1924, 30 June 1924, 24 July 1924, 22 August 1925, and 30 September 1925, as well as numerous public declarations in July and August 1924, and in the summer of 1925. See Dionisio Pérez, *La Dictadura a través de sus Notas oficiosas* (Madrid: Compañía Ibero-Americana de Publicaciones, 1930), pp. 52, 55, 56–59, 65, 67.
- 202 Letter from Primo de Rivera to Duque de Tetuán, Tetuán 4 June 1925. José Manuel y Luis de Armiñán (ed.) *Epistolario del dictador: la figura del general Primo de Rivera, trazada por su propia mano* (Madrid: Javier Morata, 1930), p. 117.
 - 203 Dionisio Pérez, *La Dictadura a través de sus Notas oficiosas* (Madrid: Compañía Ibero-Americana de Publicaciones, 1930), p. 64.
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 - 206 Dionisio Pérez, *La Dictadura a través de sus Notas oficiosas* (Madrid: Compañía Ibero-Americana de Publicaciones, 1930), p. 72.
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 - 208 Thomas Sakmyster, ‘From Hapsburg Admiral to Hungarian Regent: The Political Metamorphosis of Miklos Horthy, 1918–1921’, *East European Quarterly*, 17:2 (1983), p. 129.
 - 209 Catherine Hore, *Lamiral Horthy. Le regent de Hongrie 1920–1944* (Paris: Edi8, 2014); Thomas Sakmyster, *Hungary’s Admiral on Horseback: Miklós Horthy, 1918–1944* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994).
 - 210 Stephane Groueff, *Crown of Thorns: The Reign of King Boris III of Bulgaria, 1918–1943* (Lanham: Madison Books, 1998), pp. 88–101.
 - 211 It was precisely the involvement of Tsankov in the extra-judicial murder of communists and agrarians which led to his fall as Prime Minister and facilitated the rise to power of the conservative Andréi Liapchev in January 1926. See Richard J. Crampton, *Bulgaria* (Oxford: OUP, 2007); Christian Promitzer, ‘Interwar Bulgaria: Populism, authoritarianism and ethnic minorities’, in Sabine P. Ramet (ed.), *Interwar East Central Europe, 1918–1941. The Failure of Democracy-Building, the Fate of Minorities* (London: Routledge, 2020).
 - 212 Dylan Ridley, ‘Civic Associations and Authoritarian Regimes in Interwar Europe: Italy and Spain in Comparative Perspective’, *American Sociological Review*, 70:2 (2005), p. 303.
 - 213 Adrian Lyttleton, *The Seizure of Power: Fascism in Italy, 1919–1929* (London: Routledge, 2003).
 - 214 Giulia Albanese, *Dittature mediterranee. Sovversioni fasciste e colpi di Stato in Italia, Spagna e Portogallo* (Rome: Laterza, 2016), pp. x–xii.
 - 215 Giulia Albanese, *Dittature mediterranee. Sovversioni fasciste e colpi di Stato in Italia, Spagna e Portogallo* (Rome: Laterza, 2016), pp. 186–188.

4 The Civil Directory (1925–1930)

At 3 o'clock in the afternoon on 17 October 1928, Miguel Primo de Rivera arrived at the port of Santa Cruz de Tenerife on board the gunboat *Dato*. The local authorities were waiting impatiently to greet him. As soon as the Marqués de Estella arrived at the dockside, a group of young girls dressed up in traditional costumes presented him with a bunch of flowers, to the sound of cheers from the hundreds of locals who were gathered to receive the dictator.¹ Next, Primo was taken to the Plaza de la Constitución, where he observed a parade of more than 3000 members of the *Somatén*, 600 scouts and members of the *Unión Patriótica* (UP). Afterwards, a *Te Deum* was sung in honour of the dictator at the Church of the Conception. Primo then went to review the troops at the San Carlos barracks. Events then moved to the Captaincy-General, where the dictator was handed a glass of wine. There, Primo regaled the officers with 'a patriotically charged speech', before receiving the civil authorities of the province.² That evening, the Marqués de Estella attended a banquet at the Town Hall of Tenerife with 400 guests, organised by the 'Businesses and organisations of the province', where he was also kind enough to say a few words about the high esteem in which he held the government in the Canary Islands. Once the dinner was over, the dictator was still keen to stay out for a while and went to an open-air dance taking place in the Plaza del Príncipe Alfonso.³

The next few days for the dictator in the Canary Islands also involved patriotic speeches, the blessing of flags, Masses and banquets with members of the UP.⁴ Despite the busy schedule of dinners and ceremonies, Primo continued to handle the business of running the country personally. During his many trips throughout Spain, the dictator had developed a custom of making notes on small scraps of paper of various ideas that were coming to him, about laws to pass, or of measures to take in various fields. These handwritten notes were later sent to the Prime Minister's Office, where everything possible was done to fulfil the wishes of the dictator. Thus, on his trip to the Canaries in October 1928, Primo made one of his notes on a scrap of paper that he had to 'ask him [the *delegado* in La Palma] why he was ignoring the *Somatén* and its leader'.⁵ In another note, Primo revealed his desire for the leaders of the local *Somatén* to sit on the so-called 'Juntas Ciudadanas' (citizens' councils) – committees

filled with regime men who oversaw appointments to public posts as well as orchestrating campaigns in support of the dictatorship.⁶ This system of sending orders through handwritten notes on scraps of paper offers us a sense of how Primo exercised power. It was a system with neither filters nor restrictions, which allowed for an idea scribbled on a piece of paper to become a royal command after passing through the *Secretaría Auxiliar de la Presidencia* (Bureau of the Prime Minister). Even so, on occasions, *this modus operandi* created a degree of confusion in government, given that orders hurriedly scribbled by the dictator were not always clear. In the case of the leaders of the *Somatén* joining the *Juntas Ciudadanas*, for example, officials at the Bureau of the Prime Minister wondered ‘whether to pass the necessary Royal order and if this ruling is to be applied generally or only in the province of the Canary Islands’. As such, it was necessary to write to Primo to seek clarification.⁷

Beyond the problems it created, this peculiar system of command demonstrates the centrality of the Prime Minister’s Office in the governmental structures of the Primo de Rivera dictatorship. In December 1925, coinciding with the creation of the Civil Directory, the Marqués de Estella reformed the Prime Minister’s Office and attached three further offices to it, namely, a Bureau of the Prime Minister an Administrative Office, and an Office for News and Press Censorship. Primo filled the three new departments with military commanders loyal to him and set-up their offices ‘in the rooms directly attached to the Prime Minister’s Office’.⁸ The concentration of power was also physical. In the Bureau, Primo brought together his most loyal officers, including Major Máximo Cuervo Radigales, a sinister individual who would eventually end up heading the Francoist prison system in the 1940s. Cuervo – who had been ADC to General Adolfo Vallespinosa, Minister for Justice during the Military Directory – was tasked with coordinating the work of ministers, the civil service and the UP with the Prime Minister’s Office, as well as responding to some of the innumerable letters from citizens all over the country to the dictator.⁹ In August 1927, Máximo Cuervo was named Head of the Bureau, his responsibilities were increased and he began to accompany the Marqués de Estella on his trips throughout Spain, which he had to coordinate with Major Fidel de la Cuerda, Primo’s personal adjutant, and many years later one of the originators of the National Identity Card in Franco’s Spain.¹⁰ The Bureau was also enlarged. When it had been created in December 1925, the royal decree had declared that 10 people would work in the department, but 4 years later more than 50 army officers were now attached to it.¹¹

The reforms to the structure of government following the creation of the Civil Directory also involved Severiano Martínez Anido assuming the posts of Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior. Primo was confirming *de jure* what had effectively been the case *de facto* since the start of the dictatorship, namely, that Martínez Anido was his number two (although technically the Vice-President of the Council of Ministers had been Admiral Magaz during the Military Directory), and that he was officially in charge of the Interior Ministry (which had not had a Minister between 1923

and 1925). Elsewhere, there was continuity in the Ministry of War, where Primo kept his wartime comrade from Africa, Juan O'Donnell y Vargas, the Duque de Tetuán, in post. Similarly, the Ministry of the Navy stayed in the hands of its former under-secretary, Admiral Honorio Cornejo Carvajal. Primo also brought various men into the Civil Directory who shared his desire to regenerate Spain through state intervention and authoritarianism. For example, Primo promoted Galo Ponte y Escartín from his position as prosecutor in the Supreme Court to become Minister of Justice. Rafael Benumea y Burín, the Conde de Guadalhorce and an engineer, was appointed Minister for Development. Meanwhile, Eduardo Callejo de la Cuesta, a professor of natural law at the University of Valladolid, was appointed Minister of Education. The dictator also placed much faith in a series of younger men to deliver his promised transformation of the country. José Calvo Sotelo, the *Maurista* who had prepared both the Municipal Statute and the Provincial Statute for the regime, was made Finance Minister, even though he was barely 30 years old. José María Yanguas Messía, a 35-year-old professor of international law and former deputy for the Conservative Party, was chosen as Foreign Minister. Meanwhile, Eduardo Aunós Pérez, who had been an under-secretary at the Ministry of Labour, Commerce and Industry under the Military Directory, was now promoted to minister. He was 31 years old.

With this mix of officers, technocrats and rising stars of the Spanish right in the cabinet, Primo proceeded with the construction of an authoritarian state which had already begun to take shape during the Military Directory. Nor did the arrival of civilians into government ministries, or the reform of the government structures, mean that Primo was withdrawing in any way from directing political decisions. This new state would be designed in no small part by the dictator. The creation of the National Assembly, the development of a corporative system, the attempts to frame a new authoritarian constitution and reform of education were all crucial transformations during the Civil Directory, and Primo would play a decisive role in all of them. The dictator intervened personally and constantly in the projects that his ministers were engaged in, and any legislation that was even remotely important required his approval. Primo would usually spend the early evening making adjustments to royal decrees, before the Bureau of the Prime Minister would send them to the *Gaceta de Madrid* for official publication. Deeply controlling and somewhat obsessive, Primo had no wish to delegate too much, and used his loyal number two Martínez Anido to take personal supervision over those projects which might lead to problems, even if Primo would always reserve the right to have final say. Primo's aim was to build a new Spain which was both modern and authoritarian, and adapted to the European scenario that unfurled after the First World War. He was nonetheless very clear that this was his personal endeavour.

The first major step towards an anti-liberal and authoritarian political settlement in Spain was the creation of the National Assembly (*Asamblea Nacional Consultiva*). The intention was to create a government-controlled chamber to

replace the old Cortes. According to Calvo Sotelo, the idea had been given to Primo de Rivera by Mussolini. The Italian dictator is said to have advised his Spanish counterpart to create a parliament with ‘any system and by any means’ in order to gain international legitimacy for his regime.¹² Whether the result of the advice of his Italian counterpart or owing to other reasons, Primo announced his intention to institute a new chamber in November 1925.¹³ It would not be until July 1926, however, that the National Congress of the UP took the decision to create a corporative parliament that would represent the ‘natural’ building blocks of the nation, namely, family, municipality and province.

On 4 September 1926, the dictatorship scheduled a plebiscite between the 11th and 13th of the month, coinciding with the third anniversary of the military coup, with the aim of gaining popular approval for the regime and so that public opinion was seen to back the need to put together a national assembly to assist the Executive in its work. The regime press stated that the Central Committee of the UP had written to the government to ask for a plebiscite to be arranged at the start of September, but it is clear that Primo himself decided when and how the people would be consulted.¹⁴ In presenting the UP as the originator of the idea for a plebiscite, however, the Marqués de Estella was trying to suggest to the public that the party was an autonomous entity, with the power to influence the political agenda of the regime directly. Similarly, Primo wanted to minimise his own role within the Executive in the eyes of the public, denying that his own power was ‘personal and arbitrary’ and even questioning whether his regime could really be labelled a dictatorship:

All of this, which is more or less what is required, has been achieved in the short span of three years, exercising government in the shape of a ‘dictatorship’, an exaggerated description, because that would suggest personal and arbitrary power, which has not existed for even one moment on the part of the King nor the Government, for this latter has always checked its judgements against the relevant bodies, has accommodated its decisions to the laws of the country, without further exception than those suspended or modified in specific cases, and with all decrees subject to royal assent, just as the King has submitted all of his ideas and initiatives to the Government. Thus, there has not been a ‘dictatorship’, but rather a ‘government’, with only the minimal authority required, and required more and more each day and everywhere, as is demonstrated clearly by everyone’s experiences.¹⁵

These words are less interesting as a sign of how the dictator conceived of his own regime, and more about how he wished it to be seen by the Spanish people. In the next passage, the Marqués de Estella spoke of how parliamentarism had failed in Spain and neighbouring countries, because it constrained strong Executives. To do away with the ‘legal tyranny’ of Parliament, what was needed in this new European scene was an advisory assembly for the

government, genuinely representative of the people and the first step in the revolutionary process of redefining the state:

The Government and the *Unión Patriótica* have an idea of a new state structure, strong, real, practical, democratic, free from convoluted philosophies and humiliating imitations, and they wish to submit themselves to the knowledge and approval of a Great Assembly, which will be the genuine representation of the country, so that with its help it can begin the revolutionary work which the health of Spain, the march of time and the exhaustion of the current situation.¹⁶

Primo's 'new structure' for the state was very similar to that which Spain's fascist party, Falange Española de las JONS, and later General Franco, would put forward from the 1930s onwards.

The principal cell of the nation is the municipality, and of this, the family, with its ancient virtues and its modern understanding of the citizen [...] the province is the nucleus, the backbone which directs and rules the whole system of the state,

declared Primo.¹⁷ Moreover, this new structure for the state had

to seek the possible levelling of the classes in the pursuit of life; but without populism, doctrinarian measures, nor any spirit of vengefulness; with careful reasoning and requiring everyone perform their work and fulfil their duties [...] With a Christian and democratic spirit, but with discipline.¹⁸

As on other occasions, the dictator promised revolutionary changes, but in practice, these became moderate reforms, particularly when it came to matters affecting large economic interests. The state had a duty to redistribute wealth, but with the lower orders disciplined so that they did not pick up dangerous leftist ideas. This clearly demagogic discourse – at times similar to that of Mussolini – of 'revolution, but not too much', sought to maintain a delicate balance between attracting the working and middle-classes towards the dictatorship while assuring the most powerful sectors of society that things would stay the same.

The regime's plebiscite involved a lot of activity but not much voting. Indeed, voting was not the point. Rather, the plebiscite was an exercise in collecting signatures in favour of the government and in favour of the creation of the National Assembly. The dictatorship allowed men and women over the age of 18 to participate, or rather to sign. After a week of frenetic propaganda by army officers, civil governors, public servants, members of the *Somatén* and the UP, the plebiscite took place without any form of guarantee of secrecy. Regime councillors and members of the UP sat at all stations. The collecting

of signatures took three days from 11 to 13 September. As was eminently predicable, Primo 'won' his plebiscite. The government declared that it has gathered 7,478,502 signatures in favour, or 57.04% of those eligible to sign.¹⁹ *La Nación* presented the results as an unquestionable demonstration of the love of the Spanish people for Primo de Rivera's dictatorship. Dishonest comparisons were drawn between the number of votes for the parliamentary elections in Madrid and Barcelona in 1919 and the signatures recorded in the regime's plebiscite in these cities, without taking into consideration the fact that the vote for the Cortes in 1919 was nothing like the mass collection of signatures in 1926, nor the fact that women had been unable to vote in Spain under the Restoration System.²⁰ Any excuse was used to delegitimise parliamentary government and justify the new corporative assembly. Nonetheless, the geographical distribution of percentages of signatures gathered in favour of the dictatorship during the plebiscite of 1926 shows us that the regime did not enjoy much support in some parts of Spain by September 1926. In the city of Barcelona, for example, the signatures accounted for less than 11% of the total population, while in the city of Madrid, it was only 32%, which was also well below the national average.²¹

The project for the National Assembly soon ran into problems. Various conservative groups feared losing out in the new authoritarian state and were suspicious of the idea of a single chamber. Their fears were understandable. Primo de Rivera had, after all, made it very clear from the start that political parties were not going to be represented in the new parliament and the regime's propaganda insisted repeatedly that the National Assembly had to be based on corporative suffrage where the parties had no representation.²² Initially, the King was also wary of the idea of a single-chamber assembly. Alfonso XIII realised that the Assembly meant the definitive institutionalisation of the dictatorship and the impossibility of returning at some future point to the Restoration System if things went awry. The new dictatorship was definitively putting an end to the figure of the monarch as the supreme arbiter of politics, while strengthening the powers of the dictator. Alfonso XIII initially rejected the plan for the Assembly and any constitutional reform that might arise from it. But the King also understood that Primo still had considerable popular (and military) support. Under strong pressure from the Marqués de Estella, Alfonso finally signed the decree to summon the National Assembly in September 1927.²³

In theory, the members of the assembly were chosen through a complex system which combined universal, indirect male suffrage with a corporative election which involved various 'professions or classes', 'social interests', public servants and members of the UP. The reality was much simpler. The first 400 members of the assembly who met in the old Congress of Deputies on 10 October 1927 were hand-picked by the regime. The dictator appointed his former Foreign Minister, José María de Yanguas y Messía, as Speaker of the Assembly and filled the chamber with state functionaries (more than 30% of the total), economic interest groups (particularly from Catalonia and the

Basque Country), large agricultural and urban property owners, military officers and above all members of the UP. Primo also tried to persuade the socialists to join the assembly, but they flatly rejected the idea of participating in a chamber with corporative representation. Francisco Largo Caballero, Fernando de los Ríos and Dolores Cebrián declined the chance to become members of the Assembly. The dictator had more success in bringing Social Catholics into the Assembly, who mostly came to hold seats through their membership of the UP, with some attending as representatives of the Catholic unions. Figures from the old Conservative party also held seats, such as Juan de la Cierva. Prominent members of the Carlist movement, such as Víctor Pradera, also accepted the dictator's invitation to join the body. Perhaps predictably, however, Primo de Rivera did not ask most former parliamentarians to join the chamber. Most of its members were thus new politicians, and only 16.5% had been deputies or senators in the last five legislatures of the Liberal Monarchy before September 1923.²⁴ This absence of experienced Restoration politicians in the Assembly represented a defeat for Alfonso XIII. Unable to stop the formation of the new chamber, he had nonetheless hoped that Restoration politicians would become members of it.²⁵ His hopes were dashed. By now, the King must have understood that it was going to be difficult to rely on the old Restoration elites in the future. He was more isolated than he had thought and more closely linked to Primo de Rivera than he would have liked.

The radical implications of the new Assembly were certainly not lost on the liberal newspaper *El Sol*. In early October 1927, it commented that not even in Fascist Italy had parliament and universal suffrage been abolished. Spain was the only European country where parliamentary institutions had been replaced.²⁶ The Madrid daily certainly had a point. Primo de Rivera's National Assembly was the first corporative chamber in interwar Europe. At all times, its business was controlled by the Executive. The Assembly was divided into 18 sections, each formed by 11 members chosen by the Speaker. The government chose the subjects for discussion and what each section would cover, according to its speciality. Subjects would normally be related to economic, juridical, or technical matters, with the exception of the First Section, which was charged with preparing draft constitutional laws. The internal orders of the chamber also offered the government direct control of the Assembly. The Executive, alongside Yanguas as the Speaker, determined the order of business for the commissions, the themes for debate, and whether or not the findings of the various sections made it to the floor for debate. The government and Yanguas also decided if votes should be taken after findings had been debated in the chamber, and if the vote was binding. The government could then take a recommendation into consideration or simply ignore it. The Executive also sought to ensure that if members made any criticism of the government, this would never reach the public. Accordingly, a strict censorship of proceedings of the Assembly was imposed upon journalists.²⁷ Primo de Rivera thus broke his word yet again, since he had guaranteed before the formation of the Assembly that its debates would be public.²⁸

The consultative National Assembly is a good example of what the regime meant at an institutional level. The National Assembly was conceived to articulate a corporative state, seeking to overcome liberal parliamentarism and political parties. The new chamber was presented as a space for public debate where all social groups could work together. Ultimately, however, it was a hierarchical institution, hand-picked and controlled by the government, with, virtually, no representation for the working classes, and where debates were censored from the Spanish public. In many respects, Primo de Rivera's National Assembly was a precedent from the Francoist Cortes in later decades.

Nonetheless, the Assembly came to play a key role in the Civil Directory. The next phase in the construction of the regime's political system was the formulation of a new constitution for Spain. The task was handed to the First Section of the National Assembly, whose members, unsurprisingly, were hand-picked by Primo de Rivera. Among the members of the section were important figures from the monarchist right, such as Juan de la Cierva, the *Mauristas* Antonio Goicoechea and Gabriel Maura, and the Carlist Victor Pradera. Nonetheless, Primo wanted to ensure that the First Section was controlled by a majority of *upetistas*. He thus nominated José María de Yanguas Messía, Carlos García Oviedo, José María Pemán, Ramiro de Maeztu and Laureano Díez Canseco as members. With such a composition, the Marqués de Estella was once again trying to integrate differing conservative currents into his dictatorship, but the result was disastrous. When some of the former members of the Conservative party proposed a return to the Constitution of 1876 with just a few new tweaks, the members from the UP flatly refused and demanded a complete rupture with the old Restoration System.²⁹ Maeztu proposed substituting universal suffrage with corporative suffrage and suggested removing political rights from those who were 'indifferent', that is to say those who did not openly support the dictatorship, as had happened in Fascist Italy.³⁰ Pemán declared that it was time to move from an 'individualist state to a social state', for which it was necessary to strengthen the powers of the Executive.³¹

When the First Section completed its draft of the new constitution in May 1929, nobody was happy with the results. Conservatives, liberals, republicans and socialists were united in publicly condemning the text. Alfonso XIII was also opposed to the new text and privately declared his wish to return to the constitutional model of 1876. Perhaps more importantly, Primo himself was very reluctant to adopt the text, since he believed the new constitution would give too much power to the King.³² The dictatorship had reached a cul-de-sac, and in the autumn of 1929 Primo de Rivera decided to abandon the idea of creating a new authoritarian constitution for Spain. The work of the First Section was in vain, but it nonetheless left an ideological legacy. In the 1930s, *primorriveristas* – by then known as Alfonsine Monarchists – came to regard the constitutional draft of 1929 as the 'seed' of the doctrinally anti-democratic movement they were building in opposition to the Second Republic. Later still, the decidedly anti-liberal and corporative constitutional draft of 1929 also



Figure 4.1 Primo de Rivera and the ministers of the Civil Directory parade in the streets of Madrid during the commemoration of the dictatorship's fifth anniversary in September 1928. Credit: Alfonso.

served as a useful precedent for the Franco regime in drafting its 'Fundamental Laws of the Kingdom'.³³

A further cornerstone of the new dictatorial regime was the establishment of a corporative system. The Marqués de Estella handed the operation to his Minister of Labour, Eduardo Aunós, a young man from Lérida, who had begun his political career as a conservative Catalanists at the side of Francesc Cambó and had ended up on the Spanish nationalist far-right under Primo de Rivera.³⁴ Aunós devised a corporative state that was fundamentally inspired by fascism, but which also drew on the ideas of the French thinker George Sorel and the Social Catholic doctrines of the late-nineteenth century.³⁵ The corporative Spanish state was presented, as it was in Fascist Italy, as a third way between capitalism and socialism. To put it another way, the regime sought to overcome social conflicts through state intervention, which would create a national sense of solidarity.³⁶ The idea had begun to take form in 1926 when, after a meeting in Rome with the fascist leader Giuseppe Bottai, Aunós returned to Spain enamoured with the corporatist model that was being developed in Italy. Aunós's version covered all economic sectors of the country, which would be divided into 27 corporations. Each would be controlled by a corporative council (*consejo de corporación*), which would guide national production and would decide upon the composition of arbitration committees (*comités paritarios*) to resolve labour disputes between workers and employers. According to Aunós, the 27 corporations under

state control would not only solve labour conflicts but also to serve to inculcate ‘strong patriotic feelings among workers and employers.’³⁷

Aunós’ model was designed to integrate moderate elements of the labour movement into a system which sought to indoctrinate workers with patriotic values. Nonetheless, the dictatorship had to pay an enormous political price for this. The UGT accepted the invitation from the government to participate in the arbitration committees but did not renounce the use of strike action as a tool in labour disputes. As labour conflicts increased from 1928 onwards, the government stepped up its repression of the socialist movement. In Asturias, for example, the owners of a mine in financial difficulties decided to lay-off 4000 workers in 1928, which resulted in an increase in labour conflicts in the region, led by the socialists of the Asturian Miners’ Union.³⁸ In the last years of the dictatorship, the regime closed down 93 branches of the UGT, which deepened the growing split between socialists and the government and hampered the working of the arbitration committees.³⁹

At the same time, and clearly aware that the regime’s corporative model owed more to fascism than to Social Catholicism, *El Debate* launched a campaign in November 1928 in which it denounced the model as ‘statist’ and ‘centralist’.⁴⁰ As well as doctrinal differences there were other more practical concerns. The dictatorship had chosen the UGT as the representative for workers on the arbitration committees, which inevitably meant the marginalisation of Catholic unions within the new system. The new corporative state was thus not only at odds with the interventionist leanings of the Catholic unions and associations but was frustrating the hopes of the Social Catholics to increase their power within the regime.⁴¹ Matters only grew worse when the government attempted to extend the corporative model to the countryside, given that the Social Catholics believed this would open the door for the socialists to assume control of Spanish agriculture. Catholic opposition to the move was such that it was able to paralyse the implementation of the regime’s agrarian legislation.⁴² Despite past collaboration, the divorce between the dictatorship and the Social Catholics was irreversibly gathering pace. From 1928, Social Catholics began to leave the UP, a tendency which, as we will see below, further increased in 1929 as the dictatorship’s discourse became more radicalised alongside repressive measures against its increasingly numerous opponents.⁴³ The corporative system also alienated businessmen, who believed that the arbitration committees set up by the regime tended to favour the workers. Consequently, broad sectors of the upper and middle classes, who had supported the regime precisely on the understanding that it would put an end to workers’ demands, felt betrayed by Primo de Rivera and his government. In the autumn of 1929, amidst the worsening economic crisis, businessmen demanded that Primo de Rivera dissolve the arbitration committees. The dictator refused and the businessmen withdrew their support from Primo. By the end of 1929, the regime was left without its principal economic bulwark.⁴⁴

Aunós’ corporative system has to be understood within the context of the creation of a new, modern, authoritarian, interventionist and expansive

state. The regime's model set in train with the Civil Directory entailed the enlargement of the state based upon an economic nationalism which was deeply developmentalist and protectionist. Taking advantage of the global bonanza of the 1920s, Finance Minister Calvo Sotelo developed an unprecedented programme of state intervention in the Spanish economy. Financed by a massive issue of government debt, the Primo de Rivera dictatorship launched an ambitious programme of public works, which involved significant investment in highways, ports, railways, social housing and marsh drainage. Thanks to the combination of protectionist measures and state investment, Spain saw growth in the banking sector, foodstuffs industries, civil engineering, transport and heavy industry. The state also established new monopolies in petroleum (*Compañía Arrendataria del Monopolio de Petróleos, CAMPSA*) and telecommunications (*Compañía Telefónica Nacional de España*). Behind this state intervention in the economy, there was a clearly defined intent. As Eduardo Aunós himself confessed, 'the industrial policies and public works were intended to create a rise in living standards that would compensate the people for the loss of their unattainable political liberties'.⁴⁵ Put another way, the regime was anticipating more than 30 years in advance the ideas of the Francoist technocrats, in the late 1950s and beyond, in its belief that material well-being could serve as compensation for the loss of political liberties.

Spain's economic growth between 1922 and 1929 saw GDP rise by 4% on average each year. This, combined with the stabilisation of prices between 1925 and 1929 worked in favour of the popularity of the regime among the middle and upper classes in Spain, who were the greatest beneficiaries of the financial boom, at least until the currency crisis with the peseta in 1928. Beyond simple economic growth, investment in public works schemes served to bind various sectors of civil society to the Primo de Rivera dictatorship. The creation of the *Confederación Sindical Hidrográfica del Ebro* (Ebro Confederation of Hydrographic Unions), for example, led to the incorporation of a whole group of technocrats into the regime, while the dictatorship took on board the engineers' discourse, redolent of Joaquín Costa, of modernising the Spanish countryside. Moreover, the development of hydraulic projects throughout the country brought the regime's discourses and policies to areas of the Spanish agriculture which rarely had any form of happy contact with the state. The state was now linked closely to the development of infrastructure.⁴⁶ In other fields, such as the programmes for building cheap public housing (*casas baratas*), the regime had more modest success. The dictatorship was able to co-opt many of the cooperatives involved in the *casas baratas*, which gave them a degree of political weight in exchange for them lending the dictatorship a platform for government propaganda. But as the Civil Directory went on, these associations were making it clear that the state investment was well below what was needed to meet the lack of affordable housing in Spain, and were beginning to distance themselves from a regime that had promised more than it could deliver.⁴⁷

The project of economic and state expansion was based upon unprecedented public spending. To finance the spending, Primo de Rivera's government issued an enormous quantity of public debt, which Calvo Sotelo placed every year in so-called 'extraordinary budgets', as well as the sector budgets assigned to railroad construction, hydrographic confederations and the promotion of tourism. In 1926, for example, a loan was made for a value of 3540 million pesetas.⁴⁸ As was to be expected, the banks were happy to pick up this debt, but many private individuals with savings were also willing to take a risk on purchasing a large part of the government loan. Public debt thus became something akin to a thermometer for the confidence that middle-class investors had in the dictatorship.⁴⁹ In a clear push for collecting tax money, the regime also raised taxes by some 49% on direct and 44% on indirect taxation in the period between 1923 and 1929.⁵⁰

As well as raising taxes, Primo de Rivera's government wanted to ensure they were paid. In 1926, Calvo Sotelo set out a reform of taxation to increase levies on the profits of the upper and middle classes and to chase tax evasion more aggressively. Primo was fully behind his Finance Minister in this regard. After all, the Marqués de Estella had spent years arguing that the public deficit was a problem, in large part owing to the cost of the wars in Morocco. In his correspondence with General Sanjurjo in 1926, Primo insisted that he had to reduce spending on the colonial adventure.⁵¹ In a letter dated 13 August, for example, he told Sanjurjo, whom he had appointed High Commissioner in Morocco, of the pressing need to reduce spending and costs in Africa:

I feel it my duty in this matter to be completely frank, so that there can be no doubt about the firm criteria of the Government of relieving the nation from the burden of Morocco, even to the point, once the honour of the Armed forces is satisfied, of the extreme action of abandoning it, if maintaining it demands allocation in budget for the year 1927 of one cent more than 180 million pesetas, a figure which is around half of the present reality, and which, without any doubt, can be considered ruinous.⁵²

It is improbable that Primo was truly thinking of abandoning the Spanish protectorate at a moment when he was clearly winning the war. More likely, this was an exaggeration of a dictator accustomed to hyperbole and threat, even in his personal correspondence. But Primo's words do show us how seriously he took the question of the deficit. When it came to tax collection and the persecution of tax evasion set out by Calvo Sotelo, Primo insisted the state must simplify 'its tax instrument' and increase 'the rigour of punishment when fraud or the intent to commit fraud is proven'.⁵³ In his manifesto for Spaniards when announcing the plebiscite of 1926, Primo left no doubt as to his thinking about tax reform:

The tax base should normally be derived from production or profits, which demands rigorous recording of business. It is essential to bring

about a simplification of direct taxation, ideally just one [...] Spanish taxpayers must get used to the idea that Spain, to respond to the obligations imposed by rebuilding the nation and placing it into conditions of high production, needs (even given the reduction in the coming year of 60 to 80 million [pesetas] in Morocco, and a further 120 to 140 million in the year after that) a budget for income of 3300 million [...] and that they can be fulfilled without deferral of national wealth, if a truly civic morality inspires behaviour when it comes to taxes.⁵⁴

Despite their good intentions, Primo and Calvo Sotelo found the 'civic morality' or the middle and upper classes did not extend to agreement with their taxation proposals. Pressure from the large landowners (*latifundistas*) and urban property associations forced the government to withdraw the Royal Decree of 3 January 1926, which had sought to tackle the concealment of propertied wealth. Meanwhile, small business owners were perhaps the sector most alarmed by Calvo Sotelo's measures against tax evasion, since they feared they would ultimately pay the fiscal price, given the alliance between the government and the large monopolistic companies. Ultimately, the progressive 'Draft Tax Bill for Rents and Earnings' – which Primo entrusted Calvo Sotelo to draft in the summer of 1926 – never became law thanks to the outright rejection of the major professional associations, as well as all manner of business and landowners' bodies.⁵⁵ Instead, the government had to settle for increasing tax on the service sector workers and professionals who earned more than 3250 pesetas per annum, which principally affected the liberal professions. The regime also increased the tax burden from 8.7% of GDP in 1923 to 12.1% of GDP in 1930, with a 49% rise in direct taxation and a 44% hike in indirect taxation. The result was an improvement in the sums collected, which went from 2453 million pesetas in 1922–1923 to 3524 million pesetas by 1928, although this was also helped by a more efficient collection system and the economic growth produced in Spain during the Civil Directory.⁵⁶

In 1928, the collapse of the peseta on the international markets rang the alarm bells once again for the richest in Spanish society. The reduction in the value of the currency was the result of speculation in which foreign investors were abandoning the peseta – which in the preceding years had recorded extremely high nominal values – and withdrawing capital from Spain. The growing budget deficit for the regime and the sensation of a degree of political fragility only accelerated the fall in the value of the currency, which was going to continue. In June 1928, the government decided to act by creating a Committee of Intervention in the Currency, which was given a war chest of 500 million pesetas to arrest the decline of the peseta on the international markets.⁵⁷ It quickly became clear that these measures were not sufficient, however. The peseta's value continued to fall throughout the autumn. Some within the Catalan bourgeoisie began to feel genuinely uncomfortable. Francesc Cambó published *La valorarización de la peseta* (The valuation of the peseta), a book which argued for the stabilisation of the currency through a deflationary

policy, less state intervention in the economy and greater freedom for private enterprise.⁵⁸ Crucially, Cambó added that ‘only a democratic regime, which puts an end to the political uncertainty and eliminates extremist options on the political right and left, can stabilise the peseta and restore confidence in the business world’.⁵⁹ By the end of 1928, for some members of the Catalan bourgeoisie, the solution to the country’s economic problems had become a political matter. It required the end of the dictatorship.

In early 1929, the regime made another attempt in its fight against the falling value of the peseta by creating a committee, led by Antonio Flores de Lemus, Professor of Economic Policy and Public Finance at the University of Madrid. In June, the committee advised a reduction in the public deficit and government debt in order to stabilise the currency, without ruling out the occasional intervention in the market to increase exports and revive national productivity.⁶⁰ The following month, the regime implemented its plan to reduce the deficit in the balance of trade by promoting the consumption of Spanish goods and restricting certain imports. Primo explained the plan in an official note. According to the dictator, the speculators wanted ‘agitation and disorder in Spain’ so that the value of the peseta would fall, and they would thus make more money. As such, ‘if the country keeps its calm and limits its buying of goods from abroad as much as possible’, and if ‘Spanish production’ grew and was made better, the country would emerge from the crisis ‘with a strengthened national economy and Spanish industry further developed, creating new sources of production and employment’.⁶¹ Primo was also aware that part of the problem was the image of his dictatorship and the doubts about his regime among foreign investors. Without saying so explicitly, in July 1929 Primo highlighted the need for ‘public calm to continue as it has until now’ during the Expositions in Seville and Barcelona, which had been inaugurated in May, since those events would serve as a shop window for the dictatorship and attract thousands of foreign visitors.⁶²

Patriotic calls to buy Spanish goods and not those from abroad did not have much impact among the public in general. Even less successful was the proposed patriotic purchase of 350 million pesetas of public debt, in the form of state bonds that the government offered in December 1929, to pay back foreign loans that had been called in during July. Despite the confidence that Calvo Sotelo enjoyed among the major Spanish capitalists, the wealthy classes and private banks abandoned the dictatorship and preferred to seek loans in foreign currency outside of Spain. Things were further complicated when the Bank of Spain denied the regime access to its gold reserves to guarantee the release of bonds in December 1929 and to cover the deficit.⁶³ In January 1930, the peseta continued to lose value on the international markets. On 9 January, Primo offered the public his own explanations for the crisis. Befitting his nationalistic world view, Primo placed the blame upon external and internal enemies of the regime, the ‘large foreign financial bodies’ who were ‘at war against Spain’s economic freedom and revival’, as well as ‘the lack of civic action and national collaboration’ of those bad Spaniards who wanted to see

an end to the regime.⁶⁴ In a clear message to those who had not patriotically bought their state bonds, Primo warned the upper classes that 'the fall in the peseta affects the wealthy more than the humble', since foreign luxury goods increased in price when the currency was devalued. Primo also saw the solution to the problem of devaluation, once again, in a nationalistic framework in which 'good Spaniards' would oppose 'with all their might [...] those who fight Spain from without and those from within who do not defend it'.⁶⁵ It was necessary 'to demonstrate to the world that a country united by the elevation of its feelings and in defence of its life, and in this case of its solid and genuine monetary prestige, is unbeatable'.⁶⁶ Despite Primo's bluster, on 21 January Calvo Sotelo presented his resignation, which implicitly acknowledged the failure of his economic policy. To replace him as Finance Minister, the dictator chose his friend, fellow native of Jerez and Minister of the Economy, the Conde de los Andes. A week later, Primo himself was forced to resign. Meanwhile, the peseta continued to fall on the international markets throughout 1930.⁶⁷

Both in public and in private, Primo frequently referred to his dictatorship as a revolution.⁶⁸ Nonetheless, the revolution that Primo de Rivera offered was a nationalistic revolution, that is to say, a new model in which the fatherland served as the unifying framework of diverse social classes (through the National Assembly), where an authoritarian nation state would be the arbiter between those social classes (through the corporative system), and where the state itself organised the redistribution of wealth (via fiscal reform). However, the crucial theme running through this nationalistic 'revolution' was precisely that no major social transformation would take place, that the upper classes could rest assured that their position was not in jeopardy, and that the new Spain would maintain the privileges of the old economic elites. As Primo de Rivera related to his readers in an editorial for *La Nación* in 1929, it was true that the dictatorship had 'something that we might call *special socialism*'.⁶⁹ Even so,

neither threatens or diminishes the right of property; it guides it, moulds it, so as to fulfil its highest social functions [...] Our aim is to prevent both the avaricious expansion of capital and the coercion and violence of the worker [...] There is therefore not even the slightest cause for alarm in the social work of the dictatorship.⁷⁰

As we have already noted, the upper classes supported Primo de Rivera from the very first days of the regime, since they understood that a dictatorial regime might be very favourable for their businesses. During the Civil Directory, when those same economic elites perceived that plans for tax reform might threaten their privileged position, they had no problem whatsoever in casting aside the project of Primo de Rivera and Calvo Sotelo. Big business was more patient with the arbitration committees set up by the regime, but the end result was the same. In December 1929, the purchase of foreign currency

rather than Primo's 'patriotic' state bonds marked the climax of deeply disloyal and 'anti-patriotic' behaviour towards the regime on the part of some of the same Spanish elites who had benefited so massively from the economic policies of the dictatorship.

The policies of state intervention, the formation of a corporative system and the creation of state monopolies also brought with them an increase in corruption in various areas. One of the most infamous examples of corruption and cronyism (*enchufismo*) involved Primo de Rivera himself. On 2 July 1927, a royal decree awarded the monopoly on the sale of tobacco in the Spanish protectorate in Morocco to the well-known businessman and Mallorcan smuggling "king" Juan March. Primo took the decision personally and in defiance of the experts of the Tobacco Leaseholding Company, who cautioned against it, as well as the advice of his Finance Minister, who preferred to set up a public tender to award the monopoly.⁷¹ The scandal was such that Primo was forced to explain in an official note that the concession of the monopoly was justified on the basis that the state was going to receive more money in taxes.⁷² Interestingly, Primo admitted in his note that there was smuggling taking place in the area around Ceuta and Melilla, which Juan March already controlled, as well as the rest of the Moroccan protectorate, which was at that time in the hands of the government's Tobacco Leaseholding Company. There was also smuggling between Africa and the Peninsula, but the fact that Primo wanted to sell the monopoly to the known smuggler was justified with the outlandish argument that this would put a stop to the illegal traffic.⁷³ With official notes of this nature, Primo de Rivera demonstrated his clear lack of regard for the intelligence of his fellow Spaniards.

Meanwhile, Primo admitted that March had to pay for the services granted, since the businessman had shown 'a marked and disinterested determination to collaborate on a large scale with the work of [Spanish] colonisation' in Morocco.⁷⁴ It is true that March had enjoyed years of good relations with Primo de Rivera, even if things had not always been so.⁷⁵ In October 1923, for example, when March was under investigation by the dictatorship for his smuggling activities, the millionaire sought a meeting with Primo. March convinced the dictator that they could help each other and the dictator ordered to stop the judicial investigation. March then began to offer his fleet to assist operations in the Moroccan protectorate and to subsidise pro-government newspapers such as *La Correspondencia Militar* and *La Nación*.⁷⁶ In exchange, his Trans-Mediterranean Company received generous state subsidies.⁷⁷ The agreement between Primo de Rivera and March demonstrated that the persecution of the criminal activities of Restoration elites, which Primo had been boasting about from the first day of his dictatorship, could be abandoned if the price was right.

Juan March also benefited from his good relations with the dictator in the hydrocarbon business. In 1925, the Mallorcan millionaire founded the company *Petróleos Porto Pi*, a Franco-Spanish venture which supplied Spain with crude oil from the Soviet Union. In 1926, the company already controlled 15%

of the Spanish market. In September 1929, the *Banca March*, along with three other banks, contributed the necessary capital to set-up the *Compañía Española de Petróleos, S.A.* (CEPSA), a private business constituted at the behest of the state to guarantee the supply of crude oil and complement the work of CAMPSA. The latter had been established in 1927 as a state monopoly on the distribution and sale of petroleum and was in the hands of a financial consortium controlled by the *Urquijo, Vizcaya, Hispanoamericano* and *Español de Crédito* banks.⁷⁸ CAMPSA soon became the flagship for regime corruption, since members of the government handed out the roles linked to the creation of the monopoly among family members and other intimates. Primo, for example, named two of his adjutants, Lieutenant-Colonel José Ibáñez García and Lieutenant-Colonel Alfonso Elola Espín, as inspectors for the monopoly. The two men thus earned a generous extra salary on top of those they enjoyed as army officers. Meanwhile, Martínez Anido's adjutant, Roberto Bahamonde, was awarded the recently created post of Director General of Supply, a very attractive position, given that many businesses were prepared to pay bribes to secure the contracts for the state monopoly. Martínez Anido also found a job for his son's father-in-law, Roberto Martínez Baldrich, as well as for his close friends as inspectors of the monopoly. General Sanjurjo's son, meanwhile, was named inspector of CAMPSA in Zaragoza.⁷⁹ Amidst such a bonanza of cronyism and corruption, it is hardly strange that CAMPSA was popularly known as the *Consortio de Amigos de Martínez Anido y Primo Sociedad Anónima* (Consortium of Friends of Martínez Anido and Primo Limited Company).⁸⁰ By 1927, it seems that it was commonly accepted among Spaniards that Primo de Rivera led a deeply corrupt regime.

Primo's family also took advantage of his position of power. In 1924, for example, the US International Telephone and Telegraph Company (ITT) had hired Primo's oldest son, José Antonio Primo de Rivera, as a lawyer. The American company hoped to gain influence within the dictatorship by hiring the young José Antonio, then only 21 years old, so that the regime would award the Spanish telephone monopoly to them. The machinations of ITT proved successful. In August 1924, the regime created the *Compañía Telefónica Nacional de España* (CTNE). Though it was subject to a public tender, this appeared to make little difference, and the company became a subsidiary of ITT. José Antonio's work for ITT initially went unnoticed in Spain, but when Ángel Ossorio y Gallardo complained about the role of the dictator's eldest son and the award of the telephone monopoly, in a private letter to Antonio Maura, things began to change. The letter was intercepted by the regime, which was hardly uncommon in the dictatorship, and the Conservative leader was arrested and imprisoned.⁸¹ Primo was then forced to defend his son publicly and release an official note to explain. Primo claimed that his son had obtained his job through academic merit (which was certainly debatable), that he had a doctorate in law (which was not true), and that he spoke perfect English and French (which was questionable). Primo added that as soon as he had been informed that ITT was bidding for the telephone monopoly,

‘I called the director and forced him to dispense with my son’s services’.⁸² Once again, Primo was not telling the truth, given that he had only asked the President of ITT, the ex-lieutenant colonel in the US Army, Sothene Behn, that he cancel a trip his son had planned to the United States with the company, not that he should fire José Antonio. In any case, Primo’s intervention would have taken place after José Antonio had been working as an advisor to ITT during the creation and granting of the Spanish telephone monopoly.⁸³

Alongside family members and close colleagues, the Marqués de Estella himself sought to benefit economically from his position as dictator of Spain. In 1927, the regime began a campaign to raise funds to pay Primo de Rivera for the sacrifices he had made for the nation in the form of a house. The dictatorship decided that the collection was not in fact going to be voluntary and established fixed donations for banks and businesses in proportion to their turnover.⁸⁴ When some businesses complained at what was clearly a form of extortion, Primo reacted in typical fashion. First, the dictator denied all responsibility and stated in an official note, published on 9 March 1929, that he was upset at the possibility that in some cases there had been pressure to make donations.⁸⁵ Displaying considerable *chutzpah*, the dictator claimed that he had just heard that not all donations had been absolutely voluntary and asked that all who had been

contributed thanks to force, or had subsequently changed their mind, could withdraw their contributions, in the safe knowledge that not only will no inconvenience befall them, but that for my part I will consider such behaviour a display of citizenly sincerity and bravery worthy of the highest praise.⁸⁶

The dictator was sure to add a few populist flourishes to his note, declaring that in any case, he was thinking of using some of the four million pesetas collected up to that point ‘to benefit the poor’, as well as purchasing premises for the UP and the *Somatén*.⁸⁷ In any case, these promises about the donations should not lead us to believe that the dictator did not continue to think that he deserved the money that had been collected. As he pointed out in the same official note, he was going to keep the money ‘because I believe in good conscience that I have offered service to the country which justify this beautiful tribute’ and so that his children would no longer have to move house so often.⁸⁸

Property was going to occupy much of Primo’s time. In September 1929, for example, the Town Council of Jerez decided to gift the dictator the house in which he had been born 59 years earlier.⁸⁹ The decision did not go unnoticed and liberal opponents of the regime once again denounced the avarice of the dictator and his predilection for using his position to accumulate properties. In the last years of the dictatorship, Primo accumulated a small fortune using his position, leaning on businesses and accepting donations from public institutions. Standing out among his assets and income was the four million

pesetas collected by the subscription campaign; the house in the centre of Jerez; the lands, businesses and properties of the family in Madrid, Jerez, and Robledo de Chabela; his 25,000 peseta annual salary as a Captain-General; and the 10,000 pesetas per year which he received for life as a holder of the *Gran Cruz Laureada de San Fernando*, which he had awarded himself after the landings in Alhucemas. Some historians have sought to portray Primo de Rivera as an honest man, who found himself in an 'economic situation bordering on penury' when he ceased to be dictator.⁹⁰ This was apparently a 'clear sign of the honesty which characterised his personal conduct'.⁹¹ The surviving historical sources offer us a very different picture, however. Primo did not endure financial hardships, much less was he an example of honesty or integrity.

Such behaviour was not confined to the dictator. The links between the regime's ministers and big business led to many cases of corruption. The Conde de Guadalhorce, for example, juggled his post as Minister of Development with being a member of the board of the hydroelectric company *Canalización y Fuerzas del Guadalquivir*, a business which was generously subsidised by the state. The minister also set up the *Sociedad Saltos del Alberche*, which built a dam to the west of Madrid. Also on the board of this business was Juan O'Donnell, the Minister of War during the Civil Directory. The firm received not only received state subsidies but also enjoyed a special tax status. José Calvo Sotelo, meanwhile, retained his strong links with the Bank of Barcelona and the *Banco Central* when he took charge of the Finance Ministry. After his resignation as minister in January 1930, he would go on to occupy the Presidency of the *Banco Central*. The Foreign Minister, José María de Yanguas Messía, also kept alive his relationships with big business, in his case with large mining interests, while the Conde de los Andes, Minister for the Economy, was deeply involved with the large landowners of the south of Spain. José Sanjurjo, the High Commissioner in Morocco, was embroiled in the civil air monopoly in Spain in the form of the *Concesionaria de Línea Aéreas Subvencionadas*, S.A. (CLASSA), a business whose profits were swelled through public subsidies.⁹² What is more, Primo sought to legalise this type of arrangement. In July 1927, for example, a royal decree was enacted to exempt the companies created by the Civil Directory from investigation of conflicts of interest, and which allowed politicians and civil servants to be members of the boards of private businesses.⁹³ The decree was enacted to overcome an earlier decree of the Military Directory from October 1923, which explicitly prohibited public office holders and politicians from working for private businesses, so as to avoid clear problems over conflicts of interest and abuses of power. What had been a key regulation in the construction of the populist discourse of the regime against corruption was now clearly flouted by a royal decree created to exempt regime officials from having to obey the law.

In truth, the capitalist model of the regime was based on the constant channelling of public money to businessmen in the private sector through companies linked to the state, as well as the creation of hundreds of public posts

distributed to hand-picked regime loyalists. Once again, the Primo de Rivera dictatorship was a precursor to what would later occur under the Franco dictatorship. The expansion of the state also involved the creation of a dense bureaucratic network which brought with it the emergence of intermediaries referred to as ‘primistas’, in other words, experts in gaining advantage through bribery, either financially or through payment in kind.⁹⁴ Accordingly, the great showpieces of the dictatorship – the IberoAmericana Exposition in Seville and the International Exposition in Barcelona in 1929 – were mired in deeply corrupt organisational models, characterised by a proliferation of intermediaries and cost overruns, which left the municipal treasuries of the cities who hosted the events in a parlous state.⁹⁵ Regime corruption was also notable at a more local level. In numerous town councils in rural areas, for example, regime councillors decided to rent out private lands to hunters without the consent – and occasionally without even the knowledge – of the owners. Indeed, the practice was so widespread that in the summer of 1927 the Director General of Agriculture sent out a circular to all civil governors ‘exhorting them to announce in the “Official Bulletin” that the town councils can only lease land to the hunt through tendering if it is municipal property and cannot do so when the land is in private hands.’⁹⁶

For all the emphasis the regime placed on its ‘anticaciquismo’, on cleanliness in politics and on justice, corruption, cronyism and abuse of power ran throughout all the institutions created by the dictatorship. The *delegados gubernativos*, for example, were often unable to resist the temptation of using their position of power to benefit themselves. Despite the warnings of Martínez Anido about the need to show the most irreproachable moral behaviour, accusations of corruption did not take long to appear. On some occasions, the *delegados* succumbed to the wiles of the old political elites, who bribed the officers so that they could maintain their control over municipal government. Among other cases, this is what happened with José del Olmo Medina, a *delegado* in the province of Valencia, who allegedly received 5000 pesetas to break up the town council of Guadasuar in March 1928, and form a new council a month later, which included the old *caciques* as town councillors. In other cases, *delegados* simply abused their power to obtain material and political benefits. For example, Alberto Serrano Montaner, a *delegado* in the province of Granada, was housed in a mansion offered to him by the town council and was later accused of buying jewellery and tickets to bullfights using public funds. Serrano also allegedly abused his position by doing business with the municipality of Motril and pressured the councillors to recommend him to the government as a potential member of the National Assembly. Although the investigation launched by the Ministry of War was not able to prove any of these allegations, Martínez Anido nonetheless dismissed Serrano. A similar case was that of Francisco Alonso Burillo, *delagado gubernativo* in Zaragoza, who was accused of creating a coal-selling business and defrauding his partner. Once again, Martínez Anido sacked him, this time without bothering to wait for the investigation to conclude.⁹⁷ In other cases, however, Primo’s

right-hand man was more lenient with those accused of corruption. In the province of Seville, for example, the *delegados* Juan Rodríguez Gutiérrez and Juan Borges Fe obtained commissions for the sale of industrial machinery, but stayed in their posts, even though the civil governor had advised Martínez Anido to relieve them.⁹⁸ As with other aspects of the Primo de Rivera dictatorship, capriciousness was a crucial factor when it came to confronting corrupt practices.

The *Somatén Nacional* was another regime institution which witnessed flagrant abuses of power. From the moment of its establishment in September 1923, the *Somatén* offered a golden opportunity for social climbers to advance in local politics and for hustlers of all kinds to make easy money. The higher echelons of the *Somatén* were quickly forced to expel some of their members for various reasons, such as the presentation of false denunciations, business fraud, indiscriminate beatings or the use of their *Somatén* identity cards in a state of drunkenness.⁹⁹ Scams involving members of the *Somatén* also led to disputes between regime officials themselves. In the town of Canillejas in Madrid province, for example, the confrontation between the mayor and a corporal in the *Somatén* began when the latter insisted on being considered as part of the 'local security forces' during bull fights.¹⁰⁰ The mayor refused when he realised that the man was simply looking for a way to see the spectacle without having to pay for it. Enraged, the *somatenista* denounced the mayor. The case was eventually brought to the *Dirección General de Seguridad*, where they had no idea how to proceed. Ultimately, the DGS was forced to consult Martínez Anido, who exercised the final judgement in this type of imbroglio.¹⁰¹

In some rural areas, *somatenistas* organised criminal networks to rob peasants, travellers and locals. In one case, the civil governor of Albacete wrote to Martínez Anido, denouncing several *somatenistas* in his province who were charging peasants to cross paths and roads under 'imaginary laws', while others were simply attacking and looting travellers and local residents.¹⁰² The civil governor believed that these criminal activities were leading to a loss of prestige for the *Somatén*. Meanwhile, the abuses of power and crimes of the militia were proving a serious obstacle to the involvement of many citizens in the *Somatén*, who otherwise fully backed the regime. Despite the illegal behaviour, the regime proved extremely indulgent of its criminally active paramilitaries. In the spring of 1927, for example, the dictatorship declared an amnesty for all *somatenistas* who had been convicted of minor offences, provided they were not crimes against private property. This contrasted sharply with the arbitrary and indiscriminate political and social repression of the regime against the population and led to rising public hostility, not only against the *Somatén* but against the dictatorship more broadly (Figure 4.2).¹⁰³

That the regime's institutions were the focus for crime and abuses of power should not lead us to think that all Spaniards were passive victims of the dictatorship's corruption. As had happened under the Restoration System, many citizens tried to take advantage of the lack of integrity of the dictatorship's personnel in the public administration. The number of cases in which citizens,



Figure 4.2 Unión Patriótica members at the Palacio Real in Madrid during the commemoration of the dictatorship's fifth anniversary in September 1928. Credit: Alfonso.

either individually or collectively, addressed the authorities out of self-interest to prioritise particular projects or public services in their localities, shows us the trust that many Spaniards still had in the clientelist system during the dictatorship.¹⁰⁴ In other cases, citizens wrote to Primo de Rivera personally to denounce *delegados* or their connivance with local *caciques*. One group of residents from La Codosera (Badajoz), for example, wrote to the dictator denouncing the *delegado* of Alburquerque for favouring members of the 'disastrous liberal group' and having chosen two of them as mayors for the town.¹⁰⁵ Admitting that they had previously been *Mauristas*, the sources for this denunciation recounted how the *delegado* often took long walks (and even dance classes) with these liberals and had shown themselves 'arrogant and contemptuous to the others who had professed alternative ideas'.¹⁰⁶ Accordingly, the Conservatives of La Codosera asked Primo to sack the *delegado*, not for political reasons, they insisted, but because 'we are Spaniards and would like to enjoy the same rewards as the vast majority of the rest of Spain'.¹⁰⁷ Patriotism and anti-politics were used to hide what was clearly a political matter steeped in *caciquismo*.

The innumerable petitioning letters sent to Primo de Rivera also reveal a history of thousands of Spaniards who sought all manner of favours from the dictatorship. During the Civil Directory, the Bureau of the Prime Minister became the office which channelled the majority of written requests for favours sent to the dictator. The Head of the Bureau, Máximo Cuervo, received dozens of letters asking for posts in the civil service and granting passes in public examinations for family members and friends.¹⁰⁸ Occasionally, Cuervo was

minded to award a post or approve the request for an examination pass. This was the case, for example, for Juan Antonio Nájera Ortíz, a 'relative of a relative' of Máximo Cuervo, who in 1929 sat an official exam to become a state lawyer. The Head of the Bureau then wrote to a senior official in the Interior Ministry to see 'what in justice can be done for him, and once he has sat [the exam] tell me the result so I can satisfy the recommender'.¹⁰⁹

On other occasions, Máximo Cuervo was less forceful in pushing the recommendation. In February 1929, for example, when the doctor Antonio Vallejo Nájera – also a distant cousin of Cuervo, who would sadly become notorious in later years as a Francoist psychiatrist who performed experiments on Republican prisoners – sent him a list of names of all the members of the Exams Board of Customs Typists so that a family member could obtain a civil service post. Cuervo confined himself to writing to Pablo Verdeguer, the Director General of the Customs Service, 'without any form of recommendation, kindly requesting, and this alone, that on the completion of the examinations he is kind enough to tell me the results that the interested party obtains'.¹¹⁰ A little over a week later, Cuervo sent a letter from the Director General of the Customs Service to Vallejo Nájera, in which he informed him that his relative had not been able to obtain the position on that occasion.¹¹¹ Given that Vallejo Nájera was a man fully committed to the dictatorship, Cuervo's lack of enthusiasm in the case might appear a little strange. For whatever reason, however, it seems clear that Cuervo felt sufficiently powerful to decide how, and for whom, he would peddle his influence and recommendations. In another case, for example, Cuervo refused to use his powers of patronage for former workers of the Royal Tourist Board to recommend them to the new National Tourism Board (*Patronato Nacional de Turismo*, PNT), explaining that it was not the Prime Minister's Office, but the PNT itself which should select its members.¹¹² Cuervo was not being completely honest here. The Prime Minister's Office stood at the summit of the pyramid of a dictatorial system and could impose its will on all branches of the state apparatus.

The corrupt and capricious behaviour of the regime's elites also took place in a context of impunity. If Primo de Rivera punished judges, lawyers and prosecutors who made any move against his illegalities during the Military Directory, during the Civil Directory the dictator passed laws to remove the last vestiges of judicial independence and to destroy any form of legal restriction upon his power. On 16 May 1926, for example, Primo de Rivera announced a royal decree which gave the government the ability to adopt exceptional measures and sanctions 'without any other limit than the circumstances and the good of the country dictate and inspired by integrity and patriotism'.¹¹³ Article 4 suspended all 'constitutional and legal precepts which run counter to what the Royal Decree sets out'.¹¹⁴ Meanwhile, the new decree made the Directory the supreme arbiter, since it specified that the only recourse against a decision of the government was an appeal to the cabinet itself.¹¹⁵ After the failure of a civil-military conspiracy (the *Sanjuanada*) in June 1926, which aimed to topple Primo and replace him with General Aguilera as the new Head of

Government, the Marqués de Estella awarded new powers to the Executive to impose administrative or disciplinary punishments without restriction, including in cases when they ran counter to ‘existing laws and regulations’.¹¹⁶ In October 1926, a further decree confirmed the omnipotence of the dictatorial government, giving it the power in extraordinary circumstances to suspend, even retroactively, sentences passed by the Supreme Court or the provincial courts. The Executive justified it by claiming that the suspension was linked to its task of bringing morality to the public administration.¹¹⁷

Impunity and illegality, alongside the discrepancy between what was preached and what was done, were defining characteristics of fascist regimes, and a pronounced feature of Primo de Rivera’s dictatorship.¹¹⁸ These features clearly marked the repressive policies of the Spanish dictatorship as opposition movements began to grow during the Civil Directory. The first major conspiracy against the dictatorship was the *Sanjuanada* of 1926, an attempted insurrection led by old Liberal politicians such as the Conde de Romanones and Melquiades Álvarez, as well as constitutionalist veteran Army officers, such as General Weyler and General Aguilera. The conspiracy aimed to install a liberal monarchy to Spain. The plotters were able to attract a diverse group of people opposed to the regime, including democrats, republican politicians, Catalanists, and even some from within the Spanish anarchist movement who were living in exile in France. The plan was for General Aguilera to declare an uprising from Valencia. Thereafter, Madrid and Barcelona were to join the insurrection while Romanones and Álvarez would force the King to dismiss Primo de Rivera. Once the dictator was removed, the King would name Aguilera or Melquiades Álvarez as leader of a transitional government, which would swiftly return Spain to the constitutional settlement of the Restoration System, although on this occasion it was promised that the new regime would be genuinely democratic.¹¹⁹ Sadly for the conspirators, the regime leaked details of the plot to the press as a means of defusing it, and starting on 23 June, Saint John’s Eve, the police began to arrest the insurgent leaders.

With the ringleaders under arrest, Primo acted astutely. On 26 June, he released an official note in which he played down the significance of the ‘absurd plot’ and ridiculed the conspirators as oddballs, fools, desperate, and motivated by secret personal ambitions.¹²⁰ According to the dictator, the conspirators could not be ‘very intelligent people [not] to appreciate the national circumstances and overwhelming reasons which lead a people and an Army, perhaps once every century, to support a change of political regime’ as had happened on 13 September 1923. The Marqués de Estella was also sure to link the plotters with an apocalyptic vision of the Restoration System of the past:

They yearn, apparently, for the time before 13 September when they enjoyed [freedoms and a constitutional regime], as well as terrorism, separatism, godlessness, monetary chaos, international disdain, disorder in Morocco, the ruin and neglect of agricultural and industrial

production. They can have their opinion. The vast majority of Spaniards show daily that they want to continue with the regime and the present government.¹²¹

Primo combined ridicule for the conspirators with a populist, punitive and vengeful attitude. The dictator went on to say in his official note that he was going to punish the plotters harshly, 'without prejudicing the sentences which the courts will in due time impose', because the public demanded that he be 'severe with the thoughtless or heartless who try to disrupt the Fatherland'.¹²² No sooner had Primo declared this than it was done. On 2 July, the dictator changed the law so that the Executive could punish the leaders of the uprising without any prior trial and impose enormous fines upon them. For the Conde de Romanones, Primo imposed a fine of half a million pesetas; for General Aguilera, 200,000 pesetas; for General Weyler and Gregorio Marañón, 100,000 pesetas. Other conspirators received smaller economic sanctions for their actions. Others still were imprisoned. This was the case for Segundo García, for example, a Lieutenant-Colonel in the Cavalry, and like Primo a holder of the Order of the San Fernando, who was gaoled in the Montjuic Prison until General Berenguer offered an amnesty after the fall of Primo in 1930.¹²³ In punishing the leaders of the *Sanjuanada*, Primo made particular mention, with clearly vengeful undertones, of General Valeriano Weyler, one of the few high-ranking officers who had openly opposed the coup on 13 September 1923. For the dictator, Weyler's involvement 'in the preparation of events which could have cause great damage to the nation' was proven, and he would be fined 'for frequently promoting disquiet among the public and difficulties for the Government of the Country with his gloomy predictions and words'.¹²⁴ The use of punishment without trial, at Primo's discretion, for a loosely defined crime of promoting disquiet among the population leading to possible damage to the nation, is a good indication of the scale and arbitrariness of the power that was gathered in the dictator's hands.

Privately, the Marqués de Estella was very shaken by the *Sanjuanada*. The letter he sent to General Sanjurjo on the day that he imposed punishment on the conspirators contains no mocking tone, or any attempt to minimise the danger of the plot against his regime, both of which had been a clear feature of his public declarations on the matter. Instead, the call was to fight:

Of course, all of this cannot be achieved without struggle and the slightest weakness would be fatal and would lose us the faith under which [the whole country] follows us; I myself am as strong as a bull and in the highest spirits, and am prepared to defend the ideal that we pursued on 13 September, much more so now that I see it consolidated and on our way to seeing my Country happy and great. Let those who do not like it be angry, but let no one believe that through coercion or rebellion they will weaken us, since both myself and the Government which accompanies me have the firm resolution to take on every single fight, sure that

Spain will emerge the stronger for it and re-establishing the principle of authority which has been lying in the gutter for half a century, and without which it is a wonder that anarchy among all classes and sectors of society did not take over the country and destroy it completely.¹²⁵

Primo was ready to fight for Spain and his dictatorship, even at the cost of his life:

You will understand that my position carries with it few flowers and many thorns, but when I consider how things are in Spain, how they will be and how they are outside of Spain, and see the love, more obvious every day, of the good people, I am reaffirmed in the task of continuing the struggle, no matter what the cost. I believe that I am not alone, but if I were, I would die fighting.¹²⁶

The disparity between the dictator's public declarations in official notes and those in private correspondence makes clear that Primo was performing a role for the Spanish public, which had little in common with his most private feelings. In his public discourse, Primo sought to convey a paternalist, understanding and humane image of himself and his dictatorship. In private, he comes across as a much more unsettled, vindictive and punitive character. A similar disparity between public persona and private comments can be seen in the repression of Catalan nationalism under the Civil Directory. In a letter published in the press in early May 1928, for example, the dictator proposed to Francesc Cambó that he deliver a speech in Spanish, which he was originally going to deliver in Catalan and which had been prohibited by the authorities.¹²⁷ With characteristic false modesty, and with praise for the former Catalanist leader which was so excessive that it could only be read as false, Primo wrote:

I invite you, whether in Madrid or Barcelona, and naturally in Spanish, which you handle with so much aplomb [...] to deliver [the speech] in a spacious venue which I will provide, and for my part I will do my best to listen to you, since my intelligence requires precise illustration, and because I am certain that you have a very special conception of a great Spain which everybody will understand.¹²⁸

Things were very different in private correspondence, however. In a letter to Admiral Magaz, for example, who had been placed in charge of the Military Directory while Primo was directing army operations in Morocco, the Marqués de Estella spoke of the Catalans as thieves. Playing down the significance of a fundraising drive by Catalanist groups, Primo joked to his friend that 'The Catalans have long shown that money which passes through their hands doesn't all arrive at its destination'. Nonetheless, if it was demonstrated that the Catalan clergy was 'behaving conspiratorially and preaching anything

that could disturb public order it would be a case of conducting a swift raid on them and sending them to serve in Andalucía.¹²⁹ Primo continued to display a deep disdain for the Catalan clergy in private during the Civil Directory. For example, the Marqués de Estella described Cardinal Francesc Vidal i Barraquer, the Archbishop of Tarragona, as a liar and an ignoramus, whose writings left the sensation of 'lacking class'.¹³⁰ For Primo, the way to deal with the Cardinal, who insisted on the clergy using Catalan in Mass, was either to send transfer him to the Archbishopric of Zaragoza, or else assign him:

[To] Rome, where I do not think his presence could do any harm, because this man does not engender affection, either through his culture or his character, and for all that he wants to speak about the problem, he will say no more than he has already said in writing, exaggerating reality and subjecting it to his arbitrary commentary.¹³¹

Beyond derogatory descriptions, Primo was consistent in his repression of Catholic Catalanism during the period of the Civil Directory. The Captaincy-General of Catalonia continued to lead actions against priests who were preaching in Catalan. The creation of the regime's *Junta de Acció Cívica* (Council for Civic Action) in Barcelona in 1927 offered General Barrera, the Captain-General of Barcelona, and General Milans del Bosch, the Civil Governor, the possibility of coordinating the repression of the clergy with civilians loyal to the regime. The *Junta* led to the arrest of many priests, punishments for religious educators teaching in Catalan, and fines for various institutions accused of propagating anti-Spanish ideas, raising still further the climate of political repression in Barcelona.¹³² The confrontation between civil and ecclesiastical authorities became especially tense in the city, where the Bishop of Barcelona, Josep Miralles, refused to order his priests to preach in Castilian.¹³³ In other areas, such as education, many primary and secondary school teachers were punished after being accused of having Catalanist sympathies, or simply for not implementing the linguistic laws of the regime, which mandated the exclusive use of Spanish in the classroom. In the University of Barcelona, the regime created a spy network, which involved *primorriverista* academics sending secret reports to Martínez Anido and Máximo Cuervo in Madrid, in which they denounced the political activities of professors, lecturers and student societies.¹³⁴ Based upon these denunciations, the dictatorship dismissed academics, closed down publications and even imprisoned the director of the daily newspaper *Vida Universitària* for refusing to publish it in Spanish, as requested by General Milans del Bosch.¹³⁵

The nationalists of *Estat Català*, the small independentist party led by Francesc Macià, also endured constant persecution under the Civil Directory, in particular after the so called 'Prats de Molló incident' of November 1926. This referred to an attempted invasion of Catalonia by a small army of *escamots* – the paramilitaries of *Estat Català* – which Macià had organised with the help of the antifascist Ricciotti Garibaldi, the grandson of the famous

Giussepe, and leader of the *Legione Garibaldina della Libertà*. The plan was to enter Catalonia from France near Prats de Molló with some form of ‘Army of Catalan Volunteers’, which would stimulate a popular uprising and bring about the independence of the region.¹³⁶ The insurrection was a disaster, however. Ricciotti Garibaldi was in fact a double agent working for Mussolini. The Italian dictator passed information on the plot to Primo de Rivera, but not to the French government, in the hope that the Spaniards would be set at odds with the French for their lack of action and move towards collaboration with the Italians in the Mediterranean. With the information received from the Italians, the Spanish police informed their French counterparts, as well as the *Gendarmerie* and *Sûreté Générale*, about the plans of the Catalan nationalists. This led to the arrest of practically all the *escamots* (some 115 individuals) close to the border between 2 and 4 November. Among those arrested was Francesc Macià himself. In early 1927, he was tried alongside 111 of his men and deported to Belgium.¹³⁷ In Catalonia, meanwhile, the police arrested 80 members of *Estat Català*, including some of its leaders such as Miquel Ferrer i Sanxís and Dr Jaume Aiguadier. The arrests decapitated the organisation in the region, even though a new executive was soon formed. Aiguadier returned to political life in 1928 after two years in prison, but the dictatorship imprisoned him again during the Universal Exposition in Barcelona in 1929, presumably to stop the separatist leader from attempting any form of anti-regime propaganda during the event.¹³⁸

The Civil Directory also showed continuity in its repression of the anarchist movement. Blanket arrests and maltreatment of prisoners remained the norm in these years, with prisoners frequently subject to beatings, deliberately malnourished and housed in unhygienic and inhuman conditions.¹³⁹ After the failed attempt at an anarchist insurrection in November 1924 at Vera de Bidasoa, the dictatorship’s *Brigada Social* (Political Police) proceeded to brutally repress the anarcho-sindicalist movement. Much the same happened after the Prat de Molló incident. Although the anarchists had not formally supported the Catalanist insurrectionary attempt, the political police used it as an pretext to launch yet another campaign against the CNT and began to “discovered” new anarchist plots against the regime. The most important case was that of the so-called ‘Puente de Vallecas conspiracy’, in which Lisandro Doval, a Civil Guard captain and Head of the *Brigada Social*, arrested 13 anarchists and accused them of being involved in an attempted assassination of Primo de Rivera and the King. After the usual mistreatment at police headquarters, the detainees ‘confessed’ their plan to kill the dictator and the monarch, a fairy tale that was quite possibly concocted by Captain Doval. The information extracted from the 13 detainees led to the arrest of the National Committee of the CNT in Gijón. There, Doval tortured several anarchist leaders, who ‘admitted’ that they had been put in contact with the CNT management in Paris to organise a new uprising against the dictatorship. This new information obtained through police torture led to further arrests of anarchists in Asturias, Bilbao and Madrid, as well as the gathering of false evidence which was later

used in court against the accused.¹⁴⁰ This police action also led to the deaths of some anarchists. In order to explain the deaths of the militants in custody before the judge, members of the *Brigada Social* explained that one anarchist had committed suicide at the police station and that they had been forced to apply the *ley de fugas* to three other men.¹⁴¹

Primo was fully aware of the murders and torture conducted by his political police, as well as fictional plots they concocted. This was, after all, the very system that he and Martínez Anido had implemented when they had worked as Captain General of Catalonia and Civil Governor of Barcelona, respectively, in the years before the coup of 1923. While all of this was going on, Primo de Rivera wanted to convey an image of calm leadership. In public, he sought to downplay the importance of anarchist attacks, even on those occasions in which he himself had been the target. One such incident took place on 31 July 1926, when the farm labourer Domènec Masachs Torrente made an attempt on the dictator in Barcelona. The young anarchist was mingling among the crowd in the Plaza de Palacio and threw a dagger at the Marqués de Estella, which missed and embedded itself in the bodywork of his car. Masachs was run over by one of the cars belonging to Primo's bodyguards and arrested after a violent struggle.¹⁴² Two days later, the Marqués de Estella released an official note in which he offered his version of what had happened. Primo presented himself as someone who had acted with total poise, ordering that his car be stopped after the attempted assassination, calmly examining the knife and then handing it over to the police.¹⁴³ Playing down the incident, Primo added that he imagined that 'given the poorly prepared nature of the attack, it seems to be some hothead who has acted on his own'.¹⁴⁴ The dictator added that this 'danger is inherent to the functions of government, and has always been born by those who have performed them, which is why we should not give the incident more attention than it deserves'.¹⁴⁵ As we have seen, however, the dictator's words were often very different to his actions. Following the attempt on his life, the police arrested more than a dozen syndicalists, including one of the principal leaders, Ángel Pestaña, accusing them of having been involved in the plot against the Marqués de Estella.¹⁴⁶

Of all the insurrections against the dictatorship, the one that most unsettled Primo de Rivera was that led by the Conservative politician and former Prime Minister, José Sánchez Guerra. In 1927, Sánchez Guerra had voluntarily gone into exile in Paris.¹⁴⁷ There he was able to bring together various groups who were opposed to the regime, including conservatives, liberals, republicans and socialists. In Madrid, a Central Revolutionary Committee comprised of conservative and liberal constitutionalists began preparations for a military insurrection, which attracted various high-ranking officers, including Miguel Cabanellas, Eduardo López de Ochoa and Fermín Galán, as well as practically the entire Artillery Corps. In Barcelona, meanwhile, the nationalist leader Lluís Companys created a Revolutionary Committee of Catalonia to support Sánchez Guerra's plot, which brought together Catalanists, socialists, communists, republicans and anarchists. On 14 January 1929, the

various branches of the conspiracy were assimilated, albeit rather loosely, into a Revolutionary Committee comprised of Sánchez Guerra, the republican Alejandro Lerroux, as well as the republican General López de Ochoa. The plan was for a coup d'état to be launched from Valencia on the morning of 29 January, where the Captain-General of the region, Alberto Castro Girona, would mobilise his troops. Meanwhile, Sánchez Guerra would establish a provisional government. The military uprising would be accompanied by an insurrectional general strike brought about by the workers' movement and other opposition groups. Against this backdrop of insurrectionary action, the rebel units in Madrid would arrest Primo de Rivera and Alfonso XIII. The monarch would be exiled and the provisional government in Valencia would call elections to a Constituent Cortes. Things did not go to plan for the plotters, however. The garrison at Ciudad Real moved too quickly and rose up on 28 January, thus exposing the conspiracy against the regime. When Sánchez Guerra arrived in Valencia, Castro Girona refused to see him, which undermined the attempted coup, and with it the plan to unseat Primo de Rivera. On the morning of 30 January, Sánchez Guerra surrendered himself without offering any resistance.¹⁴⁸

The dictator's public reaction to what was unfolding at Ciudad Real and Valencia was predictable. Primo ridiculed the conspirators and played down the significance of their actions. On 29 January, he declared in the National Assembly that the insurrection of artillery officers in Ciudad Real was a 'crazy riot involving just a single regiment', that the attempted rising had failed and that 'complete tranquillity' reigned in the rest of Spain.¹⁴⁹ He added that, even if the insurrection had been 'clearly a criminal folly against the nation', the repression would not be particularly severe. It was important to differentiate between those 'thoughtless soldiers who got carried away' and the officers who had served as 'ringleaders' for the uprising.¹⁵⁰ That same day, once the rebel officers in Ciudad Real had surrendered, Primo released two further notes to the press. He stated that the government had known about the insurrection for some time and that it had quelled it easily thanks 'to the healthy spirit of the armed forces'.¹⁵¹ In his characteristic manner, Primo contrasted the intentions of the 'lowlifes' who wanted to discredit the regime with 'the quiet indignation of those true patriots, of the healthy minded public', who had known to condemn those 'who pay no mind to the national good and prestige'.¹⁵² The following day, after the arrest of Sánchez Guerra in Valencia, the dictator was joking about the attempted uprising, referring to it as 'comical'.¹⁵³ He added, 'I can't understand this movement, without a programme, without ideology and without organisation'. The dictator also insisted on the need for calm, declaring to the press that the government must not 'get involved in the investigation or increase its powers to feel secure', since it already enjoyed 'the very clear and manifest backing of public opinion', as testified by the thousands of telegrams of support it had received.¹⁵⁴

Despite the public image of *sangfroid*, control and popular support that the dictator sought to convey, the truth is that the events at Ciudad Real

and Valencia had deeply affected Primo de Rivera. The *Jerezano* immediately grasped that the conspiracy suggested there was a divide within the Army, which went beyond the notorious hostility of the Artillery Corps towards the dictatorship. Primo understood that he was losing support among the military and made plans to avoid future uprisings. On 30 January 1929, he issued a royal decree in which officers were asked to 'report to their respective seniors all attempts at seduction towards rebel movements to which they are subjected by military personnel or civilians, either in writing or by other means'.¹⁵⁵ Primo also ordered commanders to give 'serious and lively talks about military discipline and the overriding duty not to endanger the good name of the fatherland with seditious acts'.¹⁵⁶ On 19 February, the dictator dissolved the Artillery Corps. Alfonso XIII asked the Marqués de Estella to reconsider the decision and show clemency to the artillerymen.¹⁵⁷ Embittered, Primo nonetheless stood his ground on the matter. Shortly thereafter, a military court martial sentenced several rebel officers from Ciudad Real to death, and others to life imprisonment. Nonetheless, the iron fist of the regime could not prevent the withdrawal of support for the dictator from senior military officers becoming evident. The Supreme Court of the Army and the Navy subsequently annulled the sentences of death and life imprisonment and reduced many other sentences. On 28 October 1929, Sánchez Guerra himself was acquitted by a court martial. The judgement represented a clear act of censure for Primo de Rivera by part of the Army, as well as a fresh blow to the dictator's authority.¹⁵⁸

One of the lessons that Primo took from the attempted rebellion was the need to transform the *Somatén* and the UP into parapolice bodies. To the great ire of the dictator, members of the UP and *Somatén* in Ciudad Real had stayed at home during the insurrection. As Primo would confess to Calvo Sotelo, the UP had not lifted a finger to defend the regime and this had hurt him deeply.¹⁵⁹ Just one week after the rebellion, the Royal Decree of 4 February 1929 bestowed 'additional functions of vigilance and information' upon the party and the *Somatén* and called upon the latter to step up its involvement in political repression.¹⁶⁰ Among the new measures announced was the creation of 'Citizens' Investigation and Information Centres, working hand in hand with the Authorities when it comes to the maintenance of public order'.¹⁶¹ These centres would fall under the control of the UP and would process denunciations made by citizens against potential opponents of the regime. Meanwhile, the centres would be used to organise a spy network through which the *Somatén* corporals of 'every district, town or neighbourhood' were duty-bound to gather information and prepare reports on all political opponents in the local headquarters of the party and the *Somatén*. Similarly, *upetistas* and *somatenistas* were authorised to conduct searches in the houses of those suspected of opposing the regime.¹⁶² The *Somatén* was also encouraged to use violence against those who threatened 'public order' and were authorised to close down any association or group that was holding 'political debates'.¹⁶³

The regime's new measures marked a qualitative step towards semi-totalitarian positions on the part of the Primo de Rivera dictatorship.¹⁶⁴ The party, the militia, the forces of law and order and the Army were all overlapping in the service of the regime's repression, in what amounted to the creation of a *de facto* police state. As for the public image of the *Somatén* and the UP, the consequences of the radicalisation of the regime were catastrophic. Unsurprisingly, the 'blank cheque' that the regime had handed to the militia and the party led to further abuses of authority, an increasing number of unfounded and anonymous accusations, and widespread arrests of political opponents.¹⁶⁵ The slow but steady decline in the number of members of the *Somatén* and UP throughout 1929 speaks volumes about the counter-productive results of Primo de Rivera's policies.¹⁶⁶

After the Sánchez Guerra plot, the dictator also fixed public servants in his sights. In February 1929, a decree gave the government the power to dismiss, forcibly transfer or suspend without pay any public worker for so much as criticising the regime or for obstructing in any way the implementation of the regime's policies.¹⁶⁷ Meanwhile, Primo ordered the *Somatén* and UP to persecute dissident state functionaries with particular zeal.¹⁶⁸ For the UP, the consequences would be disastrous. Civil servants constituted the largest professional group within the state party and the indiscriminate arrest of public sector workers, alongside the arbitrary legislation of the dictatorship, ultimately distanced many such individuals from the regime.¹⁶⁹ Attacks upon other professional groups were also significant, including lawyers, doctors and architects, who came to oppose the dictatorship thanks to the intense interference of the state in their associations, to say nothing of the repressive measures that the regime took against political dissidents in these sectors.¹⁷⁰ Accordingly, the integration of professional, middle-class groups into the regime – which Mussolini had achieved through a slow process in Fascist Italy – was never fully realised in Spain under Primo de Rivera.¹⁷¹

Notwithstanding the crisis occasioned by the quasi-totalitarian behaviours of the Marqués de Estella, there were some within the regime who were planning a further fascistisation of the UP. In a letter to José María Pemán on 12 December 1929, for example, Ramiro de Maeztu advocated 'establishing a form of fascism' within the UP.¹⁷² The goal was to build a strong *Unión Patriótica*, like the Communist Party in the Soviet Union and the Fascist Party (PNF) in Italy, because the official political party in those countries was the basis of governmental stability. For Maeztu, to strengthen the foundations of the UP it was necessary for members to enjoy political and institutional privileges of some form, so that their lives depended on maintaining the regime in power, as was the case in Italy and the Soviet Union. Maeztu's proposal was to all intents and purposes a totalitarian party adjoined to the state. Nonetheless, his plans never came to fruition. The dictatorship was enduring a terminal crisis throughout 1929, and thousands of UP members were already abandoning a ship that they could see was

likely to sink. On 17 December, Primo implicitly acknowledged the decline of the party, although his initial intention had been to do the opposite. In an official note, the dictator spoke of the strength of the party and declared that the UP boasted 'some six-hundred or seven-hundred thousand nominal members subject to its discipline'.¹⁷³ Despite being a somewhat questionable figure, Primo's statement implicitly admitted the loss of approximately 50% of the membership in the space of two years, if we compare his figures with the 1,300,000 members the party had boasted in 1927.¹⁷⁴ Two weeks later, the dictator acknowledged publicly what was already clear for many people, namely, that certain sectors of Spanish society were displeased with the regime. They included groups close to the Catholic Church, aristocrats, banks and industry, employers, the conservative classes, the press and civil service, in short, most of the social and professional groups who had supported the dictatorship on 13 September 1923.¹⁷⁵

In the year of his coup, Primo had declared that his aim was to follow the example of Mussolini. Six years later, the Primo de Rivera regime began to fall apart, while the Italian dictator was managing to consolidate his power and had a certain degree of public support.¹⁷⁶ If we look at the development of the PNF in Italy and the UP in Spain, we can see how the two regimes were moving in opposite directions. In Italy, the PNF progressively absorbed conservative groups and incorporated the rhetoric and ideas of Catholics into its discourse throughout the 1920s.¹⁷⁷ In 1929, the Lateran Pacts integrated the Catholic Church into the fascist state. By contrast, Primo de Rivera's regime steadily radicalised its discourse, objectives and political personnel, which led to a gradual distancing of various conservative groups from the regime.

With the creation of the Civil Directory in December 1925, Primo attempted to perpetuate his dictatorship using a deeply despotic model, which concentrated practically absolute power in his own hands. From royal orders to the decrees of his cabinet, as well as the rules he would write down on scraps of paper during his travels throughout Spain, all legislation would pass through the hands of the dictator, or in his absence the Bureau of the Prime Minister. This concentration of power in Primo's hands was accompanied by legislation which submitted judicial authority to the dictator's will, as well as the creation of a National Consultative Assembly, whose recommendations would only be converted into law if Primo wished them to be. As in all dictatorships, the concentration of power in very few hands and the lack of powers for legislative and judicial control created a deeply corrupt system, in which abuses of power and illicit enrichment became the norm. Against such a backdrop of the concentration and abuse of power, as opposition to the dictator grew, he chose to step up the repression. Unlike Mussolini, who was able to combine repressive actions with a process of integrating diverse social sectors into the regime, the adoption of quasi-totalitarian measures by Primo de Rivera led to a profound crisis of the dictatorship's institutions, and ultimately to the fall of the dictator himself.

Notes

- 1 *Unión Patriótica*, 1 November 1928, p. 10.
- 2 *Unión Patriótica*, 1 November 1928, p. 10.
- 3 *Unión Patriótica*, 1 November 1928, p. 11.
- 4 *Unión Patriótica*, 1 November 1928, pp. 11–12.
- 5 ‘Viaje a Sevilla, Jerez y Canarias Octubre 1928’, AHN, sección FFCC, Directorio Militar, legajo 191, expediente 12650.
- 6 ‘Viaje a Sevilla, Jerez y Canarias Octubre 1928’, AHN, sección FFCC, Directorio Militar, legajo 191, expediente 12649.
- 7 ‘Viaje a Sevilla, Jerez y Canarias Octubre 1928’, AHN, sección FFCC, Directorio Militar, legajo 191.
- 8 The reorganisation of the Presidencia del Consejo de Ministros can be seen in the royal decree of 25 January 1925. AGA, Fondos de la Presidencia del Gobierno (Primo de Rivera), 51/10.378, expediente 242.
- 9 Manuel Gutiérrez Navas, ‘Biografía de Máximo Cuervo Radigales. Aproximación a una vida Jurídico Militar y Católica Social’, Unpublished PhD thesis, vol. 1, Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia (2004), pp. 112, 114, 124–125.
- 10 Martí Marín, ‘La gestación del Documento Nacional de Identidad: un proyecto de control totalitario para la España Franquista’, in Carlos Navajas & Diego Iturriaga (eds.), *II Congreso Internacional de Historia de Nuestro Tiempo* (Logroño: Universidad de la Rioja, 2008), pp. 323–338.
- 11 Manuel Gutiérrez Navas, ‘Biografía de Máximo Cuervo Radigales. Aproximación a una vida Jurídico Militar y Católica Social’, Unpublished PhD thesis, vol. 1, Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia (2004), pp. 112, 114, 126–127.
- 12 Calvo Sotelo, *Mis servicios al Estado. Seis años de gestión. Apuntes para la historia* (Madrid: Instituto de Estudios de Administración Local, 1974 [1931]), p. 336.
- 13 *La Nación*, 17 November 1925; 18 November 1925.
- 14 The letter from the UP asking Primo to call a plebiscite (dated simply ‘September 1926’), the royal order calling the plebiscite (dated 3 September 1926), the letter from Primo de Rivera to all Spaniards explaining the need for a plebiscite, as well as a series of clarifications over how the poll would function, were all published on the same day in *La Nación*, 4 September 1926. It is hardly feasible that members of the UP could have sent Primo a letter on 1 or 2 September which in 48 hours would have motivated the dictator to call a plebiscite, write in support of the poll, prepare a royal order and write a piece to explain the details of the vote on 3 September. The simultaneous publication of all of these documents appears to have been orchestrated by the Bureau of the Prime Minister.
- 15 *La Nación*, 4 September 1926.
- 16 *La Nación*, 4 September 1926.
- 17 *La Nación*, 4 September 1926.
- 18 *La Nación*, 4 September 1926.
- 19 González Calleja, *La España de Primo de Rivera. La modernización autoritaria, 1923–1930* (Madrid: Alianza, 2005), pp. 139–140.
- 20 *La Nación*, 15 September 1926, p. 1.
- 21 The regime did achieve a notable turnout in the province of Murcia, where 301,426 people signed, an impressive figure if we compare it with the 342,797 signatures collected in the entire province of Madrid. Figures are available from *La Nación*, 16 September 1926, p. 3. See also, Manuel Tuñón de Lara, ‘En torno a la Dictadura de Primo de Rivera’, *Cuadernos Económicos del ICE*, 10 (1979), p. 35.
- 22 For Primo’s statement in the *Chicago Tribune*, see *La Nación*, 3 September 1926. Various pieces were published on how the National Assembly would function. See, *inter alia*, *La Nación*, 31 January 1927, 15 February 1927, 17 February 1927, 18 September 1927, 29 October 1927, 18 November 1927.

- 23 J. L. Gómez-Navarro Navarrete, *El régimen de Primo de Rivera: reyes, dictaduras y dictadores* (Madrid: Cátedra, 1991), pp. 266–268.
- 24 Juan José Linz, ‘La Asamblea Nacional de Primo de Rivera’, *Política y Sociedad: estudios en homenaje a Francisco Murillo Ferrol*, vol. II (Madrid: Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas, 1987), p. 573.
- 25 González Calleja, *La España de Primo de Rivera. La modernización autoritaria, 1923–1930* (Madrid: Alianza, 2005), p. 141.
- 26 *El Sol*, 11 October 1927.
- 27 González Calleja, *La España de Primo de Rivera. La modernización autoritaria, 1923–1930* (Madrid: Alianza, 2005), p. 146.
- 28 *La Nación*, 1 October 1925.
- 29 J. L. Gómez-Navarro Navarrete, *El régimen de Primo de Rivera: reyes, dictaduras y dictadores* (Madrid: Cátedra, 1991), p. 295.
- 30 Gonzalo Álvarez Chillida, ‘El fracaso de un proyecto autoritario: el debate constitucional en la Asamblea Nacional de Primo de Rivera’, *Revista de Estudios Políticos*, 93 (1996), p. 364.
- 31 José María Pemán, *El hecho y la idea de la Unión Patriótica* (Madrid: Sáez y Hermanos / Junta de Propaganda Patriótica y Ciudadana, 1929) pp. 79, 332–333. See also his articles in *La Nación*, 29 November 1928, 7 December 1928, 29 December 1928, 11 January 1929.
- 32 Gonzalo Álvarez Chillida, ‘El fracaso de un proyecto autoritario: el debate constitucional en la Asamblea Nacional de Primo de Rivera’, *Revista de Estudios Políticos*, 93 (1996), pp. 371–373.
- 33 Eduardo González Calleja, ‘La dictadura de Primo de Rivera y el franquismo ¿Un modelo de dictadura liquidacionista?’, in Carlos Navajas & Diego Iturriaga (eds.), *Novisma. Actas del II Congreso de Historia Internacional de Nuestro Tiempo* (Logroño: Universidad de la Rioja, 2010), pp. 48–49.
- 34 Alejandro Quiroga, ‘Eduardo Aunós. Del catalanismo al nacionalcatolicismo’, in Fernando Molina Aparicio & Xosé Manoel Núñez Seixas (eds.), *Heterodoxos de la patria: biografías de nacionalistas atípicos en la España del siglo XX* (Granada: Comares, 2011), pp. 79–99.
- 35 For the regime’s model of corporatism, see the works of its creator, Eduardo Aunós, *Las corporaciones del Trabajo en el Estado Moderno* (Madrid: Juan Ortiz, 1928); *El Estado corporativo* (Madrid: Gráfica Ernesto Giménez, 1928); *La organización corporative del trabajo y su posible desenvolvimiento* (Barcelona: Librería Bosch, 1929).
- 36 Miguel Artola, *Partidos y programas políticos, 1808–1936*, vol. 1 (Madrid: Alianza, 1991), p. 560.
- 37 Eduardo Aunós, *Las corporaciones del Trabajo en el Estado Moderno* (Madrid: Juan Ortiz, 1928), pp. 182–183.
- 38 Adrian Shubert, *Hacia la revolución. Orígenes sociales del movimiento obrero en Asturias* (Barcelona: Crítica, 1984), pp. 173–178.
- 39 González Calleja, *La España de Primo de Rivera. La modernización autoritaria, 1923–1930* (Madrid: Alianza, 2005), p. 162.
- 40 To avoid the censorship, *El Debate* used a common tactic, which was to attack Italian fascism as an indirect way of criticising the Primo de Rivera dictatorship. See, for example, ‘Consecuencias y contradicciones’, *El Debate*, 2 November 1928; ‘Contra el estatismo’, *El Debate*, 13 November 1928; ‘Otra víctima del estatismo’, *El Debate*, 20 November 1928; ‘L’Observatore protesta contra el concurso atlético femenino’, *El Debate*, 20 November 1928; ‘La Acción Católica y el gobierno italiano’, *El Debate*, 27 November 1928.
- 41 For Catholic criticisms, see Carlos Ruiz del Castillo, *El conflicto entre el comunismo y la reforma social* (Madrid: Sociedad de Estudios Políticos, Sociales y Económicos, 1928).

- 42 Juan Pan-Montojo, 'Asociacionismo agrario, administración y corporativismo en la dictadura de Primo de Rivera', *Historia Social*, 43 (2002), pp. 25–29.
- 43 Julio Gil, *Conservadores subversivos. La derecha autoritaria alfonsina* (Madrid: Eudema, 1994) p. 54.
- 44 Shlomo Ben-Ami, *Fascism from above: The Dictatorship of Primo de Rivera in Spain 1923–1930* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), pp. 325–332.
- 45 Ramón Tamames, *Ni Mussolini ni Franco: La dictadura de Primo de Rivera y su tiempo* (Barcelona: Planeta, 2008), p. 287.
- 46 Joel Baker, 'Anti-politics', *Infrastructure Policy and Civil Society Mobilisations in Spain under the Primo de Rivera dictatorship (1923–1930)* (Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Sheffield, 2020), pp. 52–56, 286.
- 47 Joel Baker, 'Anti-politics', *Infrastructure Policy and Civil Society Mobilisations in Spain under the Primo de Rivera dictatorship (1923–1930)* (Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Sheffield, 2020), pp. 133.
- 48 Pablo Martín Aceña, *La política monetaria de España, 1919–1935* (Madrid: Instituto de Estudios Fiscales, 1984), pp. 139–140.
- 49 Shlomo Ben-Ami, *Fascism from above: The Dictatorship of Primo de Rivera in Spain 1923–1930* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), pp. 334–338.
- 50 González Calleja, *La España de Primo de Rivera. La modernización autoritaria, 1923–1930* (Madrid: Alianza, 2005), p. 247.
- 51 See, for example, the letters from Primo to Sanjurjo on 2 July, 21 July and 13 August 1926. José Manuel de Armiñán and Luis de Armiñán, *Epistolario del dictador. La figura de Primo de Rivera trazada por su propia mano* (Madrid: Javier Morata, 1930), pp. 357–366, 373–376, 383–389.
- 52 Primo de Rivera to Sanjurjo, 13 August 1926, in José Manuel de Armiñán and Luis de Armiñán, *Epistolario del dictador. La figura de Primo de Rivera trazada por su propia mano* (Madrid: Javier Morata, 1930), pp. 386–387.
- 53 *La Nación*, 4 September 1926.
- 54 *La Nación*, 4 September 1926.
- 55 José Calvo Sotelo, *La contribución a la riqueza territorial de España* (Madrid: Imprenta del Servicio de Catastro de Rústica, 1926), pp. 10–17, 30.
- 56 González Calleja, *La España de Primo de Rivera. La modernización autoritaria, 1923–1930* (Madrid: Alianza, 2005), pp. 246–247.
- 57 Fernando Eguidazu, 'La crisis de la peseta y la caída de la Dictadura', *Cuadernos Económicos de I.C.E.*, 10 (1979), pp. 299–352.
- 58 Francesc Cambó, *La valoración de la peseta* (Madrid: J. Pueyo, 1928), pp. 99–127.
- 59 Francesc Cambó, *La valoración de la peseta* (Madrid: J. Pueyo, 1928), p. 127.
- 60 Fernando Eguidazu, 'La crisis de la peseta y la caída de la Dictadura', *Cuadernos Económicos de I.C.E.*, 10 (1979), pp. 338–342.
- 61 Dionisio Pérez, *La Dictadura a través de sus Notas oficiosas* (Madrid: Compañía Ibero-Americana de Publicaciones, 1930), p. 269.
- 62 Dionisio Pérez, *La Dictadura a través de sus Notas oficiosas* (Madrid: Compañía Ibero-Americana de Publicaciones, 1930), pp. 269–270.
- 63 González Calleja, *La España de Primo de Rivera. La modernización autoritaria, 1923–1930* (Madrid: Alianza, 2005), p. 254.
- 64 Dionisio Pérez, *La Dictadura a través de sus Notas oficiosas* (Madrid: Compañía Ibero-Americana de Publicaciones, 1930), pp. 314–315.
- 65 Dionisio Pérez, *La Dictadura a través de sus Notas oficiosas* (Madrid: Compañía Ibero-Americana de Publicaciones, 1930), p. 316.
- 66 Dionisio Pérez, *La Dictadura a través de sus Notas oficiosas* (Madrid: Compañía Ibero-Americana de Publicaciones, 1930), p. 316.
- 67 For the average monthly exchange rate of the peseta for the British pound, French franc and US dollar, see Pedro Martínez Méndez, *Nuevos datos sobre la evolución*

- de la peseta entre 1900 y 1936. *Información complementaria* (Madrid: Banco de España, 1990), pp. 12–14.
- 68 In a letter from Primo to Sanjurjo on 30 May 1926 the dictator stressed the need in the Moroccan protectorate for ‘a revolution akin to that of 13 September here’. See José Manuel de Armiñán and Luis de Armiñán, *Epistolario del dictador. La figura de Primo de Rivera trazada por su propia mano* (Madrid: Javier Morata, 1930), p. 349. Primo also used the phrase in a written reply to Francesc Cambó on 1 May 1928, which was published as an official note, when he wrote ‘the revolution of September 1923, although, fortunately, bloodless, was exactly that and nothing else’. See Dionisio Pérez, *La Dictadura a través de sus Notas oficiosas* (Madrid: Compañía Ibero-Americana de Publicaciones, 1930), p. 196.
- 69 Ramón Tamames, *Ni Mussolini ni Franco: La dictadura de Primo de Rivera y su tiempo* (Barcelona: Planeta, 2008), p. 289.
- 70 Ramón Tamames, *Ni Mussolini ni Franco: La dictadura de Primo de Rivera y su tiempo* (Barcelona: Planeta, 2008), p. 289.
- 71 Mercedes Cabrera, ‘Los escándalos de la Dictadura de Primo de Rivera y las responsabilidades en la República: el asunto de Juan March’, *Historia y Política*, 4 (2000), p. 22.
- 72 Dionisio Pérez, *La Dictadura a través de sus Notas oficiosas* (Madrid: Compañía Ibero-Americana de Publicaciones, 1930), pp. 139–141.
- 73 Dionisio Pérez, *La Dictadura a través de sus Notas oficiosas* (Madrid: Compañía Ibero-Americana de Publicaciones, 1930), p. 140.
- 74 Dionisio Pérez, *La Dictadura a través de sus Notas oficiosas* (Madrid: Compañía Ibero-Americana de Publicaciones, 1930), p. 140.
- 75 For the process by which Juan March gained the advantage over Primo, see Mercedes Cabrera Calvo-Sotelo, *Juan March, 1880–1962* (Madrid: Marcial Pons, 2011), pp. 99–103.
- 76 Ramón Garriga, *Juan March y su tiempo* (Barcelona: Planeta, 1976), p. 217.
- 77 Paul Preston, *A People Betrayed: A History of Corruption, Political Incompetence and Social Division in Modern Spain* (London: Harper Collins, 2020), p. 163. In 1925, March also took control of the newspapers *La Libertad* and *Informaciones*, seemingly at the request of Primo de Rivera himself. See Mercedes Cabrera, ‘Los escándalos de la Dictadura de Primo de Rivera y las responsabilidades en la República: el asunto de Juan March’, *Historia y Política*, 4 (2000), p. 13.
- 78 González Calleja, *La España de Primo de Rivera. La modernización autoritaria, 1923–1930* (Madrid: Alianza, 2005), pp. 227–228.
- 79 Paul Preston, *A People Betrayed: A History of Corruption, Political Incompetence and Social Division in Modern Spain* (London: Harper Collins, 2020), pp. 180–181.
- 80 Ramón Tamames, *Ni Mussolini ni Franco: La dictadura de Primo de Rivera y su tiempo* (Barcelona: Planeta, 2008), p. 329.
- 81 Joan Maria Thomàs, *José Antonio. Realidad y mito* (Barcelona: Debate, 2017), p. 79.
- 82 Joan Maria Thomàs, *José Antonio. Realidad y mito* (Barcelona: Debate, 2017), p. 80.
- 83 Joan Maria Thomàs, *José Antonio. Realidad y mito* (Barcelona: Debate, 2017), p. 81.
- 84 Paul Preston, *A People Betrayed: A History of Corruption, Political Incompetence and Social Division in Modern Spain* (London: Harper Collins, 2020), p. 182.
- 85 *La Nación*, 9 March 1929, p. 5.
- 86 *La Nación*, 9 March 1929, p. 5.
- 87 *La Nación*, 9 March 1929, p. 5. Several months later Primo would declare that he had paid the four million pesetas collected into ‘national public funds’. See *La Nación*, 31 December 1929, p. 1.

- 88 *La Nación*, 9 March 1929, p. 5.
- 89 *La Nación*, 28 September 1929, p. 5.
- 90 Ramón Tamames, *Ni Mussolini ni Franco: La dictadura de Primo de Rivera y su tiempo* (Barcelona: Planeta, 2008), p. 284.
- 91 This is the view of Tamames in, *Ni Mussolini ni Franco: La dictadura de Primo de Rivera y su tiempo* (Barcelona: Planeta, 2008), pp. 284–285.
- 92 Paul Preston, *A People Betrayed: A History of Corruption, Political Incompetence and Social Division in Modern Spain* (London: Harper Collins, 2020), pp. 178–179.
- 93 Jaime Muñoz Jofre, *La España corrupta. Breve historia de la corrupción en España (de la Restauración a nuestros días, 1875–2016)* (Granada: Comares, 2016), p. 49.
- 94 Jaime Muñoz Jofre, *La España corrupta. Breve historia de la corrupción en España (de la Restauración a nuestros días, 1875–2016)* (Granada: Comares, 2016), p. 55.
- 95 Lorena Romero-Domínguez, ‘La dictadura de Primo de Rivera: entre el control y la censura (1924–1930)’, in Concha Langa-Nuño, Lorena Romero-Domínguez & María José Ruiz Acosta (eds.), *Un siglo de información en Sevilla (prensa, radio y televisión): 1900–2009* (Sevilla: Universidad de Sevilla, 2009), pp. 51–82; Jaime Muñoz Jofre, *La España corrupta. Breve historia de la corrupción en España (de la Restauración a nuestros días, 1875–2016)* (Granada: Comares, 2016), p. 120.
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- 99 The cases mentioned can be found in *El Somatén*, December 1924. For the punishments imposed on the Somatén corporals for ‘certain crimes’, see Comandante General de la Primera Región to Martínez Anido, 22 October 1925. AHN, Gobernación (Estado), serie A, legajo 59, cajas 1 & 2.
- 100 Dirección General de Seguridad to Martínez Anido, 6 July 1928. AHN, Gobernación (Estado), serie A, legajo 59, caja 2.
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- 158 González Calleja, *La España de Primo de Rivera. La modernización autoritaria, 1923–1930* (Madrid: Alianza, 2005), pp. 372–373.
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- 161 Article 3, Royal Decree 4 February 1929. *El Somatén*, February 1929.
- 162 Article 3, Royal Decree 4 February 1929 and Article 5, Royal Circular 8 February 1929, Addendum. *El Somatén*, February 1929. The Royal Circular of 16 April 1929 can be found in *Colección Legislativa del Ejército*, no. 147, pp. 86–87.
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- 165 See, for instance, Emilio Casado Escobedo to Martínez Anido, 1 May 1929. Casado was protesting the fact that he and 90 others had been imprisoned without charge for more than 2 weeks. A similar case can be seen in Manuel Ríos to Martínez Anido, 19 October 1929. Ríos petitioned for the release of certain prisoners, ‘neither political nor dangerous’, who had been imprisoned in Barcelona for three months without charge. For examples of false accusations, see Civil Governor of Valencia to Martínez Anido, 2 December 1929. All of this correspondence can be found in AHN, Gobernación (Estado), legajo 59, caja 2.
- 166 The available date for membership of the Somatén Nacional in each military region in the last years of the dictatorship offer a somewhat fragmentary and incomplete picture. Nonetheless, all the available sources suggest a decline in the membership. The First Military Region had 22768 members in August 1928 and 22492 in 1929. The seventh Military Region had 19703 members on 31 January 1929, but 12 months later the figure had fallen to 18985. For the figures, see Eduardo González Calleja & Fernando del Rey Reguillo, *La defensa armada contra la revolución. Una historia de las «guardias cívicas» en la España del siglo XX* (Madrid: CSIC, 1995), pp. 334, 336. See also the reports from regional captains of the Somatén in December 1929 to Primo de Rivera, which suggested a decline in membership. AHN, Presidencia del Gobierno, FFCC, legajo 199, caja 2. Rosa Martínez Segarra also suggests there was a steep fall in the membership in the last years of the dictatorship, from 56103 members in 1927–1928 to just 22492 in 1930. See Rosa Martínez Segarra, *El Somatén Nacional en la dictadura de general Primo de Rivera* (Unpublished PhD Thesis, Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 1980), p. 277.

- 167 Jaime Muñoz Jofre, *La España corrupta. Breve historia de la corrupción en España (de la Restauración a nuestros días, 1875–2016)* (Granada: Comares, 2016), p. 51.
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- 169 The sense of a loss of support among civil servants is clearly conveyed in the daily newspaper *El Sol*, 5 February 1930.
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- 171 For a comparison between the two dictatorships, see Dylan Riley, 'Civic Associations and Authoritarian Regimes in Interwar Europe: Italy and Spain in Comparative Perspective', *American Sociological Review*, 70:2 (2005), pp. 288–310.
- 172 Maeztu to Pemán, 12 December 1929, in Álvarez Chillida, *José María Pemán: Pensamiento y trayectoria de un monárquico, 1897–1941* (Cádiz: Universidad de Cádiz, 1996), p. 308.
- 173 The Official Note is in Dionisio Pérez, *La Dictadura a través de sus Notas oficiosas* (Madrid: Compañía Ibero-Americana de Publicaciones, 1930), pp. 296–300. The quotation is taken from p. 297.
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- 175 Official Note of 31 December 1929, *El Sol*, 1 January 1930.
- 176 Renzo de Felice, *Mussolini il duce: Lo stato totalitario 1936–1940* (Turin: Einaudi, 2006), pp. 1–55; Patrizia Dogliani, *Il fascismo degli italiani. Una storia sociale* (Milan: De Agostini, 2022), pp. 59–91.
- 177 John Pollard, 'Conservative Catholics and Italian Fascism: The Clerico-Fascists', in Martin Blinkhorn (ed.), *Fascists and Conservatives: The Radical Right and the Establishment in Twentieth-Century Europe* (London: Unwin, 1990), pp. 32–50.

5 Caudillo of the Nation

Propaganda, Masculinity and the Leadership Cult

At two in the morning of 13 September 1923, four reporters working for Barcelona dailies arrived at the Captaincy-General of Catalonia.¹ Having been called by Primo the previous afternoon, the Marqués de Estella explained that the ungodly hour of the meeting owed to the fact he was leading a *coup d'état*. Primo understood that control of information would be crucial, and so he had felt it a good idea to meet with the press two hours before he had mobilised the troops. The reporters were obliged to wait for a few minutes, since their arrival coincided with a tense discussion between Primo and the Minister of War, General Aizpuru, which ended with the Captain-General of Catalonia cutting off communications with Madrid. Primo received the press in his office, gave them copies of his 'Manifesto for the Country and the Army' and asked for 'their word of honour that they would simply print the manifesto, without any commentary'.² At five in the morning, Primo once again received the press in his office. This time, with news of the uprising spreading, there were many more reporters. The Captain-General outlined the political aims of the 'movement', which would 'dissolve the Cortes', dismiss the public officials then in post, create a 'new administrative, governmental, judicial and perhaps even military framework' for the country and tackle the 'unhealthy Catalan sentiment of hostility to Spain'.³ Primo added with pride that he

did not have to imitate the Fascio, nor the great figure of Mussolini, although his actions have been a useful lesson to us all [...] For in Spain we have the *Somatén* and we have had Prim, an admirable military and political figure.⁴

Minutes later, Primo was reading a declaration to the troops of the Barcelona garrison. In it, the Marqués de Estella highlighted the patriotism of the soldiers and his intention 'to come to the aid of Mother Spain' in its time of need.⁵

The distribution of his manifesto, the declarations to the press at the Captaincy-General and the speech to the troops in the early hours of 13 September 1923 fulfilled different functions for Primo de Rivera during the coup. Nonetheless, each of these actions served to present what was, in truth,

a violent and anti-constitutional act of insubordination against the government as a selfless sacrifice to save the nation. From the very first moments of the coup, the Marqués de Estella had to seek legitimacy for his dictatorship. To this end, in his 'Manifiesto', Primo de Rivera justified his insurrection as the only way to save a nation that was in mortal peril thanks to the actions of 'the professional politicians', anarchist violence, 'unpunished communist propaganda' and 'shameless separatist propaganda'.⁶ The Captain-General acknowledged that his action was illegal and that the new regime would be born from a 'technical indiscipline', but this could be excused since he was following the will of the people and because he intended to liberate the country from this 'array of misfortunes and immoralities which began in '98 and threaten to bring Spain to a tragic and dishonourable end'. This discourse of national salvation, with its references to historical myths and a sense of transcendental mission, also served to bestow Primo de Rivera with a certain messianic connotation as a patriotic leader. It was a message which emphasised a historical crisis not only to justify an illegal political action but also the concentration of power in the hands of a superior individual, a message that became a staple of the far-right dictatorships in interwar Europe.⁷

Since the Marqués de Estella was making clear his intention to abandon the Spanish constitution of 1876 definitively and build a completely new political regime, the need to bestow upon it a charismatic legitimacy became even more pressing. As with other counter-revolutionary dictatorships – whether they were genuinely 'fascist' or not – the traditional legitimacy bestowed by monarchy or Church was clearly no longer sufficient in Spain if a new regime were to be built. As was the case for Miklós Horthy in Hungary, Benito Mussolini in Italy and Józef Piłsudski in Poland during the 1920s, Primo de Rivera had to create a charismatic aura to justify his power and present himself as the 'Caudillo' who would lead a process of national regeneration.⁸ The process of creating a charismatic aura involved bestowing such leaders with special meanings which served to justify their authoritarian exercise of power.⁹ It was necessary to build and promote an idealised, and to some extent sacralised, image of the dictator through the media, through official propaganda and through patriotic ceremonies, which would serve to complement traditional forms of legitimacy (derived from institutions such as the Crown or the Church), and which would replace rational, legal (or constitutional) forms of legitimacy with a charismatic legitimacy.¹⁰

The construction of Miguel Primo de Rivera into a charismatic figure was carried out from above in multiple ways. On the discursive level, the Marqués de Estella himself was responsible for presenting himself, from the moment of the 'Manifiesto of 13 September', as the leader who had to operate on the sick body of the nation. As Primo would often say, he was the surgeon whom the people had sought, since the 'healthy people' had asked him to intervene to put an end to the 'worms' who were the politicians devouring the nation.¹¹ In adopting a pseudo-scientific and regenerationist discourse, which in some ways resembled the 'iron surgeon' described decades earlier by Joaquín Costa, Primo was playing a relatively sure hand, because regenerationist vocabulary

and talking points were commonplace across broad sectors of Spanish society in the years before 1923.¹² Meanwhile, the regime put forward an image of the dictator as a prophetic leader and national saviour in religious terms.¹³ In the official propaganda, Providence had sent Primo to Spain and his coup had saved the country from the abyss. A messianic story was created, which bound the dictator to the will of God, something which Primo himself had no qualms about saying on more than one occasion. In his speech in Zaragoza on 27 May 1924, for instance, the Marqués de Estella combined his characteristic false modesty with his classical nationalist providentialism when he declared:

In the constant performance to which I willingly submit, there are moments of sadness, because I realise my responsibility, and I bow before the altar of the fatherland with remorse at not having made better use of my youth to prepare myself for this duty, which it would appear that God has reserved for me, with the technical and cultural preparation to guarantee my success.¹⁴

Primo returned to a similar theme on another occasion when he said 'I know how little I am worth and have no doubt that there is a divine will, if one man, incapable of governing himself, can govern over 20 million Spaniards'.¹⁵ Nobody ought to be fooled, however. The dictator was by no means humble about himself, nor is it very likely that he thought that God had anything to do with the creation of his dictatorship. The Marqués de Estella liked to present himself to the press, as well as his colleagues, as an indefatigable worker, a just man, a brave soldier, always willing to sacrifice himself for the nation, and above all a beloved leader of his people.¹⁶ As with all political leaders, and in particular those whose power does not derive from the ballot box, Primo highlighted a series of special qualities about himself, which justified his position as ruler.¹⁷ This 'self-justification', which separates the political leader from the ordinary people, tells us much about how Primo was seen, and how he saw himself. It also indicates how the dictator understood his own exercise of power. In his private correspondence, the Marqués de Estella made it quite clear to friends and comrades-in-arms how he conceived his work as dictator as a sacrifice he was making for the nation. As we have seen, in a letter to José Sanjurjo in the summer of 1926, Primo wrote that his 'position has few flowers and many thorns', but that he was prepared to sacrifice himself for Spain 'no matter what the cost'.¹⁸ In the same letter, Primo had told Sanjurjo that he had done everything 'to see my Country happy and great', and he was therefore was prepared to continue fighting against the enemies of the regime.¹⁹ The 'whole country' was behind Primo and he was feeling 'strong as a bull and in the highest spirits', prepared 'to defend the ideal that we pursued on 13 September'.²⁰

Such themes of self-sacrifice and love of the people were also commonplace in Primo's public declarations and writings as justification for his dictatorship. In August 1927, for instance, lengthy commentaries of the dictator were published in *La Nación*, in which he declared that to have left power

after the victory at Alhucemas in September 1925 would have been an act of cowardice.²¹ He had preferred to sacrifice himself and continue in government for a ‘second phase, not devoid of worries and sorrows, much like the first’.²² Predictably, the sacrifice was worth the sorrow. As Primo explained, ‘in these twenty months I have not had the pain of having caused Spain any harm, and I have a suspicion of having done it some good’.²³ Suffering for the nation was of little consequence, and speaking to a rally of the *Unión Patriótica* he declared, somewhat melodramatically, that ‘if one has to fight and even die, it would not be an excessive sacrifice if that is what the Fatherland required’.²⁴

From the first to the last day of Primo’s rule, the principal argument employed by the regime for the continuation of his dictatorship was the support of the people. In the ‘Manifesto of 13 September’ the coup was defined as ‘an act which the healthy people demand and impose’.²⁵ Through the years, the Marqués de Estella would repeat countless times that the people loved the dictatorship and that Primo – rather than the wrong-headed system of liberal parliamentarianism – truly represented them. Indeed, in a somewhat bizarre historical analysis, Primo declared shamelessly ‘no dictatorship has ever received such trust and affection from the people as ours’.²⁶ Primo also had no qualms in playing the card of popular support during moments of crisis. In June 1929, for example, when meeting the Italian Ambassador to Spain, Primo minimised the significance of the recent mobilisation of the regime’s opponents and gave the appearance of confidence in the stability of his government, since it was based upon the ‘consensus of the majority of the people’.²⁷ Five months later, under renewed pressure after the acquittal of Sánchez Guerra by a military court and the growing opposition to the regime, Primo appealed to the unconditional support that the people afforded him. Very much in keeping with his populist manner – and in a trend of telling fictional anecdotes that remains true of politicians to this day – Primo spoke of how, when he was in a town in Cantabria, one rural labourer, who had not realised he was speaking with the dictator, had told him

since this Directory “works”, we are able to live in peace and earn for our own upkeep; without elections there are no struggles in the town, whereas before even parents and children hated each other; and now we possess the lands, we see the fruits of our labour.²⁸

It is not without irony that Primo recounted this implausible anecdote of a farmer’s support for the dictatorship at a dinner in honour of José María Pemán, to mark the publication of his book *El becho y la idea de la Unión Patriótica*, at the Hotel Ritz in Madrid. Even so, it gives us a good indication of what *primorriverista* populism truly was. The appeal to a supposed popular backing would remain until the very last days of the regime. In an official note published on the last day of 1929, for example, Primo de Rivera declared that the dictatorship would continue, ‘resolute and well-regarded for its moral strength and for the determined support of the people’ (Figure 5.1).²⁹



Figure 5.1 Primo de Rivera supporters signing in defence of the dictatorship. Madrid April 1929. Credit: Alfonso.

The Marqués de Estella's continual references to popular support as a way of justifying his rule should not lead us to believe that Primo considered the support of Spaniards as a *sine qua non* for his dictatorship. In the letter to Sanjurjo already mentioned, written days after the failure of the *Sanjuanada* in the summer of 1926, the dictator boasted about popular support for his regime, but nonetheless added 'I believe that I am not alone, but if I were, I would die fighting'.³⁰ Ultimately, it was the power of the masses that Primo valued, not their backing. Years later, in an official note dealing with the opposition his regime had faced in 1929, Primo stated that for a dictatorship to function the support of the masses was a somewhat imprecise notion. 'To govern', he declared, 'and even more so in a dictatorship, it is only necessary to have the backing of a select minority and a general popular support'.³¹ In this matter, as in so many others, Primo spoke of following the lead of Mussolini:

Mussolini's movement lights the way I must follow to save my country. Mussolini is a torch that illuminates the people, without them having to follow him dazzled. Like him, I believe that the influence of so-called public opinion over the actions of government must be limited, that is to say, the masses should not lead government, but rather government must convince and lead the masses. I also share Mussolini's belief that the principle of Liberty, very nice 'in theory', is not particularly effective as a rule of conduct for peoples, and that it must be replaced by the principle of authority.³²

It is within this authoritarian mental framework of a national caudillo protecting the people that we can understand some of the more polemical and cynical comments and actions of Primo de Rivera. One striking example would be the dictatorship's prohibition of betting on games of chance. As we have seen, the dictator had a gambling problem, but this did not stop him in October 1924 from declaring betting in casinos to be illegal.³³ Although some diehard supporters of the Marqués de Estella would like to present the measure as a decision which Primo took in a bid to contain his own addiction to gambling, the truth is that the ban on betting, which would be incorporated into the Penal Code in 1928, and the closure of casinos throughout Spain, were an example of his moralist paternalism towards the people. It was a moralism that the regime's elites were never meant to abide by, let alone the dictator himself.³⁴ Indeed, Primo de Rivera continued to bet and lose money at the tables with his friends during the dictatorship and appeared to have no moral qualms about doing so.³⁵

Another case in which the dictator failed to follow his own recommendations was that of eating. According to Primo, in Spain 'we eat too much and work too little [...] Ten per cent, doing less of the former and more of the latter, would be enough to sort out the national economy'.³⁶ The solution was to reduce the quantities eaten to change the time of dining in Spain:

Just one formal, family meal should be enough, at the table between five-thirty and seven-thirty in the afternoon, and afterwards, for those

who do not stay up late, nothing else, for those who do, a snack. Before this, a small lunch or breakfast at ten-thirty or eleven-thirty, and the early risers could expect, around seven-thirty or eight-thirty, a cup of coffee. Such a regime, much healthier and a warding-off obesity, would save electricity, coal and the cleaning of table linens, it would free up hours in the morning for some and in the early evening for others, allowing the shows to run from nine in the evening until midnight. It would be as comfortable for the night owls as it would for the early birds, it would place us in line with Europe and would have many other advantages.³⁷

Primo's advice was not so much a case of eccentric ramblings of a dictator looking forward to changing the habits of the Spanish people, but rather a sign of his double standards. The general was overweight, had a 'prodigious appetite' and was famous for his love of shellfish and game birds. Primo also ate in a relatively disorderly fashion. In short, he was someone who never once thought to follow his own recommendations.³⁸

Even so, the dictator's views on the subordinate role of the people under dictatorships did not mean that he ignored the matter of public opinion in the maintenance of his own regime. On the contrary, Primo de Rivera was obsessed with shaping public opinion in favour of his regime and himself. From the moment the coup was launched, prior censorship was instituted and Primo set up a means of communicating with Spaniards through official notes, press leaks, written articles, edited collections of his works and 'fake interviews', that is, texts written entirely in his own hand which simulated a dialogue with the press.³⁹ Indeed, the first 'fake interview' the Marqués de Estella 'gave' to the press was on the night of the coup itself, when handed some sheets to the four reporters from Barcelona newspapers who had been called to the Captaincy-General entitled 'Declarations of the Captain-General'. In the 'interview', Primo answered questions which the journalists had not even asked.⁴⁰ While dishonest, the regime's modes of political communication were nonetheless innovative and broke with the traditional norms of the Restoration System.

Primo wanted to ensure that the necessary structures were in place to support his novel efforts to mould public opinion. In December 1923, the Military Directory created the Bureau for News and the Press, an organisation dedicated entirely to regime censorship and propaganda.⁴¹ To lead this new office, the dictator chose Lieutenant-Colonel Pedro Rico Parada from the General Staff. He would remain in post until October 1925, when Primo named him as the editor of the pro-government newspaper *La Nación*. The importance that Primo de Rivera attached to the new Bureau is beyond doubt. The dictator tied the new organisation to the Prime Minister's Office and ordered that its rooms be set up next door to his own office. Placing the Bureau for News and the Press physically close to the dictator was significant, and done quite deliberately. The dictator would often pay visits to intervene personally in the censorship of newspapers and to discuss with Rico Parada the content of texts

to be published.⁴² The Bureau for News and the Press thus served to channel the Marqués de Estella's control freakery, as well as feeding the vanity of a dictator who boasted of being a 'natural journalist'.⁴³

Alongside the Bureau for News and the Press, Primo entrusted the work of propaganda and indoctrination in the country at large to the *delegados gubernativos*, members of the UP and the *Somatén*. To this end, during the period of the Military Directory, they organised hundreds of military parades, 'acts of patriotic affirmation', and blessings of the flags of the *Somatén*. Meanwhile, governmental campaigns were launched to promote patriotic feeling throughout Spain.⁴⁴ Regime institutions and media also helped to create what might be termed a quotidian propaganda, which involved publicity about the dictator becoming a part of the daily lives of millions of Spaniards. Throughout the dictatorship, the media was relentless in publishing images of the 'National Caudillo' in newspapers, magazines, books, pamphlets, cheap novels and postcards. Portraits of the National Leader were obligatory in the headquarters of the UP, and in the patriotic events and meetings which carried images of the dictator onto the streets.⁴⁵ Meanwhile, in an effort to promote the image of the patriotic leader, as well as taking over public space, the Directory renamed dozens of streets in towns throughout Spain with the name of the dictator, while most of the new public schools opened during the period were named after Primo de Rivera.⁴⁶

To support the propagandistic work of the dictatorship, Primo sought the active collaboration of the clergy when *upetistas* were pursuing their 'educational campaigns'.⁴⁷ At first, this strategy appeared to meet with some success, given that the vast majority of the Catholic clergy openly cooperated with the regime. Moreover, when the Military Directory launched a propagandistic campaign against its critics in exile at the end of 1924 – and in particular against the works and magazines such as *España con honra* (Spain With Honour) published in France by Vicente Blasco Ibáñez, Miguel de Unamuno and Eduardo Ortega – the Church offered its full support to the dictator and mobilised the Catholic masses to the streets to show their disgust at these 'so called Spaniards'.⁴⁸ Notwithstanding the undoubtable importance of Church support to the dictatorship in Spain, as was the case in Fascist Italy, the official party remained the principal intermediary between the leader and the masses.⁴⁹ To be sure, the UP did not have the propagandistic strength of the PNF in Italy, but this did not prevent the regime from developing a certain taste for the theatrical in showing and encouraging popular support for the dictator. On 29 May 1924, for example, 30,000 members of the UP gathered at Medina del Campo to witness a speech by the National Head of the UP, that is to say, Primo de Rivera himself.⁵⁰ In Madrid, the UP regularly organised parades to show their support for the dictator in front of Primo's residence, the Buenavista Palace. Upon seeing this form of liturgy, the British Ambassador to Spain could not help thinking of the fascist gatherings that were held in Italy in front of the Palazzo Venezia.⁵¹

As in so many other cases, war served to build up the mythical image of a patriotic leader. In the Autumn of 1925, for instance, the Military Directory

lost no time in making propagandistic capital from the victory of Spanish forces at Alhucemas. Although the end of the war in Morocco was not yet quite in sight, the Royal Decree of 6 October 1925 described the landings at Alhucemas as 'the most difficult undertaking' ever successfully undertaken by a colonial army and awarded Primo the highest honour possible in the Spanish Army, the *Gran Cruz Laureada de San Fernando*.⁵² Before the landings, Primo had already been compared to Mussolini, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, and even Lenin for his revolutionary enthusiasm and his role as saviour of the nation. In the Autumn of 1925, the regime's press now compared his military talent to that of Napoleon.⁵³ Not only was the Marqués de Estella a man of 'creative and organising will' who was bringing about 'radical change in the life of the nation at all levels'. In addition, Primo's military victory in the Rif placed Spain at the forefront of the rebirth of the Greco-Latin peoples who were stirring again throughout the Mediterranean to prevent a 'new age of horrors and massacres'.⁵⁴

For his part, Primo accepted the honour of the *Gran Cruz* with his customary false modesty. Two days after the decoration, the dictator wrote to his colleague in the Directory, Alfonso Villaespinosa:

First of all, I begin by offering you, as with all my colleagues on the Directory, the most sincere thanks for your part in the decision of His Majesty, which has resulted in more than I could have hoped, for I confess sincerely that I had not encouraged them for one moment and that I believed any form of recompense for this difficult enterprise that we are all engaged in was still very far away for me. But each of you, with singular tact, have taken advantage of my absence to propose this extraordinary gift, which I accept, for its great meaning and to acknowledge your counsel.⁵⁵

Primo was delighted with the award and could also see the huge potential that the victory at Alhecumas offered for singing his own praises. As mentioned in Chapter 3, on returning from Africa, he delayed his return to Madrid to visit some Andalusian towns and to take part in the public celebrations which had been organised in his honour. The general made sure that his return to Madrid coincided with the celebration of the *Fiesta de la Raza* (Feast of the Race), 12 October.⁵⁶ This year, the customary annual national celebration was combined with homage to the national leader, who was awarded the title of 'Adopted Son' by all of the mayors in the province of Madrid. Military parades were staged throughout Spain in commemoration of the conquest and the returning soldiers were received as heroes in a grand tour organised by the regime at the start of October 1925. The final stop on this tour was Madrid, where the troops marched through the crowds which filled the streets of the capital in a parade presided over by the King and by the military, civilian and religious hierarchies.⁵⁷ Keen to mobilise the population, the regime ordered the *delegados gubernativos* to organise patriotic acts in their districts in memory of

those fallen for the nation in Morocco. According to the reports prepared by the civil governors, the *delegados* organised scores of these events with great success. In the heady atmosphere of such celebrations, many towns and villages renamed streets and squares after the dictator, or with the date 13 September to commemorate Primo's coup.⁵⁸ As in other European dictatorships, so in Spain the date of the regime's birth came to be celebrated as a mythical foundational moment for a new fatherland, which had been reborn after the intervention of a charismatic Caudillo.⁵⁹

The victory at Alhucemas also served to strengthen the providential image of the dictator. The support of the Catholic Church for Spain's 'civilising mission' in Morocco lent a decisive impetus to the identification of Catholicism with the nation and with the regime. Masses for the fallen in Africa and the commemoration of Spain's victory against the Riffian rebels became crucial features in the military parades presided over by Primo de Rivera. The consecration of the national flag and the blessing of troops were also key rituals in these nationalistic ceremonies, where the figure of the leader was lionised as the saviour of the nation.⁶⁰ The sacralisation of the nation and sanctification of the dictator thus became more than simple political discourses and instead came to resemble Christian rituals. In these patriotic ceremonies, the nation was reasserted through the Christian symbolism of death and resurrection, while the mystical connotations of the blood and sacrifice of the fallen in Africa came to form part of a public 'communion' between the dictator and the people. As in Fascist Italy, the cult of the leader became one of the key ingredients in the process of sacralising politics, in which national leaders were deemed to have messianic characteristics and in which nations were held up as religious entities.⁶¹ Unlike Mussolini, however, Primo's 'patriotic religion' could count upon the initial blessing and active participation of the Catholic Church.

The creation of the Civil Directory led Primo to shake up the propagandistic apparatus of the dictatorship. On 16 December 1925, *La Gaceta* announced the creation of the Office for News and Press Censorship, an institution which would replace the old Bureau for News and the Press. Composed of military officers, this new organisation was also integrated into the Prime Minister's Office and led by Caledonio de la Iglesia, a lieutenant-colonel in the General Staff and later a member of the National Assembly after June 1928. Unlike Pedro Rico before him, Caledonio de la Iglesia was given a larger team of some 50 men, and from June 1926, the Office also began to incorporate civilians into its ranks. The Office continued to work tirelessly in pursuit of propaganda and censorship, coordinated its efforts with provincial censors and published Primo's writings in multiple formats. Needless to say, Primo's relationship with the Office also remained consistent. He continued to interfere constantly in its work, adding an extra layer of arbitrariness and coercion into the workings of the state censorship.⁶²

Primo's interference posed a headache for Caledonio de la Iglesia. The lieutenant-colonel had the authority to censor the dictator himself – to

make the verbal excesses of the Marqués de Estella more suitable for press publication – but he did not always judge things correctly. In his memoirs, Caledonio de la Iglesia related how in one of the dictator's speeches he said 'something excessively eccentric which prompted ironic and sharp comments from the listeners'. The chief censor thus decided to remove this part of the speech and prevent its publication the following day.⁶³ Primo was not pleased. When the dictator read his speech in the press, he called for De la Iglesia 'for having cut the entertaining and pleasing part from his peroration, leaving only the dry and serious bits, adding that he knew perfectly well what he wanted to say and when'.⁶⁴ Months later, the chief censor was once again reprimanded by Primo, this time because he had allowed the publication of some remarks the Marqués de Estella had made in a propaganda event in front of 200 followers. According to De la Iglesia's account, Primo telephoned him

puzzled that I had authorised it, unbefitting my usual political sensitivity and the powers he had granted me, adding that it was one thing what was said at specific place and for a specific audience, but quite another which appeared in the press and was spread throughout the whole of Spain.⁶⁵

Primo's scolding about when (and when not) to publish confirms the capricious nature of both the censorship and the dictator himself. More significantly, it suggests that Primo fully grasped that his meetings, speeches and press declarations were moments in which he consciously conveyed a particular message to a given audience. It also indicates Primo's sensitivity to the means by which a message would be carried and the context in which a message was delivered. In short, Primo was clearly aware that in his public declarations he was always playing a particular role.

Primo de Rivera's displays of sympathy, cheerfulness and amiability in front of the domestic and international press should thus be seen not as a natural expression of his character, but rather as part of the image that the dictator himself wished to project. In contrast to the figure who was constantly portrayed as cheerful and good natured, the testimonies of some of Primo's former colleagues show Primo as a moody and unpredictable dictator, subject 'to the impetuosity of his character and changing political vicissitudes'.⁶⁶ Even the *Jerezano* propagandists acknowledged that the dictator was 'a somewhat difficult man'.⁶⁷ Primo also reacted irascibly towards critics of his regime, as could be seen in the case of Quintiliano Saldaña, who used a speech in the National Assembly to denounce the 'infamous contract' between the Spanish state and the US company IIT, which gave the latter control of Telefónica.⁶⁸ Writing later, the Professor of Criminal Law described how Primo was 'livid' upon hearing the criticisms, 'and in the end let his rage fly'. 'The Head of Government, surrounded by his 600 hounds', proceeded to insult Saldaña in the National Assembly.⁶⁹ Similarly, in any discussion of Primo's personality, it is worth remembering, as we have seen in previous chapters, that Primo had no

problems using poison gas on the civilian population of Morocco, 'applying' the *Ley de Fugas* to murder anarchists, imprisoning hundreds of political opponents, allowing the torture of militant workers in prisons and police stations throughout Spain, and bypassing laws at whim.

We must therefore view the promotion of an image of Primo de Rivera as affable and easy-going as part of a propaganda project to counteract the image of a dictator who ordered the use of chemical weapons against civilians, advocated the murder of trades unionists and legitimised mistreatment and false denunciations throughout the country. Vicente Blasco Ibáñez was not so far from the truth when he said that 'Primo de Rivera and the other generals in the Directory allowed themselves the luxury of appearing kind-hearted and falsely tolerant [...] Their colleague Martínez Anido took care of the killing for them'.⁷⁰

The promotion of a positive image of Primo de Rivera nonetheless enjoyed a degree of success thanks to the powerful propaganda apparatus that the Civil Directory created. As well as the Office for News and Press Censorship, the government used public money to purchase some 70 provincial newspapers. On 19 October 1925, the first edition of the daily evening newspaper *La Nación* went on sale. The foremost ideologues of the regime would play a leading role in the newspaper, including José Pemartín, José María Pemán and Ramiro de Maeztu. Primo himself would also write frequently for *La Nación*. In December 1925, a News Office was set up in the Foreign Ministry, entrusted, in the words of the regime, with 'raising awareness abroad of the Spanish social movement in three aspects – scientific, artistic and economic – so little known, not so say lied about, until now'.⁷¹ The new office also received lists of Spanish authors publishing abroad and statistics about the 'Spanish economic movement', and naturally circulated news on matters of interest that was received from embassies abroad.⁷²

Obsessed with the reputation of Spain and his dictatorship, which he often conflated with his own image, in May 1926 Primo de Rivera established *Plus Ultra*, an agency for disseminating official news stories about Spain. The dictator's aim was to create a body that would sway international public opinion about Spain, its dictatorship and its dictator. It was necessary 'to destroy the legend that has us looking in the eyes of Europe as a country that is resistant to the influence of wider culture', as well as raising 'enthusiasm amongst the peoples of America at the scale of the traditions of our race, so that they are guided culturally, not by the meridian of Paris or New York, but by Madrid', and finally to promote 'tourism, which if well-organised, could be an enormous source of income for the Spanish people'.⁷³ To achieve these ends, a modern propaganda machinery was necessary, which would operate incessantly and across multiple media, and would have no qualms about telling lies. As the founding text which set-up the *Plus Ultra* Agency acknowledged:

We believe that effective propaganda has to be multifaceted and persistent, it has to be unleashed through the telegraph office, everywhere,

through the article, through the announcement, through radiotelephony, incessantly and persistently in the manner of the hammer hitting the anvil. *Plus Ultra* must ensure that the name of Spain circulates in the foreign press, appears in the dazzle of the illuminated advertisement and resounds in homes, whenever possible using truthful materials, but when these are lacking, using the unquenchable fount of the imagination.⁷⁴

Primo allocated the considerable annual budget of 500,000 pesetas from state funds for the agency and placed his friend the Marqués de Quintinar in charge of the general delegation of *Plus Ultra* in Madrid. Quintinar would later set-up the far-right periodical *Acción Española* during the Second Republic and became Director of Public Works in the early years of the Franco dictatorship.⁷⁵ As was his standard practice, Primo sought to control *Plus Ultra* and linked the agency to the Bureau of the Prime Minister. From his own office, Primo would regularly involve himself in the work of *Plus Ultra*, whether by writing articles for publication (for a fee) in the foreign press, or telling the Marqués de Quintinar which foreign newspapers were offering negative coverage of Spain and when to begin campaigns of counter-information. In 1928, for example, 'by order of the President', the Bureau of the Prime Minister sent to Quintinar a copy of the French newspaper *L'Information*, which had displeased Primo for its criticism of 'Spanish affairs'.⁷⁶ Primo's office suggested to Quintinar 'that in the national interest the Agency "Plus Ultra" counteract these campaigns'.⁷⁷ Alongside the General Delegation in Madrid, the so-called Principal Delegation of *Plus Ultra* was opened in Paris with the intention of refuting at source the French press and the individuals in the Spanish opposition movement exiled in France.⁷⁸ The Spanish Ambassador to France, José Quiñones de León, was placed in charge of the Parisian delegation. Quiñones combined propaganda with building up a dense network of spies and informers closely linked to the French police, which would prove very useful when combatting the Spanish exiles.⁷⁹ Once again, propaganda and repression represented two sides of the dictatorship's coin. Few understood as well the Spanish dictator that what we now call 'soft power' could work in tandem with a fierce persecution of political opponents.

The *Plus Ultra* Agency was relatively efficient and managed to introduce regular articles, interviews and positive stories about Spain, the dictatorship and the dictator, thanks to a network of journalistic contacts extending throughout Latin America, France, Britain and the United States.⁸⁰ In 1928, the creation of the National Tourist Board would complement the propaganda activities of the dictatorship abroad, and from March 1929, part of the budget for Primo's office was transferred to the Foreign Ministry's News Office to continue paying for propaganda in foreign outlets.⁸¹ Between March 1929 and March 1930, for example, the Parisian edition of the *Chicago Tribune* published 16 columns each week about Spain.⁸² On other occasions, the dictator himself personally supervised propaganda production and the setting up of tourist offices, as was the case with the opening of an office on New York's Fifth Avenue in May 1929, or the

publication of a supplement about Spain in the *New York American* a month before.⁸³ Madrid was so pleased with the feature in the *New York American* that they asked for 500 copies to be sent and translated into Spanish to 'facilitate their effective circulation through the embassies'.⁸⁴

The regime also used propaganda materials published abroad for consumption in Spain. On 10 August 1926, for example, *The Times* of London published a lengthy supplement dedicated to Spain. The excuse for the feature was the visit of Alfonso XIII and his queen Victoria Eugenie to Great Britain, but the true explanation for the publication was the 25,000 pesetas that Primo's office paid for the piece.⁸⁵ The feature repeatedly praised the rebirth of the Spanish race brought about by the dictatorship and the obvious material progress taking place in the form of reservoirs, modern cities, hydroelectric industries, a growing rail network and brand-new highways.⁸⁶ The British newspaper also reprinted Primo's words, in which he demanded a permanent seat for Spain in the League of Nations and presented his dictatorship as a moderate regime, which had not had to resort to extreme violence and which boasted widespread popular support. On 13 August, *La Nación* published an article entitled 'One of the most important newspapers in the world dedicates a special supplement to Spain'. The article summarised the piece in *The Times* and related with pride the very positive picture of 'national progress across the board' which was painted in the supplement. With no hint of irony, it thanked the London daily for 'the offering to our Fatherland that this editorial represents, congratulating our eminent counterpart for the skill with which such a magnificent issue has been put together'.⁸⁷

In August 1926, *La Nación* would also publish numerous articles summarising pieces in the French daily *Le Temps*. On 11 August, for example, it published an article on the front page entitled 'The work of Spain on the international stage, discussed and praised by *Le Temps*'. *La Nación* congratulated the French recognition of the national 'work of reconstruction' brought about by Primo de Rivera, who had 'completely re-established order and discipline in the country', as well as Spain's new international strength, as demonstrated by the new Italo-Spanish treaty signed just a few days earlier.⁸⁸ On 12 August, the headline in *La Nación* read that 'The foreign press does justice to the name of Spain and recognises the triumphs of this regime'. Once again, the international recognition of Spain and its dictator was highlighted, while the words of 'an organ of opinion so prestigious and authoritative in so many ways as *Le Temps*' were reproduced 'faithfully and to the letter'.⁸⁹ None of this was accidental. The *Plus Ultra* agency had contracted the pieces from *Le Temps* months before.⁹⁰ The regime's investment in foreign newspapers was intended to improve the image of Spain, the dictatorship and the dictator abroad. Above all, however, the regime wanted to use such material for nationalistic propaganda inside of Spain. The aim was to use international acknowledgement and praise to generate national pride among Spaniards, which in turn would fashion a bond of 'patriotic' and emotional support for the Marqués de Estella and his government.

Even so, friendly articles in *Les Temps* and other foreign newspapers would last only for as long as the regime was able to pay for them. On 8 April 1929, *La Nación* complained bitterly about an article in *Le Temps* which was critical of Primo's dictatorship during university protests in Spain. In such cases, foreign press criticism of the Spanish dictatorship stimulated a different form of nationalistic logic, namely, that the country was the victim of jealous foreigners who wanted to prevent the resurgence of Spain. On this particular occasion, Primo himself ventured out to rebut the 'campaigns' of certain newspapers against Spain. In the case of the criticisms that had appeared in *Le Temps*, the dictator riposted by showing journalists an article published in the far-right French outlet *L'Action Française*, which spoke of 'a campaign being waged against Spain, very similar to that launched against fascism three years ago, being part of a joint plan of action against the Spanish Dictatorship'.⁹¹ According to *L'Action Française* – and now repeated by Primo – the campaign against the dictatorship was part of a European-wide leftist and masonic offensive to arrest the anti-democratic trend which had swept Italy, Portugal, Hungary and Spain.⁹²

If propaganda was vital to shaping an image of Spain and its dictatorship, both at home and abroad, it was equally central to the regime's efforts to construct a cult of the leader around Primo de Rivera. During the Civil Directory, the regime accelerated its efforts to fashion a charismatic legitimacy for Primo with a propaganda blitz that was unprecedented in Spain. Key ideologues of the UP, such as José María Pemán, José Pemartín and Julián Cortés Cavanillas, promoted an image of the dictator as a superman of 'brilliant intuitions' who was guided by providence.⁹³ To augment the proselytising work of the regime, in 1928 the dictator set up the *Junta de Propaganda Patriótica y Ciudadana* (JPPC – Council for Patriotic and Civic Propaganda). Conceived as a special section of the Office for News and Press Censorship, the JPPC was personally led by Lieutenant-Colonel Máximo Cuervo, Head of the Bureau of the Prime Minister. Alongside a team of 50 military officers, Cuervo organised various cycles of 'patriotic speeches' and produced a series of pamphlets and postcards carrying the image of Primo de Rivera, which were distributed among public servants as well as the general public.⁹⁴ Meanwhile, the JPPC oversaw the publication of books by the dictator and his ideologues.⁹⁵ These volumes were later sent to all civil governors, which in turn distributed them to schools, cultural organisations, town halls, libraries, barracks and UP offices throughout Spain.⁹⁶ At the same time, the JPPC orchestrated a series of 'patriotic demonstrations' in protest at the supposed 'conspiracy' of the foreign press to discredit the Primo de Rivera dictatorship.⁹⁷ With the help of the civil governors, the JPPC mobilised UP militants to participate in such patriotic events, in which signatures in support of the dictator were collected and in which thousands of pamphlets were given out. As the Civil Governor of Lugo would crudely put it, but nonetheless very revealingly, such events were a good opportunity to 'flood the province with pamphlets and ensure that citizens swallowed their ideas'.⁹⁸

Primo played a key role in promoting his own personality cult in the dozens of official tours that he made throughout Spain during his dictatorship. The dictator's pace was so frenetic that after a tour comprising Teruel, Huesca, Logroño, Soria and Burgos in August 1927, Primo had visited every Spanish province as Head of Government.⁹⁹ The tours allowed the dictator to walk among the people, something which he personally enjoyed.¹⁰⁰ For someone who was convinced that he had the support of the majority of the population throughout his dictatorship, the shows of affection in the streets – although they were always organised by the authorities – served to reaffirm what Primo already believed about his popularity. The numerous trips throughout Spain also allowed the dictator to engage in something akin to a continual political campaign, in which he was presented as a leader who maintained direct contact with the people. In his visits to towns and cities, Primo received all manner of requests from individual citizens and various groups, which he would pass to the Bureau of the Prime Minister to be dealt with. As Máximo Cuervo would remark in a letter to the Minister of Education, Eduardo Callejo, after Primo's visit to Valencia and Barcelona in January 1929, the dictator's 'desire' was 'that all of requests made personally to members of the Government when they travel or meet people be studied in detail and processed quickly'.¹⁰¹ This way of working, in which the Marqués de Estella listened to ordinary people and (generally) awarded material benefits to those in need, as and when Primo felt like it, was designed to strengthen the messianic image of a national Caudillo, even if it simultaneously, and perfectly, reflected his despotic and populist way of governing.

Much like other methods of fostering a leadership cult around Primo, popular mobilisations in homage to the dictator would increase under the Civil Directory. In January 1926, according to the regime press, the liturgies held during Primo's visit to Barcelona included a parade of 20,000 *upetistas*, as well as a demonstration in front of the Teatro Olimpia which boasted 7000 supporters.¹⁰² In May 1929, some 9000 *somatenistas* marched in front of Primo de Rivera, Alfonso XIII, Victoria Eugenia and the entire diplomatic corps during the Fiesta of the *Somaten* in the Retiro Park in Madrid, as well as 'before a gigantic crowd made up of all social classes'.¹⁰³ In September 1928, the celebrations for the fifth anniversary of the coup mobilised the entire propaganda machinery of the UP. Over the course of a week, the UP organised meetings, dinners and parades in hundreds of towns throughout Spain.¹⁰⁴ The crowning moment took place in Madrid, where thousands of *upetistas* arrived from all over Spain. As would happen years later under the Franco regime, the Primo de Rivera dictatorship was happy to pay for train fares and sandwiches for those turning out to support the regime. According to *La Nación*, 5000 *upetistas* marched through the streets of Madrid on 13 September 1928 in commemoration of the anniversary.¹⁰⁵ Three days later, 40,000 supporters gathered to celebrate in Barcelona.¹⁰⁶

Primo also showed great interest in using the most cutting-edge media at the time for his propaganda, such as radio and cinema. These new media rapidly became essential 'vehicles of charismatisation' throughout Europe in the interwar period, and Spain would prove no exception.¹⁰⁷ At a time when

radio broadcasting was becoming much more widespread, the dictatorship placed censors in every station. Additionally, Primo made use of a number of radio stations for his patriotic speeches.¹⁰⁸ Nonetheless, Primo's interest in using these innovative means did not guarantee he would be able to do so in a sophisticated manner. Invited to make some statements on *Unión Radio* in April 1924, for example, the dictator stated it was

the first time I have been in front of this device of marvellous invention which can record my words to broadcast them, perhaps to the world, the first words I have to say are a resounding, categorical and enthusiastic "Viva España!"¹⁰⁹

Directly thereafter, Primo began to vehemently criticise the 'absurd black legend' and in particular those 'bad Spaniards' who were spreading it and damaging the reputation of Spain.¹¹⁰

Like Mussolini, Primo was interested in cinema. Already during the Military Directory, he had commissioned a propaganda documentary about the submission of Guipuzcoan flags to the Spanish flag on the Day of Guizpúzcoa in March 1924.¹¹¹ In 1927, a documentary which included a speech by Primo de Rivera became the first sound film recorded in Spain. In the speech, the dictator showed awareness that sound was 'one of the most revolutionary and influential modern innovations in the art of spreading ideas'.¹¹² Primo would speak in further sound films in 1928. Even so, despite the dictator's undoubted interest in cinema, the regime was unable to put together a state policy for promoting cinema in the form of a government production company or distributor provided with sufficient funding to perform significantly useful propaganda work. Indeed, the financial cost of producing propaganda documentaries fell largely on private businesses, which followed their own varied policies when it came to producing films. Nonetheless, after the victory at Alhucemas a series of documentaries were filmed about the Spanish protectorate in Morocco, whose titles left little doubt as to the message the filmmakers were trying to convey. *La paz en Marruecos* (Peace in Morocco, J. Almeida 1927), *Marruecos en la paz* (Morocco at Peace, Rafael López Rienda 1928) and *Marruecos en la guerra y en la paz* (Morocco in War and Peace, Luis Ricart 1929) were all documentaries shot during the Civil Directory.¹¹³ The international expositions in Seville and Barcelona in 1929 were also used to present numerous propaganda documentaries, which showcased the progress of the nation in recent years. Among the most prominent were *El resurgir de España* (The Resurgence of Spain, Antonio Calvache 1929), which was clearly the work of the UP; *La España de hoy* (Spain Today, Francisco Garcallo 1929), which covered Spain's advances in politics, education, the economy, culture and sport; and *España ante el mundo* (Spain in the World, Antonio Calvache & José Calvache 1929), a film which was commissioned personally by Primo de Rivera.¹¹⁴

The regime's propaganda documentaries can only be understood within the context of a deeply nationalistic Spanish film culture in this period.

A whole series of fictional films were produced during the 1920s which promoted conservative, Catholic and Spanish nationalist values very much in line with the thinking of the dictatorship.¹¹⁵ Films such as *Currito de la Cruz* (Alejandro Pérez Lugín, 1925), a box office hit without any explicit political message, promoted a series of right-wing stereotypes, which amplified the reception of regime propaganda across class boundaries.¹¹⁶ Both commercial films and the regime's propaganda output worked in tandem to promote a series of 'national masculinities' linked to bravery, victory and Christian morals.¹¹⁷ In many respects, the patriotic renewal that the Primo de Rivera regime advocated involved the revival of a virility which the Spanish nation had supposedly lost years before. Indeed, this link between national resurgence and the restoration of the nation's virility had been spoken of since the very first day of the dictatorship. In his 'Manifesto', Primo de Rivera had used the following words:

This movement is for men: let those who do not feel full and real men wait in a corner, without disrupting the happy days we are preparing for the nation. Spaniards: Long Live Spain and Long Live the King!¹¹⁸

Primo's reference to the virility of those involved in his coup demonstrates his belief that masculinity and national regeneration were connected.

Throughout the dictatorship, the official image of Primo as a providential leader and saviour of the nation was often associated with the image of a virile soldier, of gentlemanly conduct, who was also a good Catholic and a good father to his family. Primo liked to present himself to the press as a simple man who dined with his children at home, and who, on some nights, would venture out from his residence at the Buenavista Palace to pray at the Basilica of Cristo de Medinaceli.¹¹⁹ Alongside the supposed hand of providence which helped him in Morocco, the success of the landings at Alhucemas was explained by virtue of the dictator's virility and courage, which was seemingly much more decisive than French military support when it came to defeating the Riffian rebels.¹²⁰ Accordingly, the decree which awarded Primo the *Gran Cruz Laureada de San Fernando* spoke of 'the iron will, the quiet valour, the prodigious intelligence [and] the insuperable military ability of General Primo de Rivera', who 'gallantly assumed all his duties' and who had led the Spanish army to victory.¹²¹ After the landings in Morocco, Primo himself wrote a very revealing telegram to the Cardinal Primate of Spain, informing him of the abundance of religious insignia worn by Spanish soldiers. The message, which must have delighted the Cardinal, stated:

It is my pleasure to communicate to Your Eminence, after touring the encampment where 18000 good men work hard day and night, that I have not heard a single blasphemy, and indeed have seen many manly chests unbuttoned to display medals and badges of deep religious sentiment. My salutations with devotion and respect, Primo de Rivera.¹²²

The official press described Primo's actions in Spain as filled with 'vigour' and 'determination' and stated that members of the UP had to participate in the government of the dictatorship 'without falling into exaggerated prudish nonsense'.¹²³ Members of the single party would know how 'to adjust themselves to morality and an urbane and gentlemanly form, which always governed relations between the sexes in Spain [...] The authorities should handle very differently the picaresque and the witty from the vulgar, tawdry and obscene'.¹²⁴ The dictator's reflections on the UP in August 1927 also demonstrate the importance in the plans of the regime of military virility and a desire to follow traditional gender codes:

Many will label this document as romantic. There is no need to deny it or be ashamed of it. Not long ago, in some words that I gave at the Casino de Clases in Madrid I spoke, as best as I knew how, of romanticism as the recovery of our character and moral base. Those men who wear their honourable uniform and their modest badges with pride and care; those who refer to their life partners as 'my lady', or at the very least 'my wife', instead of the tackiness of 'my woman', as well as those who offer the support of their virile arms in public; who offer their lives in war and work hard in peace, who worship the loyalty of those who command them, who read and make poetry [...] They are the height of romanticism today, and must not die out in either the professional class to which I allude or in the social class found in the workshops or engaged in modest professions or jobs.¹²⁵

Notwithstanding the mention of modest jobs, Primo associated this form of national masculinity with a particular social class:

The truth is that in Spain, without denying the existence in the aristocracy of a dignified elite who belong to it, there is a middle class, a numerous and broad-based bourgeoisie, which retains its racial virtues, which has not dressed itself in the style of the latest fashion, but which represents a reputable social element in its family life, in its attitude to work, and in its romantic faith in the future and in the prestige of the Nation.¹²⁶

The national masculinity promoted by the dictator and his propagandists sought to restore the social and sexual order which was considered to be under serious threat in the 1920s.¹²⁷ According to José María Pemán, for example, the First World War had led to the questioning of ideas of the nation, authority and family throughout the world. The dictatorship had come to satisfy a 'thirst for order' which was felt in broad sectors of Spanish society.¹²⁸ In southern Europe, according to Primo, the solutions involved 're-establishing good sense, strengthening the principle of authority, energising civic morality, establishing norms for national organisation [and] reaffirming the subordination of the individual to society'.¹²⁹ This 'masculinisation of politics'

sought to counteract the figure of the womanising Don Juan, who was seen as synonymous with a lack of ideals and civilisational chaos. For Ramiro de Maeztu, the womaniser represented selfish pride, the libidinous instinct, the sexual disorder which led to revolutionary social disarray, or to put it another way, 'The Don Juan cannot open his mouth without drooling at the Bolshevik who lives inside every man'.¹³⁰

It is in this context of promoting a new counter-revolutionary masculinity that we can best understand the moralising campaigns of the dictatorship against blasphemy, gambling, cabarets, homosexuality and the use of cocaine. In the grandiloquent vocabulary of the *primorriverista* conservative press, these were 'crusades' against

untrammelled excess, against open prostitution, against the plague of homos, against obscene shows, against corrupting reading matter, which incite the madness of sexual aberration and artificial paradises, and which sometimes lead to crime; against the freedom of addicts, layabouts and degenerates.¹³¹

This campaign for a new and idiosyncratic masculinity is encapsulated in article 819 of the regime's Penal Code of 1928, which punished with imprisonment of 5 to 20 days, or with a fine of 50 to 5000 pesetas, those who 'even with the intention of gallantry, address themselves to a woman with gestures, expressions or vulgar or tasteless words, or who insistently besiege her in words or in writing'.¹³² It is within this same context that we can best explain the invitation the regime extended to women to get involved in support of the regime as 'bridesmaids' of the *Somatén*, or by joining the women's sections of the UP. The aim was to promote a controlled mobilisation of women from above, which would involve women in the reaffirmation of the *primorriverista* nation, while setting out a particular space for women and not allowing them at any point to question the model of national masculinity promoted by the regime.¹³³

The contradictions between the regime's model of national masculinity and the private life of the dictator did not go unnoticed by large sections of the public. In contrast to the good family man and father of strict Catholic morals that Primo claimed to be, rumours of his numerous affairs circulated throughout Spain and presented a very different image of the dictator. Sometimes they were not even rumours. In an authorised biography of the Marqués de Estella published in 1926, the *ABC* journalist Andrés Révész wrote:

He has been quite the lover. He has loved women both high and low. Of the earliest little has emerged – he is very discreet in this regard – save for his wife, a woman of singular beauty and virtue. Her life was short and she was selected by the commanding impulse of the heart of the man who governs us today. More democratically, now he is a widower he has a new relationship with a very pretty and very Madrileña woman, who

flaunts here grace and poise as a waitress in a famous bar. It is said that he has been quite the lover, that he has loved many, but [...] it is also said that he has preferred the fleeting to the constant.¹³⁴

Given the moralising criticism of the dictatorship for the licentious lives of those who habitually frequented cabarets and singing bars, the dictator's love of parties and his gambling habits certainly undermined the official message. Notwithstanding the campaigns against the consumption of drugs, the La Caoba scandal showed that the Marqués de Estella was prepared to violate judicial processes to get his friend – some claimed his lover – accused of prostitution and drug dealing out of a jail sentence. In many respects, Primo was the very Don Juan caricature that his propagandists were so keen to criticise. Although some historians have suggested that it was precisely his predilection for women and wine which made him popular, the truth is that the public image that the dictator promoted of himself was light years from his true and womanising self.¹³⁵ It is also clear that the rumours and writings about the dictator's wanton life undermined the effectiveness of attempts to portray Primo de Rivera as a charismatic figure (Figure 5.2).



Figure 5.2 Primo de Rivera with a group of women. Credit: EFE.

In truth, Primo's notoriety for womanising and gambling was based partly upon exaggerations and gossip spread by opponents of his regime, who sought to present a grotesque image of the dictator from the very start of the regime. Primo's fondness for alcohol regularly appeared in the articles of Vicente Blasco Ibáñez, for example. The novelist even claimed that the Marqués de Estella had once gone out partying in the Moroccan protectorate with none other than 'Abd-el-Krim, who was his Arabic teacher and drinking buddy when he lived in Melilla as an employee of the Spanish government'.¹³⁶ For Blasco Ibáñez, Primo was 'a cheerful and shameless sort, who spoke of the business of government as if he were having a conversation late at night, with plenty of glasses sitting on the table'.¹³⁷ By contrast, friends of the dictator cast doubt on his supposedly excessive taste for alcohol. Jacinto Capella, for example, claimed that Primo's fondness for gambling 'contributed a lot to the legend that he was a drinker'.¹³⁸ Both friends and enemies appear to agree, however, on Primo de Rivera's love of gambling. Blasco Ibáñez, for instance, described the dictator as

one of the most famous gamblers in Spain [...] There is no gambling joint that he has not patronised. He has gambled with his own money and that of others, and when he took over the Government in order to moralise Spain, he was, as they say, very short of money.¹³⁹

As well as a gambling addict, Blasco Ibáñez had no qualms in describing the dictator as a whoremonger:

From his youth he retains a fondness for visiting certain establishments at night, which in France display a large number above the door [...] Even now, as absolute master of Spain, Madrid's night owls often see his official car parked in the neighbourhoods of the most notorious houses of prostitution. These establishments are closed to their usual parishioners when they are visited at night by His Excellency and his friends.¹⁴⁰

In a very similar vein, in *España con Honra* Miguel de Unamuno also highlighted the fondness of the generals in the Military Directory for the brothels. The publication was spearheaded by Unamuno in France, alongside Carlos Esplá, Vicente Blasco Ibáñez and Eduardo Ortega y Gasset:

"Fully realised masculinity!" But in these men of the whorehouse, in these generals of the brothel [...] whose ejaculations find such favour in the encampments of the crusade, masculinity is poisoned in such a troglodyte parade. The greatest atrocities, as well as gaffes, of the dictatorship which is poisoning Spain, that is gelding it through poison, derive from intoxication. Poor Spain is in the hands of madmen, epileptics, money grabbers, alcoholics and imbeciles.¹⁴¹

The La Caoba scandal allowed the regime's opponents to present Primo as a regular visitor to the brothels and back streets of Madrid, an 'ever-present guest of the gambling houses and the houses of closed windows which sell easy love'.¹⁴² Primo was someone who was prepared to release a 'street walker' who dealt cocaine and other drugs from prison, even though he would have to reprimand a judge and retire the Head of the Supreme Court to do so.¹⁴³ The republicans in exile were always prepared to remind Primo that his was a regime that had stained the Spanish flag 'with the blood of murder, with the bile and spit and pus of vengeful envy, with the vomit of gamblers, with the drugs of prostitutes, with the ink of profanities and official calumnies'.¹⁴⁴ Unamuno called upon Spanish women to liberate the fatherland 'by sweeping away with brooms that scoundrel of whorehouses, who pay the least and loots the depleted treasury of the nation'.¹⁴⁵ The scathing criticism of the republicans about the regime's notions of national masculinities clearly had a significant effect inside Spain. Primo himself led the charge in attacking his opponents in official notes, statements to the press and campaigns against these 'bad Spaniards', who were attacking the Marqués de Estella and Alfonso XIII so brazenly from the safety of France.

In response to the La Caoba scandal, Primo published official notes to defend his actions and confirmed that he would act similarly again, since 'as part of my nature, I have felt inclined all my life to be kind and benevolent towards women'. Actually, this did nothing other than keep alive the link between the dictator and the famous prostitute in the popular consciousness.¹⁴⁶ Muzzled by the censorship, the Spanish press had to find ways to report on the scandal. *El Heraldo de Madrid*, for example, reported the case as if it had taken place in Bulgaria, where the imaginary tyrant called 'Zancoff' had threatened a judge until he had released a woman in jail. Primo did not appreciate the joke and fined the newspaper and the journalist who had penned the story.¹⁴⁷ Elsewhere the criticism was much more subtle. *El Sol*, for example, published a cartoon by Luis Bagaría which showed a snail on the branch of a tree without any textual commentary.¹⁴⁸ The censors did not realise that the green animal represented General Primo de Rivera slithering on a mahogany tree (*caoba*). Censored or not, the story of Primo and the prostitute became so famous that it turned into a popular song:

Te llamaban la Caoba por tu pelo colorao.
 Te llamaban la Caoba.
 Ahora es blanco marfilao.
 Ya ninguno te da coba.
 Mira si el mundo ha cambiao
 They called you la Caoba for your red hair.
 They called you la Caoba.
 Now it is white as ivory.
 Nobody sucks up to you now.
 Look how the world has changed.¹⁴⁹

In such conditions, it was practically impossible to construct an image of a charismatic leader who was both gentlemanly and romantic. Nonetheless, in the spring of 1928, when the dictator made public his engagement to the aristocrat Mercedes ‘Niní’ Castellanos y Mendiville, the regime press saw a new opportunity to present Primo as the highest representation of Spanish chivalry and leave behind the jokes about prostitutes, gambling and drugs. For months, the newspapers were filled with items about the relationship between the widowed general, now 58 years old, and the stepdaughter of the Conde de San Félix, aged 40. The fiancées appeared together in public in various social engagements and Castellanos began to accompany the dictator on his official tours throughout Spain.¹⁵⁰ At the end of April, Niní Castellanos gave an interview to *La Estampa* magazine. She claimed that she had met the general in 1921 and confirmed that she was set to marry the dictator.¹⁵¹ The wedding was announced for 24 September 1928, so as to coincide with the bride’s saint’s day. All appeared to be going perfectly. In mid-May, Primo gave an award to Castellanos at the Fiesta of the *Somatén* held in the Retiro Park in Madrid, in the presence of dictatorship’s hierarchy, as well as thousands of citizens who were in attendance.¹⁵² However, on 8 June 1928, without any form of explanation, it was announced that the wedding would not take place. ‘It is correct, as has been said today, that General Primo de Rivera has withdrawn from his proposed marriage’, was the simple factual statement presented by *La Nación* on its inside pages.¹⁵³ The reason behind the cancellation of the wedding remains uncertain. Some authors have suggested that the opposition of the dictator’s children to the marriage proved decisive, in particular that of José Antonio and Miguel, but we have no proof of this.¹⁵⁴ What is certain is that the cancellation of the wedding frustrated efforts to redefine Primo de Rivera’s image as a family man who conducted himself as a gentleman.

Even though some have suggested that the abrupt cancellation of the wedding had a negative bearing on Primo de Rivera’s popularity, the truth is that in the spring of 1928, the dictator felt very secure as regards the social support for his dictatorship.¹⁵⁵ On the very same day that the cancellation of his marriage to Niní Castellanos was announced, Primo gave one of the strangest interviews of his life. In his chambers at the Buenavista Palace, sat in bed, where he lay recovering from a cold, he received the editor of *La Nación*, Manuel Delgado Barreto, to rebut the rumours of a crisis in the government. Primo spoke of having the support of ‘public opinion, together, unanimous’ when it came to continuing in power for another five years at least.¹⁵⁶ From his bed, and beneath a giant crucifix, Primo, who did not stop smoking throughout the entire interview, insisted that ‘the will of the country’ had not abandoned him ‘even for an instant’ during the five years of the dictatorship and defended the *Unión Patriótica* as an ‘enormous force, of positive value’ called upon to govern the nation.¹⁵⁷

Primo was not entirely wrong about the popularity of his regime. In 1928, the reports of the Italian embassy in Madrid indicated broad popular support

for the regime. For the Ambassador, Giuseppe Medici, the dictatorship could count upon

the sympathy of most of the nation, who, indifferent, by dint of the atavistic tendency of the Spanish soul, to political and parliamentary battles, is today receptive to the long-lasting internal tranquillity and the widespread economic prosperity that a few years of strong government has visibly brought to the country.¹⁵⁸

Nonetheless, the Ambassador's reports also warned that, despite Primo's admiration for fascism, the UP was nothing but a 'very pale imitation of the *Fasci*'. In Italy, wrote the Ambassador, the *Fasci* had created the regime, whereas in Spain it was the regime that had created the UP. Nor was the *Somatén* particularly similar to the Italian *Milicia Voluntaria*, having fewer members, less weaponry, laxer discipline, and above all because it lacked the strength and spiritual cohesion of the Italian fascist paramilitaries. In early January 1929, the Italian Consul in Barcelona went even further. He reported to Rome that the *Unión Patriótica* was 'a fictional creation beloved by the Dictatorship for creating a clientelist politics beyond the restricted circles of the military, to whom the uprising it owed its success'. For him, the UP's influence on Spanish political life was practically nil.¹⁵⁹

The Italian diplomats' analysis of a broad, but somewhat passive support of the majority of Spaniards for the Primo de Rivera dictatorship coincided in large part with the views of the French Ambassador in Madrid. In 1928, he had already stated that the regime would be maintained without too much difficulty thanks to the 'national indifference' of Spaniards.¹⁶⁰ Both Italian and French diplomats concurred, however, that the support was shallow among broad sections of Spanish society, indeed more akin to a form of acquiescence. While things were going well for Primo de Rivera politically, this superficial level of popular backing appeared to be sufficient and gave the dictator the false impression that his support was stronger than events would later prove. Once the dictatorship began to face a series of crises throughout 1929, however, the flimsiness of popular support for Primo became more apparent, even among members of the UP and the *Somatén*. During the insurrection in Ciudad Real in January 1929, for example, members of the party and the militia stayed at home, to the extent that the Army had to be called in to face down the uprising. As we saw in the previous chapter, the passivity of the party and the militia left Primo deeply disenchanted and sad.¹⁶¹ The Marqués de Estella now understood that his followers in the UP and *Somatén* might parade through the streets and acclaim their leader, but he could not count upon them to mobilise in defence of his regime. Meanwhile, the escalation of the student protests against the regime in the spring of 1929 demonstrated the inability of the youth sections of the UP to stand up to an opposition that was wresting control of the streets from the party.¹⁶² Unlike Mussolini, therefore, Primo de Rivera was unable to mobilise the militia and the party when his

regime was under attack.¹⁶³ Not only does this suggest a much weaker political commitment on the part of *upetistas* and *somatenistas* towards the Primo dictatorship than that which the *Fasci* demonstrated in Italy. It also shows that the degree of popular support for Primo was, in general terms, much less than that enjoyed by Mussolini, who was indeed able to mobilise his stalwarts in moments of crisis.

This ability to mobilise in times of crisis might perhaps be used as an indication of the success of processes of ‘charismatisation’. There can be no doubt that Primo’s regime was able to construct a leadership cult and mobilise broad sectors of the population, but very few of those who took part in the patriotic events staged by the UP, or the ceremonies in which the flags of the *Somatén* were blessed, were prepared to put their lives on the line for the Marqués de Estella and defend his regime with arms. In comparison to an Italian fascist, the degree of political commitment of a *upetista* was lacking. There is certainly data to support such a claim. The fact that the official daily newspaper *La Nación* had a print run of just 50,000 copies, for example, shows us that the vast majority of members of the UP – which, the dictator claimed, had more than 1,600,000 members in 1927 – did not bother to read the official press.¹⁶⁴ Nor did the reports of the provincial leaders of the UP leave any doubt on the matter. In April 1929, for example, the provincial head of the UP in Barcelona, Andrés Gassó y Vidal, bitterly informed the dictator about the inactivity of his members. In a brutal letter, Gassó wrote that 90% of the members of the party were ‘indifferent to’ or ‘disillusioned’ with the regime. Another 5% of the members, according to Gassó, were only going to the party headquarters to read the newspaper or play cards. The remaining 5% wanted ‘to act in good faith’ but owing to the lack of support from their leaders, their enthusiasm could not make itself felt.¹⁶⁵

The Italians had their own views on the Spanish dictatorship’s difficulties in creating a powerful leadership cult, a charismatic image of Primo and solid popular support for the regime. A report prepared for Mussolini by one of his adjutants in October 1929 offered a sharp comparison of how the two dictatorships had developed. The conclusions were devastating:

But the Fascist Revolution has been passion, struggle, blood and had three component features, without which it is very difficult to realise the miracle of inspiring a new way of life in a people: a war won, a *condottiero* (warrior Caudillo), a myth. The commendable movement of Primo de Rivera in Spain, by contrast, although it has indisputably been something more than a ministerial crisis, has nonetheless been much less than a revolution. It lacks the war won; the myth was terribly absent, as has been proven pathetically in the attempt to construct a “patriotic party” without spirit and without verve, and the *condottiero* could not be said to be anything more than an energetic and intelligent gentleman, who meanwhile does not have numerous nor enthusiastic followers, and has been more inhibited than encouraged in his many initiatives.¹⁶⁶

The level of commitment of the members of the respective official parties in the two dictatorships stemmed, to some degree, from the circumstances of each regime and the links that were established with the respective leaders. In purely fascist regimes a double process of 'charismatisation' took place.¹⁶⁷ Italy and Germany witnessed a 'genuine charismatisation', which involved a 'charismatic community' of a handful of followers, normally the old veterans of the party, who were imbued with a mystique of 'Führerprinzip' common to fascist ideology. Such militants, who had often known the leader before he became dictator, remained loyal to the *Führer* even in those moments of greatest adversity. This explains the support offered to Mussolini by the *gerarchi* fascists in the winter of 1942–1943, when it was clear to all that the *Duce* was unable to defend either his party or his country. In short, there was an original community of followers, in which the charisma of the leader continued to exercise a powerful hold.¹⁶⁸ In the case of Hitler, the German dictator was able to generate a certain degree of popular adulation as late as 1943 and 1944, when military defeats were heralding the downfall of the national-socialist project.¹⁶⁹

Alongside the 'charismatic community', the fascist dictatorships also involved a process of charismatisation based upon the cult of the leader, which was manufactured from above.¹⁷⁰ In this regard, a similar process could be seen in all of the European counter-revolutionary dictatorships of the interwar period, where a leadership cult was planned rationally from above. Unlike the purely fascist dictatorships, however, in the counter-revolutionary dictatorships, the leadership cult did not derive from a charismatic community which predated the taking of power.¹⁷¹ Unlike Mussolini's Italy or Hitler's Germany, Primo de Rivera's regime constructed the charismatic image of the Spanish leader entirely after the assumption of power. The regime's ideology did not derive from a fascist group opposed to democracy, in which a group of founding members developed a 'charismatic community' before arriving in power. At the hour of his coup in September 1923, Primo de Rivera lacked a political base. The creation of the UP was meant to address this absence precisely. Yet the very fact that the party was 'official' meant that the commitment of the membership would be minimal. By 1926, the regime leadership already realised that the UP was a perfect breeding ground for the advancement of personal ambitions for many members. In December that year, General Milans del Bosch and General Barrera made a public appeal to purge the party and expel 'all those who had joined the UP in bad faith'.¹⁷² After the regime had fallen, José Calvo Sotelo said that the chief problem of the UP had been precisely its official nature, which meant it attracted many people who sought to benefit from affiliation, but who did not feel committed to the regime or its leader.¹⁷³ With such wicker, it was inevitable that the bottom of the regime's basket would fall out in times of difficulty.

Notes

- 1 *ABC*, 14 September 1923.
- 2 *La Vanguardia*, 14 September 1923.
- 3 *La Vanguardia*, 14 September 1923.

- 4 *La Vanguardia*, 14 September 1923. Juan Prim (1814–1870) was a decorated Spanish general and statesman who had played a leading role in various domestic and colonial military campaigns in the first half of the nineteenth century. He would eventually serve as Prime Minister from June 1869 until he was assassinated in December 1870.
- 5 *La Vanguardia*, 14 September 1923.
- 6 Jordi Casassas i Ymbert, *La dictadura de Primo de Rivera (1923–1930)*. Textos (Barcelona: Anthropos, 1983), pp. 81–87.
- 7 Aristotle Kallis, ‘Fascism, “Charisma” and “Charismatisation”: Weber’s Model of “Charismatic Domination” and Interwar European Fascism’, *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, 7:1 (2006), p. 29; Antonio Costa Pinto, ‘Elites, Single Parties and Political Decision-Making in Fascist-Era Dictatorships’, *Contemporary European History*, 11:3 (2002), pp. 429–454.
- 8 Antonio Costa Pinto & Stein Ugelvik Larsen, ‘Conclusion: Fascism, Dictators and Charisma’, *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, 7:2 (2006), p. 253; Piero Melogrami, ‘The Cult of the Duce in Mussolini’s Italy’, in George L. Mosse (ed.), *International Fascism* (Sage: London, 1979), pp. 73–90; Luisa Passerini, *Mussolini immaginario. Storia di una biografia, 1915–1939* (Bari: Laterza, 1991); Angelo M. Imbriani, *Gli italiani e il Duce. Il mito e l’immagine di Mussolini negli ultimi anni del fascismo, 1938–1943* (Napoli: Liguori, 1992); John Pollard, ‘Mussolini’s Rivals: The Limits of the Leadership Cult in Fascist Italy’, *New Perspective*, 4:2 (1998), pp. 26–29; Didier Musiedlak, ‘Mussolini: le grand dessein à l’épreuve de la réalité’, *Parlement[s], Revue d’histoire politique*, 13 (2010), pp. 51–62; Dávid Turbucz, ‘Miklós Horthy in Poland. Official Visit, Image of Charismatic Leader and His Leader Cult. The Hungarian Interpretation’, *Hungarian Studies*, 32:2 (2018), pp. 291–304; Mieczyslaw B. Biskupski, *Independence Day: Myth, Symbol and the Creation of Modern Poland* (Oxford: OUP, 2012); Heidi Hein-Kirchner, *Der Pilsudski-Kult und seine Bedeutung für den polnischen Staat 1926–1939* (Marburg: Herder-Institut, 2002).
- 9 John Breuilly, ‘Max Weber, Charisma and Nationalist Leadership’, *Nations and Nationalism*, 17:3 (2011), pp. 477–499.
- 10 Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, 2nd ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), pp. 212–250; Roger Eatwell, ‘New Styles of Dictatorship and Leadership in Inter-War Europe’, *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, 7:2 (2006), p. 136.
- 11 For the quotations, see Manuel Rubio Cabeza, *Crónica de la dictadura* (Madrid: Sarpe, 1986), p. 154. Primo’s use of medical metaphors and scientific vocabulary can also be seen, *inter alia*, in *La Vanguardia*, 11 July 1925; *La Nación*, 19 October 1925; Dionisio Pérez, *La Dictadura a través de sus Notas oficiosas* (Madrid: Compañía Ibero-Americana de Publicaciones, 1930), pp. 32–37; Primo de Rivera, *Disertación ciudadana* (Madrid: Sanz Calleja, 1926), p. 23.
- 12 It is worth clarifying that despite his sympathy for Joaquín Costa, the dictator never made any express mention of him during the period of the Military Directory. Primo de Rivera and his propagandists only began to refer to Costa regularly in the later years of the regime. See Eloy Fernández Clemente, ‘Retórica regeneracionista y pseudocostismo en la Dictadura de Primo de Rivera’, in *El Legado de Costa* (Zaragoza: Ministerio de Cultura/Diputación General de Aragón, 1984), pp. 139–173. For the popularity of regenerationist ideas, see María Teresa González Calbet, *La Dictadura de Primo de Rivera* (Madrid: El Arquero, 1987), pp. 50–51, 265.
- 13 For examples, see, *inter alia*, *La Nación*, 11 December 1925; *El Somatén*, August 1924; Mask (pseudonym of Enrique Díaz Retg), *Páginas para la Historia. Hacia la España nueva: pasado, presente y porvenir del Directorio Militar* (Madrid: Sucesores de Rivadeneira, 1925), p. 189.

- 14 Dionisio Pérez, *La Dictadura a través de sus Notas oficiosas* (Madrid: Compañía Ibero-Americana de Publicaciones, 1930), p. 52.
- 15 Raymond Carr, *España 1808–1939* (Barcelona: Ariel, 1970), pp. 543–544.
- 16 Among the many examples of Primo representing himself as a tireless worker, see *La Nación*, 11 March 1929. For Primo as a just man, see *La Nación*, 31 December 1929. For the dictator as a servant of the nation, see *La Nación*, 8 August 1927, 9 March 1929.
- 17 Rodney Baker, *Legitimizing Identities: The Self-Presentations of Rulers and Subjects* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 3–4.
- 18 Primo de Rivera to Sanjurjo, Madrid, 2 July 1926, in José Manuel de Armiñán and Luis de Armiñán, *Epistolario del dictador. La figura de Primo de Rivera trazada por su propia mano* (Madrid: Javier Morata, 1930), p. 366.
- 19 Primo de Rivera to Sanjurjo, Madrid, 2 July 1926, in José Manuel de Armiñán and Luis de Armiñán, *Epistolario del dictador. La figura de Primo de Rivera trazada por su propia mano* (Madrid: Javier Morata, 1930), p. 365.
- 20 Primo de Rivera to Sanjurjo, Madrid, 2 July 1926, in José Manuel de Armiñán and Luis de Armiñán, *Epistolario del dictador. La figura de Primo de Rivera trazada por su propia mano* (Madrid: Javier Morata, 1930), p. 365.
- 21 *La Nación*, 8 August 1927.
- 22 *La Nación*, 8 August 1927.
- 23 *La Nación*, 8 August 1927.
- 24 *La Nación*, 8 August 1927.
- 25 Jordi Casassas i Ymbert, *La dictadura de Primo de Rivera (1923–1930). Textos* (Barcelona: Anthropos, 1983), p. 81.
- 26 Miguel Primo de Rivera, *El Pensamiento de Primo de Rivera* (Madrid: Sáez Hermanos / Junta de Propaganda Patriótica y Ciudadana, 1929), pp. 80–81.
- 27 Juan Avilés Farré, ‘Un pálido reflejo del fascismo: la dictadura de Primo de Rivera en los informes diplomáticos italianos’, *Pasado y Memoria. Revista de Historia Contemporánea*, 16 (2017), p. 84.
- 28 *La Nación*, 5 November 1929.
- 29 *La Nación*, 31 December 1929.
- 30 Primo de Rivera to Sanjurjo, Madrid, 2 July 1926, in José Manuel de Armiñán and Luis de Armiñán, *Epistolario del dictador. La figura de Primo de Rivera trazada por su propia mano* (Madrid: Javier Morata, 1930), p. 366.
- 31 Dionisio Pérez, *La Dictadura a través de sus Notas oficiosas* (Madrid: Compañía Ibero-Americana de Publicaciones, 1930), p. 286.
- 32 Andrés Révész, *Frente al dictador* (Madrid: Biblioteca Internacional, 1926), p. 18.
- 33 José Ignacio Cases, ‘La transformación de las políticas públicas de juego de azar en España’, *GAPP. Revista Gestión y Análisis de Políticas Públicas*, 6 (2011), pp. 80–81.
- 34 Jacinto Capella, *La verdad de Primo de Rivera: intimidades y anécdotas del dictador* (Madrid: Imprenta Hijos de Tomás Minuesa, 1933), p. 28.
- 35 Jacinto Capella, *La verdad de Primo de Rivera: intimidades y anécdotas del dictador* (Madrid: Imprenta Hijos de Tomás Minuesa, 1933), p. 28.
- 36 *La Vanguardia*, 9 October 1929.
- 37 *La Vanguardia*, 9 October 1929.
- 38 For the quotation, see Jacinto Capella, *La verdad de Primo de Rivera: intimidades y anécdotas del dictador* (Madrid: Imprenta Hijos de Tomás Minuesa, 1933), p. 101. Capella described his friend thus: ‘He had a prodigious appetite; I have never known anyone in my life who could eat more, with game birds being one of his favourite dishes’. On the hours at which Primo ate, see Andrés Révész, *Frente al dictador* (Madrid: Biblioteca Internacional, 1926), pp. 37–38. Révész (p. 41)

- also mentioned Primo's appetite and culinary tastes: 'He had a hearty appetite and ate well. He loved all types of shellfish and game birds'.
- 39 Juan Ignacio Rospir, 'Estudio preliminar', in Caledonio de la Iglesia (ed.), *La censura por dentro* (Madrid: Fragua, 2017), pp. xxii–xxix.
 - 40 *La Vanguardia*, 14 September 1923.
 - 41 Lluís Costa Fernández, 'Comunicación y propaganda durante la dictadura de Primo de Rivera (1923–1930)', *Historia y Comunicación Social*, 18 (2013), p. 389.
 - 42 Juan Ignacio Rospir, 'Estudio preliminar', in Caledonio de la Iglesia (ed.), *La censura por dentro* (Madrid: Fragua, 2017), p. xxxiv.
 - 43 Juan Ignacio Rospir, 'Estudio preliminar', in Caledonio de la Iglesia (ed.), *La censura por dentro* (Madrid: Fragua, 2017), p. xxxii.
 - 44 Manuel Rubio Cabeza, *Crónica de la dictadura* (Madrid: Sarpe, 1986), pp. 128–129, 143–144, 157, 161.
 - 45 Among many other examples, see *El Somatén*, August 1924; *Unión Patriótica*, 1 April 1927; *La Nación*, 13 September 1927.
 - 46 Dozens of reports on the opening of new public schools can be found in AHN, Presidencia del Gobierno, legajo 358.
 - 47 *ABC*, 25 January 1925; *La Nación*, 3 November 1925.
 - 48 Shlomo Ben-Ami, *Fascism from above: The Dictatorship of Primo de Rivera in Spain 1923–1930* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), p. 76. On *España con Honra*, see Victor Ouimette, 'Unamuno, Blasco Ibáñez and España con Honra', *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies*, 53:4 (1976), pp. 315–322.
 - 49 See *La Nación*, 11 December 1925. Alejandro Quiroga, 'Providential Dictator: Nation and Religion under Primo de Rivera (1923–30)', in Gregorio Alonso and Claudio Hernández Burgos (eds.), *The Soul of the Nation* (New York/London: Berghahn, 2024), pp. 134–155.
 - 50 A photographic account of the event was published in *Unión Patriótica*, 1 November 1926.
 - 51 Shlomo Ben-Ami, *Fascism from above: The Dictatorship of Primo de Rivera in Spain 1923–1930* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), p. 110.
 - 52 Royal Decree, 6 October 1925.
 - 53 For the comparisons with Mussolini and Atatürk, see *El Somatén*, August 1924. The hyperbole over Primo's military abilities and comparison with Napoleon and Lenin can be seen in Mask (pseudonym of Enrique Díaz Retg), *Páginas para la Historia. Hacia la España nueva: pasado, presente y porvenir del Directorio Militar* (Madrid: Sucesores de Rivadeneyra, 1925), p. 7.
 - 54 Mask (pseudonym of Enrique Díaz Retg), *Páginas para la Historia. Hacia la España nueva: pasado, presente y porvenir del Directorio Militar* (Madrid: Sucesores de Rivadeneyra, 1925), pp. 7, 324.
 - 55 Primo de Rivera to Adolfo Vallespinosa, Tetuán, 8 October 1925. José Manuel de Armiñán and Luis de Armiñán, *Epistolario del dictador. La figura de Primo de Rivera trazada por su propia mano* (Madrid: Javier Morata, 1930), p. 327.
 - 56 Mask (pseudonym of Enrique Díaz Retg), *Páginas para la Historia. Hacia la España nueva: pasado, presente y porvenir del Directorio Militar* (Madrid: Sucesores de Rivadeneyra, 1925), p. 189.
 - 57 Manuel Rubio Cabeza, *Crónica de la dictadura* (Madrid: Sarpe, 1986), pp. 161–162.
 - 58 Instructions to the *delegados* and the holding of patriotic events can be seen in AHN, Presidencia del Gobierno, legajo 331, caja 2.
 - 59 Antonio Costa Pinto & Stein Ugelvik Larsen, 'Conclusion: Fascism, Dictators and Charisma', *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, 7:2 (2006), pp. 251–257.

- 60 Manuel Rubio Cabeza, *Crónica de la dictadura* (Madrid: Sarpe, 1986), pp. 128–129, 143–144, 157, 161.
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- 62 José Manuel Morales Tamaral, 'A la conquista de las masas. Los orígenes de la propaganda estatal en la España de entreguerras, 1917–1936', *Rubrica Contemporanea*, 5:10 (2016), p. 75.
- 63 Caledonio de la Iglesia, *La censura por dentro* (Madrid: Compañía Ibero-Americana de Publicaciones, 1930), p. 71.
- 64 Caledonio de la Iglesia, *La censura por dentro* (Madrid: Compañía Ibero-Americana de Publicaciones, 1930), p. 72.
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- 67 Andrés Révész, *Frente al dictador* (Madrid: Biblioteca Internacional, 1926), p. 48.
- 68 Quintiliano Saldaña, *Al servicio de la justicia* (Madrid: Javier Morata, 1930), p. 16, n. 1.
- 69 Quintiliano Saldaña, *Al servicio de la justicia* (Madrid: Javier Morata, 1930), pp. 15–16.
- 70 Vicente Blasco Ibáñez, *Por España y contra el rey* (Sevilla: West Indies Publishing Company, 2020 [1925]), p. 106.
- 71 José Manuel Morales Tamaral, 'A la conquista de las masas. Los orígenes de la propaganda estatal en la España de entreguerras, 1917–1936', *Rubrica Contemporanea*, 5:10 (2016), p. 79.
- 72 José Manuel Morales Tamaral, 'A la conquista de las masas. Los orígenes de la propaganda estatal en la España de entreguerras, 1917–1936', *Rubrica Contemporanea*, 5:10 (2016), p. 79.
- 73 The founding document of the Plus Ultra Agency is reproduced in full in Rosa Cal Martínez, 'La agencia Plus Ultra: un instrumento de propaganda de Primo de Rivera', *Mélanges de la Casa de Velázquez*, XXXI:3 (1995), pp. 181–187. For the quotation, see p. 182.
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- 85 María Rosa Cal, 'Los gastos reservados y la prensa con Primo de Rivera', *Historia 16*, 271 (1988), pp. 72-77.
- 86 *The Times* (London): *Spanish Number*, 10 August 1926.
- 87 *La Nación*, 13 August 1926.
- 88 *La Nación*, 11 August 1926.
- 89 *La Nación*, 12 August 1926.
- 90 Rosa Cal Martínez, 'La agencia Plus Ultra: un instrumento de propaganda de Primo de Rivera', *Mélanges de la Casa de Velázquez*, XXXI:3 (1995), pp. 184-185.
- 91 *La Nación*, 8 April 1929.
- 92 *La Nación*, 8 April 1929.
- 93 For the quotation, see José María Pemán, 'Prólogo', in Miguel Primo de Rivera (ed.), *El pensamiento de Primo de Rivera*. Sus notas, artículos y discursos (Madrid: Imprenta Artística Sáez Hermanos/Junta de Propaganda Patriótica y Ciudadana, 1929), p. 9. Other examples of the dictator being described in messianic terms are José Pemartín, *Los valores históricos en la dictadura Española* (Madrid: Arte y Ciencia, 1928), p. 127; Julián Cortés Cavanillas, *La dictadura y el dictador* (Madrid: Talleres Tipográficos Velasco, 1929), pp. 311-313; Emilio R. Tarduchy, *Psicología del dictador* (Madrid: Sáez Hermanos, 1929), pp. 103-109.
- 94 AHN, Presidencia del Gobierno, legajo 199, caja 1, & legajo 192, caja 2.
- 95 Among which were Miguel Primo de Rivera, *El pensamiento de Primo de Rivera* (Madrid: Sáez Hermanos / Junta de Propaganda Patriótica y Ciudadana, 1929); José Pemartín, *Los valores históricos en la dictadura española* (Madrid: Arte y Ciencia, 1928); Julián Cortés Cavanillas, *La dictadura y el dictador* (Madrid: Talleres Tipográficos Velasco, 1929); Emilio R. Tarduchy, *Psicología del dictador* (Madrid: Sáez Hermanos, 1929).
- 96 For the distribution of propaganda, see AHN, Presidencia del Gobierno, legajo 190, caja 1; legajo 192, caja 1; legajo 199, caja 1; legajo 204, caja 2.
- 97 *Unión Patriótica*, 15 April 1929.
- 98 Civil Governor (Lugo) to Máximo Cuervo, 30 July 1929. AHN, Presidencia del Gobierno, legajo 192, caja 1.
- 99 *La Nación*, 2 August 1927.
- 100 As Primo himself acknowledged in a letter to Admiral Magaz, in which he talked about his tour of the east coast and spoke of 'a continuous acclaim'. See Primo de Rivera to Magaz, 4 June 1925, in José Manuel de Armiñán and Luis de Armiñán, *Epistolario del dictador. La figura de Primo de Rivera trazada por su propia mano* (Madrid: Javier Morata, 1930), p. 117.
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- 104 *La Nación*, 10 September 1928, 11 September 1928, 12 September 1928.
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- 118 *ABC*, 14 September 1923.
- 119 *La Nación*, 2 March 1929.
- 120 Primo de Rivera's speech to members of the Unión Patriótica in the Palacio de Hielo in Madrid, 16 October 1925, in Mask (pseudonym of Enrique Díaz Retg), *Páginas para la Historia. Hacia la España nueva: pasado, presente y porvenir del Directorio Militar* (Madrid: Sucesores de Rivadeneyra, 1925), p. 205.
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- 128 Nerea Aresti, 'A Fight for Real Men: Gender and Nation-Building during the Primo de Rivera Dictatorship (1923–1930)', *European History Quarterly*, 50:2 (2020), p. 250.
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- 130 Maeztu's words are quoted in Nerea Aresti, 'La peligrosa naturaleza de Don Juan. Sexualidad masculina y orden social en la España de entreguerras', *Cuadernos de Historia Contemporánea*, 40 (2018), p. 14.
- 131 For the quotation, see *La Acción*, 24 April 1924. For the campaign against gambling, see *La Acción*, 12 March 1924.
- 132 *Gaceta de Madrid*, no. 257, 13 September 1928, p. 1523.

- 133 Nerea Aresti, 'A Fight for Real Men: Gender and Nation-Building during the Primo de Rivera Dictatorship (1923–1930)', *European History Quarterly*, 50:2 (2020), pp. 248–265.
- 134 Andrés Révész, *Frente al dictador* (Madrid: Biblioteca Internacional, 1926), pp. 44–45.
- 135 According to Ben-Ami, Primo's 'taste for celebrations, wine, women, and good food, his somewhat quixotic readiness to fight for what he sincerely thought to be a noble cause – all that made up a constant appeal to the gallery, and the gallery applauded'. Shlomo Ben-Ami, *Fascism from above: The Dictatorship of Primo de Rivera in Spain 1923–1930* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), p. 163.
- 136 Vicente Blasco Ibáñez, *Por España y contra el rey* (Seville: West Indies Publishing Company, 2020 [1925]), p. 76. Another mention of Primo's drinking had it that Primo announced his military strategy in Morocco during the dessert course at a dinner in Málaga. Blasco Ibáñez added (p. 97) that announcements were 'always [made] at moments of heavy drinking!'
- 137 Vicente Blasco Ibáñez, *Por España y contra el rey* (Seville: West Indies Publishing Company, 2020 [1925]), p. 107.
- 138 Jacinto Capella, *La verdad de Primo de Rivera: intimidaciones y anécdotas del dictador* (Madrid: Imprenta Hijos de Tomás Minuesa, 1933), p. 27.
- 139 Vicente Blasco Ibáñez, *Por España y contra el rey* (Seville: West Indies Publishing Company, 2020 [1925]), p. 78.
- 140 Vicente Blasco Ibáñez, *Por España y contra el rey* (Seville: West Indies Publishing Company, 2020 [1925]), p. 78.
- 141 Unamuno's article in *España con Honra* (number 4, 10 January 1925) is reproduced in Manuel María Urrutia León, 'Miguel de Unamuno y España con Honra (1924–1925)', *Cuadernos Cátedra Miguel de Unamuno*, 47:1 (2009), p. 209.
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- 144 For Unamuno's words, see Manuel María Urrutia León, 'Miguel de Unamuno y España con Honra (1924–1925)', *Cuadernos Cátedra Miguel de Unamuno*, 47:1 (2009), p. 211.
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- 151 *La Estampa*, 24 April 1928.
- 152 *La Nación*, 14 May 1928.
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- 159 Juan Avilés Farré, 'Un pálido reflejo del fascismo: la dictadura de Primo de Rivera en los informes diplomáticos italianos', *Pasado y Memoria. Revista de Historia Contemporánea*, 16 (2017), p. 77.
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6 The Nationalisation of the Masses

On Saturday 2 March 1929, Miguel Primo de Rivera wrote to the Director-General of Health, Lieutenant-Colonel Antonio Horcada Mateo, to ask him to give a lecture at a course for Army officers.¹ The dictator sought to gather the most distinguished members of the regime's intelligentsia in a course 'particularly aimed at the officers who were going to be engaged in the missionary work of educating the people in the incredibly important civic and pre-military ideas'.² The idea, as the dictator eagerly explained, was that the lectures to regime officials would constitute 'the basis of a doctrine which, propagated thereafter, will raise the level of the citizenry'.³ On Sunday 3 March, Primo met at one in the afternoon with Máximo Cuervo, the Bureau of the Prime Minister, to finalise the details of the course, which was to be held at the Alcázar de Toledo.⁴ The Marqués de Estella went for a walk after the meeting, returning to his office to dine at around 6, and then went to the Zarzuela Theatre with his family.⁵ After the performance, at 9 o'clock that evening, the dictator gave an optimistic press statement about the staging of a 'preparatory course for the leaders chosen to spread civic, gymnastic and pre-military education' among the people.⁶

Seven days later, General José Villalba y Riquelme, the President of the National Committee for Physical Culture and co-organiser of the event with Primo, inaugurated the Citizenry Course in Toledo.⁷ Over the next three weeks, 125 officers of the *Servicio Nacional de Educación Física, Ciudadana y Premilitar* (National Service for Physical, Civic and Pre-military Education – SNEFCP) attended talks given by pro-regime luminaries such as Eduardo Pérez Angulo, José Pemartín, Eduardo Aunós, Manuel Siurot Rodríguez, José María Pemán, José Calvo Sotelo and José María de Yanguas Messía. Needless to say, the programme also included the invited contribution of Antonio Horcada. Predictably, the talks had a distinctly nationalistic tone and included dissertations on the sacred unity of Spain, the regime's Spanish-American policies, the corporative structure of the dictatorship and the 'spirit of citizenship'.⁸ Meanwhile, some other regime's ideologues gave lectures on subjects that were ostensibly more technical, such as the education system, advances in agriculture and animal husbandry, economics and taxation. Even here, however, the Spanish nationalist undertones were hardly

absent. It is no coincidence that all of the speakers present – save for Calvo Sotelo, who was murdered in July 1936 just days before the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War – would later go on to occupy senior posts in the administration of the Franco dictatorship. The course in Toledo also involved a group of captains and officers from the Central School of Gymnastics who instructed the officers of the SNEFCP on the pedagogical methods they should use in the teaching of physical education. Their training incorporated modern educative techniques, including the use of documentary films on the teaching of gymnastics and the use of research methods stemming from physiological experiments.⁹

Primo was delighted with the course. At the start of April, he wrote to Carlos Guerra Zagala, the Director of the Central School of Gymnastics, to congratulate him on the event. Primo also asked Máximo Cuervo to have a collection of the lectures published as a book.¹⁰ Three months later, the book was published by the JPPC, which Cuervo directed from his post at the Bureau of the Prime Minister. Primo himself provided the prologue. In it, he urged the officers of the SNEFCP to deliver ‘at all times, a living example of citizenship’ which would prevent the ‘people’ from believing the ‘false prophets’ who tried to trick them.¹¹ The JPPC initially published 20,000 copies of the book and Cuervo had it distributed strategically all over Spain. Most copies (some 8500) were sent to civil governors with orders to distribute them in ‘schools that are most distinguished for their work and pedagogy’, centres of higher learning, ‘the parish priests who are most distinguished for their social and civic spirit’, branches of the UP, the casinos and libraries of each province, as well as to the local press.¹² Additionally, Cuervo reserved a large number of copies to send to provincial *Juntas Patrióticas* (Patriotic Councils), officers in the SNEFCP who were already at work on their missions, as well as bishops, ministers, institutes, universities, colleges, academies and military libraries.¹³ Cuervo also made sure to send a 1000 copies of the book to America to be used in regime propaganda.

Primo’s direct involvement in the organisation of this course at the Alcázar de Toledo, the content of the lectures, as well as the creation and distribution of propaganda materials are all particularly illustrative of the dictator’s obsession with the nationalistic indoctrination of Spaniards. In this respect, Primo remained consistent throughout his dictatorship, even if his ideas on the ability of the Army to shape consciences and create identities among the population were already in evidence as early as the First World War. As we noted in Chapter 1, in 1916, Primo de Rivera had written that the Great War would bring about deep moral transformations. At that time, he had called for the propagation of the ‘ideal of the Fatherland’, not only in army barracks but also in the schools and among adults in working-class districts in Spain.¹⁴ That same year, the future dictator also proposed the use of modern propaganda media, such as cinema, which would have a greater impact on the people. Between 1917 and 1923, the socio-political tensions in Spain and the revolutionary upheavals throughout Europe did nothing but confirm Primo’s beliefs

in the need to use nationalism as a remedy for revolution. Having arrived in power after September 1923, Primo not only used the Army to indoctrinate the people, but he would also launch the largest programme of nationalisation of the masses in the history of Spain. It would involve military officers both inside and outside the barracks, but also the participation of schoolteachers, civil servants, *upetistas* and *somatenistas*, as well as the clergy, in order to propagate nationalistic, populist and authoritarian narratives across very diverse social spheres.

The dictator's stated objective was the creation of a new Spain and the formation of a new citizenry in an authoritarian guise. As Primo himself would write in one of his propaganda works, *Disertación ciudadana*, the new citizen was bound to the 'fulfilment of four duties', namely, military service, paying taxes, public support for his dictatorship and finally the duty of work.¹⁵ Above all, a good citizen had to satisfy his military obligations to his country. Second, citizens had the duty to contribute to the regeneration of the nation, not only by paying taxes to the state but also by actively collaborating in the 'collective obligations' of every Spaniard, which included public support for the dictatorship through participation in parades and ceremonies, and the performance of public office without any form of partisan motivation.¹⁶ This was, in other words, a concept of citizenship absent any notion of rights.¹⁷ The new Spaniards had to be a 'Citizen Soldier', a warrior who would be soaked in nationalistic, authoritarian and anti-liberal ideas throughout their lives.¹⁸ To this end, in place of rationalistic ideas, the dictator constantly unleashed a romantic and irrational nationalistic discourse, laced with religious vocabulary and a deep patriotic symbolism.¹⁹ Indeed, the notion of the 'citizen soldier' had much in common with the *cittadino soldato* of Fascist Italy. Like Primo's dictatorship, the Italian fascists used the French revolutionary myth of moral regeneration of the masses and transformed it into a policy of state-led moral indoctrination of the entire population. The ultimate goal in Spain was therefore much like Mussolini's Italy, that is to say, the creation of a 'new man'.²⁰

The unspoken objective of Primo's programme of mass indoctrination was to bring about an inter-class integration which would both legitimise his regime and stall the advance of the workers' movement. As so often, Primo de Rivera was at the forefront of a wider European trend in the interwar period, in which other dictators also turned to nationalistic hyperbole to legitimise anti-democratic political systems. Distracting attention towards supposed threats from abroad and above all towards the 'enemy within', these European dictatorships sought to achieve a 'negative integration', that is to say, a nationalistic union of the working and middle classes, based upon the supposed dangers that foreign and domestic opponents represented to the country.²¹ This was hardly a new tactic, of course. It had been used with some success in Wilhelmine Germany before 1918, when the government and nationalistic associations saturated German society with propaganda which emphasised the need for an expansionist foreign policy and the fight against 'internal enemies' who favoured democracy and leftist internationalism. Nonetheless, at the root

of the intensification of this, 'negative integration' on the part of European governments was the political earthquake represented by the First World War. Practically every European state reacted to the war by stepping up their policies of nationalisation in an attempt to achieve cultural homogeneity and to control their populations politically. Unsurprisingly, the implementation of this 'nation-building nationalism' was particularly fierce in those countries with counter-revolutionary dictatorships.²² After all, throughout the 1920s, the dictatorships in Hungary, Italy, Bulgaria, Poland, Portugal, Greece and Yugoslavia were established with the excuse of having to 'save' the country from national disintegration.²³ Emphasising supposed threats from internal and external enemies invariably became a way to justify the existence of the dictatorships themselves. Mass indoctrination in patriotic values thus became a political priority in the anti-democratic regimes of the period.

In the case of Spain, Primo had a very clear sense from the outset that the Army was going to play a crucial role in the nationalisation of the masses. The dictator sought to promote a new type of education in the barracks, which aimed to indoctrinate the soldiers politically. At the start of 1924, a royal decree detailed that all men had to 'acquire a pure military spirit' during their time in the barracks.²⁴ Meanwhile, the Marqués de Estella legislated for new education programmes for the soldiers which would place more emphasis on teaching concepts of love of the country, the King and the flag, as well as heroism, obedience, honour and civic duty.²⁵ The General Plan for Education in 1927 is a good example of the importance Primo attached to indoctrination in the barracks. The law divided military training into three key areas, namely, technical, tactical and moral. The plan established that 'moral education' was an integral part of the training for a soldier, and as such had to be imparted throughout a period of military service. According to the law, the instructor had to promote soldierly moral values not only during the teaching sessions devoted to this theme, but on all teaching occasions which 'present themselves in real life, without losing sight of the fact that the lessons [of life] are more deeply engraved in the intelligence of the soldiery than arid lectures, and that example is the best teaching in such matters'.²⁶ This didactic approach – albeit as tremendously condescending as the dictator himself – would be accompanied by other structural reforms in the Army which sought to build a more efficient system of education. The Royal Decree of 1 January 1927, for example, made battalions 'permanent' centres of training, while two weeks later a royal decree set-up 'school units' in all of the military regions of Spain, with the aim of improving the capacity for indoctrination in the barracks.²⁷

Complementing the moral indoctrination, the dictatorship encouraged patriotic rituals in the barracks. The most important of these, the *jura de la bandera* (oath to the flag), transformed radically under the dictatorship. In early 1924, Primo decided that the national flag could no longer remain 'hidden' in the barracks, and as such ordered that in all the garrisons of Spain, the recruits received 'the military sacrament that turns them into soldiers under the sun, together with their fellow citizens, in front of the King or the

Authorities who stand in for the Government'.²⁸ The dictator was hoping to transform the *jura de la bandera* into a popular ceremony. The Royal Decree of 31 March 1924 ordered all military authorities to organise public ceremonies for the *jura de la bandera* aiming to unite soldiers and the people in 'a single will'.²⁹ The government declared the holding of the jura a 'national day' and set out that all state buildings, schools, universities, seminaries, barracks and ships, both naval and civilian, had to display the Spanish flag in commemoration of this new patriotic festival. The royal decree, which aspired to a public communion between the people and the soldiers with the national flag used as an object of worship, was perhaps more eloquent:

In order to endow the Oath with a popular support that cannot be legislated or enforced from above, the Authorities must organise a fiesta (this day must be a fiesta of the Fatherland) so that it will contribute to advance the masses' love for the flag, the very representation of national honour and the emblem in which all Spanish regions are mixed and blended together.³⁰

The regime did not take long to put the new legislation into practice. In early April 1924, the King presided over an enormous ceremony on the Paseo de la Castellana in Madrid, in which hundreds of recruits swore loyalty to the national flag.³¹ The integration of the masses into military ceremonials took a further important step the following year with the creation of the *Fiesta de la Despedida del Soldado* (Festival of Graduating Soldiers). Attempting to combine civic, military and religious rites into a single nationalistic ceremony, the Military Directory invented this new ritual by means of a royal decree. The first act of the new ceremony would be a public Mass involving 'one company, squadron and battery from each corps of the garrison, each with their flag or standard, their band and music, in full ceremonial dress'.³² After the Mass, the Military Governor would give a speech reminding the soldiers of the importance of their vow to the nation and their duties outside of the barracks. Thereafter, the soldiers would parade before the flag, stopping to place a kiss on the flag as they passed it, while the band would play military music. To ensure that this ceremony was a success with the public, the day of the *Fiesta de la Despedida del Soldado* was declared a public holiday. Following orders from the military governor, all ceremonies took place before the civil and ecclesiastical authorities. Also invited were members of the various industrial and agricultural groups and associations, as well as workers' unions and other 'prestigious local corporations'. There is little doubt that Primo sought to turn this ceremony into a ritual which would bring all classes together, under the auspices of the Army.

Despite the undoubtable efforts that the dictator made to indoctrinate recruits in the barracks, it is difficult to judge the impact that the nationalising policies of the regime had on the young men who entered military service. The surviving documentation indicates that the number of Spaniards entering

the military was higher during the Primo de Rivera dictatorship than ever before, that political indoctrination in the barracks reached unprecedented levels, and that new patriotic rituals were invented during this period. Nonetheless, it is possible to detect certain factors which seriously undermined this process of nationalising the soldiery. For one thing, the fact that it was still possible (for those able to pay) to purchase an exemption from military service obviously made it more difficult to use the *patria* as vehicle of genuine inter-class integration. Meanwhile, the reduction of the period of military service from three years to two years was undoubtedly a relief for many young men, but it also reduced by a third the time that they would be exposed directly to military propaganda. The surviving testimonies of those who lived in barracks during the dictatorship also offer a discouraging picture. Most companies lacked the necessary number of 'educational' officers, the vast majority of recruits graduated without having received a proper military training, and many soldiers ended up as personal servants to the officers.³³ According to Major García Benítez, for example, indifference and corruption permeated life in the barracks and the soldiers did not take long to understand that it was better not to get too involved, not to ask too many questions, and to obey the orders of the officers without thinking.³⁴ Far from forging a 'new man', as the *primorriveristas* hoped, it seems clear that this way of life instead created an army of apathetic soldiers, whose only objective was to survive the barracks until they were given permission to return to their homes.

Moreover, as General Emilio Mola would observe, economic constraints and the war in Morocco both made it impossible to bring about Primo's military reforms.³⁵ From 1925 onwards, the Spanish military budget was gradually reduced, both in terms of the total number of pesetas received by the Army and the percentage of state funding allocated to the Armed Forces.³⁶ As we saw in Chapter 3, the Marqués de Estella saw the war in Morocco as a serious drain on the state and quickly began to reduce military spending. Meanwhile, the growth in the number of recruits (an increase of more than 10% in the course of the dictatorship) added further pressure onto the military's education system.³⁷ Ironically, Primo was thus a victim of his own success in bringing more recruits into the army. With the military budget continuing to decline and the number of recruits continuing to increase, the hopes of converting the army into an indoctrinating machine proved extremely fanciful.

In any case, the most ambitious plans for military indoctrination were to take place outside of the barracks. In his bid for the mass indoctrination of civilians, Primo initially entrusted the leading role to the *delegados gubernativos*. These men represented a veritable army of officers spread throughout the country with the mission, among other things, of organising lectures, patriotic rallies and military parades in support of the regime.³⁸ As we have seen, in October 1923, Primo de Rivera and Martínez Anido posted a *delegado* in each judicial district with the aim of 'overseeing and directing' municipal life. Many *delegados* were also sent to provincial capitals. Initially, their role was to

consolidate military control over town councils and to destroy local networks of *caciquismo*. At the same time, the dictatorship hoped that the delegates would be able to create a 'new citizenry' in the towns and villages of Spain.³⁹ Primo was well aware that the destruction of the old political structures had to be accompanied by the emergence of a new type of citizen. The *delegados* received orders to set up local branches of the *Somatén*, the *Exploradores* (a Spanish equivalent of the British Boy Scouts movement), sporting associations and cultural centres for men and women, as well as trying to reduce the levels of illiteracy. The dictator also asked these officers to organise patriotic lectures, which would promote the virtues of the 'Spanish race' and emphasise the duties of every citizen, namely, to defend their fatherland, to respect authority and to pay their taxes.⁴⁰ To carry out this educative mission of strengthening 'the body and soul of the citizens' Primo recommended that the delegates seek the help of teachers, priests and doctors.⁴¹

The delegates clearly listened to Primo de Rivera. Dozens of reports sent to Martínez Anido confirm that teachers got involved in various aspects of 'national regeneration', principally through 'patriotic talks' given during the first months of the dictatorship.⁴² The delegates understood that the involvement of teaching staff was key to the success of patriotic propaganda. Indeed, one of the first things that the officers were sure to do when taking up their roles as *delegados* was to meet with the teachers in their respective jurisdictions. In such meetings, the *delegados* demanded that teachers publicly support the regime and sought the active collaboration of local teachers' associations. Meetings frequently ended with a public declaration of loyalty to the dictatorship.⁴³ This was an effective system. During the first months of 1924, hundreds of 'patriotic talks' took place throughout Spain with a view to indoctrinating both children and adults. In most cases, the speeches of the *delegados* were complemented by the participation of teachers.⁴⁴

In pursuance of Martínez Anido's orders, the officers used every possible opportunity to mobilise the population. For example, *delegados* organised celebrations for the *Día de la Raza* (Day of the Race), or the *Fiesta de la Bendición de la Bandera del Somatén* (Festival for the Blessing of the Flag of the *Somatén*) in towns and villages where it had never been held before. Meanwhile, Primo invented his own celebrations, such as on 13 September, to mark the anniversary of his coup, as well as others to commemorate Spanish victories in Morocco. In such celebrations, the *delegados* brought together local authorities for the occasion, raised the Spanish flag and delivered patriotic speeches. Many of these ceremonies also included a public Mass with the participation of the local priest.⁴⁵ As with the regime's festivals for the *jura de la bandera* or the *Fiesta de Despedida del Soldado*, these patriotic rituals in towns involved discourse and imagery taken from Catholicism. In both cases, the nation was transformed into the supreme deity.

After the formation of the Civil Directory, Primo decided to intensify the process of the indoctrinating the masses. With his usual degree of condescension, the Royal Decree of 29 January 1926 officially launched the new

campaign, which sought 'to implant moral and patriotic ideals in the humble minds' of the rural working class. The new legislation set out how 'in all settlements of fewer than 6000 inhabitants' there would be 'Sunday lectures for adults of both sexes'.⁴⁶ The talks would cover the duties of citizens, the history of Spain and various professional themes related to agriculture and light industry. The events would be organised by mayors and would take place in town halls. The legislation also recommended that the mayors choose the speakers from among teachers, doctors, pharmacists, military officers and priests from the area.⁴⁷ As had happened with soldiers, Primo prioritised the indoctrination of the rural civilian population, since he believed that this social group had not yet been so 'poisoned' by leftist ideas as the inhabitants of the bigger cities.

The *delegados*, who in March 1926 received orders to relocate to provincial capitals, continued to organise talks and ceremonies in towns and villages throughout Spain, following the direct instructions from Primo's office.⁴⁸ Just two months after the approval of the royal decree announcing rural talks for adults, Antonio Almagro Méndez, then Head of the Bureau of the Prime Minister, sent a letter to Martínez Anido enquiring into the progress of the Sunday talks. In the letter, Almagro reminded the Interior Minister that Primo had a special interest in the holding of these talks and exhorted Martínez Anido to encourage the mayors, by means of the *delegados* and civil governors, to fulfil their duties to organise such events.⁴⁹ Keen to oblige, Martínez Anido ordered civil governors to press mayors to hold the lectures and to demand that the mayors produce detailed reports on the events.⁵⁰ The following week, Martínez Anido sent 200 copies of Primo's book *Disertación ciudadana* to each and every civil governor in Spain, so that they could be distributed to the *delegados*. The aim was clear. The dictator's book must serve as 'base and guide for the Sunday lectures' and must 'reach every town'.⁵¹

The Sunday talks were conceived as a second Mass of the day, in which the whole population should gather to listen to the 'missionaries of the Fatherland' preach the 'gospel' of the dictator. The doctrinal homogenisation set out by the Royal Order of 29 January 1926 established that the lectures must be based upon the thinking of the national leader and spread it to all corners of the country. In truth, the regime's approach was a forerunner of a form of mobilisation and propaganda later used in Fascist Italy. In 1932, Mussolini created the *raduni domenicali*, Sunday meetings in which fascist propagandists gathered the adult population of small settlements together with the intention of preaching nationalistic dogmas to them, just as had happened in Primo's Spain.⁵² And just as in Spain, so in Italy, the representatives of the government focussed their weekly activities in the smaller towns and villages. In Italy, however, all of those prosletysing for the nation belonged to the official party. In Primo's Spain, the missionaries included army officers, teachers and priests who supported the regime.

In neither Italy nor Spain did these attempts at mass indoctrination of the rural population through Sunday talks yield the expected results.⁵³ Despite the pressure from Martínez Anido in Madrid, civil governors and delegates

ran into problems when trying to hold the talks. In the province of Álava, for instance, the civil governor complained that most of towns had a very small population, 'all of them agricultural and in which there is a lack of suitable people for any cultural tasks'.⁵⁴ As a result, he had been forced to recruit school inspectors for the task, which had delayed the organisation of events. Meanwhile, in Barcelona province, Primo's plans for Sunday lectures in the smaller towns ran into a parallel 'educative' campaign launched by the provincial government. In the Spring of 1926, the Provincial Government of Barcelona had funded a series of patriotic and professional courses and lectures which were set to take place in the public libraries of Pineda, Canet del Mar and Sallent.⁵⁵ Since the *delegados* for Arenys del Mar and Manresa actively participated in the organisation of these events, the organisation of Primo's patriotic Sunday lectures had to be delayed until the summer.⁵⁶ Even in those provinces where the civil governor had acted effectively, such as Santander, only 50% of towns had held talks by early March 1926.⁵⁷ Whether due to a lack of planning, a lack of human or economic resources, or a lack of political will on the part of local mayors, the Sunday lectures appear to have been held irregularly, if at all. In October 1927, Primo resumed his campaign to involve army officers in the 'educational' work of spreading citizenship lessons among all social classes.⁵⁸ On 26 October, the dictator gave a lecture at the Casino de Clases in Madrid in which he urged officers to continue their 'exemplary collective action', spreading the values of 'hierarchy', 'order', 'authority' and 'sacrifice' in lectures, in cafes and in the family sphere.⁵⁹ The new propaganda push did not work, however, at least not immediately. On 28 December 1927, Primo published a new Royal Decree which insisted on the need to increase the number of Sunday talks in towns with less than 6000 inhabitants.⁶⁰ Almost two years after the creation of the Sunday lectures, Primo could see that the number of events actually staged was clearly insufficient.

While the *delegados* performed their propagandistic duties throughout the country, Primo developed much more ambitious plans for the indoctrination of the masses. From 1925, the dictator began to design a new pre-military education system for all Spanish children and teenagers. As in many other European countries, pre-military education already existed in Spain from before the First World War. This type of education was delivered by a state-funded *Tiro Nacional de España* (National Rifle Association – TNE), as well as a series of private colleges, which allowed for a reduction in military service for those students who took military courses and trained in shooting. But the pre-military education system had serious difficulties under the Restoration Monarchy. Fraud in the granting of diplomas, which allowed for a reduction of several months in the barracks during military service, was a widespread problem in the private schools. To make matters worse, just the rich benefited from this system, since they were the only ones who could afford to pay the fees for these courses in pre-military education. At the same time, the TNE did not have sufficient funding, was deficient in adequate shooting ranges and qualified provincial sections, and, more importantly, lacked significant numbers,

which obviously rendered it impossible to organise schools to offer pre-military education to the working classes.⁶¹

Determined to turn around this situation, Primo reorganised the system of pre-military education in Spain. According to the Marqués de Estella, pre-military instruction was too theoretical and paid very little attention to the physical and moral aspects of education. The dictator was well aware that the private schools were poorly equipped and excessively expensive, which limited access for the working classes to a pre-military education.⁶² The fundamental principles of the dictator's reforms were 'unification of doctrine', cross-class integration and bringing schools under direct state control. To achieve 'unification of doctrine', the Royal Decree of 8 May 1925 set out that all teachers engaged in pre-military education had to be military officers, including those who were teaching in private schools. The decree also placed all pre-military schools in Spain under the direct control of the Military High Command.⁶³ The following month, a royal order specified the academic programme that these pre-military schools were to follow. Not surprisingly, the Military Directorate introduced a new curriculum which placed emphasis on physical education and citizenship, the latter understood as learning, among other ideas, love of the fatherland, discipline, honour and loyalty.⁶⁴

The reforms of the pre-military education system also underlined the educational role of the state. The state would provide its own schools free to the population, with the intention that the working classes would have access to this form of education. The private schools, meanwhile, saw their licenses to offer pre-military education withdrawn. Only those private academies linked to 'patriotic associations', such as the TNE, were authorised to offer pre-military training, but they were banned from charging for this type of instruction.⁶⁵ Meanwhile, the government attempted to get a handle on the fraudulent practices involving reduction of military service. Students who had gained a diploma in pre-military education would be examined in the barracks by army officers before any reductions in a period of service would be granted.⁶⁶

After a period in which Primo ordered various high-ranking officers to make study visits to other European nations – and received a large number of reports about civic and pre-military education for the whole population (including women and young girls) – the dictator created the National Committee for Physical Culture in November 1928. As director of the new body, Primo chose General Villalba, and the committee was placed under the direct control of the Bureau of the Prime Minister.⁶⁷ Meanwhile, an internal report from the Bureau set out the criteria for the SNEFCP to follow. The report established the need to transmit the ideas of the national leader directly to the people, ensuring a 'unity of doctrine', and required that all books, documents and themes for lectures had be selected by the Bureau of the Prime Minister.⁶⁸ In January 1929, the government set-out the organisation of civic education for adults and pre-military and gymnastic education for youngsters in all districts in Spain, save for the provincial capitals. Once more, Primo was prioritising the indoctrination of rural over industrial workers. Officers who

were on the 'reserve list' could ask for a posting voluntarily, with an important incentive that they would be paid a full salary.⁶⁹ The regime claimed that this practice would alleviate the excess of inactive officers in the Spanish army. The work of these uniformed 'missionaries of the fatherland' included offering lectures for adults, as well as coordinating and directing gymnastic and pre-military education in their districts.⁷⁰

The educational and propagandistic mission of these officers in the SNEFCP was very similar to those that had already been assigned to the *delegados*. At the end of January 1929, Primo set out a programme through which the SNEFCP was given the same hierarchical organisational structure as that used by the delegates. Officers working for the SNEFCP passed under the authority of the civil governors, who in turn had to inform General Villalba on their work. Villalba received orders exclusively from Primo de Rivera himself. In a bid to achieve the maximum impact, Villalba ordered the SNEFCP officers to demand the assistance of local mayors and UP leaders to ensure mass participation in the 'patriotic lectures', which would take place every Sunday and on other public holidays. As for pre-military education, Villalba was in perfect agreement with the Marqués de Estella in that it should be 'directed at the masses, at the whole of society, not just a few exceptional individuals'.⁷¹ To avoid a repeat of the problems experienced with the *delegados*, who often lacked training as educators, in February 1929 Primo and Villalba began to put together the course at the Alcázar de Toledo for officers in the SNEFCP.⁷²

There can be no doubt that the course in Toledo gave to these officers a much better training as 'apostles of the fatherland' than that which the *delegados* had previously received, that is to say no guiding at all. By June 1929, many of the SNEFCP officers were already working in their respective jurisdictions. In July, Villalba published a royal order with the aim of filling vacant posts for 'local heads' of the SNEFCP as quickly as possible.⁷³ Nonetheless, old problems resurfaced once these officers began work on the ground. Officers needed the active cooperation of the local town halls to fulfil their propagandistic missions. In March, the dictatorship ordered that both civil governors and mayors coordinate their efforts to support the local heads of the SNEFCP. Provincial and local authorities had orders to provide premises in which patriotic lectures could be held, as well as rifle ranges and gymnasiums. Town councils were also required to publicise the pre-military courses and talks for adults.⁷⁴

Despite the interest shown by the regime, many mayors refused to provide the necessary facilities, arguing that there were not sufficient funds in the municipal budgets to cover such activities. In June 1929, the number of municipalities refusing to cooperate was such that Martínez Anido ordered civil governors to oblige municipal councillors to reserve part of their budget for the following year to cover the purchase of sporting facilities. Meanwhile, civil governors received orders to press local associations and well-to-do individuals to give up their shooting ranges and gyms temporarily, and for free, to the officers of the SNEFCP.⁷⁵ Even so, pressure on municipal budgets was not the only factor which lessened the impact of the SNEFCP. Despite Primo's

support, Vallalba was unable to run the SNEFCP effectively. In December 1929, a further royal order placed organisation of the SNEFCP 'definitively' in the hands of the National Committee for Physical Culture and provisionally suspended further recruitment of new officers into its service. By the time the dictatorship fell in January 1930, the SNEFCP boasted just 267 officers throughout the whole country, which meant that fewer than 50% of judicial districts in Spain had been assigned an officer.⁷⁶ The dictator's dreams of turning the Army into an effective machine for imbuing Spanish society with nationalistic and militaristic values could not be realised. Most of his plans for indoctrinating the masses were stymied by lack of funding and the complexity of the task itself. Lacking funds and time, poorly organised and dependent on municipal charity just to function, the SNEFCP would have no significant impact on the Spanish population.

Alongside the Army, the other crucial institution in Primo's dreams of nationalising the people was the educational system. As he had with military officers, so the dictator used teachers as agents of nationalistic indoctrination.⁷⁷ True to form for the Marqués de Estella, nationalisation went hand-in-hand with repression. The dictator's first steps in regard to education involved a dash to prevent the spreading of so-called 'anti-patriotic doctrines' in schools and to impose Castilian Spanish as the only language of instruction throughout the country. Published less than a week after the coup in September 1923, the 'Decree against Separatism' entertained prison sentences for all those who purveyed secessionist ideas in schools.⁷⁸ Two days later, the Military Directory sent a circular to primary school teachers reminding them that it was obligatory to give classes in Castilian, and that books which spread Catalanist ideas were banned.⁷⁹ In October 1925, the government released another royal order which perfectly encapsulated the intentions behind the educational policies of the regime. The fundamental goal of the state was to guarantee its own survival, and it had to pursue this objective above all others. Primo de Rivera demanded the obligatory cooperation of all citizens, and in particular state functionaries, who had a duty to serve the government loyally and at all times. For their part, teachers had to be 'paladins of civic virtue' both inside and outside of the school walls.⁸⁰ Those who spread ideas contrary to the unity of the nation – whether actively or through omission of 'essential facts' in the teaching of Geography and History – or launched attacks on Catholicism, private property or family values would be culpable of crimes against the state and the nation.⁸¹

The fact that the dictator intervened personally in the repression of teachers gives a clear sense of the importance he attached to the education system as a field of ideological battle. For example, Primo reminded *delegados gubernativos* that it was their duty to inspect both public and private schools and to punish teachers who disseminated 'anti-patriotic ideas'.⁸² Notwithstanding the public support that hundreds of teachers had given to the dictatorship after 13 September 1923, the Marqués de Estella did not trust the profession.⁸³ The dictator wanted to control teachers and established a system of surveillance

which rewarded and punished teachers according to their political loyalty to the dictatorship and their ability to promote Spanish nationalist ideas. In 1924, and once again in 1925, Primo ordered Martínez Anido to prepare a list of state teachers who had displayed extraordinary 'zeal' in their work in order to award prizes to them.⁸⁴ First, primary school inspectors would nominate candidates for the prize, while the *delegados* would oversee and authorise the inclusion of names on the lists. The *delegados* would then send their dossiers to the civil governors, who in turn would send them to the offices of Martínez Anido, General Navarro y Alonso de Celada, the officer who served as Minister of Education during the Military Directory.⁸⁵ The objective of rewarding the most capable teachers was not only to ensure that they supported the dictatorship but also to create a census of educators who were loyal (or disloyal) to the regime. The research involved in seeking the 'best' teachers were accompanied by similar investigations into those teachers who were not rigorously following the regime's legislation. Often, the reports sent to Madrid included punishments imposed on teachers considered to be hostile.⁸⁶

Purges of the teaching profession were a constant throughout the dictatorship, in both public and private schools. In late 1923, for example, and on the basis of anonymous denunciations, *delegados gubernativos* began their inspections of schools throughout Spain, while civil governors punished dozens of teachers for crimes which included recommending the works of Miguel de Unamuno, teaching liberal ideas, or refusing to gather students to meet a visiting Cardinal.⁸⁷ Moving to a Civil Directory did nothing to calm the inquisitorial zeal of the regime. On 27 May 1926, for example, the General Director of Primary Education, Ignacio Suárez Somonte, declared that it was necessary to 'nationalise the school'.⁸⁸ He added that 'every single one, whatever class of school they may be, in which children are not taught to believe the Catholic faith and love of Spain ought to be shut down [...] and shut down they will be'.⁸⁹ The team in charge of the regime's education system proved he was not speaking idly. On the day after Suárez Somonte's words were published in the press, the Minister of Public Education, Eduardo Callejo, sent a letter to Martínez Anido in which he asked if the *delegados* were still legally entitled to inspect schools and asked for a greater involvement of the military in the persecution of those teachers who had displayed 'irregular' behaviours.⁹⁰ Martínez Anido replied that civil governors would continue to supervise and punish teachers through the *delegados* and school inspectors with the aim of 'correcting these irregularities'.⁹¹ The Interior Minister knew what he was talking about. Numerous teachers were sacked, fined or relieved for political reasons during the Civil Directory, while others were rewarded for their loyalty to the regime.⁹²

Obsessed with controlling the educational system, Primo de Rivera and Martínez Anido were not slow to grasp the potential in the primary school inspectors. They were given the power to close down public and private schools which, in their judgement, were teaching ideas contrary to the unity of the fatherland, or against religion. They were also allowed to close schools

where they found anyone teaching in languages other than Castilian. Should they encounter any opposition from headteachers or teachers, inspectors were obliged to inform the civil governor, who would enforce the sanction.⁹³ The Royal Decree of 13 October 1925 ordered inspectors and headteachers to be on the lookout for teachers who might be spreading doctrines against the unity of the *patria*, or which were considered 'antisocial'. In cases where they found 'enough circumstantial evidence', the teachers in question could be sacked on the spot.⁹⁴ Primo also insisted that inspectors examine textbooks with painstaking care and observe students with the aim of detecting any possible evidence of the teaching of anti-patriotic or antisocial ideas.⁹⁵ Meanwhile, inspectors also had to investigate the conduct of teachers outside of the school walls and discover if they were involved in spreading anti-patriotic propaganda among locals.⁹⁶ In other words, this decree transformed school inspectors into spies in the service of the regime. Once again, Primo de Rivera blurred the lines between the public and the private sphere in the name of protecting the fatherland, while every effort was made to establish an investigatory machinery that would characterise a totalitarian state.

Having converted school inspectors into agents of the dictatorship, Primo and Martínez Anido then decided to spy on their own informants. In June 1926, the Interior Minister set up an intelligence network with the aim of spying on his school inspectorate. In a confidential letter, he instructed all civil governors to gather information about the 'moral and political atmosphere' in which the inspectors were working.⁹⁷ Meanwhile, he ordered the *delegados* to watch the inspectors closely and to inform the civil governors about the inspectors' political tendencies. In turn, the civil governors would report to the Director General of Primary Education to weigh up possible punishments. The first secret reports on the inspectors were sent to the Ministry of Public Education the following week. Prepared by the civil governors of each province, these reports were in truth political files on the inspectors, in which their activities outside of the schools were set out in detail, as was their degree of loyalty to the dictatorship.⁹⁸ After the reports came the sanctions. Many of the inspectors who were not fulfilling their 'patriotic duties', at least according to the civil governors, were sacked, above all in Catalonia, where the regime unleashed a particular crusade against the use of Catalan in primary schools.⁹⁹

The system of spying and punishments in schools had unforeseen consequences for the regime, however. As in many other areas, the involvement of military officers provoked discontent among civilian professionals who grew increasingly hostile towards the dictatorship. A sense of frustration continued to grow among teachers at the perceived despotism of the *delegados*. In 1927, various teachers' groups wrote to Primo to demand a different inspection regime for schools that was pedagogically based, in place of the dictatorship's repressive model of inspection.¹⁰⁰ In certain cases, the actions of the *delegados* even prompted outbreaks of violence. In the town of Moya (Las Palmas), for example, the father of a teacher who had been penalised tried to murder the local *delegado* by stabbing him in the neck.¹⁰¹ Faced with such discontent, the

regime responded by intensifying the degree of state control over education and expanding the purges of professors and inspectors, which, as might be expected, only served to make matters worse. After the fall of Primo, the inspectors themselves would publicly complain about the political surveillance which the dictatorship had forced them to be involved with and called for a complete reform of the inspectorate and a return to their pedagogical work.¹⁰² For their part, the teachers denounced in the press the repression that they had been subjected to by the dictatorship and demanded an amnesty for their colleagues. The teachers argued that the dictatorship's intention had not been to correct the flaws of their dismissed colleagues, but simply to weed out all those individuals who did not politically agree with the regime.¹⁰³ Through its policy of spying and repression, the dictatorship's policies ended up driving inspectors to despair and sowing distrust among teachers. Accordingly, the regime broke two of the crucial elements (teachers and inspectors) in the bonds of ideological control of the educational system, which in turn closed off avenues for using the school system for effective indoctrination.

The regime's intense activity in regard to the banning of books and the repression of teachers did not at first entail major changes in the primary curriculum. Nonetheless, the dictatorship was clearly very diligent when it came to selecting 'appropriate' texts for teaching Spanish history, preparing lists of books for purchase by schools and public libraries.¹⁰⁴ In putting together these



Figure 6.1 Primo de Rivera gives a geography lesson. Credit: Getty. Keystone-France.

lists, the dictatorship chose its favourites from a broad range of children's texts which had been submitted in the *Libro de la Patria* (Book of the Fatherland) competition. This was an official prize set up in 1921 by the Maura government and its minister César Silió, which hoped to promote patriotic feelings among Spanish children. Although the judges had failed to award a prize in 1922, many of the 63 works put forward for consideration were published and included in the officially approved reading list of the Primo dictatorship.¹⁰⁵ The regime thus awarded official status to works which related how imperial glories and Catholicism were integral to the history of Spain, while also warning of the many contemporary 'dangers' facing the nation. It is worth highlighting that all these books had something in common. All appealed to Spanish national vanity, making use of hyperbolic and moving language. This form of nationalistic education was not based upon intellectual learning, but rather emotional learning, and as such was obsessed with the notion of the 'fatherland in danger' and appeals to 'feel' the greatness of Spain. This also explains the key role that teachers played in the application of this pedagogic-emotional method, since it required a fervent commitment on the part of teachers if they were to exercise a truly deep influence on the children.¹⁰⁶

As we know, Primo was no purist for the truth. If he was required to invent history to strengthen the patriotism of Spain's children, then he was quite prepared to do so. In a meeting of the UP in the Palacio de Hielo in Madrid, for example, the Marqués de Estella declared to his audience:

Educate a learned, just, healthy and patriotic generation, for man is the greatest social value; may you bring to the school a uniform civic and moral vigour, leaving philosophical disquisitions and fundamental critiques to higher stages of learning, understanding the danger and the damage of planting in the souls of children a lack of love for the Fatherland or doubts over religion. It is preferable to falsify History, if we present it as noble and great to our children, than to subject them from childhood, when they are not able to discern, to harsh criticisms and severe and bitter judgements.¹⁰⁷

Conscious of its importance in the nationalisation process, Primo sought to control school reading. In early November 1923, the dictator entrusted the Royal Council for Public Education to prepare a report on the possibility of producing a single text for learning that would be mandatory in all primary and secondary schools. Nonetheless, disputes between the regime and the Royal Council – whose members were considered by the government to be excessively liberal – prevented the production of the report. In 1926, Primo decided to reform, or more accurately purge, the Royal Council for Public Education and staff it with people he considered loyal to the dictatorship. Thereafter, he chose to ignore the existence of this institution altogether.¹⁰⁸ Even so, the Marqués de Estella was determined to standardise the textbooks at primary and secondary levels. In early 1926, he personally established a

set of guidelines for the future legislation for a single textbook at both age levels. Such books had to be inspired by 'Christian morals, the principles of the State Religion, a burning love of Spain and a deep respect for the current political system'.¹⁰⁹ Next, Primo asked the Royal Academy of History to prepare a series of readers on the history of Spain, covering various levels, the use of which would be mandatory in all state schools. The Academy entrusted the task to the former Director of the Centre for Historical Studies, Rafael Altamira.¹¹⁰ A liberal academic, fully committed to the promotion of Spanish patriotism through works of history, Altamira wrote the first textbook in the series. Interestingly, the volume claimed that the reign of the Hapsburg monarchs had been the 'Golden Age' of Spain, and very much in line with the discourse of the regime, emphasised the recent 'renewal of Spanish prestige' in the international arena and the hope that 'our nation will once again be as of important in the world as it was from the time of the Catholic Kings to the mid-seventeenth century'.¹¹¹ Nonetheless, Altamira's book was not published until 1930. The Berenguer administration gave official status to the text in March that year and declared its use to be obligatory in all state schools.¹¹² While liberal schoolteachers welcomed the book, it produced a flood of criticism from the Catholic right.¹¹³ In any case, it was too late for Primo de Rivera. When the book finally arrived in schools, the Marqués de Estella had already been forced to resign.

The dictator had more success in the promotion of patriotic ceremonies. Whether introduced as part of the school curriculum or extracurricular events, the so-called 'patriotic events' were considered extremely important for the regime. The anniversary of Primo's coup (13 September), the Day of the Spanish Race (12 October) and the Festival of the Blessing of the *Somatén* Flag became public events which taught the children about the nation, the dictatorship and its leader. Often, such events included a ceremony in which the national flag was blessed while the students sang patriotic songs.¹¹⁴ It was thus hoped that the children would internalise images of national identity in a spirit of 'patriotic communion' specifically thought to appeal to the hearts of youngsters. After the news that Spanish pilots had successfully completed the first trans-Atlantic flight from Spain to South America in 1926, for example, the government ordered that the voyage of the 'heroes of Plus Ultra' be taught in geography classes in all state schools.¹¹⁵ Teaching about this type of event had two purposes. On the one hand, the authorities sought to combat the inferiority complex which, in their opinion, had been spread to the population through the ideas of certain progressive regenerationists. The press proclaimed that the flight of the *Plus Ultra* represented the clearest proof that Spain was not a backward country, but rather one capable of great modern feats.¹¹⁶ On the other hand, the voyage was described as a contemporary version of the passage of Columbus, thus underlining the Spanish-American vision of the dictatorship.¹¹⁷ In such an ambience of nationalistic exaltation, teachers not only explained the aeronautical adventure in class, but many schools also organised public tributes to the 'heroes of the Plus Ultra'.¹¹⁸

The regime also showed great enthusiasm when it came to inventing, or reinventing, traditions, such as the *Fiesta del Libro* (Festival of the Book). Made official by a Royal Decree of 6 February 1926, the Fiesta was to be held on 7 October every year – the anniversary of the birth of Cervantes – in all educational institutions in Spain.¹¹⁹ With every intention of directing the commemoration of this new anniversary, the government gave strict instructions to primary and secondary schools, universities, polytechnics and professional colleges of how the celebrations should proceed. Every institution was legally obliged to ‘commemorate the Fiesta del Libro with public and solemn sessions, devoted to acclaiming and raising awareness of national publications and the culture of the fatherland’.¹²⁰ Primary schools had to devote at least one hour ‘to explain to their pupils the importance of books as instruments of culture, civilisation and [spiritual] wealth’.¹²¹ To ensure that the events were held in the way in which Primo had planned, three weeks before the first Fiesta del Libro, Martínez Anido mobilised the civil governors and *delegados* for the occasion.¹²² The minister ordered that all provincial and municipal councils take part, both in the event and the organisation of public lectures in all secondary schools. Meanwhile, all public bodies had to put aside a specified proportion of their budget for the purchase of books, which could be donated to the children of the poor and ‘popular libraries’, that is to say public libraries, in every province of Spain.¹²³

The promotion of libraries and the donations of books stemmed from the regenerationist idea that patriotic education of the masses would strengthen national identity.¹²⁴ Yet the Fiesta del Libro had even bigger meanings. Above all, it represented a reassertion of the Castilian language. Previous liberal governments under the Restoration Monarchy had promoted Castilian as the national language in state schools and had turned *Don Quijote* into a national symbol. In 1912, and again in 1920, the state’s educational authorities had ordered the obligatory daily reading of the *Quijote* in state schools. The inauguration of the Fiesta del Libro marked the high point in the linguistic policy of educational ‘Hispanicising’ under Primo de Rivera’s regime. It was also the regime’s National-Catholic response to the celebrations held to promote regional nationalisms in the peninsula, such as the *Día de la Lengua Catalana* (Day of the Catalan Language). Given this, it is hardly surprising that Primo was particularly interested in promoting the Fiesta del Libro in Catalonia. Similarly, the regime’s ideologues were keen to highlight the universal nature of the Castilian language, linking it to their policy of pan-Hispanism and the rebirth of Spanish imperialism.¹²⁵ The figure of Cervantes, who had participated in the battle of Lepanto as a soldier, was a permanent reminder of the Spanish imperial glories of the sixteenth century.¹²⁶

For the conservative press, the celebration of the Fiesta del Libro represented an important milestone for the dictatorship.¹²⁷ In Santander, for instance, three new libraries were opened in the province in tribute to Cervantes on 7 October 1926. Meanwhile, school trips were organised to the library of Menéndez Pelayo, where the children were given a talk on the life

of this traditionalist thinker. At the end of the visit, the pupils recited a prayer for the soul of Menéndez Pelayo at the foot of his commemorative statue, as well as in honour of the nation and the Spanish book.¹²⁸ One of the keys to the success of this celebration was the involvement of teachers during the events. Many of them welcomed the initiative from the outset and played a very active role in events. One trade publication, *El Magisterio Español*, praised the Fiesta in the following manner:

[It] represents one of the government's better ideas. And it has not simply been an initiative, like so many others that are later forgotten, but has been carefully tended since the first day, and has mobilised all the available tools to ensure that the fiesta has positive results.¹²⁹

In this particular case, Martínez Anido's network of informers and spies appears to have been effective in mobilising teachers.

Nonetheless, and despite the interest shown by Primo and Martínez Anido in the Fiesta del Libro, we should not exaggerate its success as a mobilising tool. According to the teacher Eduardo Gómez Baquero, in 1927 the public scarcely attended the events organised in schools and academies to celebrate the Fiesta del Libro, and nor did sales in the bookshops increase. In his opinion, the fundamental problem was that although the regime had made every effort for the event, it had not generated much public enthusiasm because it was an artificial creation. Gómez Baquero outlined some of the common problems encountered when traditions are invented, remarking that 'The Fiesta del Libro began by imposing a liturgy, and two days later is already old, wasted and decrepit'.¹³⁰

In other cases, rather than inventing new traditions, the dictatorship sought to 'reinvent' old traditions, such as the *Fiesta del Árbol* (Day of the Tree). This celebration of the 'patria chica' (local homeland) had fallen into disuse by the start of the 1920s. Primo and Martínez Anido hoped to revitalise it as a new tool of forging a unitary Spanish nationalism. Predictably, the regime turned to the *delegados* to organise and spread the patriotic message of the festival.¹³¹ Also predictably, the delegates organised the Day of the Tree in the same way that they had set up other patriotic events, namely, a gathering of local dignitaries, raising the national flag and delivering patriotic speeches.¹³² Teachers were also called in to say a few words in praise of the nation, while children were asked to recite poems and sing patriotic songs composed specifically for the occasion. Often, the town priest would say a public Mass to bless the flag and the trees that were planted as part of the festival, which were now depicted as symbolic and organic representations of the fatherland. During this particular 'patriotic communion' the *delegados* clearly fulfilled their role as 'apostles of the fatherland', while the teachers became 'priests of the nation' guiding their young 'flock'.

Beyond the reinvention of traditions in the form of patriotic events, the repression of teachers and school inspectors, and the promotion of nationalistic

works, the regime's programme of nationalisation was affected by purely material considerations as well, such as the number of schools built and the number of teachers available to the dictatorship. From the start of his regime, Primo championed the construction of new schools, and there can be no doubt that the dictatorship made huge efforts in this regard. According to official figures, the number of state schools rose from 27,080 in 1923 to 33,446 in 1930.¹³³ Even so, it is worth pointing out that this increase of 23.5% in the number of education centres would not have made much difference when it came to improving the ratio of students per school. After the demographic boom in the decade after 1910, the school-age population had risen by more than a million during the 1920s and the number of children in school had risen by 22.9% in the period 1924–1930.¹³⁴ The numbers are significant. By the academic year 1932–1933, only 51.2% of Spanish children of school age were on the school roll.¹³⁵ In other words, despite the efforts of the Primo de Rivera dictatorship, the schools built by the regime merely served to absorb the impact of the demographic growth. Ironically, the educational expansion of the 1920s, which was itself a response to the process of socio-economic modernisation in Spain in the first two decades of the twentieth century, fell victim to the demographic boom produced by that same process of modernisation.

The increase in the number of teachers and improvement of their material conditions was also a crucial part of the regime's propaganda, but the truth was rather less impressive. Although it is clear that the number of state-school teachers rose from 28,924 in 1922 to 34,680 at the end of 1930 – an increase of almost 20% – it is also true that the inability to provide a permanent placement for hundreds of trained teachers and the breaking of promises to increase their salaries soured relations between teachers and the Minister of Public Education, Eduardo Callejo.¹³⁶ No other subject united teachers as much as their salary improvements. From the conservative-leaning *El Magisterio Español* to the more liberal *El Magisterio Nacional*, and even in their Catholic and socialist counterparts, all of the professional publications of the sector, and indeed many outside of it, demanded urgent improvements in teachers' salaries.¹³⁷ From 1926, as it became ever more clear that the promises of the government were not being kept, teaching associations, headteachers and mayors in various towns ran campaigns for substantially improving the pay of teachers.¹³⁸ When Primo's own office began to take an interest in the matter, the Minister of Public Education tried to minimise the problem and stated that 'save for some isolated troublemakers', the teachers were 'all very satisfied that they would gradually [be dealt with], because it [could not] be done all at once'.¹³⁹ It is inconceivable that Eduardo Callejo was unaware of the broad discontent among teachers, and so his words can only be seen as an attempt to justify his actions, or lack thereof. As it was, and despite an avalanche of petitions and complaints, the government did not alter its policy and kept pay for most teachers frozen throughout the dictatorship. As Callejo himself eventually acknowledged privately to Máximo Cuervo, the state simply did not have the necessary money to offer a decent salary to all the new teachers.¹⁴⁰

Meanwhile, Primo de Rivera also hoped to reform secondary education to strengthen its capacity as a nationalising tool.¹⁴¹ At the start of 1926, Primo personally prepared a document entitled 'Study-proposal for a single text', in which it was suggested that teachers would only have to offer explanations which complemented the official book prepared by the dictatorship, 'within the boundaries of love of the Fatherland and respect for the state religion, Christian morals and the present political institutions'.¹⁴² Weeks later, the dictator would clarify the patriotic principles that would define the single-text and design a system through which the state would have absolute control over 'the selection, production and sale of text books'.¹⁴³ Primo ordered that the Minister of Public Education prepare a proposal for a royal order, which would make reference to the single text in a 'virile and uncompromising language, defending the indisputable right of the state to conduct and adjust education'.¹⁴⁴ At the end of August, the decree was approved. Predictably, the law included all of the dictator's suggestions and expressly defended the exclusive right of the state to produce textbooks, arguing that the state monopoly would not only improve the doctrinal content of the books, but also that it would reduce their cost, thus 'easing the burden on the middle classes' who had to pay for them.¹⁴⁵

Throughout the first half of 1926, Wenceslao González Oliveros, the Director of the General Bureau of Secondary and University Education, as well as Eduardo Callejo and Primo himself, all worked together on the reform.¹⁴⁶ In June, Callejo presented Primo with a draft of the royal decree for the reform of secondary education. Following the principles of the regime, the proposed law spoke of the need to adapt educational reforms to the 'national psychology' and structure the teaching periods to improve the relation between primary and secondary education, on the one hand, and universities on the other. It was hoped to avoid the 'atomisation' produced by previous liberal reforms and to bring all of the educational institutions in Spain under the direct control of the state.¹⁴⁷ In August, Primo painstakingly revised the document and added some finishing touches.¹⁴⁸ On 25 August, the cabinet approved the royal decree that would set out the reform of secondary education in Spain. The new law divided secondary education into two stages, each lasting three years, namely, elementary baccalaureate and university baccalaureate. Compared to the 1903 programme of education that it replaced, there were significant changes. First, the new curriculum placed emphasis on scientific-technical education, much as Giuseppe Bottai, the Minister of Education Fascist Italy, would later do with his educational reforms in the 1930s.¹⁴⁹ This 'scientific drive' sat perfectly with Primo's modernising discourse, which advocated technical education as a means of improving national productivity. Second, and perhaps predictably, the new plan made a great play on the teaching of history. While the 1903 programme included the teaching of history in just the third and fourth years of study, the dictator made it obligatory during each of the first four years of secondary education, as well as increasing the number of weekly hours devoted to history from six in the first two years to

fifteen in the fourth.¹⁵⁰ Among the obligatory subjects were Global History, Spanish-American History, the History of Spain and the History of Spanish Civilisation; a clear sign of Primo's determination to inculcate teenagers with Spanish nationalistic and imperialist values.

Despite what some have argued, Primo's educational reforms in general, and the single text in particular, did little to satisfy the religious ambitions for education held by the political right.¹⁵¹ As a matter of fact, Catholic school-teachers felt uneasy about the imposition of textbooks by the state. Even some of the regime's usual stalwart publications, such as *El Magisterio Español*, were opposed to the new measures.¹⁵² The proposed state monopoly on the content and production of textbooks became a defining issue for the Church. The Augustinian priest, Fr Delgado, for example, described the single-text as 'tyrannical' and running counter to natural law. Delgado's principal objection was that no member of the clergy had formed part of the panels which had determined the content of the books. In his opinion, the Church, as 'constitutional guardian' of the Catholic faith, had the right to supervise the creation of the single text.¹⁵³ The reference to the Constitution of 1876 is particularly significant, since it suggests the ecclesiastic elite was beginning to consider that it might have been better off under the old Restoration regime. Delgado's words also revealed the willingness of the Church to cooperate with the state as an equal partner while maintaining ecclesiastical autonomy and its ability to involve itself in public education, as had been the case since 1876. In sharp contrast, Primo's reforms were clearly seeking to subordinate the Church to the state.

Almost as soon as the law for the single text was approved, the rightist and ultra-Catholic newspaper *El Siglo Futuro* launched a campaign against it, accusing the government of appropriating ecclesiastical prerogatives.¹⁵⁴ Perhaps more importantly, the Social Catholics, whom, as we have seen, provided a large part of the social base of the UP, also rejected the educational reform on similar grounds.¹⁵⁵ In late 1928, *El Debate* called upon Catholics to oppose the reforms, given that they involved the state increasing its control over Spanish education. To pursue its campaign in opposition to the dictatorship and avoid the censorship, the Social Catholics used their tried-and-tested method of criticising Mussolini, when the true target was clearly Primo. Thus, *El Debate* roundly condemned the Italian fascist intervention in education and denounced the state practice of moving Catholic teachers from one post to another, calling it a scandalous interference on the part of the state. The last paragraphs of the editorial made it clear that the objective of the Catholic right was cooperation with the Primo dictatorship, but not subordination to it. According to this piece:

In such anarchic and difficult times, Catholics must, on the one hand, support the government and civil authorities [...] on the other, they must be prepared to defence the liberty and legitimate rights of the Catholic Church against the intrusion of civil power.¹⁵⁶

For the Social Catholics, religious doctrine represented the principal tool of political socialisation. Patriotism was of course an important element, but it was complementary to Catholic doctrine, while the expansion of state power was seen as a threat to the privileges of the Church. For their part, regime officials and ideologues saw the nation as sacred and supreme, while state organisations provided the necessary tools for mass nationalisation. As in Italy, policies of mass indoctrination demanded an expansion in state education that would prompt serious tensions with the Catholic Church.

The process of mass nationalisation acquired its own specific connotations in those areas of the country where other languages existed alongside Castilian. Primo de Rivera saw the propagation of Spanish in Catalonia, the Basque Country and Galicia as a basic tool in the process of nationalisation. In one piece of correspondence with Francesc Cambó, for example, the dictator made the point very clearly:

I would ask the Catalan people, as I ask the Basques or Galicians [...] that the predominant [language] be spread and used by all as the only means of widening and strengthening the spiritual and racial basis of a Great Spain.¹⁵⁷

Primo's experiences as Captain-General of Catalonia had convinced him that 'separatists and regionalists' had used schools to 'de-Spanishise' Catalan children by teaching exclusively in Catalan. As such, it was the dictatorship's duty to promote an education exclusively in Castilian.¹⁵⁸ This linguistic policy of Primo had two objectives. First, language would be used as a means of transmitting a Spanish national identity in Catalonia, the Basque Country and Galicia. At the same time, the aim was to prevent regionalists and nationalists using Catalan, Basque and Galician as arms for the political socialisation children in primary schools. As we have seen, during the first weeks of the dictatorship, the regime imposed teaching in Castilian on all educational institutions in Spain. The regime also approved laws which established prison sentences for teachers who spread 'secessionist' doctrines in the classroom and cut funding for the teaching of languages other than Castilian.

In the Basque Country, some schools were closed and some teachers arrested for giving classes in Basque, but in general the regime was more tolerant and pragmatic in its handling of the linguistic issue there than it was in Catalonia.¹⁵⁹ At the start of 1924, for example, General Echagüe, the Military Governor of Vizcaya and himself a Basque speaker, published an official note in which he declared that Basque could be used in all those areas in which Spanish speakers were a minority. According to the notice, no punishments would be handed out to those who spoke or wrote in Basque.¹⁶⁰ There was a large measure of common sense in such actions. The unleashing of monolingual teaching in parts of the Basque Country where Basque had traditionally been used as the language of communication between teachers and students, and as a means of learning Spanish, was not going to be possible overnight,

no matter how much the regime might wish it. Moreover, in some parts of the Basque Country the process of Hispanicisation was going to be difficult. To judge by one report, jointly prepared by the *delegados gubernativos* of Azpeitia and Vergara and the schools inspector for Guipuzcoa in 1924, most residents in the province were 'frankly anti-Spanish', which had a direct impact at school, where attendance was poor due to 'the hatred that the natives feel at learning the national language'.¹⁶¹

One of the major reasons for the regime's comparative leniency towards Basque nationalists was the relative willingness of the Basque Church to cooperate with the dictatorship. Although some priests were reprimanded or fined by the military for preaching in Basque, both Bishops of Vitoria during the dictatorship, Zacarias Martínez and Mateo Múgica, were steadfast monarchists and did not have much sympathy with Basque nationalism, so much so that there was no episcopal protest when the teaching of the catechism in Basque was prohibited.¹⁶² The bishops recommended to priests that they preach in Spanish or in Basque depending on the language used by the majority of the faithful in their respective parishes. As a result, throughout the dictatorship it was normal for Basque to be used by priests in Basque-speaking areas – something which the regime was prepared to tolerate – and publications on Basque culture continued to be financed by the Church. Indeed, much to the consternation of Basque nationalists and to the delight of the dictatorship's authorities, many rural priests in Vizcaya in fact became members of the UP, something which strengthened the links between the Basque Church and the regime.¹⁶³

In Catalonia, however, the situation was radically different. The regime was keen to launch a witch hunt against Catalanists, whom it perceived to be hiding everywhere among teachers. From early October 1923, all teachers and inspectors received instructions to report on their colleagues if they were giving classes in any language other than Castilian.¹⁶⁴ Dozens of nationalist teachers were denounced by their colleagues, by inspectors, or simply by anonymous citizens.¹⁶⁵ At the same time, the dictatorship took measures against those inspectors deemed to be too indulgent, many of whom were sent to provinces outside of Catalonia and replaced with individuals loyal to the Primo regime.¹⁶⁶ Both private and state schools which answered to the town halls were also the target of the regime. Civil and military governors, with the assistance of the *delegados*, first purged the municipal councils of those they considered to be separatists, and later dismissed municipal employees accused of being Catalanists, in so doing strengthening their hold over municipal schools and libraries.¹⁶⁷ All of these purges stemmed from the surgical notions, which the dictator had long since been speaking of in public, of 'cleansing the national body'. Indeed, Primo had warned that 'the Spanish public servant has to be Spanish [...] He who is not, will lose his job'.¹⁶⁸

The regime's strategy for nationalisation was not based upon repression alone. It also involved the promotion of National-Catholic values in schools and cultural institutions.¹⁶⁹ After the dissolution of the Catalan *Mancomunitat*

in March 1925, the government concentrated its efforts on promoting its *españolista* policies from the provincial councils. In Barcelona, Primo placed Josep Maria Milà i Camps, the Conde de Montseny and a well-known Spanish nationalist, in charge of the *Diputación*. Through the council's Department of Education, Milà i Camps organised book donations, supported cultural associations, organised patriotic lectures and granted scholarships for various courses. The importance of this institution for the dictatorship is made clear if we compare the education budget for the provincial council of Barcelona and the old *Mancomunitat*. In the academic year 1922–1923, the *Mancomunitat* had a budget of 2,401,872 pesetas for its Department of Public Education, while in 1929 the provincial council of Barcelona had 2,550,233 pesetas for education. To put this in context, the latter was only used to cover the province of Barcelona, while the *Mancomunitat*'s budget had to cover all of the four Catalan provinces.¹⁷⁰

While the Barcelona provincial council absorbed some of the work of the *Mancomunitat*, Milà i Camps decided to seek 'a sincere declaration of Spanishness' from those who worked for the provincial council, which predictably generated a some discontent among the old workers of the *Mancomunitat*.¹⁷¹ Patriotic oaths aside, it is clear that the Department of Education of the *Diputación* devoted much of its efforts and resources to the purchase of books and their subsequent distribution to schools and public libraries. They principally included nationalistic (Spanish) works which exalted the figure of the dictator, the *Somatén* and the Spanish race, although they also included classics of Spanish and Spanish-American literature and religious publications.¹⁷² Meanwhile, special efforts were made during patriotic events. In 1925, for example, copies of the *Revista Hispanoamericana* were distributed in schools and libraries to mark the *Fiesta de la Raza*.¹⁷³ Following orders from the dictator, the council also organised patriotic lectures each year in all libraries and public educational institutions in the province of Barcelona, and donated hundreds of books to national and municipal schools to celebrate the *Fiesta del Libro*.¹⁷⁴ Town councils in the province of Barcelona also participated actively in these endeavours. For several years, for example, to mark the *Fiesta del Libro*, the council of Vilanova i la Geltrú distributed hundreds of patriotic publications to schools, the local Atheneum and the local prison (Figure 6.2).¹⁷⁵

The provincial council's education department was also active when it came to staging patriotic educational programmes. At the start of 1926, for example, it organised a series of courses at public libraries in Pineda, Canet del Mar and Sallent, which included nationalistic subjects such as 'Spanishness' as well as 'professional talks' on topics such as fishing and agriculture.¹⁷⁶ When the courses were over, the council assisted the *delegados gubernativos* in organising the 'Sunday lectures' in the province.¹⁷⁷ Nor was the indoctrination of teachers overlooked. From 1926, the *Diputación* organised pedagogy conferences in the teacher training colleges (*escuelas normales*) of Barcelona, with the specific aim of training prospective teachers how to inculcate patriotic values among the students.¹⁷⁸ The regime's officials also paid attention to female education.



Figure 6.2 Card with the image of Primo de Rivera returning victorious from the Rif War. Credit: Alfonso.

The *Diputación* funded the Women's Popular Library and established new study grants for the Women's Professional College of Barcelona.¹⁷⁹ For the dictatorship, the nationalisation of women was perfectly compatible with their involvement in the labour market. In this sense, the regime's notion of the social and 'patriotic' role of women was clearly different to that of Fascist Italy. While the Spanish dictatorship tried to 'forge' a Spanish woman committed to the regime while active in the labour market, Italian fascism condemned women to much more passive roles linked to domestic labour.¹⁸⁰

There can be little doubt over the intensive efforts that the dictatorship made at (Spanish) nationalisation in Catalonia. It is nonetheless possible to question the overall impact of this process of social engineering. On 8 October 1929, coinciding with a visit to the Universal Exposition in Barcelona, Primo declared in an official note that his policies had eradicated Catalan nationalism and awoken a deep love for Spain among the Catalan people. In the simple, if not particularly modest, words of the Marqués de Estella:

I [...] have awoken in [the Catalans] a dormant love of Spain, the sense of all living together through bad days as well as the good. Racial brotherhood, historic solidarity, the spread of the common tongue, and the good Catalans, those who most justifiably and passionately love the beautiful land in which they were born, have believed in me and followed me, freeing themselves from the yoke of slavery that against all

reason and benefit wanted to impose socialistic ideas upon them, which were so contrary to the noble and human feelings which characterise the children of Catalonia.¹⁸¹

We can certainly question the degree to which Primo actually believed that Catalan nationalism had been definitively vanquished and his policies of ‘Spanishising’ the population had been a resounding success. It is possible the dictator was carried away with the atmosphere of patriotic exaltation at the Barcelona Exposition when he prepared this official note. It is improbable, however, that Primo was unaware that the situation in Catalonia was in reality very different to that which he had described. The regime’s repression in Catalonia was both intensive and arbitrary, and it had slowly alienated many social groups who had initially backed the dictatorship.¹⁸² As early as December 1924, Calvo Sotelo had written to Primo asking him to do something because repression in the region was proving counter-productive, claiming 90% of Catalans were against the Military Directory.¹⁸³ Calvo Sotelo believed that ‘the time has arrived for reconciliation in Catalonia’ and urgently asked Primo not to dissolve the *Mancomunitat* because it was likely to worsen matters.¹⁸⁴ ‘Experience clearly teaches us that faced with this problem of collective psychology and popular sentiment, the policy of force, of intransigence, is sterile’, he concluded.¹⁸⁵ As we have seen, Primo de Rivera took no heed of Calvo Sotelo’s suggestions. Instead, he proceeded to abolish the *Mancomunitat* and continued with his repressive policies in Catalonia.

As a result of this repression, important groups within the middle classes and clergy became more radicalised in their Catalanist sentiments. At the same time, many Catalan monarchists, who had been staunch anti-Catalanists before the Primo regime, began to see things differently and would ultimately adopt conservative regionalist positions after the fall of the dictator.¹⁸⁶ Meanwhile, the suppression of political liberties drove many Catalan regionalists to take refuge in cultural activities. Accordingly, publications in Catalan actually increased during the dictatorship. In 1923, there had been just six newspapers in Catalan, but by 1927 there were already 10 daily newspapers and 147 magazines published in the language. By 1930, some 10.2% of all books published in Spain were written in Catalan.¹⁸⁷ Clearly, Primo de Rivera’s policies of nationalisation placed languages in the front line in the dialectic between Spanish and Catalan nationalism.

In terms of education, the policies of ‘Hispanicisation’ in Catalonia ran into a series of practical difficulties. The imposition of Castilian in state educational institutions was well received in urban areas with a high number of Spanish speakers. After all, given the continual flow of immigrants to the region from other parts of Spain during the first decades of the twentieth century, many Catalan towns had seen a rapid growth and become bastions of Spanish nationalism.¹⁸⁸ In rural areas, however, the teachers found it extremely difficult to give classes in Castilian. A good example of this was a letter published in *El Magisterio Nacional*, sent in by an Aragonese teacher who worked in

Tortosa. The teacher complained bitterly about the amount of time he had to spend explaining the meaning of Castilian words such as 'lentejas' (lentils) to a young and bewildered audience who could barely understand him.¹⁸⁹ For this particular teacher, it was 'anti-pedagogic' to teach in this way, and as such he had sought permission to give classes in Catalan or 'at the very least be able to use some words in Catalan'. He was not alone in such requests. Three months after the fall of the dictatorship, the state teachers in Barcelona, many of whom were not Catalans, prepared a joint request to radically depart from the linguistic policies of Primo de Rivera. They unanimously demanded, first of all, permission 'to use regional languages in the classroom', and secondly the reestablishment of courses in vernaculars other than Spanish in the teacher training colleges.¹⁹⁰

In many ways, the problems that the regime found in response to the process of nationalisation in Catalonia could be found throughout Spain. On the one hand, the centrality of the Army as the principal institution in the process of indoctrination had unwelcome results. To be sure, the *delegados* were able to organise thousands of nationalistic ceremonies and mobilise the population to a certain degree. Nonetheless, the public image of the *delegados* was rapidly deteriorating, principally due to the indiscriminate repression they had unleashed, to accusations of corruption which were labelled at them, and due to the financial strain, they were placing upon municipal budgets. With the creation of the SNEFCP, the institution ran into financial problems and the officers who staffed it did not have sufficient time to achieve noticeable results. In truth, the intervention of the military into civilian life was counterproductive. Some officers and members of the government noted how the work of the *delegados* besmirched not only the regime but also the army as a whole, as well as damaging the prestige of the regime throughout the country. Since the officers presented the nation, the regime and the Army as parts of a single whole, the decline in popular support for the dictatorship led to a decrease in mass support for the very idea of Spain that the *delegados* were trying to promote. Accordingly, the effects of military indoctrination on civil society might be defined as a 'negative nationalisation', in which growing opposition to the government personnel who spread the official canon of the nation became linked to the rejection of the very idea of the nation itself which was put forward by said personnel. The fact is that all those groups who opposed the official concept of Spain preached by the 'apostles of the fatherland' – regional nationalists, regionalists, republicans, Carlists and anarchists – re-emerged after the fall of the dictatorship with even great popular support. This tells us something about the negative effects of military propaganda in the state's attempt at nationalisation of the masses under Primo de Rivera. Meanwhile, after the dictator's fall, so many groups, from conservative monarchists to Social Catholics, from socialists to liberals, were in agreement on one fundamental point, namely, that the Army should no longer involve itself in political matters.¹⁹¹ One editorial in the conservative *ABC* three days after the fall of Primo de Rivera, for example, made it clear that the dictatorship's policies had

transformed the army into a state institution 'incompatible with the nation'.¹⁹² In short, Primo de Rivera's policies of militarised nationalisation of the masses had generated a degree of consensus over the supremacy of civil authority.

Similarly, Primo de Rivera was unable to transform the education system into an effective tool of indoctrination. The regime's education reforms had a doubly negative effect. First, they served to disenchant key groups of regime sympathisers, not least of all the Church, Social Catholics and many middle-class conservatives. Second, they displeased the teachers, the very individuals responsible for transmitting the regime's messages to children and teenagers. The teachers' disgust with the regime was the result of a combination of repression and a lack of improvement of the material conditions of teachers and schools. The result was that teachers slowly but surely distanced themselves from the dictatorship, and so a fundamental link in the chain of ideological transmission between the state and Spanish children was unable to function effectively. This slow but inexorable opposition of the profession, from teachers to inspectors, reinforces the thesis of the 'republicanisation' of certain professional groups under the Primo dictatorship.¹⁹³ As with doctors, lawyers and all manner of public servants, so teachers and inspectors began to feel that the creation of a constitutional republic was the way forward for Spain. The dictatorship's policies of nationalisation had a counter-productive effect, and the republic came to be seen as a legal and regulated way of governing, which would be capable of protecting the interests of professional groups. In other words, for broad sections of the middle- and lower-middle classes, the idea of a republic became an attractive alternative because it was the exact opposite of the arbitrary, illegal and capricious conduct of the Primo de Rivera dictatorship.

Notes

- 1 On Horcada, see Jorge Molero Mesa & Isabel Jiménez Lucena, 'Salud y burocracia en España. Los cuerpos de sanidad nacional (1855–1951)', *Revista Española de Salud Pública*, 74 (2000), pp. 5–6.
- 2 Primo de Rivera to Antonio Horcada, 2 March 1929, AHN, legajo 190, caja 1.
- 3 Primo de Rivera to Antonio Horcada, 2 March 1929, AHN, legajo 190, caja 1.
- 4 The Alcazar was a stone fortress dating back to Roman times, which was restored and enlarged by Carlos I and Felipe II in the sixteenth century. As well as being the seat of the Primate of the Catholic Church in Spain, Toledo was also the site of the National Infantry Academy that Primo himself had attended.
- 5 *La Nación*, 5 March 1929, p. 2.
- 6 *La Nación*, 5 March 1929, p. 5.
- 7 *La Nación*, 11 March 1929, p. 11.
- 8 Eduardo Pérez Agudo (ed.), *Curso de ciudadanía. Conferencias pronunciadas en el Alcázar de Toledo. Marzo 1929* (Madrid: Junta de Propaganda Patriótica y Ciudadana, 1929).
- 9 For the training in methods of physical education, see 'Dossier con conferencias y demostraciones prácticas' in AHN, Presidencia del Gobierno, legajo 190, caja 1.
- 10 Undated letter from Primo de Rivera to Carlos Guerra Zagala, April 1929, AHN, Presidencia del Gobierno, legajo 190, caja 1.

- 11 Miguel Primo de Rivera, 'Prólogo', in Eduardo Pérez Agudo (ed.), *Curso de ciudadanía. Conferencias pronunciadas en el Alcázar de Toledo. Marzo 1929* (Madrid: Junta de Propaganda Patriótica y Ciudadana, 1929), p. x.
- 12 Cuervo's official order, in which he explained how the civil governors should distribute the book, is in AHN, Presidencia del Gobierno, legajo 190, caja 1.
- 13 'Distribución de la edición del curso de conferencias de Toledo', AHN, Presidencia del Gobierno, legajo 190, caja 1.
- 14 The comments of Primo de Rivera in 'Prólogo' to Tomás García Figueras & José de la Matta Ortigosa, *Elementos de educación moral del soldado* (Sevilla: F. Díaz, 1916), pp. xi–xv, with the quotation taken from p. x of this volume.
- 15 Miguel Primo de Rivera, *Disertación ciudadana* (Madrid: Sanz Calleja, 1926), p. 19.
- 16 Miguel Primo de Rivera, *Disertación ciudadana* (Madrid: Sanz Calleja, 1926), pp. 22–23. Interestingly, Primo included the exercise of the vote in the list of a citizen's duties, although he never specified in which type of election people might be able to fulfil this duty.
- 17 Manuel Pérez Ledesma, 'El lenguaje de la ciudadanía en la España contemporánea', in Manuel Pérez Ledesma (ed.), *De súbditos a ciudadanos. Una historia de ciudadanía en España* (Madrid: Centro de Estudios Políticos y Constitucionales, 2007), pp. 464–466.
- 18 For the regime's notion of a 'soldier citizen', see Teodoro de Iradier y Herrero, *Catecismo del ciudadano* (Madrid: Talleres del Depósito de Guerra, 1924), pp. 18–19.
- 19 Miguel Primo de Rivera, *El Pensamiento de Primo de Rivera* (Madrid: Sáez Hermanos / Junta de Propaganda Patriótica y Ciudadana, 1929), pp. 139–140, 214–219, 245–248, 253–255, 270.
- 20 Emilio Gentile, *The Sacralization of Politics in Fascist Italy* (Cambridge, MA & London: Harvard University Press, 1996), p. 96.
- 21 For the concept of 'negative integration', see Hans-Ulrich Wehler, *The German Empire, 1871–1918* (Berg: Leamington Spa, 1985), pp. 100–137.
- 22 For the concept of 'nation-building nationalism', see John Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State* (Manchester: MUP, 1993), p. 28.
- 23 Emilio Gentile, *Il Culto del Littorio. La sacralizzazione della politica nell'Italia fascista* (Bari: Laterza, 2009); Emilio Gentile, *La Grande Italia: The Myth of the Nation in the Twentieth Century* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2009); Irina Livezeanu, 'Interwar Poland and Romania: The Nationalisation of Elites, the Vanishing Middle, and the Problem of Intellectuals', *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, 22 (1998), pp. 407–430; Brian Porter-Szucs, *Faith and Fatherland: Catholicism, Modernity and Poland* (Oxford: OUP, 2011); Antonio Costa Pinto & Maria Inazia Rezola, 'Political Catholicism, Crisis of Democracy, and Salazar's New State in Portugal', *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, 8:2 (2007), pp. 353–368; Paul A. Hanebrink, *In Defense of Christian Hungary: Religion, Nationalism and Antisemitism, 1890–1944* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006); Spyridon Ploumidis, 'Corporatist Ideas in Inter-War Greece: From Theory to Practice (1922–1940)', *European History Quarterly*, 44:1 (2014), pp. 55–79; Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed* (Cambridge: CUP, 1996); Peter F. Sugar (ed.), *Eastern European Nationalism in the Twentieth Century* (Washington, DC: American University Press, 1995); Irina Livezeanu, *Cultural Policies of Greater Romania: Regionalism, Nation-Building & Ethnic Struggle, 1918–1930* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995); Karen Barkey & Mark von Hagen (eds.), *After Empire: Multiethnic Societies and Nation-Building. The Soviet Union and the Russian, Ottoman and Hapsburg Empires* (Oxford: Westview Press, 1997).

- 24 Royal Decree, 29 March 1924, in *Diario Oficial del Ministerio de la Guerra* (hereafter DOMG), 30 March 1924, pp. 985–993.
- 25 Inter alia, see Royal Circular, 1 December 1929, *Diario Oficial del Ministerio del Ejército* (hereafter DOME), 1929, no. 267, pp. 599–607.
- 26 Royal Circular, 17 February 1927, *Colección Legislativa del Ejército* (hereafter CLE), 1927, no. 83, pp. 97–101.
- 27 Royal Decree, 31 December 1926, in DOMG, 1 January 1927, no. 1, pp. 4–5; Royal Circular, 12 January 1927, in DOMG, 13 January 1927, no. 9, pp. 123–124.
- 28 Royal Decree, 31 March 1924, in CLE, 1924, no. 128, p. 188.
- 29 Royal Decree, 31 March 1924, in CLE, 1924, no. 128, p. 188.
- 30 Royal Decree, 31 March 1924, in CLE, 1924, no. 128, p. 188.
- 31 Manuel Rubio Cabeza, *Crónica de la dictadura* (Madrid: Sarpe, 1986), p. 141.
- 32 Royal Circular, 2 June 1925, in CLE, 1925, no. 145, pp. 201–202.
- 33 Ladislao Cuadrado, Infantry Major, ‘Algunas transformaciones y síntesis de un plan de instrucción’, *Memorial de Infantería*, 38:244 (September 1930), pp. 201–208.
- 34 Carlos Navajas Zubeldía, *Ejército, Estado y sociedad en España (1923–1930)* (Logroño: Instituto de Estudios Riojanos, 1991), pp. 161–162.
- 35 Emilio Mola Vidal, *Obras completas* (Valladolid: Librería Santarén, 1940), p. 1029.
- 36 Annual military budgets (in millions of pesetas) were as follows: 1924 (second half)/1925 (first half), 1343.1; 1925/1926, 1185.5; 1926 (second half), 497.9; 1927, 948.2; 1928, 932.4; 1929, 925.9; 1930, 1036.7. In the same period, military spending as a percentage of government expenditure was as follows: 1924/1925, 36.4%; 1925/1926, 32.2%; 1926 (second half), 30.2%; 1927, 26%; 1928, 26.6%; 1929, 25%; 1930, 26.33%. For the data, see Carlos Navajas Zubeldía, *Ejército, Estado y sociedad en España (1923–1930)* (Logroño: Instituto de Estudios Riojanos, 1991), p. 189. Nonetheless, at the end of the dictatorship the regime increased the educational budget within the military budget. Funds assigned to military training centres rose 7.44% in the last years of the regime, from 9,266,018.1 pesetas in 1929 to 9,912,682.1 pesetas in 1930. Once Berenguer assumed government, the education budget grew further to 10,714,304.75 pesetas. See Royal Decree, 3 January 1929, in CLE, 1929, p. 22; Royal Decree, 3 January 1930, in CLE, 1930, p. 22; Royal Decree, 3 January 1931, in CLE, 1931, p. 14.
- 37 The number of recruits rose from 134,410 in 1923 to 148,522 in 1930, an increase of 10.49%. Figures for recruits throughout the dictatorship are as follows: 134,410 (1923), 142,901 (1924), 140,275 (1925), 150,116 (1926), 153,885 (1927), 139,139 (1928), 144,615 (1929), 148,522 (1930). Data is taken from *Anuario Estadístico de España, 1931*.
- 38 Alejandro Quiroga, ‘Los apóstoles de la Patria. El ejército como instrumento nacionalizador de masas en la Dictadura de Primo de Rivera’, *Mélanges de la Casa de Velázquez*, 34:1 (2004), pp. 243–272.
- 39 Royal Decree, 20 October 1923, in *Gaceta de Madrid*, 21 October 1923.
- 40 Instructions to the delegates can be found in Royal Decree, 20 October 1923; Royal Order, 9 December 1923; Royal Decree, 20 March 1924. See also the letters from Primo de Rivera to the *delegados* on 5 April 1924 & 24 April 1924; Letter from Martínez Anido to the delegates, 1 January 1924; Telegram from Martínez Anido to the delegates, 4 January 1924, all in AHN, Presidencia del Gobierno, legajo 331, caja 1.
- 41 Royal Decree, 20 October 1923, article 4.
- 42 The reports of the *delegados* and civil governors are in AHN, Presidencia, legajo 331, caja 1. See also the creation of the Junta de Cultura Física in Aoiz in Jesús

- María Fuentes Langas, *La Dictadura de Primo de Rivera en Navarra* (Pamplona: Gobierno de Navarra, 1998), p. 105. For more cases of priests, teachers and doctors cooperating with the *delegados* in La Rioja, see Carlos Navajas, *Los cados y las comadreas. La Dictadura de Primo de Rivera en la Rioja* (Logroño: Instituto de Estudios Riojanos, 1994), pp. 77–87.
- 43 See, for example, the reports from the delegados of Carabanchel Bajo, Llano de Vich, Santa Coloma de Farnés, Mondoñedo, Palos de Moguer, Barco de Valdeorras, Pola de Siero, Vich, Talavera, Llodio, Caldas Reyes, Olot, Salas de los Infantes, Alcira, Quintanar de la Orden, Puenteareas, Linares, Cistierna & Belorado. AHN, Presidencia, legajo 331, cajas 1 & 2. Other delegates pushed the teachers in the local press to inculcate love of the nation in the hearts of the children. See, for example, the case of the *delegado* José Fernández Navarro reported in *El Magisterio Castellano*, 1 March 1924.
 - 44 See the reports of the delegados in Valencia de Alcántara, Hellín, Andújar, Icod, Palos de Moguer, Llodio, Olot, Sala de los Infantes, Alcira, Cariñena, Calatayud, Madrigueras, & Iniesta. See also Civil Governor (Cuenca) to Primo de Rivera, in AHN, Presidencia, legajo 331, caja 1.
 - 45 Numerous reports about various patriotic events can be found in AHN, Presidencia, legajo 331, caja 1.
 - 46 Royal Order, 29 January 1926, *DOMG*, 31 January 1926, no. 24, p. 249.
 - 47 Royal Order, 29 January 1926, *DOMG*, 31 January 1926, no. 24, p. 249.
 - 48 Royal Decree, 20 March 1926, *DOMG*, 23 March 1926, no. 65, pp. 74–75.
 - 49 Chief of the Sub-Secretariat of the President of the Council of Ministers to Martínez Anido, 23 February 1926. AHN, Gobernación, serie A, legajo 61A, caja 3.
 - 50 Martínez Anido to civil governors, 24 February 1926. AHN, Gobernación, serie A, legajo 61A, caja 3.
 - 51 Martínez Anido to civil governors, 6 March 1926. AHN, Gobernación, serie A, legajo 61A, caja 3.
 - 52 On the Sunday meetings in Italy, see Emilio Gentile, *The Sacralization of Politics in Fascist Italy* (Cambridge, MA & London: Harvard University Press, 1996), p. 97.
 - 53 For the poor results in Italy, see Emilio Gentile, *The Sacralization of Politics in Fascist Italy* (Cambridge, MA & London: Harvard University Press, 1996), p. 188.
 - 54 Civil Governor (Álava) to Martínez Anido, 26 February 1926. AHN, Gobernación, serie A, legajo 61A, caja 3.
 - 55 The courses were held between March and June 1926. ADPB, Departament de Instrucció Pública, legajo 4177, carpeta 15.
 - 56 See, for example, the holding of a Sunday talk in Botrils. *La Vanguardia*, 27 August 1926.
 - 57 Civil Governor (Santander) to Martínez Anido, 8 March 1926. AHN, Gobernación, serie A, legajo 61A, caja 3.
 - 58 Miguel Primo de Rivera, *Actuación ciudadana que corresponde al Ejército. Conferencia pronunciada por el Presidente del Consejo de Ministros, Excmo. Señor D. Miguel Primo de Rivera en el casino de Clases de Madrid, el día 26 de octubre de 1927* (Madrid: Imprente de Juan Pérez Torres, 1927), p. 24.
 - 59 Miguel Primo de Rivera, *Actuación ciudadana que corresponde al Ejército. Conferencia pronunciada por el Presidente del Consejo de Ministros, Excmo. Señor D. Miguel Primo de Rivera en el casino de Clases de Madrid, el día 26 de octubre de 1927* (Madrid: Imprente de Juan Pérez Torres, 1927), pp. 23–24.
 - 60 Royal Order, 27 December 1927, article 6. *Gaceta de Madrid*, 28 December 1927.
 - 61 Problems around premilitary education are mentioned in the Royal Decree of 21 October 1912. The extremely poor situation of state associations is recorded

- in the reports of the national assemblies of the TNE in *El Tiro Nacional de España* (Madrid: 1915), p. 64; *Tiro Nacional de España* (Madrid: 1918), pp. 23–27, 47–69.
- 62 The dictatorship's criticisms of premilitary education under the Restoration Monarchy are in the preamble to the Royal Decree of 8 May 1925, in CLE, 1925, no. 117, pp. 151–155.
 - 63 Royal Decree, 8 May 1925, articles 5 & 8.
 - 64 Royal Circular, 27 June 1925, in CLE, 1925, appendix 6, pp. 3–16.
 - 65 Royal Decree, 8 May 1925, articles 6 & 10.
 - 66 Royal Decree, 8 May 1925, article 13.
 - 67 The Committee for Physical Culture was created and placed under the direct control of Primo's office by the Royal Decree of 3 November 1928. See *DOMÉ*, 6 November 1928, no. 243, pp. 341–342.
 - 68 'Origen del excedente de la oficialidad en las escalas del Ejército', AHN, Presidencia del Gobierno, legajo 190, caja 1.
 - 69 Officers on the reserve list received 80% of their normal salary.
 - 70 Royal Decree, 14 January 1929, preamble and articles 1, 4 & 7. See *DOMÉ*, 16 January 1929, no. 12, p. 137.
 - 71 General Villalba to Primo de Rivera, 2 February 1929, 'Minutas sobre el cumplimiento del Real Decreto de 14 de Enero de 1929 sobre conferencias patrióticas e instrucción premilitar', AHN, Presidencia del Gobierno, legajo 190, caja 1.
 - 72 Manuscript of General Villalba, 'Programa sobre una formación de ciudadanía española', in AHN, Presidencia del Gobierno, legajo 190, caja 1.
 - 73 Royal Order, 8 July 1929, *DOMÉ*, 10 July 1929, no. 148, p. 101.
 - 74 Royal Circular, 2 March 1929, *CLE*, 1929, no. 84, pp. 137–138.
 - 75 Royal Order, 12 July 1929, *DOMÉ*, 14 July 1929, no. 152, p. 139.
 - 76 *Anuario Militar de España 1930*. See also, Royal Circular, 2 December 1930, *CLE*, 1929, n. 410, p. 537.
 - 77 Alejandro Quiroga, 'Maestros, espías y lentejas. Educación y nacionalización de masas durante la Dictadura de Primo de Rivera', in Javier Moreno (ed.), *Construir España. Nacionalismo español y procesos de nacionalización* (Madrid: Centro de Estudios Políticos y Constitucionales, 2007), pp. 159–181.
 - 78 Royal Decree, 18 September 1923, article 2. *La Gaceta de Madrid*, 19 September 1923.
 - 79 Royal Circular, 20 October 1923, *BOMIP*, 16 November 1923, pp. 833–834.
 - 80 Royal Order, 13 October 1925, *Colección Legislativa de Instrucción Pública* (hereafter *CLIP*), 1925, pp. 569–571.
 - 81 Royal Order, 13 October 1925, *CLIP*, 1925, pp. 569–571.
 - 82 Royal Order, 29 August 1924, *CLIP*, 1924, pp. 533–534.
 - 83 Numerous letters and telegrams from teachers welcoming the arrival of the dictatorship can be seen in AHN, Enseñanza: 1923–1924, legajo 356, caja 1.
 - 84 See Martínez Anido to civil governors, 27 May 1924; Martínez Anido to Primo de Rivera, Report on Teachers, 13 November 1924; General Navarro to Martínez Anido, 11 February 1925. AHN, Gobernación, serie A, legajo 61, caja 3.
 - 85 See Martínez Anido to civil governors, 14 February 1925; Martínez Anido to civil governors of Alicante, Badajoz, Baleares, Burgos, Gerona, Granada, Logroño, Orense, Palencia, Santander, Teruel & Vizcaya, 27 February 1925; Martínez Anido to Primo de Rivera, 2 July 1925. AHN, Gobernación, serie A, legajo 61, caja 3.
 - 86 See, for example, General Navarro & Alonso de Celada to Martínez Anido, 22 November 1925; Martínez Anido to Civil Governor (Almería), 14 February 1925; Martínez Anido to Civil Governor (Castellón), 14 February 1925; Civil Governor (Pontevedra) to Martínez Anido, 16 February 1925. AHN, Gobernación, serie A, legajo 61, caja 3.

- 87 Shlomo Ben-Ami, *Fascism from above: The Dictatorship of Primo de Rivera in Spain 1923–1930* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), p. 105.
- 88 Ramón López Martín, *Ideología y educación en la dictadura de Primo de Rivera*, vol. 1. (Universitat de València, Valencia, 1994), p. 35.
- 89 Ramón López Martín, *Ideología y educación en la dictadura de Primo de Rivera*, vol. 1. (Universitat de València, Valencia, 1994), p. 35.
- 90 Eduardo Callejo to Martínez Anido, 29 May 1926. AGA, Interior, caja 149.
- 91 Martínez Anido to Eduardo Callejo, 4 June 1926. AGA, Interior, caja 149.
- 92 See, for example, reports from civil governors to Martínez Anido. AHN, Gobernación, serie A, legajo 61, caja 3; ‘Unión Ciudadana Anticaciquil de Villalba’ al Director General de Educación Primaria, 20 November 1927. AHN, Presidencia del Gobierno, legajo 358; Primo de Rivera to Eduardo Callejo, 9 January 1930. AHN, Presidencia del Gobierno, legajo 114, caja 2.
- 93 Royal Order, 12 February 1924, *CLIP*, 1924, pp. 84–85.
- 94 Royal Order, 13 October 1925, article 1. *CLIP*, 1925, pp. 569–571.
- 95 These controls and sanctions applied equally to private schools. See Royal Order, 13 October 1925, articles 2, 3 & 4.
- 96 Royal Order, 13 October 1925, article 5.
- 97 Martínez Anido to civil governors, ‘Circular Confidencial y Reservada’, 24 June 1926. AHN, Gobernación, serie A, legajo 61, caja 3.
- 98 Civil governors sometimes sent copies of their reports to Martínez Anido. See, for example, Civil Governor (Coruña) to Director-General of Primary Education, 3 July 1926; Civil Governor (Murcia) to Martínez Anido, undated; Civil Governor (Zaragoza) to Martínez Anido, 1 July 1926. AHN, Gobernación, serie A, legajo 61, caja 3.
- 99 Ramón López Martín, “La inspección de enseñanza primaria en la Dictadura de Primo de Rivera”, *Historia de la educación: Revista interuniversitaria*, N. 6, 1987, p. 321.
- 100 See the numerous letters from teachers to Primo de Rivera, December 1927, in AHN, Presidencia del Gobierno, legajo 358.
- 101 The *delegado* survived the assault. See Civil Governor (Las Palmas) to Martínez Anido, 19 February 1929, AHN, Gobernación, serie A, legajo 17A, caja 2.
- 102 *El Magisterio Español*, 19 April 1930, 18 June 1930.
- 103 *El Magisterio Español*, 14 May 1930.
- 104 María del Mar del Pozo Andrés & Jacques F. A. Braster, ‘The Rebirth of the “Spanish Race”: The State, Nationalism and Education in Spain, 1875–1931’, *European History Quarterly*, 29:1 (1999), p. 89.
- 105 Alberto del Pozo Pardo, ‘El Libro de la Patria. Un concurso escolar vacío, de matiz regeneracionista (1921–1923)’, in Julio Ruiz Berrio (ed.), *La educación en la España contemporánea* (Madrid: Sociedad Española de Pedagogía, 1985), pp. 195–202.
- 106 María del Mar del Pozo Andrés, *Curriculum e identidad nacional* (Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 2000), p. 241.
- 107 Mask (pseudonym of Enrique Díaz Retg), *Páginas para la Historia. Hacia la España nueva: pasado, presente y porvenir del Directorio Militar* (Madrid: Sucesores de Rivadeneyra, 1925), p. 214.
- 108 On the reform of the Council, see Royal Decree, 25 June 1926. After purging the Council, Primo did not consult the institution again about any of the important education reforms launched by the dictatorship.
- 109 The document written by Primo de Rivera was entitled ‘Study-project on the single text’ and can be found in AHN, Presidencia del Gobierno, legajo 358.
- 110 Carolyn P. Boyd, *Historia patria. Politics, History and National Identity in Spain, 1875–1975* (Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 1997), pp. 160, 190.

- 111 Rafael Altamira, *Historia de España, para uso de las escuelas primarias* (Madrid: Real Academia de la Historia, 1930), p. 61.
- 112 Royal Order, 16 April 1930. *Gaceta de Madrid*, 23 April 1930.
- 113 For the liberals, see *El Magisterio Nacional*, 6 May 1930. For the Catholic right, see *Atenas*, 15 March 1931.
- 114 For a flavour of these ceremonies in state and private schools, see Delegado de Alpera a Presidencia, 2 May 1924; Delegado de La Roda a Presidencia, 2 May 1924; Delegado de Concentaina a Presidencia, 17 October 1924; Delegado de La Roda a Martínez Anido, 21 May 1924. AHN, Presidencia, legajo 331, caja 1. See also, Civil Governor (Granada) to Primo de Rivera, 20 March 1926; Report for the President of the Council of Ministers, 21 June 1926; Civil Governor (Coruña) to Minister of the Interior, 2 September 1926. AHN, Presidencia del Gobierno, legajo 358. Press accounts include *La Nación*, 14 July 1927; *El Magisterio Español*, 10 October 1928; *La Vanguardia*, 13 October 1923; *El Noticiero Universal*, 12 October 1928.
- 115 Royal Order, 3 February 1926, *BOMIP*, 9 February 1926.
- 116 See, for example, *La Nación*, 11 February 1926, p. 1; 15 February 1926, p. 1; 22 February 1926, p. 1.
- 117 David Marcihacy, 'La Santa María del aire: El vuelo transatlántico del Plus Ultra (Palos-Buenos Aires 1926), preludeo a una Reconquista espiritual de América', *Cuadernos de Historia Contemporánea*, 28 (2006), pp. 213–241.
- 118 Numerous reports from teachers can be seen in AHN, Presidencia del Gobierno, legajo 358.
- 119 The notion of 'the invention of tradition' and its nationalistic connotations were first offered to us in the classic work of Eric Hobsbawm & Terence Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).
- 120 Royal Decree, 6 February 1926. *Gaceta de Madrid*, 9 February 1926.
- 121 Royal Decree, 17 September 1926, in *El Magisterio Español*, 21 September 1926.
- 122 Martínez Anido to all civil governors, 20 September 1926. AHN, Gobernación, serie A, legajo 61, caja 3.
- 123 Royal Decree, 17 September 1926, in *El Magisterio Español*, 28 September 1926, pp. 833–834. Additional legislation required that donations be published two years afterwards. See Royal Order, 24 September 1928, in *El Magisterio Español*, 1 October 1928.
- 124 For a contemporary reflection on the Fiesta del Libro as a means of improving the 'inherent health of the race', see José Martos Peinado, in *El Magisterio Español*, 1 October 1928.
- 125 See for example, Jose Maria Pemán, *El Hecho y la idea de la Unión Patriótica* (Madrid: Imprenta Artística Sáez Hermanos / Eds. de la Junta de Propaganda Patriótica y Ciudadana, 1929), pp. 270–271; *La Nación*, 13 October 1928 & 23 October 1928.
- 126 M. Cluyle, 'Don Quijote en Flandes', *Revista de Segunda Enseñaza*, (December 1926) pp. 383–385.
- 127 *ABC*, 9 October 1928; *El Magisterio Español*, 12 October 1929.
- 128 *Unión Patriótica*, 1 November 1926, p. 4.
- 129 *El Magisterio Español*, 7 October 1926, pp. 67–68.
- 130 *El Sol*, 12 October 1927.
- 131 Martínez Anido to *delegados gubernativos*, 8 March 1925, AGA, Interior, caja 149.
- 132 Numerous reports of *delegados* on the Fiesta del Árbol can be found in AHN, Presidencia, legajos 358 & 331, caja 1.
- 133 Instituto Nacional de Estadística, *Principales actividades de la vida Española en la primera mitad del siglo XX* (Madrid: INE, 1952), p. 163. There are significant disagreements over the number of schools founded during the dictatorship.

- Among the authors who refer to a larger number of schools built by the regime are Mercedes Samaniego, *La política educativa en la Segunda República* (Madrid: CSIC, 1977), p. 218, who gives a figure of some 8909 schools. Shlomo Ben-Ami, *Fascism from above: The Dictatorship of Primo de Rivera in Spain 1923–1930* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), p. 286 claims 8000 schools. A smaller number of 6636 is offered in Emilio Díaz de la Guardia Bueno, 'La enseñanza con Primo de Rivera', *Historia* 16, no. 71 (1982), p. 21. James H. Rial, *Revolution from above: The Primo de Rivera dictatorship in Spain, 1923–1930* (Cranbury: Associated University Press & Fairfax George Mason UP, 1986, p. 216) speaks of 5979, whereas Ramón López Martín, *Ideología y educación en la dictadura de Primo de Rivera*, vol. 1. (Universitat de València, Valencia, 1994), p. 106 gives a figure of just 4506 schools opened.
- 134 For the figures, see *Anuario Estadístico de España 1930* (Madrid: 1932), p. xxiv. See also, González Calleja, *La España de Primo de Rivera. La modernización autoritaria, 1923–1930* (Madrid: Alianza, 2005), p. 85.
 - 135 Christopher Cobb, 'The Republican State and Mass Educational-Cultural Initiatives, 1931–1936', in Helen Graham & Jo Labanyi (eds.), *Spanish Cultural Studies* (Oxford: OUP, 1996), p. 135.
 - 136 *Anuario Estadístico de España 1930* (Madrid: 1932), p. 619.
 - 137 For some examples, see *El Magisterio Español*, 8 July 1926, 7 October 1926, 31 December 1927, 6 October 1928, 15 October 1928; *El Magisterio Nacional*, 8 May 1930.
 - 138 Numerous petitions can be seen in AHN, Presidencia del Gobierno, legajos 357 & 358.
 - 139 Eduardo Callejo to Máximo Cuervo, 15 February 1929. AHN, Presidencia del Gobierno, legajo 114, caja 1.
 - 140 Eduardo Callejo to Máximo Cuervo, 15 February 1929. AHN, Presidencia del Gobierno, legajo 114, caja 1.
 - 141 Alejandro Quiroga, 'Educación para la ciudadanía autoritaria. La nacionalización de los jóvenes en la Dictadura de Primo de Rivera', *Historia de la Educación*, 27 (2008), pp. 87–104.
 - 142 'Estudio-proyecto sobre el texto único', AHN, Presidencia del Gobierno, legajo 358.
 - 143 'Bases para dictar una Real orden para el Ministerio de Instrucción Pública, referente al texto único en las enseñanzas primaria y segunda, o sea el Bachillerato', AHN, Presidencia del Gobierno, legajo 358.
 - 144 'Bases para dictar una Real orden para el Ministerio de Instrucción Pública, referente al texto único en las enseñanzas primaria y segunda, o sea el Bachillerato', AHN, Presidencia del Gobierno, legajo 358.
 - 145 Royal Decree, 23 August 1926, in *CLIP*, 1926, pp. 490–496.
 - 146 Various documents in this process can be seen in AHN, Presidencia del Gobierno, legajos 199 & 358.
 - 147 'Proyecto de Decreto para la reforma de los estudios de segunda enseñanza', AHN, Presidencia del Gobierno, legajo 358.
 - 148 Primo de Rivera's annotations in the margins of the proposals can be seen in 'Proyecto de Decreto para la reforma de los estudios de segunda enseñanza', AHN, Presidencia del Gobierno, legajo 358.
 - 149 Callejo's reform of 1926 can be seen in Royal Decree, 25 August 1926, in *CLIP*, 1926, pp. 508–518. For the Italian case, see Pietro Luigi Aquino, *Scuola e fascismo: da Gentile a Bottai: Un percorso di studio London*: (Edizione Accademiche Italiane, 2017), pp. 137–144.
 - 150 The 1903 plan set out three hours for History each week in the third year and three hours in the fourth year. That of 1926 set out three hours per week for the first three years and six hours per week in the fourth year.

- 151 For an interpretation of the single-text as a victory for the ambitions of the clerical right, see López Martín, *Ideología y educación en la dictadura de Primo de Rivera*, 2 vols. (Universitat de València, Valencia, 1994/1995), p. 32.
- 152 *El Magisterio Español*, 31 August 1926.
- 153 *Revista de Segunda Enseñanza*, no. 28 (January 1927), pp. 6–18.
- 154 *El Siglo Futuro*, 28 August 1926, 29 August 1926, 30 August 1926.
- 155 For the social-Catholics' campaign against the single-text, see Enrique Herrera Oria, *El Debate. Educación de una España nueva* (Madrid: Ediciones Fox, 1934). Enrique Herrera Oria was the brother of the editor of *El Debate*.
- 156 *El Debate*, 27 November 1928.
- 157 Miguel Primo de Rivera and Francesc Cambó, *Miguel Primo de Rivera, Francisco Cambó: ecos de una polémica* (Santander: Hermanos Bedía, 1961), pp. 3–4.
- 158 Mask (pseudonym of Enrique Díaz Retg), *Páginas para la Historia, Hacia la España nueva: pasado, presente y porvenir del Directorio Militar* (Madrid: Sucesores de Rivadeneira, 1925), pp. 229–230.
- 159 In Tolosa, for example, one school was closed and the teacher taken to court because he was teaching only in Basque. See Manuel Rubio Cabeza, *Crónica de la dictadura* (Madrid: Sarpe, 1986), p. 141.
- 160 Manuel Rubio Cabeza, *Crónica de la dictadura* (Madrid: Sarpe, 1986), p. 36.
- 161 The quotations are from Maitane Ostolaza, 'Educación y procesos de nacionalización en el País Vasco (1871–1931)', *Historia Social*, 43 (2002), p. 42.
- 162 William Callahan, *The Catholic Church in Spain 1875–1998* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2000), pp. 161–163; Frances Lannon, 'Modern Spain. The Project of National Catholicism', *Studies in Church History*, 18 (1982), p. 582.
- 163 Santiago de Pablo, Ludger Mees, & José Rodríguez, *El péndulo patriótico. Historia del Partido Nacionalista Vasco, I: 1895–1936* (Barcelona: Crítica, 1999), pp. 192–194.
- 164 Royal Circular, 27 October 1923, *La Vanguardia*, 28 October 1923. For some criticisms over the prohibition of teaching in Catalan, see *La Veu*, 30 October 1923.
- 165 For denunciations, see AHN, Presidencia del Gobierno, legajos 101, 217 (caja 1), 358. For more accusations, see AHN, Gobernación, serie A, legajo 61, caja 3.
- 166 The Royal Order of 19 April 1928, for example, transferred seven inspectors from Barcelona province to other provinces in Andalucía, Castilla and the Balearic Islands. See *BOMIP*, 1 May 1928, no. 35, p. 588.
- 167 See, for example, the confidential report of the Civil Governor of Barcelona to Martínez Anido, 7 October 1924, which recounts the sacking of eight municipal employees in the district of Vich. AHN, Gobernación, serie A, legajo 17, caja 2, carpeta 22. For criticism of the actions of the delegados in some towns, see *La Veu de Catalunya*, 22 December 1925. For the dismissals of the mayors of Tarrasa and Sabadell, both accused of separatism, see *El Sol*, 19 September 1923, and *El Debate*, 20 September 1923.
- 168 Primo's remark is from a speech he gave at the Teatro del Centro and is reported in *La Nación*, 15 February 1926, p. 1.
- 169 The regime also launched a campaign to promote Castilian in Catalonia, obliging businesses and official buildings to label in Spanish, as well as 'Castilianising' the names of streets and towns, with some success. See Stéphane Michonneau, 'La política del olvido de la dictadura de Primo de Rivera: el caso barcelonés', *Historia y Política*, 12 (2002), pp. 115–140.
- 170 For the figures, see Enric Ucelay-Da Cal, 'La Diputació durant la Dictadura: 1923–1930', in Borja de Riquer (ed.), *Historia de la Diputació de Barcelona*, vol. 2 (Barcelona: Diputació de Barcelona, 1988), p. 252.
- 171 *La Nación*, 15 February 1926, p. 1.

- 172 A list of books bought and distributed by the council is in ADPB, Department Instrucció Pública, legajos 4176, 4177, 4181.
- 173 For the distribution of the special edition of *Revista Hispanoamericana* to schools and libraries, see ADPB, Department Instrucció Pública, legajos 4176, carpeta 49.
- 174 On the organisation of talks and distribution of books in 1926 and 1927, see ADPB, Department Instrucció Pública, legajo 4178, carpeta 92; legajo 4181, carpetas 97, 98, 100.
- 175 Laura Baiges López, 'La nacionalizació de l'educació durant la dictadura de Primo de Rivera. El cas de Vilanova i la Geltrú', *Temps d'Educació*, 49 (2015), p. 173.
- 176 'Ciclo de conferencias en bibliotecas populares durante el presente curso', ADPB, Department Instrucció Pública, legajo 4177, carpeta 15.
- 177 *La Vanguardia*, 27 August 1926.
- 178 *La Vanguardia*, 27 August 1926 & 29 August 1926.
- 179 For the sponsorship of the Biblioteca Popular para la Mujer, see ADPB, FR, 246, P663-P804. For the grants, see ADPB, FR 29, Department Instrucció Pública, legajo 4176, carpeta 59.
- 180 Augusto Turatti, the Secretary of the Partito Nazionale Fascista, believed that 'women are born to stay at home and not to work in public offices'. For his comments, see *ABC*, 16 October 1928. Even so, the Italian fascists attempted to train and mobilise women in the countryside to increase agricultural production in the 1930s. See Perry Willson, *Peasant Women and Politics in Fascist Italy: The Massaie Rurali* (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 53–71.
- 181 For the official notice, see Dionisio Pérez, *La Dictadura a través de sus Notas oficiosas* (Madrid: Compañía Ibero-Americana de Publicaciones, 1930), p. 288.
- 182 Enric Ucelay-Da Cal, 'La repressió de la Dictadura de Primo de Rivera', in *II Jornades de debat. El poder de l'Estat: evolució, força o raó* (Reus: Centre de Lectura de Reus, 1993), p. 208.
- 183 Calvo Sotelo to Primo de Rivera, 2 December 1924, AJT, carpeta 1924.
- 184 Calvo Sotelo to Primo de Rivera, 2 December 1924, AJT, carpeta 1924.
- 185 Calvo Sotelo to Primo de Rivera, 2 December 1924, AJT, carpeta 1924.
- 186 José Luis de la Granja, Justo Beramendi, & Pere Anguera, *La España de los nacionalismos y las autonomías* (Madrid: Síntesis, 2001), pp. 79–80.
- 187 Xosé Manoel Núñez Seixas, *Los nacionalismos en la España contemporánea, siglos XIX y XX* (Barcelona: Hipòtesi, 1999), p. 95.
- 188 Enric Ucelay-Da Cal, 'La iniciació permanent: Nacionalismes radicals a Catalunya des de la Restauració', in *Catalunya i la Restauració, 1875–1923* (Manresa: Centre d'Estudis del Bages, 1992), pp. 127–134.
- 189 *El Magisterio Español*, 8 May 1930.
- 190 *El Magisterio Español*, 22 April 1930.
- 191 *ABC*, 29 January 1930; *El Debate*, 30 January 1930; *El Liberal*, 29 January 1930; *El Sol*, 2 February 1930; *El Socialista*, 31 January 1930.
- 192 *ABC*, 31 January 1930.
- 193 Helen Graham, *The Spanish Republic at War: 1936–1939* (Cambridge: CUP, 2002), pp. 18–19.

7 Fall and Death of a Dictator

In the early morning of 26 January 1930, Primo de Rivera decided to go all in. His situation as Head of Government had become much more complicated in the previous few days. The King wanted his resignation, and the Marqués de Estella knew that some sections of the Army, led by General Manuel Goded, were conspiring to overthrow him. Primo wrote an official note in which he set out a consultation about his own future to ‘the ten captain-generals, the overall commander of forces in Morocco, three captains-general for maritime departments, and the heads of the Civil Guard, Customs Guards and Invalids Corps’.¹ The generals were asked to undertake a ‘brief, discreet and confidential sounding’ among their unit and service commanders and communicate to Primo if he still ‘retained the confidence and high regard of the Army and Navy’.² If he lacked the support of his comrades-in-arms, Primo was resolved ‘within five minutes of being informed’ to relinquish ‘the powers of Head of the Dictatorship and Government’ to Alfonso XIII.³ There was an air of desperation in this last throw of the dice, but also a degree of audacity. The consultation represented the final bet of a gambler who was prepared to lose everything, but who was confident that he would win. Primo appealed directly to the upper echelons of the Army, whom he saw as the only legitimate authority for his dictatorship, and thus effectively denied the King’s power to dismiss him. Given that Primo had personally appointed all the captain-generals and the heads of the Civil Guard and Customs Guards, the dictator clearly believed that his subordinates would openly declare their support for him and thus strengthen his position as dictator. Primo did not finish preparing his official note until after 3 o’clock in the morning. According to his own version of events, Primo drafted the document in a hurry and did not re-read it afterwards. When he was done, he handed the draft to a messenger to take it with all haste to the Office for News and Press Censorship, in the expectation that it would be sent to the newspapers as quickly as possible, ‘as if the salvation of the nation depended on its immediate publication’.⁴ Having handed over the note, Primo suffered a dizzy spell.⁵ The tension of the last few hours was catching up with him.

The wager did not work out well for the dictator. On the morning of Sunday 26 January, Primo met with the Minister of War, Julio Ardanaz Crespo,

to begin to sound out the mood among his comrades-in-arms.⁶ That same morning, some remarks of the dictator were published in which affirmed that he would not be thrown from office, affirming ‘what I am not prepared to do is allow them to take power away from me’.⁷ Meanwhile, the Marqués de Estella declared in the *Hoja del Lunes* newspaper that he was convinced he would receive the support of the Army High Command.⁸ Primo went further than making press statements and consulting with his ministers, however. At 3:30 in the afternoon, the dictator was at the Royal Palace for a secret meeting with the King. The audience, which was not mentioned in the press, was nonetheless recorded in the register of visitors to the palace.⁹ We cannot say for certain what Primo and Alfonso spoke about, but the meeting surely served as a chance for Primo to explain his consultation with fellow officers to the King and to calm the subsequent fury of Alfonso XIII, who was perfectly aware of what the Marqués de Estella was trying to do.¹⁰ The monarch understood that Primo was launching a ‘coup’ against his power to name and dismiss ministers from his government. If the dictator were successful in his machinations, the monarch would become a purely decorative figure.

After the heated exchange with the King, Primo returned to his home in the Ministry of the Army. It is highly likely that Alfonso demanded the dictator’s resignation that afternoon. Primo was not prepared to go, however. That evening the dictator drafted a manifesto ‘To the People and the Army’, in which he asked that ‘the King cease to be such and immediately leave the country with his family, for whose care I expect composure, correctness and nobility of conduct, above all for the Queen and her children’.¹¹ In the very next line, he added:

Thereafter, it will be necessary to proclaim the Republic and elevate to its Presidency a good, wise, level-headed and just man, whom all Spaniards will loyally assist, even those more inclined towards monarchy and with the strongest ties to the Royal Family. The Fatherland comes before everything.¹²

The manifesto ended by making it clear that with ‘this king neither the old politicians nor those in the future could prosper, if I do not complete my task of clearing this eternal obstacle to the political life of Spain’.¹³ Ultimately, Primo never made this ‘republican manifesto’ public and its content was only published for the first time in 2016. Even so, it seems clear that if Primo had received the support of his fellow generals, and nonetheless found the King stood in his way, he was thinking very seriously about playing the republican card to save his dictatorship.

However, things began to change on Monday 27 January. At 10:30 in the morning, the dictator returned to the Royal Palace, once again in secret and without having leaked the meeting to the press.¹⁴ He was not prepared to step down and was confident in the support of his comrades-in-arms. As responses to Primo’s consultation began to arrive at the Prime Minister’s Office

throughout the day, however, the situation became much more complicated for the Marqués de Estella. Most of the generals consulted were ambiguous in their support for the dictator and firm in their loyalty to the King. General Barrera, the Captain-General of Catalonia, for example, replied to Primo 'as leader and as a friend' that he sensed 'a latent unease on the part of the officers' and that the consultation had 'the look of another coup' against the King, something which he could not support.¹⁵ Only José Sanjurjo, the Head of the Guardia Civil, and Enrique Marzo Balaguer, the Captain-General of the Balearic Islands, declared their unconditional backing for Primo de Rivera.¹⁶ Alfonso XIII next tried to persuade the dictator through intermediaries. The King sent the Conde de los Andes, Minister of the Treasury and a fellow native of Jerez, to convince the dictator that he had to go.¹⁷ Despite the pressure, Primo refused to relinquish power and was resolved to go ahead with the cabinet meeting on Tuesday 28 January and the full session of the National Assembly scheduled for the following day. Nevertheless, Primo received a visit from Martínez Anido that same afternoon. The Interior Minister convinced his good friend that his situation was now untenable and that he must resign.¹⁸

Events accelerated quickly on the following day. On 28 January at 10:30 in the morning, Primo returned once again to the Royal Palace, this time accompanied by his trusted right-hand, Martínez Anido. There, the Marqués de Estella tendered his resignation to Alfonso XIII.¹⁹ It was nonetheless a conditional resignation. Primo wanted to ensure a degree of continuity in his dictatorship and suggested to the King that he name Martínez Anido, Emilio Barrera or Dámaso Berenguer as his successor as Head of Government.²⁰ When the Marqués de Estella left the Royal Palace, he did not tell the waiting journalists that he had resigned. Instead, Primo limited himself to saying that there would be a cabinet meeting at six that afternoon, and that

since I have to be dressed for an event by 9.15 this evening, we will end at 8.30, so two hours for work, and if the ministers have anything pressing, they will remain in session, but I will already have left to get changed.²¹

In the midst of a storm, the dictator was trying to offer the impression of calm. On his return from the palace, Primo met with Martínez Anido and Galo Ponte.²² It is certain that the three discussed the earlier meeting with the King and the way to implement Primo's resignation. Thereafter, Primo saw his friends José Sanjurjo and Emilio Barrera.²³ The Marqués de Estella informed them of the situation and the shortlist of generals he had proposed to the King as candidates for his replacement. Barrera brought information first-hand, given that he had met with the King at 11:30 that morning.²⁴ It is possible that Barrera already knew at this point that the King had opted for Dámaso Berenguer rather than him. In any case, once the meeting concluded, Barrera lied to the waiting journalists and declared that his meeting with Primo and Sanjurjo 'was nothing more than a courtesy visit'.²⁵ At 6 in the afternoon,

the cabinet met as planned. Before entering the meeting, Primo told journalists that 'at eight or eight-thirty I will be leaving the cabinet, because I have two or three matters to attend to, but the ministers will continue with their meeting until they have resolved various matters'.²⁶ Primo once again tried to confuse the journalists and repeated that from 8 o'clock he would have 'to leave to go and get ready, because I have other things to do'.²⁷ By 10 past 8 that evening, the expectation was palpable. Primo left the Prime Minister's Office and declared with a smile before a crowd of reporters that he was going to the Royal Palace, but that he would return in half an hour. Accompanied by his secretary, Fidel de la Cuerda, as well as his personal adjutant, Major Monís, Primo got into his official car and went to see Alfonso XIII.

At 8:20, Primo arrived at the palace to make his formal resignation. Before seeing the King, he offered the following statement to the crowd of waiting journalists:

I am going to report to the king a matter agreed by the Government, in respect of which I will say something when I come out, I suspect shortly.²⁸

For once, the Marqués de Estella was telling the truth. By 8:45, Primo had made his resignation official before the King and was once again speaking with the press. He announced that Alfonso XIII had entrusted:

General Don Dámaso Berenguer to form a Government, whom I suppose will come to see me this evening to exchange ideas. I am pleased at this appointment, having caused a very great impression on me as a discreet man of careful judgement, of calm nature and much loved in the country.²⁹

After this, Primo handed two notes to the reporters. The first stated that the cabinet had

been aware of the personal and health reasons that the Prime Minister has set out, as an irrevocable motive for presenting his resignation to His Majesty the King, and understanding clearly that the resignation of the Prime Minister involves also the ministers, who have all been requested to present themselves to His Majesty.³⁰

The second note, written in the first person, thanked the King for his understanding and announced that 'to set an example, I will continue in my post until the new Prime Minister is ready to replace me'.³¹ After handing out the notes, the general paused to have photographs taken, said his farewells cheerfully to the reporters and returned to the Prime Minister's Office to conclude the cabinet meeting. The meeting was hardly prolonged. At 9:30, the ministers had finished their business. The Marqués de Estella took the opportunity to

tell reporters that he would meet with Berenguer 'tonight or in the morning'.³² For the moment, he was going to dine with his family 'in peace' and promised 'to be in touch with the King in the coming days' to bring about an orderly transition.³³ Primo intended to set the pace of his own departure.

Some historians have suggested that Primo launched his 'consultation' with senior officers to force his own resignation, since according to them, by 26 January 1930 the dictator wanted nothing more than to leave power.³⁴ Three factors seem to run strongly against this argument, however. First, the manner in which Primo set out his consultation with fellow generals, in which the dictator was *de facto* proposing to remove the King's power to appoint and dismiss ministers and place the ultimate legitimacy of the dictatorship on the shoulders of his military comrades. Second, the resistance that the dictator showed to the prospect of resigning on both 26 and 27 January. Finally, Primo attempted to make his departure conditional on the monarch choosing a successor from a trio of generals suggested by the dictator himself. These are the actions of a man who announced the consultation with every intention of continuing in power, and not because he wanted to accelerate his own fall. Moreover, as Primo himself would comment just two days after leaving office, the decision to consult with the armed forces had been taken at the end of December when he was told that he no longer retained the confidence of the King.³⁵ In other words, the consultation was not a form of deliberate political 'suicide', but rather a risky wager to maintain his hold on power, as well as boosting the power of the Dictatorship and reducing the monarchy to a largely decorative function. The truth is that Primo miscalculated. The dictator believed that the generals he himself had appointed to their posts would show him greater loyalty than they would to the monarch. As with any dictator, Primo launched his consultation thinking that he was going to win. His intention was not only to continue as dictator, but also to reduce the King's power to a bare minimum.

There is no doubt that tensions between the King and the dictator were a crucial factor in the downfall of the Primo de Rivera regime. In the months before January 1930, relations between the two men had deteriorated to the point that the King had begun to feel that his future depended on getting rid of 'his Mussolini'. Things had not always been so. In the first years of the regime, there had been a good understanding between the two men. Alfonso praised his dictator in public and attacked the parliamentary system on numerous occasions, while for his part the Marqués de Estella spoke up for the monarchy as the essence of the Spanish nation and the King as a crucial feature of his dictatorship. Things began to change from December 1925 with the creation of the Civil Directory. While the King's approval of the new government prolonged the dictatorship, Alfonso XIII began to feel that Primo should put an end date on his exceptional regime. The King was in no hurry for a 'new normality' – which for the monarch did not in any case mean a return post-haste to the constitution of 1876 – but certainly, it was appropriate to think about a future beyond the Primo regime.³⁶ It was against such a

backdrop that the creation of the National Assembly in 1927 brought the first serious clash between Primo and the King. Initially, Alfonso was reluctant to sign the decree for the formation of the regime's assembly, since it represented a further step towards the institutionalisation of the dictatorship and would definitively shut the door on the possibility of one day convening the Cortes along the lines of the Restoration System, should the monarch one day wish to do so. Nonetheless, under pressure from the dictator, the King would ultimately and reluctantly accept.³⁷ From that point onwards, however, and until early 1929, Alfonso would only support the dictatorship 'passively'. There was a strong ideological agreement between the King and the dictator, but the two men gradually distanced from each other at a personal level.³⁸

In January 1928, the King's discomfort with his dictator was stated openly, when the monarch commented jokingly to the Italian Ambassador, Giuseppe Medici, how good it would be if Italy could loan Mussolini to Spain for half a year.³⁹ Some months later, the growing distance between Primo and the King was made public when Alfonso decided not to attend the ceremonies to mark the fifth anniversary of the 13 September coup. The King did not wish to participate in the public walkabout which he knew that Primo would expect, and absented himself from the celebrations with the excuse that he had to travel to the north of Europe.⁴⁰ The royal absence must have angered Primo, particularly since a year earlier Primo had personally helped to prepare the celebrations for the 25th anniversary of Alfonso's coronation.⁴¹ Regardless, Primo nonetheless used the figure of the monarch to promote his regime during the celebrations for the fifth anniversary of the dictatorship and declared in a banquet held at the Ritz Hotel in Madrid on the night of 13 September that he had 'the deep satisfaction of hearing extremely enthusiastic words of the King himself', who had been in touch with the dictator just minutes earlier to congratulate him.⁴² It is more than likely that Primo de Rivera invented his telephone call with the King, not least since the royal diary written by the King's private secretary recorded that Alfonso was on a ship travelling between Kiel and Stockholm on the evening of 13 September, and would not arrive in the Swedish capital until 5 o'clock on the morning of 14 September.⁴³ As we know, however, Primo had little compunction in telling lies. The dictator saw the King as an asset when it came to addressing members of the UP, and after referring to his communication with Alfonso, had no shame in declaring to his followers in the Ritz:

Monarchists by conviction, we cannot help but feel this more strongly when we see that the Monarchy is held by a King in harmony with all sectors of the nation. When this happens, we can resolve our love for the Monarchy and love for the Monarch.⁴⁴

Relations between monarch and dictator entered a new downward trajectory after the Sánchez Guerra insurrection in January 1929. As we noted in Chapter 4, Primo reacted to the events at Ciudad Real and Valencia by stepping

up the repressive measures of his regime and awarding extraordinary powers to his government, his militia and his party, which included giving *upetistas* and *somatenistas* powers to conduct searches of homes, close associations and groups which were hosting political debates, and create 'Centres for civic investigation and information, assisting the Authorities when it comes to maintaining public order'.⁴⁵ The Queen Mother, María Cristina, opposed her son Alfonso signing the royal decree which set out these changes, feeling that the King was once again being asked to perform an unconstitutional act which would implicate him still further in the Primo dictatorship. The Marqués de Estella won the battle on this occasion. The royal decree was published with the King's signature on 4 February 1929. Two days later, María Cristina died, after which Alfonso went into a depression and became psychologically confused.⁴⁶ Two weeks after that, the King confronted Primo once again. This time, the dispute was because the Marqués de Estella wanted to disband the Artillery Corps and apply severe punishments against officers within the corps. Alfonso would have preferred less drastic action, but after a bitter discussion with Primo at a cabinet meeting, the King bowed to the wishes of the dictator and signed the decree which dissolved the corps and approved punishments for the events of 19 February.⁴⁷ Once again, the King had lost a round with the dictator, Sánchez Guerra's attempted insurrection and the conflict with the artillery corps led Alfonso to consider that there were key groups within the Army who no longer backed the dictator. Sánchez Guerra's acquittal at the hands of a military tribunal in October 1929 not only confirmed royal suspicions but also showed the whole country that Primo did not have total control over the Army, no matter how much he might have thought that he did.⁴⁸

Indeed, the opposition of important parts of the Army was one of the key factors in the downfall of Primo de Rivera. Although somewhat vague, the Marqués de Estella had enjoyed the support of all corps and sections of the Army in September 1923. By early 1929, however, he found himself in a very different situation. Primo had dissolved the Artillery Corps and applied severe punishments against those involved in the Ciudad Real and Valencia revolts in January 1929. The punishments not only resurrected bitter memories from the earlier disbanding of the Artillery Corps in 1926 but also increased opposition among other corps favouring the principle of promotion by seniority, such as Engineers and Sanitation. The dissolution also accelerated the distancing of broad sections of the aristocracy from the regime, who were spooked to see the closure of a corps which included a large number of nobles.⁴⁹ Other groups within the Army were also questioning the dictatorship by early 1929, not so much in solidarity with their comrades in the Artillery Corps – which in truth many soldiers viewed as a body of privileged elites – but as a result of the regime's harsh punishments. *Junteros*, in particular, had been moving away from the dictatorship since 1925 as a result of Primo's policies in Morocco. The appointment of Francisco Franco as Head of the National Military Academy in Zaragoza in 1928 only made matters worse, since it seemed to confirm the *Africanista* leanings of the dictator in the eyes of many *Peninsulares* linked

to the *Juntas*. Meanwhile, the concentration of power in the hands of the dictator (a common feature of his style of governance) and his arbitrariness when it came to using that power (also classic features of Primo), decreeing stunning promotions in the heart of the Army, mostly of *Africanista* officers, led many generals and colonels to slowly distance themselves from the Marqués de Estella.⁵⁰

Primo was certainly aware of this growing opposition among his comrades in arms. In May 1928, Martínez Anido launched a secret investigation into all the military leaders, most of whom he found to be opposed to the continuation of the dictatorship.⁵¹ Even so, the dictator could not have foreseen the huge impact that the increasing splits within the army's high command would have a few months later. In 1929, the military courts which sentenced the artillerymen of Ciudad Real condemned several of the rebels to death, but the individual votes of some of the members of the tribunal sought clemency for General Navarro, Captain-General of the First Military Region. The case then passed to the Supreme Court of the Army and Navy, which reduced the initial sentences and overturned the death sentences and the sentences of life imprisonment.⁵² On 28 October, things got even worse for Primo when the court-martial for Sánchez Guerra absolved him, arguing that his actions were an act of legitimate resistance against a regime that was illegitimate in origin and conduct.⁵³ Primo flew into a rage. He understood the damage that the acquittal of Sánchez Guerra would do to his regime in the eyes of the public, since it would show that Primo was unable to punish those who had revolted against the dictatorship. To counter this image of weakness, the Marqués de Estella declared that he would stay in power until his 'work' was accomplished.⁵⁴ The process of transforming the dictatorship into a regime that would achieve a degree of constitutional 'normality' would be suspended *sine die*, or as the *primorriverista* press reported, 'Without a date or a deadline!'.⁵⁵ It was now time to 'order the offensive and immediately destroy the enemy'.⁵⁶

Primo's problems with the monarchy and the army – the two institutions which would ultimately prompt his fall from power – thus began before 1929. It was in that year, however, that clashes between dictator, King and some sectors within the officer corps became critical. Nonetheless, it is important not to see the crisis of the dictatorship and the fall of the dictator as a teleological process, seeking problems in 1927 and 1928 which would 'naturally' explain the collapse of the regime in January 1930.⁵⁷ It is clear that until the start of 1929, there was nothing to indicate the regime was in crisis. Indeed, a report of the British Ambassador in Madrid recorded in 1928 that it had been the quietest year in Spain since Primo had assumed power.⁵⁸ The Sánchez Guerra insurrection of January 1929 marked a decisive moment, however, not because of the actual challenge that it posed at the time, but because it began to highlight fault lines in a regime with less support than it was apt to boast about. Italian diplomats in Madrid, for example, informed the government of Mussolini that 'the recent tentative rebellion' had met with 'the indifference of the public, and in many respects, the indulgent benevolence of the

government itself'.⁵⁹ In the eyes of the fascist diplomats, this governmental magnanimity was a problem for any self-respecting dictatorship:

Benevolence which for these interests and these factions might appear a sign of weakness that gives them encouragement, but which doubtless stems from a generic feeling innate and predominant in a dictatorial government, with the agreement of all the ministers, has opted for the route of clemency and has not found the will or not had the opportunity to punish the culpable rebels with rigour, as would have happened in any other country, tolerating, with the approval of the public, that three weeks now after the events at Ciudad Real and Valencia, not a single death sentence has been announced nor any exemplary punishments handed out.⁶⁰

Even though the benevolence which the Italian diplomats were speaking about was clearly exaggerated – later there were indeed death sentences passed – what is interesting in these comments is the reference to a sense of a lack of a firm hand, when the Primo government had decided precisely at this moment to significantly sharpen its repressive nature. In addition to the Sánchez Guerra episode, 1929 saw the resumption of student protests, renewed campaigns by intellectuals against the dictator, a rising number of strikes and increasing social conflict. By themselves, these developments do not explain the fall of Primo de Rivera, but they nonetheless created a sense of loss of control on the part of the dictatorship, which led many of the regime's supporters to question their backing for the regime. Social Catholics, members of the military *Juntas*, businessmen, professional associations, landowners and a large number of state functionaries were abandoning Primo's ship as they sensed the regime was weakening under the strain of a series of crises.⁶¹

The first major act of opposition to the regime after the attempted revolt at Ciudad Real and Valencia was the resumption of student protests in March 1929. As with other issues facing the dictatorship, the problem had been some time in the making. In May 1928, the *Federación Universitaria Escolar* (FUE – University Students' Federation), an organisation with republican leanings created in January of the previous year by Antoni Maria Sbert and Antolín Casares, called its first strike in protest at the suspension of the Professor Luis Jiménez de Asúa for having delivered a lecture about birth control, and against the new Law for University Reform.⁶² In article 53 of this new law – the so-called Callejo Law – the Catholic colleges of Deusto and El Escorial were awarded the right to give university degrees. This was seen by students at the state universities as a direct threat to their interests, given that the increase in the number of degree holders would have repercussions for their own prospects for finding work after university. At the end of 1928, the FUE called its first demonstrations against the controversial article 53, and on 27 February 1929, sent a letter to the dictator demanding the withdrawal of the university reform law, at the same time as calling for a strike to

be held on 7 March. The government responded by arresting Sbert that very evening and decreeing his expulsion from all Spanish universities. This merely served to throw fuel onto the fire. The strike went ahead on the planned date and on 8 March students in Madrid occupied the faculty buildings, destroyed images of the King and took to the Calle San Bernardo, where they unfurled the red flag of the FUE and engaged in street fighting with stones against the police. Within two days, the protest had spread to every Spanish university, with the exception of Bilbao and Zaragoza. Throughout the country, students were engaged in disturbances in the streets to shouts of 'We are not artillerymen!'.⁶³

Primo chose to increase the repression. He dismissed all the deans and the Rector of the University of Madrid, creating a Royal Commissioner in place of the academic faculty. Meanwhile, the buildings occupied by students were assaulted by units of the Civil Guard, Police and Guardia de Seguridad. On 11 March, the dictator ordered the military occupation of the Madrid faculties and threatened all the striking students with a failure to matriculate. The warning had little effect. The follow-up to the strike was overwhelming and riots broke out in numerous Spanish cities. In Madrid, the students raised barricades in the main streets of the capital, burning the kiosks of the Catholic daily *El Debate* and throwing stones at the house of the dictator and the offices of the *ABC* newspaper, in a pitched battle lasting 12 days which left one dead and many wounded. In Santiago de Compostela, the students sacked the headquarters of the Civil Government and UP and placed four bombs, one of them at the house of the university Rector. In Salamanca and Barcelona, students fought the police and destroyed portraits of the King, who was ironically nicknamed 'Alfonso the student'. On 16 March, the Marqués de Estella decreed the closure of the Central University of Madrid and over the following week other universities were closed throughout Spain.⁶⁴

In response to the regime's repression, José Ortega y Gasset, Luis Jiménez de Asúa, Sánchez Román, Fernando de los Ríos and García Valdecasas resigned their chairs, while 120 other university professors from all over Spain sent a letter to the dictator in which they expressed solidarity with the students and asked Primo to remove the now-infamous article 53 from the *Ley Callejo*. Demonstrations of support for the students also came from the cultural world, such as the novelist Azorín (José Martínez Ruiz), who spoke out against the dictatorship for the first time. The public support of academics and writers for the students represented a definitive shift of the intellectual world against the regime, while offering a veneer of respectability for the protesters.⁶⁵ The student movement was bound further together after the launch of a national manifesto on 1 April and the creation of a Central Committee of the Student Movement to coordinate the protests. On 9 April, the disturbances grew worse throughout Spain and the universities were forced to stay closed for a further two weeks.

Primo was clear from the outset on how to deal with the protests. As he commented to the Italian Ambassador in the second week of March, although



THE MUSSOLINI MUZZLE.

THE DICTATOR OF SPAIN. "I WONDER IF THAT ITALIAN 'SILENCER' I'VE FIXED ON HIM IS GOING TO HAVE MUCH EFFECT ON HIS HIND LEGS."

[The sensitiveness of the Dictatorship in Spain to popular criticism is shown in the new decree that any ordinary citizen who criticizes the authorities or "foretells misfortunes to the country" shall be liable to imprisonment.]

Figure 7.1 Cartoon published in the British magazine *Punch* in March 1929. The caption reads: 'The Mussolini Muzzle. The dictator of Spain: "I wonder if that Italian "silencer" I've fixed on him is going to have much effect on his hind legs"'. The cartoon satirised the draconian legislation approved by Primo de Rivera making any ordinary citizen who criticised the authorities or foretold "misfortunes to the country" liable to imprisonment. Credit: Punch Limited.

the student demonstrations were not a serious problem, he was going to act 'like a fascist', immediately referring to the *manganello*, the truncheon usually used by the Italian fascists.⁶⁶ Alongside the usual repressive bodies at his disposal – the police, Civil Guard and Army – Primo mobilised the *Somatén* and members of the UP youth movement (JUP – *Juventudes de Unión Patriótica*) to attempt to put the fire out. The young *upetistas* tried to offer some form of resistance to the striking students, but with little success. The women's section of the JUP in Barcelona, for example, collected signatures from 350 women opposed to the student demonstrations. On 28 March 1929, the members of the section sent a 'manifesto letter' to Primo to 'state clearly that the female students of the University of Barcelona do not support said acts, but in light of the circumstances, imposed good sense and judgement, contributing with their behaviour to maintaining discipline among their classmates'.⁶⁷ Nonetheless, it is clear that the young women of the Barcelona JUP were not able to impose much discipline on their fellow students. After the first closure of the universities decreed in mid-March, the universities in Barcelona province were reopened on 5 April. Just three days later, however, the disturbances resumed throughout the whole country. Members of the JUP were shown not only to be unable to stymie the university protests but had turned themselves into prime targets for the ire of the students of the FUE. After a series of attacks against them in the universities, the students of the UP were authorised to carry firearms, which only made the situation worse. JUP students frequently abused the concession, and after a serious incident at the University of Barcelona, their licences to carry firearms were revoked on 16 April and the university itself forced to close until October 1929.⁶⁸

If the university protests showed anything, it was the scarce footprint of the JUP among university students, and by implication, among young, urban middle-class Spaniards. Unlike the young fascist movement in Italy, which became a bulwark of 'order' in the Italian universities when the educational reforms of Giovanni Gentile led to serious altercations, the JUP was seen to be inept when it came to combatting mobilisations against the dictatorship.⁶⁹ Faced with an inability to control the student protests and fearful that they might damage the image of his dictatorship during the international expositions in Barcelona and Seville, as well as the meeting of the Council of the League of Nations in Madrid, Primo cancelled the sanctions against universities on 19 May and allowed the institutions to resume classes. Most students returned to their studies and Primo secured a few months of peace. Meanwhile, on 24 September 1929, the dictator withdrew the controversial article 53 from the *Ley Callejo* in an attempt to ease tensions among students and professors. The confrontation had already spread beyond the academic world, however. Student agitation resumed over the course of the 1929–1930 academic year. Primo retaliated in January 1930 by dissolving the FUE. The students responded by calling a general strike until sanctions were lifted against Sbert and those academics who had been involved with the protests in the previous year. On 22 January, a walkout began in universities throughout Spain. This

time, the strike had a decidedly republican character and gained the support of the major unions.⁷⁰

Alongside repression, Primo also turned to propaganda and the mobilisation of public opinion to combat the student protests. In March 1929, the regime felt that it was a good moment to deploy the hackneyed tale of a conspiracy of foreign forces and bad Spaniards to explain to the Spanish public what was happening in the universities. One editorial in *La Nación* on 8 March left the matter in no doubt whatsoever:

The plan of the ringleaders of these repeated episodes could not be more perverse: to jeopardise the country in which they were born, destroy its economy, cause damage to its prestige abroad while inside Spain maintaining unrest that ruins businesses and industries, takes work away from the labourer, scares away capital and establishes, in short, a situation much like that which providentially was liquidated on 13 September.⁷¹

The dictator himself offered an object lesson in conservative government in response to the protests and declared that the students were divided, that many wanted to go to class, that those who backed the strikes had ulterior, political motives and that the youngsters were being manipulated by opponents of the dictatorship. These

enemies of the Regime have stopped at nothing: inflaming feelings of professional injury in the Army, an offensive against the currency and values of the nation, political conspiracy, propaganda among the workers, a campaign of defamation and alarm, and finally, student disturbances.⁷²

Fortunately, Primo continued,

it has all failed and been discredited, in the face of reality, that is to say the constant and calm work of the Government, which is backed by an enormous body of public opinion and is regaining its reputation abroad as the truth becomes known.⁷³

As we have seen, Primo was obsessed with the reputation of Spain, of his dictatorship and of himself. For years, Primo had offered payments to foreign newspapers so that they portrayed all three in a favourable light, and he was not prepared for protests from students and certain intellectuals – whom he absolutely detested – to damage that reputation. In March 1929, the Spanish Tourism Office in London published a pamphlet which assured potential visitors to Spain that ‘there has been no revolution’, nor any form of disturbance in the country, and nor would there be any time soon.⁷⁴ In any case, the pamphlet assured that the Government was quite capable of maintaining order. In truth, it explained, ‘the British public was the victim of alarmist reports deliberately promoted [by...] revolutionary scoundrels with the aim of damaging

the expositions in Barcelona and Seville, as part of a conspiracy designed for their own benefit'.⁷⁵ In March and April 1929, Primo set aside time to give interviews to various foreign newspapers with the clear intention of repairing the damage caused by members of the opposition. Among others, the dictator thus made statements to, or wrote articles for, the North American Newspaper Alliance, the English illustrated weekly *The Graphic*, as well as the daily newspapers *Corriere della Sera*, *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, *Daily Sketch*, *Daily Express* and *Daily Mail*.⁷⁶ In an interview with the latter, the dictator spoke with pride of the socio-economic progress in Spain under his watch and suggested that he would step down when he considered his work had been completed, and not before. For the British conservative daily, the Spanish general was not 'by any means a tyrant', but rather a 'great patriot', who was leading a country that had made 'enormous progress'.⁷⁷

In April, Primo instructed Spanish ambassadors in Europe and America to communicate to the governments in their respective postings his wish that his regime not be criticised publicly in the press, and that legal action would be launched against all those newspapers which defamed the dictatorship and Spain. Meanwhile, the ambassador in London was ordered to spread the rumour that the student protests were part of a conspiracy hatched by 'bad Spaniards' against the regime.⁷⁸ Obedient, the Spanish Ambassador, Alfonso Merry del Val y Zulueta, presented a note to the British Prime Minister asking that he use his influence to push the British press to present a more positive image of Spain.⁷⁹ For some strange reason, both Primo and Merry del Val thought that the British government was prepared to pressure the media just because Madrid had asked them to do so. For their part, the British government responded amiably that it was impossible to control the press and that it could only intervene in cases where the material published could be proved beyond doubt to be false or deceitful.⁸⁰

Primo combined the campaign for the 'Spanish trademark' abroad with a mobilisation in support of the government back at home. The idea was to demonstrate popular backing for the regime. The dictator ordered Martínez Anido and Máximo Cuervo to mobilise the civil governors, the JPPC and members of the UP. From the start of April, numerous patriotic events were organised throughout Spain in protest against the alleged conspiracy of the 'bad Spaniards' and the foreign press that had been directed to discredit the dictatorship.⁸¹ Signatures of support for Primo were collected at these events, hundreds of pamphlets were distributed by the JPPC, and massed ranks of thousands of *upetistas* staged marches.⁸² Primo played a very active role in the mobilisation and attended popular tributes in his honour in Barcelona, Zaragoza, Toledo, Huelva, Seville and Madrid.⁸³ On Sunday 14 April, the government and the UP organised a mass act of patriotic reaffirmation to plead with the dictator to stay in post and 'to highlight to the world the truth about Spanish public opinion'.⁸⁴ The event took place at Primo's residence, the Buenavista Palace, which was adorned in Spanish flags and a portrait of the dictator, and where, according to the regime press, more than 100,000 people had

gathered.⁸⁵ Meanwhile, on the Calle Alcalá, at the side of the Buenavista Palace, 2580 cars drove by in support of the dictator, in what must have been one of the first mass demonstrations using automobiles in the history of Spain.⁸⁶ From 10 in the morning until 2:30 in the afternoon, thousands of men and women paraded through the gardens of the palace, many of them members of the Madrid UP, and many others *upetistas* brought in for the occasion from other provinces. On tables decked with Spanish flags and gathered in front of the Palace, the attendees left cards in tribute to the dictator and signed with their support for him, while baskets were displayed which were full of letters and telegrams in support of the Marqués de Estella from all over the country.⁸⁷ According to the French periodical *Candice*, the improbable total of three million signatures had been collected.⁸⁸ That same day in Barcelona, Zaragoza, Logroño, Almería, San Sebastián and Granada there were other patriotic events, with parades of the UP, cards of tribute and signatures in support of Primo de Rivera.⁸⁹

In Madrid, Primo watched the event with satisfaction from the main balcony of the Buenavista Palace, accompanied by his daughters Carmen and Pilar. The entire cabinet was also gathered. Throughout the morning, the dictator called out to the crowd on numerous occasions. His words, which were re-broadcast through microphones on *Unión Radio*, stressed the importance of fighting back against the campaign that ‘wicked’ Spaniards and foreigners were launching against the ‘honourable, noble and hardworking’ Spanish people.⁹⁰ For the Marqués de Estella, the demonstration gave him the ‘strength’ and ‘confidence’ to continue as dictator, ‘without faltering or wavering, convinced that we are backed by the true public opinion’.⁹¹ Meanwhile, the modernisation of Spain brought about by the dictatorship was an ‘admirable transformation’ which ‘the many foreigners who now visit us’ could see for themselves, ‘and this will be our greatest legacy of glory’.⁹² Turning, as usual, to the question of international prestige as a stimulus for Spanish national pride, he added:

We have every faith that those countries within the sphere of civilisation will give Spain the justice that it deserves, that it will occupy the place [to] which it belongs and that the concerns will disappear, and when the foreigners come to the Expositions, which will have no comparison anywhere in the world, as curious men – because more than their money we yearn for the honour of them visiting us – they will verify what I tell you and will be true spokespeople for the nobility and progress of Spain.⁹³

Given the actions of the opposition in the spring of 1929, the expositions in Barcelona and Seville acquired an even more significant propagandistic nature than that which Primo had already envisaged for them. The dictator knew what was at stake and needed the expositions to show, both at home and abroad, a modernised nation, a strong regime and a dictator who was unquestionably in control of the country. The truth is that since coming to power, the Marqués de Estella had been directly involved in the organisation of the

Ibero-American Exposition in Seville as well as the International Exposition in Barcelona. In Seville, Primo changed the town council of the city in November 1925, filling it with loyal members of the UP, among other reasons to accelerate the progress on preparations for the Exposition.⁹⁴ Meanwhile, Primo placed his friend, Major José Cruz Conde, in charge of the Royal Commission for the Ibero-America Exposition as well as the Civil Government of Seville, to ensure that the preparations proceeded as the dictator wished and to promote the Spanish-American message of the dictatorship.⁹⁵

In Barcelona, where the economic institutions of the city, led by the *Fomento del Trabajo Nacional*, had urged in March 1929 'the need for a public power that is firm and robust' as the only way of guaranteeing the success of the international exhibition. Primo certainly placed special emphasis on security matters and named his friend and comrade-in-arms from the Philippines, Mariano de Foronda y González Bravo, the Marqués de Foronda, as Director of the event.⁹⁶ Primo also got involved in more minor details to ensure that the event in Barcelona was as successful as could be. He personally intervened, for example, to ensure that the priests from the monastery of Guadalupe and other convents loaned their art collections for the exposition *El Arte de España* (The Art of Spain), one of the most important displays within the Barcelona event. As Primo explained to the organisers of *El Arte de España* on a visit to Barcelona, the clergy had repeatedly refused to loan their objects. At this point, Primo had decided to contact the Minister of Public Education, Eduardo Callejo, to ask the priests for use of their objects in the name of the Spanish government.⁹⁷ Only then did the priests agree to loan the items that had been requested.⁹⁸ The fact that Primo intervened personally in such small affairs shows not only the importance which he attached to the Barcelona exposition. It highlights the dictator's profoundly interventionist style of government, in which he was prepared to personally get involved in the smallest details, something which reinforced, as we have seen in earlier chapters, his role as chief fixer and the apex of the pyramid of power in the regime.

Notwithstanding fears that the expositions might be overshadowed by attacks or street disturbances, things began well for Primo de Rivera. On 9 May 1929, the dictator and Alfonso XIII inaugurated the Ibero-American Exposition in Seville with all the pomp and spectacle that the dictatorship could muster.⁹⁹ In a main square decorated with the flags of Spain, Portugal and Latin American countries, standards of the Catholic Kings and tapestries from the royal household, watched over by the three branches of the armed forces and the local *Somatén*, filled with people and before the entire diplomatic corps, the Cardinal of Seville blessed the facility for the exposition and said Mass.¹⁰⁰ Later, the authorities delivered a series of patriotic speeches. Primo praised

the old Spain, which through the strength and faith of the indomitable Queen Isabel, also the Spain of Lepanto, embraces today in peerless Seville its children in America and its sister Portugal, to show the world

how the years have not withered the strength of spirit nor the essence of its artistic and cultural vigour.¹⁰¹

Next, the King opened the exhibition and the Spanish national anthem – the *Marcha Real* – was played to the cheering crowd. Later, the municipal bands of Seville and Madrid, accompanied by the 350 members of the choirs of Seville, San Sebastián and Bilbao, as well as a band of 80 guitars and bandurrias, played the anthem composed for the exposition.¹⁰² The event ended with a long military parade in which all the corps of the Army took part, as well as numerous air wings flying from the Tablada airbase nearby. No stranger to hyperbole, Primo declared to the press that ‘the events celebrated during this day have been the most impressive ever held in Spain’.¹⁰³

Ten days later, the dictator and the monarch met in Barcelona for the inauguration of the international exposition. The model from Seville was repeated once again, although public involvement was much more in evidence in Barcelona. Accounts of the event spoke of 14,000 guests at the National Palace, with the entire diplomatic corps and tens of thousands of citizens in the exposition’s enclosure, squadrons of planes and an airship overflying the event. Once again, the exhibition was blessed, this time by Bishop Miralles. The enclosure was decorated with royal tapestries and the municipal band played the national anthem. Speeches were heard from the Marqués de Foronda, the city’s mayor, Baron Viver, and of course, from Primo himself. The opening ceremony also involved cannon salutes, the turning on of fountains, the release of 20,000 doves, words from the King on the balcony and a military parade to close proceedings.¹⁰⁴ In both Seville and Barcelona, the regime press emphasised the role of the King and thus tightly bound the monarchy to the dictatorship. Readers were reminded of Alfonso’s speech in Córdoba in 1921, in which he had criticised the old politicians of the Restoration, and the press also stressed the King’s support for Primo in 1923 and in the years since.¹⁰⁵ The monarch was thus offered a subtle reminder that his fate was closely tied to that of the Marqués de Estella.

In a subtle way, the official message to the monarch appeared to be that his fate was closely tied to that of the Marqués de Estella, and furthermore, that this situation had come about through the will of the King himself. At the same time, Primo underlined that the King was playing ‘the role which the Catholic Kings played in the fifteenth century: overseeing the rebirth of Spain’ at the expositions in Seville and Barcelona. Primo also praised himself on the exhibitions, since ‘foreign representatives’ had ‘shown their admiration for [such a] marvellous spectacle, congratulating the government for such a notable success’.¹⁰⁶ Over the following days, numerous foreign newspapers offered very positive coverage of the two expositions. On 25 May, for example, *Le Petit Marseillais* spoke of the Barcelona exposition as ‘the result of a rebirth of the glory of Spain’, while explaining ‘that all the intrigues against the Exposition have failed in the face of the firm will of the working class and the indignation of the peace-loving public’.¹⁰⁷

Primo was overjoyed. After the opening of the Barcelona exposition, he told the Italian Consul in the city that 'the people' were with him and that he would '[leave] power only if and when' he considered it opportune to do so.¹⁰⁸ The joy did not last long, however. In June 1929, the Bureau of the Prime Minister received a report from the Commissioner of the Ibero-America Exposition in Seville, which stated that the event desperately needed more visitors.¹⁰⁹ The Commissioner explained that many foreigners were not visiting the event thanks to the 'political atmosphere in the country' and the 'disquieting situation' promoted from abroad by the regime's opponents.¹¹⁰ Meanwhile, the report suggested that there had also been too few Spanish visitors to the expositions in Seville and Barcelona, and as such the people would not grasp the 'patriotic efforts' that the regime had made in organising the events. The Commissioner's proposal included a 'comprehensive plan' to publicise the two expositions, both in Spain and abroad. The plan required the participation of the ambassadors, as well as public servants, publicity agencies and other private businesses such as travel agencies, hotels, restaurants and health resorts. Modern media should also be used to call the public's attention to the events, including posters, pamphlets and cinematic films.¹¹¹ In many aspects, the regime's proposal represented a good example of modern propaganda techniques, very similar to those which Mussolini would use for the Exposition of the Fascist Revolution in 1932.¹¹²

The Commissioner's report was a bitter blow for Primo de Rivera. Despite the money and propaganda efforts that the dictatorship had dedicated to the expositions for many years, the regime was some way from attracting the number of public visitors that it hoped for.¹¹³ It was not just the actions of the opposition that were affecting the number of foreign visitors. The fact that Spaniards were also not visiting the expositions deprived the regime of a political success at home, which appeared vital for the survival of the dictatorship. Unlike in Italy, where the Exposition of the Fascist Revolution in 1932 was a key part of the construction of the so-called 'culture of consent' and stimulated popular backing for the Mussolini dictatorship, the expositions in Seville and Barcelona appeared to peter out after the inaugurations, which, as we have seen, enjoyed a massive public attendance.¹¹⁴ For opponents of the regime, meanwhile, the expositions at Seville and Barcelona offered yet more proof of Primo de Rivera's megalomania and a further sign of the decadence of the monarchical system.¹¹⁵ Far from consolidating popular support for the dictator, the expositions exacerbated divisions among Spaniards.

Things also got worse for Primo on other fronts from July 1929. The dictator was aware of a high probability that the Italian pavilion at the Barcelona exposition might suffer an attack at the hands of leftist elements and communicated as much to the Italian diplomatic corps.¹¹⁶ His worst fears came true on 28 July when a bomb exploded at the rear of the Italian pavilion. According to the report sent to the Ministry of the Interior in Madrid, 'at the back part of the Italian pavilion at the Exposition [...] a gunpowder device has exploded which has led to many broken windows and a huge noise'.¹¹⁷ Fascist diplomats

reacted with a combination of indignation and astonishment. The fascists saw the attack as an attempt 'to cause insult to Spain and Italy', something which the Italian diplomats could not understand, given that their was the 'nation which is mentor and supporter of the Spanish political regime, the nation which has the most emblematic pavilion at the exposition'.¹¹⁸ In the following months, there were further bomb attacks in the city against convents and the home of the mayor of Barcelona.¹¹⁹ Meanwhile, the reports of the French Embassy spoke of the discovery in Badalona of '22 bombs which did not explode', the blowing up of numerous electrical pylons in Barcelona, Rubí and Igualada, and the destruction of a railway bridge between Badalona and Barcelona on the line that connected Spain to France.¹²⁰ Although the regime banned any mention of the attacks in the press, it is highly likely that news of the bombs was circulating around the Catalan capital, thus strengthening the impression that the regime was not capable of maintaining order, something particularly damaging for a military dictatorship.

The financial aspects of the two expositions were also problematic for Primo de Rivera. In Seville, for example, the event was regarded by various political and intellectual forums as a 'disaster', a 'lost opportunity', the cause of 'municipal ruin' and the 'underdevelopment' of the city.¹²¹ Many *Sevillanos* came to regard the exposition as a vanity project for the dictator, who had used the event for propaganda purposes, with little regard for

the inability of the town hall to repay the financial deficit, the uncontrolled expansion of slums on the outskirts, the spiralling cost of living and the crisis of subsistence into which a large percentage of the population had been cast.¹²²

There were also economic repercussions in Barcelona. One report from the province stated on 28 May 1929 that the Committee for the Barcelona International Exposition had already amassed a deficit of 390,000 pesetas.¹²³ This was just nine days after the event had opened. Primo hoped that the Catalan political elites would foot the bill, but they refused to do so. In October 1929, the Barcelona businessmen declared that they were not prepared to cover the overspend for the event, even though they acknowledged that they had benefitted economically from the exposition.¹²⁴ The Catalan economic elites who had applauded Primo so enthusiastically in September 1923 had no compunction in abandoning the general in the autumn of 1929.

By now, both the dictator and his regime were in some difficulty. The regime's constitutional project had been pushed off course and the Marqués de Estella was increasingly suffering from diabetes. In the last months of the dictatorship, the political decline of Primo coincided with his own physical deterioration. In July 1929, the National Assembly had announced a new constitutional plan which would establish a centralist state, with a single-chamber and semi-organic parliament with very limited powers, a strengthened Executive branch and a Royal Council with broad 'moderating' responsibilities over

the government.¹²⁵ Primo was doubtful of the benefits of the outline bill and decided to send it to his much-admired Mussolini, so that the Italian dictator might examine the draft and offer his opinion. Mussolini ordered the preparation of a small report on the Spanish constitutional project. The author of the report observed that the Spanish plan was inspired 'by fascist principles and bodies', but also highlighted the differences between the two dictatorships, one the result of a 'revolution' and the other of a military coup.¹²⁶ Primo himself was not particularly enamoured with the plan. He told the Italian Ambassador in Madrid that the Royal Council was based upon the Fascist Grand Council, but it is clear that Primo was deeply suspicious of the power granted to this body, as well as to the monarch, in this constitutional framework.¹²⁷ That year at the celebrations to mark the 13 September coup, alongside numerous high-ranking members of the UP, Primo questioned the draft bill and proposed instead a unicameral parliament with powers solely to moderate, as well as a new system which would strengthen the Executive.¹²⁸ Primo was leading his regime into a dead end.

In the celebrations to mark the sixth anniversary of the coup, Primo also declared that there was 'no need to enslave oneself' by offering an exact date in which he would relinquish power and cede authority to the *Unión Patriótica*.¹²⁹ To be sure, that moment would come, but he was not yet prepared to say when. Primo's announcements that he would one-day leave power were a constant from the very start of his dictatorship. Nonetheless, the Marqués de Estella had no intention of keeping to his word, and aside from his September 1923 comments stating that he was going to lead a 90-day dictatorship, the dictator never specified when he would go. In some respects, the declarations that he would one day step down were a means of calming certain critics of the regime by holding out the prospect of a future without Primo, a form of placebo which allowed people to imagine the end of the dictatorship. Throughout 1929, the Marqués de Estella regularly returned to the theme of his future resignation, albeit only to announce that the moment for his departure had not yet arrived. As later as 26 November 1929, for example, Primo said that he would indicate to the King when he was thinking of leaving, but added:

The moment has not yet arrived, and it would be weakness and an inappropriate desertion of the men who were willing to govern in quite difficult conditions, and of those who initiated the period of regeneration and enhancement [...] to be shifted and depressed by secret rumours emanating from certain malcontents, persistent in rebellion, who neither in quantity nor quality represent one per cent of the Spanish people.¹³⁰

Nonetheless, unlike in previous years, by 1929 the possibility that Primo would leave power became more realistic, if only because the dictator's diabetes was getting worse. In early 1929, a report by the French Ambassador in Madrid already picked up on the fact that 'the President is physically and

morally tired'.¹³¹ In June, Primo confessed to the Italian Ambassador that he was physically exhausted, although he was optimistic about the future of the regime, since he could count on the support of the majority of the Spanish people.¹³² In November, the weariness and uncertainty over Primo's health reached Mussolini's ears. The Italian dictator ordered his ambassador in Madrid, Medici, to urge Primo to continue as leader, despite any problems with his health. The Spanish dictator confirmed to Medici his resolve that he would not 'abandon his post in combat'.¹³³ Nor was Primo prepared to give up his nightly trips out into Madrid. According to Maurice Drummond Peterson, a diplomat at the British Embassy, Primo 'was seen every evening in the capital's nightclubs until the last days of his rule'.¹³⁴ It is probable that the British diplomat was exaggerating the number of nights that the dictator went out, but it seems clear that his fondness for nightclubs did not diminish in the last months of his dictatorship, something which clearly would not have benefited his health.

In early December 1929, Primo took the decision to begin preparations for an orderly and controlled exit from his dictatorship. On 3 December, he invited his ministers to dinner in one of his favourite Madrid restaurants, Lhardy.¹³⁵ There he informed the ministers of his plan, which would involve the reopening of the National Assembly in January, the prompt holding of municipal elections, and following these a round of provincial elections, confident that the *Unión Patriótica* would emerge victorious in both. Thereafter, in the autumn of 1930, there would be further elections to populate a unicameral and semi-corporative parliament. To achieve this regime transition, Primo envisaged a government led by the Conde de Guadalhorce, but nor had the Marqués de Estella rejected at this point the idea that he himself might remain in power. Indeed, he indicated as much to the Italian Ambassador just a few days later, explaining that, assuming there were no setbacks, he would leave power in 1931 with the consent of the King. Perhaps aware that he was unwell, Primo added that he was 15 years older than Mussolini and could not be sure that he had much time to finish his work.¹³⁶ Shortly after this, Primo's plan was leaked to the press, who openly speculated about the future political shape of the country. Part of this discussion centred on whether Spain should have a unicameral legislature, which was Primo's wish, or a bicameral parliament, which was the preference of the King.¹³⁷ Another feature of the discussion was when the dictator would leave office. Primo was hardly amused by the latter discussion. Using the language of bullfighting, he declared to the media that the dictatorship was not going to depart 'in an "espantá" (mad dash), but calmly, perhaps next year, once the future of Spain is secured'.¹³⁸ The dictator made it clear that he was thinking of remaining in post 'come what may' until a 'reliable and reassuring' situation had been re-established. Once again, Primo was in no hurry to leave power, but in making public his plans for a transition to a new government, he had opened a Pandora's Box which it would prove impossible to close.

Meanwhile, the situation became much worse for the dictator by the end of 1929. On 7 December, the eve of the celebrations of the Inmaculada

(Feast of the Immaculate Conception), a banquet was held in Madrid to celebrate the patron saint of the Army, at which the King and the dictator were guests of honour. The event brought together officers from every service, corps and military region. Primo was treated coldly by the assembled guests at the banquet, and his speech received only quiet applause, with no explicit demonstration of support for the dictator at any point.¹³⁹ The apparent disregard of the officers for Primo de Rivera was not lost on the King, who realised that the dictatorship lacked the support of most of the army and most of the public.¹⁴⁰ The Marqués de Estella was also aware of what was happening and made a plea for discipline from the Infantry Corps, the principal bulwark of his regime, yet one which was steadily moving away from the dictator after the changes he had imposed on the system of promotions in the Army, which many officers considered to be further signs of arbitrariness in his military policies.¹⁴¹ Primo knew full well that the regime could not survive without the support of the army. Alfonso XIII, meanwhile, understood that he must remove the dictator if he wished the monarchy to survive. The King now turned to some of the old politicians of the Restoration System to seek a replacement for Primo de Rivera, but they refused to offer a solution without a prior reconvening of the old Cortes.¹⁴²

Primo was not prepared to give up the fight and wanted to control the process of the transition. On 29 December, the Marqués de Estella wrote some words for the Barcelona daily *Día Gráfico*, in which he assured Spaniards that they need not fear a return to 'the other way', that is to say, the constitutional regime he had supplanted and elections based upon universal male suffrage.¹⁴³ On 31 December, Primo published another article, this time for *La Nación*, boasting that the dictatorship remained 'firm and famous for its moral strength and for the clear support of the public'. Mentions of the King as the source of legitimacy for the regime had disappeared. That same day, at a fiery meeting of the cabinet overseen by Alfonso XIII, Primo presented the King with a new plan for the transition in which he proposed to prolong the dictatorship for at least six months after the holding of elections, which would elect a unicameral and semi-corporative parliament. The King, who just days before had told General Dámaso Berenguer that he was confident that Primo would abandon his ideas for a unicameral system and that it would be possible to return to the constitutional model of 1876, must have felt betrayed when he saw the dictator digging in his heels on the matter.¹⁴⁴ Alfonso decided to buy time and told Primo that he would have to consider the matter before signing the proposal, which was effectively a tacit admission that Primo had lost the King's confidence. According to Calvo Sotelo, 'the death sentence for the Dictatorship' was signed on that day.¹⁴⁵

Primo was furious when he left the cabinet meeting, but at the doors of the Royal Palace he put on a show, greeting the waiting journalists with a smile, and preparing to give them a healthy dose of 'alternative facts'. The dictator told the press that the King would have loved to give his assent to his proposals, but the Marqués de Estella had asked that he delayed his response, so

that the unanimity of the ministers on the matter did not influence Alfonso's judgement in any way.

The King will take two or three days to mull it over, given that it is such an important and significant matter, and I did not want him to be rushed in front of ministers but rather to think on the matter calmly,

added Primo.¹⁴⁶ Primo also told the reporters that he would publish an official note that afternoon 'about the punishment for a lieutenant-colonel and two captains, who have been conspiring in Seville to form *Juntas de Defensa* or something of that nature'.¹⁴⁷ It was a smart and very measured move on the dictator's part. In the note, the Marqués de Estella alleged that the arrested officers had been acting against the dictatorship in Andalucía. In his customary way of belittling the significance of opposition, he judged them to be very few in number and 'negligible quality' and declared that practically the whole of the army continued to support the dictatorship.¹⁴⁸ The note was clearly intended to give the impression of unanimity in the army and head off any form of military insubordination. The message was also aimed at the King. Primo wanted to make it clear that Alfonso could not dismiss him while he retained the support of his comrades-in-arms.

Primo met with Alfonso once again on 2 January. The King once again asked for more time before signing the proposals.¹⁴⁹ And yet again the dictator would lie to the waiting journalists by declaring that there was no crisis in government and that the monarch had given his approval for the constitutional proposals.¹⁵⁰ In the words of the Marqués de Estella:

There has been no question of confidence, because no such question has been asked. People have been talking about a crisis, and neither on the part of His Majesty nor the Government has there been one. This was not the problem; it was nothing more than His Majesty giving his opinion on the plan that was submitted to him, and he has already had the kindness to give it.¹⁵¹

Primo went on to explain a new programme for the government for the next six months, different from that which he had offered two days earlier. This included partial provincial and municipal elections, meetings of the National Assembly in 'two or three plenary sittings' and a 'reorganisation of *Unión Patriótica*'.¹⁵² Primo was no longer talking about elections to elect (partially) a single-chamber parliament. In truth, what he was proposing was to leave things as they were for a further six months. Numerous liberal and conservative newspapers, such as *Informaciones*, *La Vanguardia*, *La Época*, *El Liberal* and *El Sol* were left disillusioned by the new proposals, and openly demanded a return to constitutional 'normality' and the calling of general elections.¹⁵³ Having opened the door to a possible change of regime, the dictator was finding it difficult to keep it closed.

Primo de Rivera was keenly aware of the difficulties facing him. He knew that he had lost most of the supporters whom he had relied upon in 1923, including broad sectors linked to the Church, the banks, big business, the employer class, state functionaries, the aristocracy and the press.¹⁵⁴ Nonetheless, the dictator intended to continue in power. Primo's resolve was stiffened further on 5 January when Calvo Sotelo, the Conde de Guadalhorce and the Conde de los Andes wrote to him to ask that he continue in post and postpone his plans for the transition.¹⁵⁵ The following day, the Marqués de Estella declared that he was going to remain in power for at least six more months, in order to 'revise, fine tune, consolidate, adjust and inspect my own work'.¹⁵⁶ Even so, and despite the dictator's fixation with remaining in power, expectation over a change of regime was growing from the second week of January thanks to the actions of the opposition and the crisis in the currency. The new collapse of the peseta on the international markets and the inability of the Treasury to arrest the slide led to the dismissal of Calvo Sotelo on 20 January. Meanwhile, student protests had resumed in earnest and Primo had ordered the dissolution of the FUE.¹⁵⁷ On 22 January, a new general strike began in universities across Spain, which aimed to overthrow the dictatorship as well as the monarchy. This time, the students not only enjoyed the open support of the constitutional 'patriarchs' of the opposition movement but also the explicit backing of the workers' unions and republican groups.¹⁵⁸ In Madrid, the students once again unfurled the red flag of the FUE on the balconies of the San Carlos Faculty of Medicine and set fire to a kiosk belonging to the Catholic daily *El Debate*. Primo deployed numerous squads of Civil Guards on foot and horseback to the Spanish capital. What principally worried the dictator was the prospect of the student revolt being joined by a constitutionalist military insurrection, which it was widely rumoured was being prepared by General Manuel Goded, the Civil Governor of Cádiz.¹⁵⁹

Indeed, Goded had been leading such a conspiracy since October 1929. The constitutionalist plot involved 'former politicians', such as Burgos and Mazo, Sánchez Guerra and Francisco Bergamín. It also involved Republican leaders such as Martínez Barrios and Ángel Galarza, socialist professors such as Fernando de los Ríos, and a broad array of military officers, including the aviator Ramón Franco and the artillery captain Medrano. It would also appear that the banker and smuggler Juan March – as we have seen, a friend of Primo and someone who benefited hugely from the tobacco monopoly he had won in Spanish Morocco – had decided to play a double-game and finance the constitutionalist conspiracy against the Marqués de Estella.¹⁶⁰ Unlike previous plots, this time the conspiracy had the acquiescence of the King, who, from the end of December, was kept informed of the insurrectionary plans by his brother-in-law, Don Carlos de Borbón-Dos Sicilias, the Captain-General of Andalucía as well as a good friend of General Goded. Backed by most of the garrisons in the south of Spain, the plotters initially planned the uprising for 15 February, but later brought it forward to 28 January. In mid-January, Don Carlos apprised the King on the progress of plans for the revolt as well as the

rebellious feeling among the garrisons at Seville and Cádiz. The Palace in turn leaked news of this to the press in the hope of definitively destabilising the dictatorship.¹⁶¹

Primo and Martínez Anido had known of the conspiracy for some time. On 16 December, various officers had been arrested in Madrid, most notably Ramón Franco, for participating in a 'conspiracy against military discipline'.¹⁶² Even so, the judicial proceedings resulted in 'no charge' and the officers were released within 36 hours.¹⁶³ By mid-January, the newspapers were filled with widespread rumours about preparations for the insurrection led by General Goded. The press also commented on the refusal of Alfonso XIII to sign the order to dismiss Don Carlos, whom Primo had presumably asked the monarch to remove for his failure to arrest the Civil Governor of Cádiz.¹⁶⁴ The dictator and Martínez Anido also despatched the *Brigada de Investigación Social* (Political Police) to Andalucía to keep a close watch on Goded and his accomplices. Around 18 January, they arrested a lieutenant-colonel and two captains in Seville for seditious actions, but a delegation of officers asked Don Carlos to set the prisoners free and expel the agents of the *Brigada* from the city. The Captain-General acceded to their request. His next step was to telephone Alfonso XIII and openly demand that he dismiss Primo de Rivera.¹⁶⁵ At this point still fearful of the potential repercussions, the King did not dare to sack the Marqués de Estella.

Primo then went on the offensive and tried to defuse the rebellion. On 25 January, he called members of the press to his office at 9:30 in the evening. The journalists found the dictator 'cheerful' and 'happy' as he told them about the latest 'hoaxes' going around Madrid about the government.¹⁶⁶ Primo, who was clearly acting, was roaring with laughter about the various rumours that the reporters relayed to him about his possible sacking and potential changes in the government. When one of the journalists told Primo that it was being suggested he was going to 'sack the Military Governor of Cádiz, General Goded, for his supposed insurrectionary plans', Primo responded:

Come on man! That is nonsense. How could anyone think that? This is General Goded, who has had an outstanding career in the Army; a man with such a service record and such great military honour. It is absurd to implicate him in these adventures. It is so absurd, gentlemen, that I would consider it truly offensive to ask him anything or make the slightest insinuation that he might be under suspicion. None of this is serious, as you well know, nor should it, nor can it be taken into consideration.¹⁶⁷

The aim of the rouse was obvious. The purpose of the excessive and false flattery of General Goded, a public denial of the existence of a conspiracy and asking the journalists not to ask Goded anything, was intended to convey the exact opposite message. In other words, Primo was making it clear that the government knew about the plot, that Primo had control over the Military Governor of Cádiz, and that the journalists were welcome to ask him about

his subversive intentions. In case anybody failed to understand Primo's double meaning, the dictator added, with no ambiguity whatsoever, 'I assure you that what I am not prepared to do is have power taken away from me, more than anything, and above all other considerations, since it would suggest a symptom of anarchic decomposition'.¹⁶⁸ The dictator also wanted to make it clear that he had

worked hard today, but nonetheless, I am not tired [...] This work strengthens me, and my health, fortunately, is not failing. I say it with emotion, because, if it were not true, I would have an excuse or pretext to retire.¹⁶⁹

Primo ended his 'pantomime press briefing' by offering Cuban cigars to the reporters gathered in his office.

That same evening, Primo drafted his famous consultation for the Army and Navy, asking the ten captains-general, the High Commander of Spanish forces in Morocco, the three captains-general for maritime departments, as well as the heads of the Civil Guard, Customs Guard and Invalids Corps if he still retained their confidence. As we have noted, the decision to launch the consultation was not the act of a man desperate to leave government, but on the contrary, an attempt to stay in power. The fact that Primo wrote the document just four hours after his theatrics with the journalists in his office designed to weaken the Goded conspiracy allows us to better contextualise his decision to launch his own counter-strike. Primo knew that Goded was bringing forward the insurrection to 28 January and was clearly aware that Alfonso XIII wanted his resignation. Accordingly, his attempt to disrupt the conspiracy of the Military Governor of Cádiz was followed that same night by a 'move' against the King that would refresh his dictatorship. Primo knew that he had to act quickly. His attempt to destroy the insurrection that the King supported led Primo to dream, just a few hours later, of a dictatorship with a monarch who lacked any significant power.

As we know, the dictator lost his bet. Ultimately, the price that the dictator paid was to leave power. Despite holding on for another two days, Primo de Rivera was forced to present his resignation on the morning of 28 January. On the afternoon of 29 January, Primo insisted to journalists that he would remain 'in Government', and would continue until Berenguer had formed a new one, 'more than anything with public order in mind'.¹⁷⁰ Meanwhile, he intended to stay at his residence at the Ministry of the Army for one more night while he collected his papers and effects. After all, 'after two-thousand and something nights that I have slept here, I do not want to leave the telephones, in case somebody was trying to get hold of me'.¹⁷¹ That same afternoon, Primo went to the headquarters of the *Unión Patriótica*. He may have lost the Presidency of the Government, but he was still leader of the UP and was prepared to show that both he and the party had a political future. At the UP headquarters, he rallied his followers to prepare for the upcoming elections 'presenting

candidates and uniting for the fight, in which the true strength of the UP will be tested.¹⁷²

On 30 January, the former dictator began to rewrite the history of his own dismissal. In an interview given to his trusted Manuel Delgado Barreto, Primo declared that he had already presented his resignation to the King on 26 January, whereupon Alfonso, 'surprised and upset', telephoned him to ask for news about the consultation with the generals.¹⁷³ The Marqués de Estella also denied that he had asked the King to sack Don Carlos de Borbón and affirmed that he had nothing but the absolute respect of the consulted generals, but he was leaving because he had committed a 'procedural error'.¹⁷⁴ And while Primo denied that his speech at the headquarters of the UP had been a 'call to arms', he insisted that his followers were mobilising and that the party would contest any future elections.¹⁷⁵ Meanwhile, the general commented that he was going to take a few days to put his 'enormous archive' in order and that after this he would take a break, first in the countryside and then in Jerez. About his immediate future, the Marqués de Estella left the door open for a return to politics:

If one day the fulfilment of my patriotic duties were seen to be – or if I myself felt them to be – incompatible with my military duties, I would ask to be placed in the reserve list. For now, the less said about me, the better.¹⁷⁶

Despite his announced departure for the countryside to rest, Primo remained in Madrid during the first few days of February. There he met with General Berenguer on numerous occasions and regularly saw his old collaborators and former ministers. Primo also received a diplomatic passport from the new President of the Council of Ministers, dated 5 February 1930, which stated that the Marqués de Estella was bound for 'France and Italy'. It requested the Spanish civil and military authorities to allow him to proceed freely, and asked foreign authorities to offer him 'any help and assistance that he might need'.¹⁷⁷ Some have argued that Primo was not looking to leave the country and the sending of the passport was a sign that the new government was expelling him from Spain.¹⁷⁸ This is certainly plausible, given that Primo had given no indication of a wish to leave the country, although it runs contrary to the version offered by Dámaso Berenguer, who recalled in his memoirs that Primo himself asked for authorisation for 'a voyage abroad that will begin the following week'.¹⁷⁹ Interestingly, Berenguer claimed that Primo's letter asking for permission to leave Spain reached him on 6 February, the same day that the passport was sent. This suggests that either Berenguer was lying about Primo's request, or that he acted remarkably quickly and despatched the passport on the same day that the Marqués de Estella had asked for it.

Whatever the explanation, it seems clear that Berenguer was very happy to see the former dictator leave the country. In his first days in government, the situation was very tense and figures from the old regime were busily arranging

meetings and rallying members of the UP. Indeed, in his biography of Primo de Rivera, Eduardo Aunós relates how the Marqués de Estella was planning a new coup during these days, since he felt that the Berenguer government was preparing to dismantle the work of the dictatorship and persecute his most high-profile leaders. According to Aunós, in early February the former dictator spoke with his closest intimates about his intention to rise up with the garrison of Barcelona and write a manifesto directed to the Spanish Army, a document which he read out several times to his former Minister of Labour.¹⁸⁰ On 9 February, Aunós and other loyalists went to see Primo before his car left for Barcelona. Aunós has Primo saying that 'within a few hours we will be back in power, and we will repair the damage that is being done to Spain'.¹⁸¹ The car journey to Barcelona was hardly promising. Primo and his small entourage had to stop at Calatayud due to heavy snowfall, and as such the general decided to continue his journey to Barcelona by train, where he would arrive the following day. Once in the city, Primo headed for the Captaincy-General, read his 'Manifesto to the Army' to General Barrera and tried to convince him that they should launch a coup. The Captain-General of Catalonia refused, however, saying that it was too soon for a military uprising, and that 'the injuries [of the dictatorship] are still smouldering; the benefits fading'.¹⁸² Barrera recommended to Primo that he travel to Paris and wait there for a while. The former dictator listened to his colleague and caught the train to the French capital that evening.

Many historians have accepted the story of Primo's attempt to raise the Barcelona garrison in revolt.¹⁸³ Certainly, it would seem that Primo was furious at the actions of Berenguer's government, that he feared judicial proceedings might be launched against him and his followers, and that he was thinking of staging another coup in the very near future. It is also highly likely that Primo would have spoken of his conspiratorial intentions to his ex-ministers, and even possible that he wrote some notes on the matter. A year later, Berenguer would claim, without specifying exactly what, that Primo had been 'planning something extraordinary and absurd' during his stay in Barcelona, but that 'it was not received well'.¹⁸⁴ Nonetheless, the story, much like that of Aunós, is somewhat far-fetched. In the first place, it is difficult to imagine that Primo did not warn Barrera of his thinking in advance. For all that Primo enjoyed spontaneity, he was perfectly aware of the complexity of staging a coup and the time required to prepare it. Second, the choice of General Barrera as a co-conspirator is unlikely. As we have seen, during the famous consultation of 26 January, Barrera had not only failed to support Primo 100%, but he had also taken the side of the King. Third, in his response to that consultation, Barrera had informed Primo that there was 'discontent' against the dictator among the officers of the Barcelona garrison. Given all of this, it is unlikely that the Marqués de Estella believed a man who had turned his back on him just two weeks before, and a garrison which was not particularly loyal to him, might be willing to risk everything to back Primo in a coup that would be directed as much against the monarchy as it would against the government.

In short, Aunós's account is not reliable. It is perhaps more understandable if we judge it within the context of the time that it was written, namely, in 1944, when the Catalan politician was serving as Franco's Minister of Justice. In presenting Primo as a providential officer prepared to lead an uprising against the King and for the salvation of Spain, Aunós was indirectly praising General Francisco Franco. At the height of 1944, as Nazi forces were slowly retreating throughout Europe, Franco was looking for ways to remain in power without having to concede the reintroduction of the monarchy to Spain, something which the less fascist members of his government were beginning to consider seriously. In other words, presenting an anti-monarchical Primo was a manner for Aunós of backing his new boss, General Franco.

Something upon which all testimonies on this period agree is that Primo de Rivera left Spain ill and in pain. 'More than the diabetes diagnosed by the doctors, the general felt the pain of ingratitude', wrote one of his biographers.¹⁸⁵ Primo felt that many social groups did not acknowledge what was, in his opinion, the great work he had conducted for Spain, even if he maintained until his very last days that the Spanish people were still with him.¹⁸⁶ The injustices and treachery Primo believed he had endured turned him into a melancholic and somewhat resentful man.¹⁸⁷ When he arrived in Barcelona on 10 February, the wife and children of General Barrera found him 'gaunt and pallid', while other descriptions of the Marqués de Estella that day speak of a 'haggard and heartbroken' man.¹⁸⁸ His diabetes had worsened notably, and it is possible that free from the tensions of running the government, Primo's body was relaxing in such a way as to lower his defences and worsen his illness. Having arrived in Paris, Primo was cared for by Dr Alberto Bandelac de Pariente, the doctor at the Spanish Embassy, who placed him on a strict diet. On other occasions, the Marqués de Estella ignored the advice of the doctors and did not observe the diet.¹⁸⁹ By early March, the former dictator was aware that he was losing the battle against diabetes. In an article for the Buenos Aires newspaper *La Nación*, he wrote that 'I look strong, but I, who can tell the difference, know very well that I have lost it [...] What is left for me to see? What is left for me to do?'.¹⁹⁰

In Paris, Primo stayed at the Hotel Pont Royal in the Saint Germain-des-Prés district. Within a few days, his daughters Carmen and Pilar had travelled to the French capital to keep him company. There, members of the Spanish Embassy soon got in touch with the former dictator and visited him at his hotel. The Ambassador, José Quiñones de León, dined frequently with the Marqués de Estella, who was a very old friend, while at the same time sending reports to Dámaso Berenguer about the gradually worsening health of the former dictator.¹⁹¹ Primo spent his days relaxing, walking around the city, receiving visiting friends (including Marshal Pétain and José Calvo Sotelo), going to concerts, offering interviews to, and writing articles for, various media outlets. The general also kept himself abreast of Spanish politics and was convinced that the new government was intent on destroying the good work of his dictatorship, something which enraged him, and very likely worsened his diabetes. It is in

this context of irritation that we should understand the letter that he wrote on 10 March to Calvo Sotelo, Head of the UP in Valencia. Primo spoke of the 'ingratitude and injustices' he had suffered, while speaking of returning to Spain to save the fatherland, 'If I have health, me, and if I don't some other Spaniard will return to take charge of the Fatherland and direct its course with firm hand'.¹⁹²

Even though Primo tried to live a relatively normal life in Paris, his health continued to deteriorate. In early March, the general and his doctor decided it would be a good idea for the Marqués to visit a clinic in Frankfurt to treat his diabetes. His son Miguel travelled up from Madrid to Paris so that he could accompany the former dictator to Germany. His departure was planned for Tuesday 18 March. On Friday 14 March, Quiñones de León hosted Primo for a farewell lunch at the Embassy. That afternoon, Primo met Mariano Daranás, the *El Debate* correspondent in Paris, to whom he confessed that he felt he was choking from one end of his torso to the other and that he thought it was angina.¹⁹³ On Sunday 16 March, Pilar and Carmen passed by the hotel to say hello to their father before going to Mass. The sisters found their father in very high spirits. Primo told them that he was happy because he had rested and was feeling better. The women left for Mass just before 9 in the morning and left the Marqués de Estella at work writing in a notebook. However, upon their return to the Hotel Pont Royal, just over an hour later, they found the general collapsed on a sofa, wearing his glasses and with some sheets of paper in his right hand. Carmen rushed to find her brother Miguel, who rapidly went in search of Dr Bandelac. Minutes later the embassy doctor confirmed what they had all feared. Primo de Rivera was dead. Dr Bandelac certified that the general had died from an embolism at some point between 9:30 and 10:00 that morning.¹⁹⁴

From the outset, the rumour spread that the general had been poisoned. In his biography of Primo, Eduardo Aunós helped to sow the seeds of doubt when he claimed that months after the death of the dictator, Dr Bandelac had declared that he believed the poisoning theory, although Aunós failed to say in his book what had changed the doctor's mind on the matter.¹⁹⁵ In 1947, Miguel Herrero went much further in his conspiracy theory. Following the thesis of Mauricio Karl in his *El Enemigo. Marxismo, Anarquismo y Masonería* (1937 – The Enemy: Marxism, Anarchism and Freemasonry), Herrero accused Dr Bandelac himself, a Sephardic Jew, of having participated in the poisoning of Primo de Rivera.¹⁹⁶ Herrero claimed that the dictator had been murdered by a Jewish-Masonic group which included Quiñones de León, who had worked as an informer, and Bandelac, who 'proceeded to embalm the cadaver swiftly by a means which totally impeded a later visceral examination'.¹⁹⁷ Meanwhile, Herrero continued, citing Mauricio Karl, the French police had allowed:

two very suspicious servants to flee the hotel, who had been in the service of Primo de Rivera. These servants, a man and a woman, fled

mysteriously, without doubt to garner the suspicion to themselves and to free the true culprit, who remained untroubled at the scene of the crime.¹⁹⁸

For Herrero, there was no doubt whatsoever that ‘don Miguel was eliminated for having been the only man, who, as well as mocking freemasonry, waged war on it without quarter and left it on its knees in Spain’.¹⁹⁹ The theory of a murderous Jewish-Masonic conspiracy has no basis in truth whatsoever. In truth, this story is more in keeping with a police pulp fiction novel of the period than anything remotely realistic. From the outset, the dictator’s own children rejected any suggestion that their father had been murdered.²⁰⁰ The Jewish-Masonic conspiracy tells us more about the demons that haunted the minds of Francoists than it does about what really killed Primo, which was an embolism brought on by a diabetic coma.

Primo’s intimates did not take long to offer reactions to his death. Some accused the former dictator’s enemies of having caused his demise by persecuting him and his work. On 17 March, just two days after Primo’s death, his oldest son, José Antonio, was interviewed by the *Informaciones* newspaper. José Antonio blamed the death of his father on those who had brought about his fall from power, ‘They have killed him [...] he did not die naturally, but by devious hand [...] the real cause of his death is everything that has happened since the crisis, and particularly the campaign for responsibilities’.²⁰¹ On the same day, somewhat more poetically, Manuel Delgado Barreto wrote in *La Nación* that the Marqués de Estella longed for Spain so much that he had ‘died thinking about it and draining the bitter chalice that they offered him as payment for his great work, thoughtlessness and injustice’.²⁰² The next day, *La Nación* published a piece which blamed Primo’s death on various social and political groups, but the entire item was prohibited by the censor of the Berenguer government. The censored piece contained the following paragraph:

Our pain is made worse by the fact that we cannot devote ourselves at this time quietly, lovingly, to our thoughts and words on the person and the work of this great Spaniard, killed by the stupidity and thoughtlessness of some, the ambition and hubris of others, the spite of many and the passivity of others; but the insolent attitude which those who were not even his enemies have taken forces us to offer a reasonable defence, painful though it is in our dejected condition, but necessary in the face of the stupidity and injustice that we cannot tolerate. That is why these pages, in which we do not want even a hint of dispute to appear, until the body of the caudillo is buried, must continue to be, without interrupting the hours of mourning, a bastion from which we steadfastly defend a name and an ideal against which there is an attempt to cause outrage.²⁰³

On 19 March, shortly after 7:30 in the morning, Primo’s remains arrived at the Estación del Norte in Madrid. The government of Berenguer met his

body with the honours accorded to a serving Captain-General and paid 2521 pesetas towards the funeral ceremony.²⁰⁴ The funeral chapel was set up in the new passenger departure lounge of the station itself. There the coffin was placed on an altar, beneath a huge crucifix. The coffin was decked in the flag of Spain and covered with bunches of flowers. Six halberdiers staged a guard of honour over the body. Masses began at 8 in the morning and continued almost continuously until 11.²⁰⁵ Dressed in the uniform of a Captain-General, the King, his children and every member of the Berenguer cabinet visited the funeral chapel. So too did practically every man who had been a minister under Primo de Rivera, as well as numerous leaders of the UP, and Manuel Delgado Barreto, who could not contain his emotion and had to leave the funeral chapel in tears.²⁰⁶ Dr Banedelac also travelled from Paris to pay his respects. Among the hundreds of people who filed past the coffin, the press highlighted the presence of many women, and as might be expected, many members of the UP.²⁰⁷ At five minutes to eleven, members of the Savoy Regiment bore arms and the national anthem was then played while the coffin was placed on a gun carriage which was to take it to the cemetery. A crowd had gathered in the streets which some media outlets numbered at 100,000, and which followed the procession amidst shouts of 'Long live Spain with honour!' and 'Long live Primo de Rivera!'.²⁰⁸ The entire route between the Estación del Norte and the Pirámides Square was filled with troops in dress uniform under the command of General Saro. Upon arriving at Pirámides, a squadron of planes from the Cuatro Vientos aerodrome staged a flypast over those gathered in homage to the deceased, and later, the troops assembled there marched before an emotional public. Once the parade had ended, the body of the dictator was carried into the family mausoleum in the San Isidro cemetery and buried there to the sound of prayers and ceremonial volleys of salute to the departed general (Figure 7.2).²⁰⁹

After the pomp of the burial, General Berenguer decided to award Primo de Rivera an official funeral. On 26 March, the King, his children, Berenguer, government ministers and the diplomatic corps gathered alongside the family of Primo de Rivera and the leading members of his former cabinet at a Mass at the Royal Basilica of San Francisco el Grande. The service had all the pomp that could be expected, with Alfonso XIII reviewing the assembled troops and entering the church under a canopy. The ceremony also involved the Symphonic Orchestra and 40 members of the Schola Cantorum choir. After prayers had ended, there were cannon salutes, a military parade and a rendition of the national anthem. Outside the basilica, a large crowd followed the proceedings. At the end of the month, the UP also organised numerous Masses for the soul of the dictator in cities and towns throughout Spain.²¹⁰ Predictably, the *primorriverista* press regarded the presence of such large numbers of the public at the burial and the official funeral – as well as the ceremonies organised throughout the country – as definitive proof that Primo de Rivera had been a leader who was deeply loved by the people and 'all good Spaniards'.²¹¹



Figure 7.2 Primo de Rivera's hearse in the streets of Madrid, 26 March 1930. Credit: Alfonso.

Given the popular love for the absent leader, followers of the Marqués de Estella continued to denounce those who had 'treacherously' stabbed him with 'the crooked and scoundrel daggers of egoism, calumny and ingratitude'.²¹² In one article entitled 'The ravens over the tomb', for example, Dr José María Albiñana described Primo de Rivera as a 'heroic genius' and labelled critics of the dictatorship, and in particular the republican Marcelino Domingo, as birds of prey, 'ugly brutes who, after flying over foreign countries leaving droppings of slanders against Spain, fling themselves upon the tomb of a hero to stir up the ground to look for worms [...]'.²¹³ For their part, the more progressive newspapers fiercely criticised the dictatorship and what they saw as its disastrous legacy. The *Heraldo de Madrid*, for example, claimed that neither

the UP nor the *Somatén*, those two vague imitations of fascism and its militia, were ever really true for one moment [...] They were simply something artificial which lived off Power, and which, once that power had gone, melted away like a dream.²¹⁴

The end of the dictator was the end of the dictatorship, and the legacy of his regime was both little and malign:

And so with the burial of the ex-dictator the dictatorship that he embodies is buried with him; this dictatorship which has lasted six years and which has left nothing more than a financial legacy which future governments will have to address as best they can.²¹⁵

The *Heraldo de Madrid* was not wrong. After the fall of Primo, the UP began to collapse and the enormous public debt which the dictatorship left behind would also become one of the most urgent problems for future republican governments against the backdrop of the Great Depression of 1929. Nonetheless, this does not mean that the dictatorship did not leave a very significant political and ideological legacy. A few days after the funeral of the Marqués de Estella, former ministers and ideologues from the regime founded the *Unión Monárquica Nacional* (UMN). This group included Ramiro de Maeztu, the Conde de Guadalhorce, José Calvo Sotelo, José María Pemán, José Pemartín, Vicente Gay, Delgado Barreto and the older son of the former dictator, José Antonio Primo de Rivera. The idea was that the UMN would replace the old UP, which was considered to be in decline and beyond saving. In April 1930, the Assembly of Provincial Heads of the UP recommended to members of the old party that they join the UMN as members, and during the summer of 1930, the last sections of the UP were dissolved.²¹⁶ The political tone of the UMN did not differ considerably from that of the UP, faithfully predicting an apocalyptic future for Spain if a democracy was established, and adopting the slogan 'Spain, united, great and indivisible'. Throughout 1930 and the first months of 1931, in an attempt to garner popular support, the

leading propagandists of the UMN launched a campaign throughout Spain in which they called for 'sacred violence' to retake power and accused the liberal monarchist parties of being prepared to return Spain to the 'decadent' parliamentary system in order to regain power.²¹⁷ The dictatorship was presented as 'providential' and the group unashamedly argued the case for a return to an authoritarian system, even without Primo de Rivera. In response to this movement, the dynastic monarchist right openly condemned the ideological radicalism of the UMN and turned their backs on these *primorriveristas* and their belligerent proposals. The sharp break with the ideas of the dynastic right which Primo de Rivera had spearheaded during his dictatorship would outlive the fall of his regime.

The dawn of the Second Republic on 14 April 1931 only served to accelerate the ideological radicalisation of the *primorriveristas*. In December that year, the old leaders of the dictatorship published the first issue of *Acción Española*, a political journal founded to develop a counter-revolutionary theory capable of offering a doctrinal base to support civilian and military insurrections against the Republic.²¹⁸ In the following years, the environs of *Acción Española* and its political party, *Renovación Española*, ceaselessly spread the ideas they had developed during the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera. Their opposition to the democratic state certainly gave them a traditionalist flavour, so much so that they came to be known as Alfonsine monarchists, owing to their support for the deposed King. Nonetheless, the fundamental principles of authoritarianism, militarism, the myth of the 'Anti-Spain', the incorporation of fascist ideas and the sacred concept of the nation remained central elements in their doctrine.²¹⁹

However, the influence of the *primorriveristas* in the development of authoritarianism in Spain during the 1930s went well beyond the confines of *Renovación Española*. Through family, ideology and material support they also contributed to the creation of Spanish fascism. José Antonio fiercely defended the dictatorship, seeing it as responsible for saving the nation. He also passionately stood up for the reputation of his father, whom he presented as a just, strong, good man who was beloved by the people. Indeed, José Antonio would testify as much to the Tribunal of Political Responsibilities when he acted as lawyer for former *primorriverista* minister Galo Ponte in 1932.²²⁰ It would also appear that the personal similarities which José Antonio perceived between his father and Mussolini prompted him to found the Falange as a fascist movement.²²¹ In ideological terms, the Spanish fascists of *Falange Española de las JONS* inherited a concept of the nation as consubstantial with Catholicism and took on a discourse in which the central elements were the unity of Spain, imperialism, condemnation of Enlightenment thinking and the exaltation of the figure of Mussolini, in a very similar manner to the way the propagandists of the UP and UMN had done just a few years earlier.²²² We can only understand this ideological link by remembering that characteristics of fascism in each country derived from specific national traditions, in particular the development of conservative

and nationalistic ideologies.²²³ In the Spanish case, there can be no doubt whatsoever that the Primo dictatorship offered a crucial contribution in the development of a conservative nationalist tradition in Spain, and certainly prepared the doctrinal ground for the later rise of the Falange. Nor should we forget the political, economic and family ties which Falangists held with certain figures from *Renovación Española*. This not only facilitated the creation and financing of *Falange Española* but also a process of hybridisation between the political cultures of fascism and extreme reactionary nationalism.²²⁴ The transnational dimension must also be remembered in this context of collaboration, given that Mussolini gave money to all the groups on the Spanish far-right to support their work in putting an end to Republican democracy in Spain.²²⁵ In other words, the links were material as well as ideological.

The Spanish Civil War (1936–1939) accelerated the processes of ideological, material and personal hybridisation between the political cultures of reactionary nationalism and fascism. It was at this moment that the old leaders of the Primo de Rivera dictatorship would openly advocate for the fusion of Nazism and Italian fascism with their own nationalistic ideas to bring about a ‘Christian totalitarianism’ as the basis for a National-Catholic state, a Spanish variant of the regimes of Hitler and Mussolini.²²⁶ This labour of ideological fusion was also occurring in the political sphere. In early 1937, José María Pemán and José Pemartín would go on to play a key role in the negotiations between the various factions within the Rebel camp to form a single political party under the command of Franco.²²⁷ After several months which saw a degree of tension, in April 1937 Falangists, Carlists, Alfonsine monarchists and the various other conservative groups who had supported the coup of July 1936 were unified into the single party, the *Falange Española Tradicionalista y de las JONS*.²²⁸

Former UP ideologues also occupied key roles in the propagandistic apparatus of the Francoist war effort and claimed the figure of General Primo de Rivera as a predecessor to the military rebels of 1936. Keen to be involved in the Francoist government, former Primo stalwarts defended the role of the army as the redeemer of the nation and emphasised the struggle against the ‘Anti-Spain’, just as they had done previously, with recourse to a religious and pseudo-scientific language to justify the rising against the democratic system and the subsequent repression of the republicans.²²⁹ The same logic that Primo’s regime had deployed ten years earlier was now applied to the dehumanisation of the ‘enemy within’. José María Pemán’s famous *Poema de la Bestia y el Ángel* (Poem of the Beast and the Angel), in which the supreme Good is locked in a crusade against the absolute Evil, is one of numerous books which exhorted this type of conduct.²³⁰ Nonetheless, at the end of the 1930s the destruction of the ‘enemy within’ was no longer just a discursive metaphor as it had been during the Primo de Rivera dictatorship. It has transformed into the genuine and large-scale physical extermination of political opponents.

Notes

- 1 *La Nación*, 27 January 1930.
- 2 *La Nación*, 27 January 1930.
- 3 *La Nación*, 27 January 1930.
- 4 Dionisio Pérez, *La Dictadura a través de sus Notas oficiosas* (Madrid: Compañía Ibero-Americana de Publicaciones, 1930), p. 322.
- 5 Dionisio Pérez, *La Dictadura a través de sus Notas oficiosas* (Madrid: Compañía Ibero-Americana de Publicaciones, 1930), p. 325.
- 6 *La Nación*, 27 January 1930.
- 7 Primo's declarations were published for the first published in *La Nación* the following day. See *La Nación*, 27 January 1930.
- 8 Manuel Rubio Cabeza, *Crónica de la dictadura* (Madrid: Sarpe, 1986), pp. 580–581.
- 9 According to the entry for 26 January, the precise time of the visit was 15:35. Archivo General de Palacio (hereafter AGP), Sección de libros y registros, Registro 06057, 1 January 1930–1 January 1931.
- 10 For the King's angry reaction, see Javier Tusell and Genoveva García Queipo de Llano, *Alfonso XIII. El rey polémico* (Madrid: Taurus, 2001), p. 585.
- 11 The document is reprinted in full in Jorge Bonilla, *La Historia no contada de los Primo de Rivera* (Madrid: Espasa, 2016), pp. 82–83. For the quotation, see p. 83.
- 12 Jorge Bonilla, *La Historia no contada de los Primo de Rivera* (Madrid: Espasa, 2016), p. 83.
- 13 Jorge Bonilla, *La Historia no contada de los Primo de Rivera* (Madrid: Espasa, 2016), p. 83.
- 14 AGP, entry for 27 January, Sección de libros y registros, Registro 06057, 1 January 1930–1 January 1931.
- 15 Barrera's response to the consultation is in Jordi Casassas i Ymbert, *La Dictadura de Primo de Rivera (1923–1930). Textos* (Barcelona: Anthropos, 1983), pp. 295–298.
- 16 González Calleja, *La España de Primo de Rivera. La modernización autoritaria, 1923–1930* (Madrid: Alianza, 2005), p. 378.
- 17 Gabriel Cardona, *Alfonso XIII. El rey de espadas* (Barcelona: Planeta, 2010), p. 271.
- 18 Shlomo Ben-Ami, *Fascism from above: The Dictatorship of Primo de Rivera in Spain 1923–1930* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), p. 387.
- 19 *La Época*, 29 January 1930.
- 20 Primo's note where he extemporised names for his successor and a future government is reproduced in Dámaso Berenguer Fusté, *De la Dictadura a la República* (Madrid: Tebas, 1975), p. 37.
- 21 *La Nación*, 28 January 1930.
- 22 *La Nación*, 28 January 1930.
- 23 *La Nación*, 28 January 1930.
- 24 *La Vanguardia*, 29 January 1930.
- 25 *La Vanguardia*, 29 January 1930.
- 26 *La Nación*, 29 January 1930.
- 27 *La Vanguardia*, 29 January 1930.
- 28 *La Vanguardia*, 29 January 1930.
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- 30 *La Vanguardia*, 29 January 1930.
- 31 *La Vanguardia*, 29 January 1930.
- 32 *La Nación*, 29 January 1930.
- 33 *La Nación*, 29 January 1930.
- 34 See, for example, Tusell & García Queipo de Llano, *Alfonso XIII. El rey polémico* (Madrid: Taurus, 2001), p. 585.

- 35 *La Nación*, 30 January 1930.
- 36 José Luis Gómez-Navarro Navarrete, 'El rey en la dictadura', in J. Moreno Luzón (ed.), *Alfonso XIII, un político en el trono* (Madrid: Marcial Pons, 2003), pp. 358–360.
- 37 José Luis Gómez-Navarro Navarrete, *La dictadura de Primo de Rivera*, pp. 101–149.
- 38 Guillermo María Muñoz, 'El año de la Corona: 1927. Monarquía, dictadura y nacionalismo en las bodas de plata de Alfonso XIII', *Ayer*, 121:1 (2021), p. 228.
- 39 Juan Avilés Farré, 'Un pálido reflejo del fascismo: la dictadura de Primo de Rivera en los informes diplomáticos italianos', *Pasado y Memoria. Revista de Historia Contemporánea*, 16 (2017), p. 75.
- 40 The King left on 9 September for Sweden, where he arrived on 14 and stayed until 19 September, when he travelled to Denmark. On 20 September he departed for Scotland, returning to Spain on 28 September. The royal tour is recorded in AGP, Registro 06056, Agenda recorded by King's Private Secretary.
- 41 See, for example, Primo's circular which directed the organisation of ceremonies, collections of signatures and popular fundraisers for the construction of the *Hospital Clínico* and University City in Madrid. The circular is in AGP, caja 16311, expediente 9.
- 42 *La Nación*, 14 September 1928.
- 43 AGP, Registro 06056, 'Viaje de S. M. el Rey a Suecia y Escocia', Agenda recorded by King's Private Secretary, p. 14.
- 44 *La Nación*, 14 September 1928.
- 45 Royal Decree, 4 February 1929, article 3. *El Somatén*, February 1929.
- 46 José Luis Gómez-Navarro, 'El rey en la dictadura', in J. Moreno Luzón (ed.), *Alfonso XIII, un político en el trono* (Madrid: Marcial Pons, 2003), p. 360.
- 47 José Luis Gómez-Navarro, 'El rey en la dictadura', in J. Moreno Luzón (ed.), *Alfonso XIII, un político en el trono* (Madrid: Marcial Pons, 2003), p. 360.
- 48 Something Primo himself would acknowledge after his dismissal. See Miguel Primo de Rivera, *La obra de la dictadura. Sus cuatro últimos artículos: 1.º Génesis de la Dictadura: 2.º Constitución y labor del Directorio: 3.º La Dictadura civil: 4.º Fin de la Dictadura española* (Madrid: Junta de Propaganda Patriótica y Ciudadana/Imprenta Sáez Hermanos, 1930), p. 45.
- 49 José Luis Gómez-Navarro, *El régimen de Primo de Rivera: reyes, dictaduras y dictadores* (Madrid: Cátedra, 1991), p. 386.
- 50 José Luis Gómez-Navarro, *El régimen de Primo de Rivera: reyes, dictaduras y dictadores* (Madrid: Cátedra, 1991), p. 388.
- 51 José Luis Gómez-Navarro, 'El rey en la dictadura', in J. Moreno Luzón (ed.), *Alfonso XIII, un político en el trono* (Madrid: Marcial Pons, 2003), p. 370.
- 52 Carlos Navajas Zubeldia, *Ejército, Estado y Sociedad en España: 1923–1930* (La Rioja: Instituto de Estudios Riojanos, 1991), p. 67.
- 53 González Calleja, *La España de Primo de Rivera. La modernización autoritaria, 1923–1930* (Madrid: Alianza, 2005), pp. 372–373.
- 54 *La Nación*, 5 November 1929.
- 55 *La Nación*, 5 November 1929.
- 56 *La Nación*, 5 November 1929.
- 57 Manuel Rubio Cabeza, for example, writes (Manuel Rubio Cabeza, *Crónica, de la dictadura* [Madrid: Sarpe, 1986], p. 399) that in January 1928 'there is still room for another couple of years, but everybody already senses the end of the dictatorship is nigh', without ever explaining why 'everybody' knew that the regime was finished by this time.
- 58 The report by J. Balfour, first-secretary to the British Ambassador in Madrid, is discussed in Silvia Ribelles de la Vega, *Un diplomático al servicio de su Majestad. Sir George Dixon Grahame, 1873–1940* (Granada: Comares, 2021), p. 119.

- 59 Juan Avilés Farré, 'Un pálido reflejo del fascismo: la dictadura de Primo de Rivera en los informes diplomáticos italianos', *Pasado y Memoria. Revista de Historia Contemporánea*, 16 (2017), p. 83.
- 60 Juan Avilés Farré, 'Un pálido reflejo del fascismo: la dictadura de Primo de Rivera en los informes diplomáticos italianos', *Pasado y Memoria. Revista de Historia Contemporánea*, 16 (2017), p. 83.
- 61 Alejandro Quiroga Fernández de Soto, *Making Spaniards. Primo de Rivera and the Nationalization of the Masses (1923–1930)* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2007), pp. 184–187.
- 62 For the university revolts, see the work of the FUE militant José López-Rey y Arroyo, *Los estudiantes frente a la Dictadura* (Madrid: Javier Morata, 1930). See also, Lázaro Somoza Silva, *La dictadura, la juventud y la República (ensayo político actual)* (Valencia: Cuadernos de Cultura, 1931); Shlomo Ben-Ami, 'La rebellion universitaire en Espagne (1927–1931)', *Revue d'Histoire Moderne et Contemporaine*, 26 (1979), pp. 365–390; Shlomo Ben-Ami, 'Los estudiantes contra el rey', *Historia* 16, 6 (1976), pp. 37–47; Eduardo González Calleja, *Rebelión en las aulas. Movilización y protesta estudiantil en la España contemporánea* (Madrid: Alianza, 2009), pp. 99–137.
- 63 Eduardo González Calleja, *Rebelión en las aulas. Movilización y protesta estudiantil en la España contemporánea* (Madrid: Alianza, 2009), pp. 111–112.
- 64 Eduardo González Calleja, *El maúser y el sufragio. Orden público, subversión y violencia política en la crisis de la Restauración (1917–1931)* (Madrid: CSIC, 1999), pp. 436–437.
- 65 Santos Juliá, 'Ser intelectual y ser joven en Madrid, hacia 1930', *Historia Contemporánea*, 27 (2003), p. 751.
- 66 Juan Avilés Farré, 'Un pálido reflejo del fascismo: la dictadura de Primo de Rivera en los informes diplomáticos italianos', *Pasado y Memoria. Revista de Historia Contemporánea*, 16 (2017), p. 83.
- 67 'Carta-manifiesto de la Sección Femenina de la Juventud de UP de Barcelona a Primo de Rivera', 28 March 1929. AHN, Presidencia del Gobierno, FFCC, Directorio Militar, legajo 192, caja 1, expediente 12917.
- 68 Eduardo González Calleja, *El maúser y el sufragio. Orden público, subversión y violencia política en la crisis de la Restauración (1917–1931)* (Madrid: CSIC, 1999), p. 437.
- 69 For the Italian case study, see Bruno Wanrooij, 'Una generazione di guerra e rivoluzione. I giovani e il fascismo delle origini', *Storia e problemi contemporanei*, 27 (2001), pp. 126–127.
- 70 Eduardo González Calleja, *Rebelión en las aulas. Movilización y protesta estudiantil en la España contemporánea* (Madrid: Alianza, 2009), p. 34.
- 71 *La Nación*, 8 March 1929.
- 72 *La Nación*, 8 March 1929.
- 73 *La Nación*, 8 March 1929.
- 74 Jordana Mendelson, 'El Poble Espanyol/El Pueblo Español (1929)', in Enric Bou & Jaume Subirana (eds.), *The Barcelona Reader: Cultural Readings of a City* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2017), p. 296.
- 75 Jordana Mendelson, 'El Poble Espanyol/ El Pueblo Español (1929)', in E. Bou & J. Subirana (eds.), *The Barcelona Reader: Cultural Readings of a City Book* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2017), p. 298.
- 76 Manuel Rubio Cabeza, *Crónica de la dictadura* (Madrid: Sarpe, 1986), pp. 493, 498; Marqués de la Vega de Anzo (ed.), *La Dictadura de Primo de Rivera juzgada en el extranjero* (Madrid: Sáez Hermanos, 1931), pp. 79–82, 309–328; *La Nación*, 8 April 1929, 9 April 1929.
- 77 A summary of the interview can be found in *La Nación*, 15 April 1929.
- 78 *La Nación*, 9 April 1929.

- 79 Silvia Ribelles de la Vega, *Un diplomático al servicio de su Majestad. Sir George Dixon Grabame, 1873–1940* (Granada: Comares, 2021), p. 120.
- 80 Silvia Ribelles de la Vega, *Un diplomático al servicio de su Majestad. Sir George Dixon Grabame, 1873–1940* (Granada: Comares, 2021), p. 120.
- 81 *Unión Patriótica*, 15 April 1929.
- 82 For various patriotic events in the provinces of Granada, Lugo, Cádiz, Jaén and Madrid, see the correspondence between civil governors and Martínez Anido in AHN, Presidencia, legajo 192, caja 1.
- 83 *La Nación*, 8 April 1929.
- 84 *La Nación*, 8 April 1929.
- 85 *Unión Patriótica*, 15 April 1929.
- 86 *Unión Patriótica*, 15 April 1929.
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- 88 Marqués de la Vega de Anzo, *La Dictadura de Primo de Rivera juzgada en el extranjero: opiniones de hombres de estado, diplomáticos, técnicos, periodistas, etc.* (Madrid: Sáez Hermanos, 1931), p. 93.
- 89 *Unión Patriótica*, 15 April 1929.
- 90 *La Nación*, 15 April 1929.
- 91 *La Nación*, 15 April 1929.
- 92 *La Nación*, 15 April 1929.
- 93 *La Nación*, 15 April 1929.
- 94 Leandro Álvarez del Rey, 'La Exposición Iberoamericana de Sevilla. En la liquidación del certamen: las conferencias del Ateneo (1930–1931)', in Bibiano Torres Ramírez & José Hernández Palomo (eds.), *Andalucía y América en el siglo XX: Actas de las VI Jornadas de Andalucía y América*, vol. 1 (Huelva: Universidad de Santa María de la Rábida, 1986), p. 96.
- 95 Encarnación López Lemus, 'La Exposición Iberoamericana en los años de la Dictadura: los dos comisarías regias: Colombí y Cruz Conde (1922–1929)', in Bibiano Torres Ramírez & José Hernández Palomo (eds.), *Andalucía y América en el siglo XX. VI Jornadas de Andalucía y América*. (Huelva: Universidad de Santa María de la Rábida, 1986), vol. 1, pp. 82–88.
- 96 *La Vanguardia*, 22 March 1929. The Marqués de Foronda was a friend of the King as well as being a friend of Primo.
- 97 For the communication between Primo and Callejo, see AHN, Presidencia del Gobierno, legajo 191, carpeta 1263.
- 98 A letter from the Director of the Exposition, the Marqués de Foronda, dated 11 April 1929 and thanking Primo for his involvement, can be found in AHN, Presidencia del Gobierno, legajo 191, carpeta 1263.
- 99 Lara Campos Pérez, 'Imperial, católica y moderna. La imagen de España en la Exposición Iberoamericana de Sevilla de 1929', *Cuadernos de Historia Contemporánea*, 45 (2023), pp. 163–183.
- 100 *ABC*, 10 May 1929.
- 101 *Unión Patriótica*, 15 May 1929.
- 102 Francisco Narbona, *Sevilla y la Exposición de 1929* (Sevilla: Monte de Piedad y Caja de Ahorros Provincial de Sevilla, 1987).
- 103 *La Nación*, 10 May 1929.
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- 108 Juan Avilés Farré, 'Un pálido reflejo del fascismo: la dictadura de Primo de Rivera en los informes diplomáticos italianos', *Pasado y Memoria. Revista de Historia Contemporánea*, 16 (2017), p. 78.

- 109 'Propuesta de propaganda y publicidad presentada a la Comisión Permanente de la Exposición Ibero Americana en la sesión de 14 de junio de 1929', AHN, Presidencia del Gobierno, legajo 199, caja 1.
- 110 'Propuesta de propaganda y publicidad presentada a la Comisión Permanente de la Exposición Ibero Americana en la sesión de 14 de junio de 1929', AHN, Presidencia del Gobierno, legajo 199, caja 1.
- 111 'Propuesta de propaganda y publicidad presentada a la Comisión Permanente de la Exposición Ibero Americana en la sesión de 14 de junio de 1929', AHN, Presidencia del Gobierno, legajo 199, caja 1.
- 112 For the Italian fascist propaganda effort, see Jeffrey T. Schnapp, 'Epic Demonstrations: Fascist Modernity and the 1932 Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution', in Richard J. Golsan (ed.), *Fascism, Aesthetics and Cultures* (Hannover: University Press of New England, 1992), pp. 1–37.
- 113 Moreover, both expositions massively exceeded estimates in terms of cost. A report of the Office of the Prime Minister indicated on 28 May 1929 that the Committee for the Barcelona International Exposition was already running a deficit of 390,000 pesetas, just nine days after the event had opened. See 'Oficina de la Presidencia a Primo de Rivera, 28 May 1929', AHN, Presidencia del Gobierno, legajo 204, caja 3. For the organisation and estimates for the expositions in Seville and Barcelona, see Rosa Cal, 'El mundo de las exposiciones', (III): del IV Centenario a Sevilla-Barcelona (1929)', *Historia* 16, 17:194 (1992), pp. 86–92; Fredrick B. Pike, *Hispanismo, 1898–1936* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1971), p. 227.
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- 116 Rubén Domínguez Méndez, 'El fascismo italiano y la Exposición Internacional de Barcelona de 1929', *Diacronie*, 14:2 (2013), p. 22.
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- 118 Rubén Domínguez Méndez, 'El fascismo italiano y la Exposición Internacional de Barcelona de 1929', *Diacronie*, 14:2 (2013), p. 22.
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- 120 Á. Herrerín López & S. Sueiro Seoane, '¿Quantité négligeable o rival terrible?: la imagen francesa de la España primorriverista', *Pasado y Memoria. Revista de Historia Contemporánea*, 16 (2017), p. 21.
- 121 Lorena R. Romero-Domínguez, 'La dictadura de Primo de Rivera: entre el control y la censura (1924–1930)', in Concha Langa-Nuño, Lorena R. Romero-Domínguez, & María José Ruiz Acosta (eds.), *Un siglo de información en Sevilla: (prensa, radio y televisión: 1909–2009)* (Sevilla: Universidad de Sevilla, 2009), p. 65.
- 122 Lorena R. Romero-Domínguez, 'La dictadura de Primo de Rivera: entre el control y la censura (1924–1930)', in Concha Langa-Nuño, Lorena R. Romero-Domínguez, & María José Ruiz Acosta (eds.), *Un siglo de información en Sevilla: (prensa, radio y televisión: 1909–2009)* (Sevilla: Universidad de Sevilla, 2009), p. 66.
- 123 'Oficina de la Presidencia a Primo de Rivera, 28 May 1929'. AHN, Presidencia del Gobierno, legajo 204, caja 3.
- 124 Shlomo Ben-Ami, *Fascism from above: The Dictatorship of Primo de Rivera in Spain 1923–1930* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), p. 349. The government also

- assumed responsibility for the debts accrued by the Barcelona City Hall in the staging of the city's exposition. See *La Nación*, 1 January 1930.
- 125 Gonzalo Álvarez Chillida, 'El fracaso de un proyecto autoritario: el debate constitucional en la Asamblea Nacional de Primo de Rivera', *Revista de Estudios Políticos*, 93 (1996), pp. 359–375.
 - 126 Juan Avilés Farré, 'Un pálido reflejo del fascismo: la dictadura de Primo de Rivera en los informes diplomáticos italianos', *Pasado y Memoria. Revista de Historia Contemporánea*, 16 (2017), p. 85.
 - 127 Juan Avilés Farré, 'Un pálido reflejo del fascismo: la dictadura de Primo de Rivera en los informes diplomáticos italianos', *Pasado y Memoria. Revista de Historia Contemporánea*, 16 (2017), p. 85.
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 - 129 *La Nación*, 16 September 1929.
 - 130 Dionisio Pérez, *La Dictadura a través de sus Notas oficiosas* (Madrid: Compañía Ibero-Americana de Publicaciones, 1930), p. 297.
 - 131 Francisco Alía Miranda, *Duelo de sables: el general Aguilera, de ministro a conspirador contra Primo de Rivera (1917–1931)* (Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 2006), p. 243.
 - 132 Juan Avilés Farré, 'Un pálido reflejo del fascismo: la dictadura de Primo de Rivera en los informes diplomáticos italianos', *Pasado y Memoria. Revista de Historia Contemporánea*, 16 (2017), p. 84.
 - 133 Francisco Alía Miranda, *Duelo de sables: el general Aguilera, de ministro a conspirador contra Primo de Rivera (1917–1931)* (Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 2006), p. 245.
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 - 135 José Calvo Sotelo, *Mis servicios al Estado. Seis años de gestión. Apuntes para la historia* (Madrid: Instituto de Estudios de Administración Local, 1974 [1931]), p. 228.
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 - 137 *La Vanguardia*, 10 December 1929, 11 December 1929; *La Nación*, 10 December 1929, 11 December 1929.
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 - 148 *El Sol*, 1 January 1930.
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- 153 *El Sol*, 3 January 1930; *La Vanguardia*, 3 January 1930. For *Informaciones*, *La Época* and *El Liberal*, see Manuel Rubio Cabeza, *Crónica de la dictadura* (Madrid: Sarpe, 1986), pp. 560–571.
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- 156 Dionisio Pérez, *La Dictadura a través de sus Notas oficiosas* (Madrid: Compañía Ibero-Americana de Publicaciones, 1930), pp. 212–213.
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- 179 Dámaso Berenguer Fusté, *De la Dictadura a la República* (Barcelona-Madrid: Plus Ultra, 1975 [1946]), p. 72.
- 180 Eduardo Aunós Pérez, *El general Primo de Rivera, soldado y gobernante* (Madrid: Alhambra, 1944), p. 222.
- 181 Eduardo Aunós Pérez, *El general Primo de Rivera, soldado y gobernante* (Madrid: Alhambra, 1944), p. 222.

- 182 Eduardo Aunós Pérez, *El general Primo de Rivera, soldado y gobernante* (Madrid: Alhambra, 1944), p. 224.
- 183 Among others, they include Ana de Sagra, Miguel *Primo de Rivera: el hombre, el soldado y el político* (Jerez de la Frontera: Ayuntamiento de Jerez de la Frontera, 1973); Xavier Casals, *Primo de Rivera y Orbaneja. El espejo de Franco* (Barcelona: Ediciones B, 2004); and Rosa Cal Martínez, 'La censura de prensa y el sepelio de Primo de Rivera', *Historia y Comunicación Social*, (5) (2000), pp. 157–170.
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- 188 Eduardo Aunós Pérez, *El general Primo de Rivera, soldado y gobernante* (Madrid: Alhambra, 1944), p. 224.
- 189 Ana de Sagra, *Miguel Primo de Rivera: el hombre, el soldado y el político* (Jerez de la Frontera: Ayuntamiento de Jerez de la Frontera, 1973), p. 365.
- 190 Miguel Primo de Rivera, *La obra de la dictadura. Sus cuatro últimos artículos: 1.º Génesis de la Dictadura: 2.º Constitución y labor del Directorio: 3.º La Dictadura civil: 4.º Fin de la Dictadura española* (Madrid: Junta de Propaganda Patriótica y Ciudadana/Imprenta Sáez Hermanos, 1930), p. 48.
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- 192 Ana de Sagra, *Miguel Primo de Rivera: el hombre, el soldado y el político* (Jerez de la Frontera: Ayuntamiento de Jerez de la Frontera, 1973), p. 370.
- 193 Ana de Sagra, *Miguel Primo de Rivera: el hombre, el soldado y el político* (Jerez de la Frontera: Ayuntamiento de Jerez de la Frontera, 1973), p. 371.
- 194 *La Nación*, 17 March 1930.
- 195 Eduardo Aunós Pérez, *El general Primo de Rivera, soldado y gobernante* (Madrid: Alhambra, 1944), p. 233.
- 196 On 'Mauricio Karl', see Paul Preston, *Architects of Terror: Paranoia, Conspiracy and Anti-Semitism in Franco's Spain* (London: HarperCollins, 2023), ch. 2.
- 197 Miguel Herrero García, *El general D. Miguel Primo de Rivera* (Madrid: Purcalla, 1947), p. 191.
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- 201 *Informaciones*, 18 March 1930.
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- 203 The censored drafts of *La Nación* are in Rosa Cal Martínez, 'La censura de prensa y el sepelio de Primo de Rivera', *Historia y Comunicación Social*, 5 (2000), p. 164.
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- 208 *Heraldo de Madrid*, 19 March 1930.

- 209 *Heraldo de Madrid*, 19 March 1930. Footage of the cortege and the State funeral by British Pathé can be seen in <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PIKcz7XMdFQ>.
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- 223 Paul Preston, *Las derechas españolas en el siglo XX: Autoritarismo, fascismo y gopismo* (Madrid: Sistema, 1986), p. 23; Ferran Gallego, *El evangelio fascista. La formación de la cultura política del franquismo, 1930–1950* (Barcelona: Crítica, 2014).
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- 226 José Pemartín, *Qué es ‘lo nuevo’ Consideraciones sobre el momento español presente* (Santander: Cultura Española, 1938), pp. 32, 52, 248–249; José Pemartín, ‘España como pensamiento’, *Acción Española*, 18:89 (1937), pp. 399, 402–404.

- In the case of Pemán, see his press contributions 'La transición y el estilo de Menéndez Pelayo', *ABC Sevilla*, 23 May 1937; 'Una política de unidad', *ABC Sevilla*, 1 September 1937; 'José Antonio, pero todo José Antonio', *ABC Sevilla*, 20 November 1938; 'La Falange Española Tradicionalista y de las JONS', *Orientación Española*, 1 August 1938 & 15 August 1938.
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8 What Happened Here?

History and Memory of a Dictator and His Dictatorship

On the morning of 10 February 1930, General Primo de Rivera arrived in Barcelona by train. From the Paseo de Gracia, the Marqués de Estella caught a taxi to the Captaincy-General. He must have had mixed emotions. Primo was returning to the place where he had launched his *coup d'état* on 13 September 1923, but he arrived this time as a former dictator. Two weeks earlier, he had been forced to resign as President of the Council of Ministers. At the Captaincy-General, Primo visited his old friend, General Emilio Barrera, the man whom the Marqués de Estella had chosen as Captain-General of Catalonia in September 1923. Primo and Barrera lunched together. Afterwards, the Marqués de Estella gave a press conference in which he denounced the smear campaign against the work of his dictatorship, which he claimed was based upon ‘notoriously unjustified attitudes and cruelties’.¹ The former dictator also announced that he was going to spend two weeks in Paris, adding that it would be ‘very good for relaxing [...] I am sure I will be bored’. Barrera replied, ‘Indeed, given your nature, I am sure you will be bored’.²

Primo was not bored in Paris, however. A few days after his arrival in the French capital he signed a lucrative contract with the Argentinian daily newspaper *La Nación* to write four articles on the genesis, birth, course and end of his dictatorship.³ In his agreement with the Buenos Aires newspaper, there was a clause which allowed him to publish the articles in the *primorriverista* Madrid daily, *La Nación*, at the same time they were published in Argentina. Although he was very pleased with the 26,600 francs he received from the Argentine daily for his articles, the principal concern for Primo was to create propaganda material to defend the memory of his dictatorship in Spain.⁴ If the Marqués de Estella did not perform a greatest service to the memory of his regime was only because he died in Paris on 16 March 1930, barely four weeks after his arrival in the city.

As a matter of fact, the battle over the memory of the Primo de Rivera regime, and over the memory of the Marqués de Estella himself, had already begun during the dictatorship. In the summer of 1929, Julián Cortés Cavnillas, at that time one of the principal leaders of the *Juventudes de Unión Patriótica*, published *La dictadura y el dictador* (The Dictatorship and the Dictator), a book which presented an idyllic portrait of Primo de Rivera. The

young *upetista* described the dictator as a kind-hearted leader, a patriot who was close to the people, 'a man in every sense of the word', who possessed the 'heart of a child' and had not wanted to spill blood during his time in office.⁵ Cortés Cavanillas was also sure that posterity would hold Primo in 'the highest regard, in accordance with his great merits', and that 'history' would 'offer thanks for the new era' that the dictator had inaugurated on 13 September 1923.⁶ Meanwhile, the propagandist predicted a long future for the dictatorship and suggested that the period of regeneration started under Primo would go on, God willing, 'for as long Spain was Spain'.⁷

Clearly Cortés Cavanillas proved short-sighted in predicting the longevity of the Primo dictatorship, but the image of the general as an affable, popular and accessible man would indeed be a lasting one. The regime's propaganda portrayed Primo de Rivera as a protecting father, who 'owing to circumstance operates a guiding dictatorship', and who was very careful not to spill the blood of his unruly children.⁸ In addition, the dictator's apologists presented him as a providential figure, sent by God to save the nation from chaos and anarchy.⁹ Alongside the religious connotations, the regime's spokesmen steeped their propaganda in pseudo-scientific analysis which referred to the 'nervous, fiery temperament' which supposedly gave Primo a higher than average intelligence, as well as his 'intuitiveness', a quality that was apparently crucial for the dictator to understand his people and allow him to direct them wisely.¹⁰ As we have seen, the Marqués de Estella himself contributed to this propaganda image of an insightful and good-natured man, declaring himself to be a 'doctor in the Science of Life' and someone who understood 'the life of the street'. In his view, this made up for his lack of education as a political leader and justified his 'claim to govern a people'.¹¹ Meanwhile, Primo had no compunction in promoting himself as a mystical figure in direct contact with God himself. In 1925, he declared at a meeting in the Teatro del Centro in Madrid that 'he had made an alliance with Providence'.¹² In November 1926, the dictator wrote in the pages of the government newspaper, *La Nación*, that 'divine assistance' allowed him 'to press ahead with the very difficult task of governing and administering 26 million Spaniards'.¹³

The dictator was also sure to construct his legacy in the symbolic field during the dictatorship. As we know, in an attempt to conquer public space and perpetuate himself in the popular imagination, the military regime renamed hundreds of streets and squares in towns and cities throughout Spain with the name of the dictator, or with the date 13 September in commemoration of his coup.¹⁴ Meanwhile, most of the new public schools opened during the dictatorship were named after Primo de Rivera.¹⁵ The Marqués de Estella also sought to perpetuate his memory through parks and statues. In Zaragoza, for example, Primo officially inaugurated a park named after him on 17 May 1929, alongside the opening of the *Trece de Septiembre* ('Thirteenth of September') bridge, which linked the main thoroughfare of the Aragonese capital with the park. The facility retained the dictator's name until 2010, when the park was renamed José Antonio Labordeta, even though the space had

been popularly known as the *Parque Grande* for decades by this point. In his native Jerez, the city council proposed the construction of a gigantic statue of Primo de Rivera on horseback. Produced by Mariano Benlliure, the equestrian statue of the dictator included an inscription which read 'To the Illustrious native of Jerez, restorer of order, Miguel Primo de Rivera y Orbaneja, pacifier of Morocco and the Marqués de Estella, the Fatherland gives thanks'. As the regime's newspaper *La Nación* told its readers, the monument was not only a 'statue left so that future generations can admire a man', but a homage from the 'women of Spain' to the dictator for having freed Spain and its people from the war in Morocco.¹⁶ When Primo unveiled the monument on 29 September 1929, the dictator made it clear that he considered it a 'perfectly justified' tribute to himself, given the 'bravery', 'skill' and 'perpetuity' of his work in government since 13 September 1923.¹⁷ The statue still sits in the Plaza de Arenal, even though it has been subject of a heated political controversy, as we will see below.

After the fall of the dictatorship, Primo's supporters remained active in promoting his legacy. Members of the UMN, former ministers and ideologues of the regime continued to use the pages of *La Nación* and the *Junta de Propaganda Patriótica y Cuidadana* (JPPT) to sing the praises of their old *caudillo*. The Catalan priest José Montagut Roca, for example, released *Los errores de la Dictaduray y réplica al libro de Cambó* (The Errors of the Dictatorship and a Reply to Cambó), a work which combined well-known mantras about Primo as a providential figure with an attack on the leader of the *Lliga Regionalista*.¹⁸ Meanwhile, Ignacio Fernández de Henestrosa y Mioño, the Marqués de Camarasa, rehashed the myths of the providential and 'intuitive' saviour of the nation in *El Marqués de Estella, soldado, dictador, hombre de estado* (The Marqués de Estella, Soldier, Dictator and Statesman).¹⁹ For his part, Rafael Caro Raggio published *Yunque y martillo* (Anvil and Hammer), a collection which included an autobiographical text by Primo de Rivera in which he spoke, without much modesty, about his wartime feats as an officer in the army in Africa.²⁰ Meanwhile, the dictator's son, José Antonio Primo de Rivera, a founding member of the UMN after the fall of the regime and Head of the JPPT, sought to defend the reputation of his father as 'a man of good faith' trying to save his country and find a solution to the problems of anarchist terrorism, the war in Morocco and the economic crisis.²¹

This campaign of Primo's supporters after his dismissal must be understood within a context of the clash between memory of the dictatorship and the political future of the country. The relaxation of censorship under the government of Berenguer led to an outpouring of works critical of Primo de Rivera and his regime. At the start of 1930, for example, the journalist Francisco Villanueva told the story of the last few months of the dictatorship in a book entitled *¿Qué ha pasado aquí?* (What happened here?). His pen portrait depicted a group of incompetents who were unable to produce a constitutional exit to the regime nor sort out the economy.²² Villanueva also produced other works on the theme,

including *La dictadura militar: II tomo de 'Obstáculos tradicionales'. Crónica documentada de la oposición y la represión bajo el Directorio (1923–1926)* (The Military Dictatorship: Volume II of 'Traditional Obstacles'. Documented Account of Opposition and Repression under the Directorate, 1923–1926). In a similar vein were the works of Gabriel Maura Gamazo, such as *Al servicio de la historia. Bosquejo histórico de la Dictadura and España bajo la dictadura. Siete años sin ley* (In the Service of History. A Historical Sketch of the Dictatorship and Spain under the dictatorship. Seven Lawless Years). Maura's works were perhaps the most important among this group of critics, but two further authors also stand out, namely, Quintiliano Saldaña García-Rubio, with *Al servicio de la justicia. La orgía áurea de la dictadura* (In the Service of Justice. The Golden Orgy of the Dictatorship), and Rafael Salazar Alonso with *La justicia bajo la dictadura* (Justice Under the Dictatorship).²³ Both men presented the dictatorship as a failed regime and denounced its repressive nature, Primo's absolute contempt for the law (including those he himself had passed) and the suppression of all manner of liberties under his rule. Elsewhere, critics of the dictator sought to erode the providential image put forward by his admirers and instead presented him as a figure of ridicule. For example, in his introduction to *Epistolario del dictador: la figura del General Primo de Rivera, trazada por su propia mano* (Letters of the dictator: General Primo de Rivera in his own words), the brothers Luis and José Manuel de Armiñan defined the former dictator as 'an uneducated windbag and comedian'.²⁴ In most cases, presenting the old dictatorship as a lawless regime subject to the authoritarian whims of Primo de Rivera was a means of creating a counterpoint to make it possible to imagine a future democratic Spain.

When that democracy arrived in Spain in 1931, the picture of a repressive and arbitrary dictator given to committing 'repeated violations' was consolidated by Melchor Fernández Almagro in his book *Historia del reinado de Don Alfonso XIII* (History of the Reign of Alfonso XIII).²⁵ Alongside this liberal historiography of the recent past, however, old colleagues of the Marqués de Estella kept alive a far-right interpretation of the dictatorship during the years of the Second Republic. Gathered around the journal *Acción Española*, numerous former ministers, ideologues and members of the dictatorship's National Assembly offered their thoughts on what the regime had meant for the history of Spain. To a large extent, this was a form of self-criticism, and to a lesser extent a form of doctrinal reflection, so as not to repeat the same errors that had led to the fall of the dictatorship and the coming of the Second Republic in Spain.²⁶ For José Pemartín, one of the regime's chief ideologues, a relative of the dictator who would later go on to become Head of Higher Education and Media for the Ministry of National Education under Franco, the Primo dictatorship was a 'patriotic and wonderful attempt to return to what was genuinely Spanish', which had not been understood by 'our rightist intellectuals', but which, nonetheless, 'was and will always be a key point of reference to understand the political history of the early twentieth century'.²⁷ Pemartín held the Primo dictatorship in such regard that in 1937 he described it as a

military forerunner to the ‘cleansing’ of the fatherland which the Francoists were carrying out during the Spanish Civil War.²⁸

During the early Franco regime, the idea that Primo had been a providential man who had saved the country from revolution was kept alive, in part thanks to the writings of old colleagues of the Marqués de Estella. With the civil war having recently ended, César González Rubio published *Miguel Primo de Rivera. La vida heroica y romántica de un general español* (Miguel Primo de Rivera. The Heroic and Romantic Life of a Spanish General), a biography in which Primo’s intuition and love of his people remained the fundamental characteristics of a dictator whose political mission was presented as a precursor to the regimes of Mussolini, Hitler and Franco.²⁹ Along similar lines, in 1944 Eduardo Aunós, Primo’s former Minister of Labour and now Minister of Justice under the Franco regime, published *El general Primo de Rivera. Soldado y gobernante* (General Primo de Rivera: Soldier and Ruler), in which he highlighted the patriotism and Catholicism of the Marqués de Estella as the key features to keep in mind when judging his political and military career.³⁰ As well as being a clear attempt to justify his own political past, restoring the reputation of Primo de Rivera also helped Aunós to sing the praises of Francisco Franco. Following in the footsteps of Pemartín during the civil war, Aunós presented Franco as the intellectual heir to Primo de Rivera and the man to complete the redemptive work of the Marqués de Estella.³¹

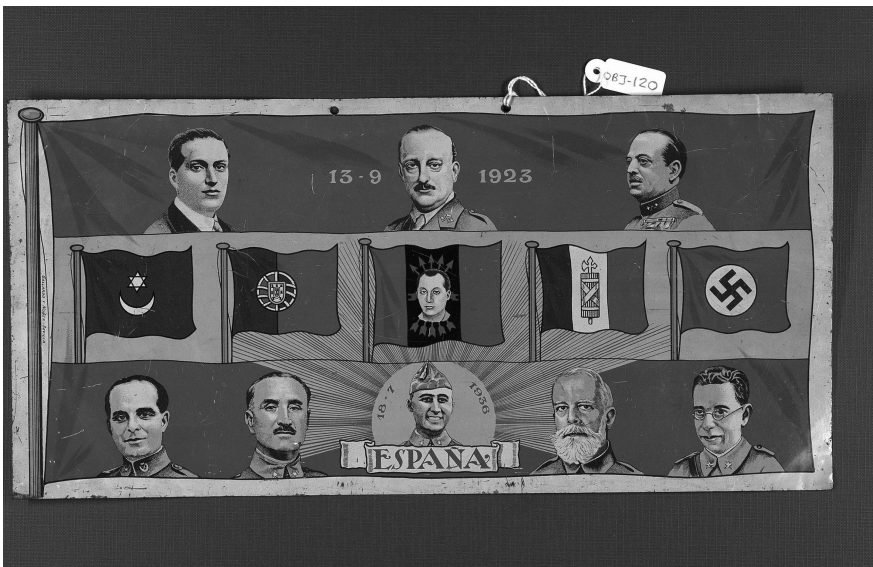


Figure 8.1 Civil War Francoist emblem with portrait of Miguel Primo de Rivera. Credit: España. Ministerio de Cultura. Archivos Estatales, ES.37274.CDMH//OBJETOS,120.

This Francoist applause for Primo at the height of Nazi power in Europe went beyond the works of intellectuals and ministers. In March 1941, for example, the magazine of *Radio Nacional de España* dedicated an entire page to eulogise Primo in its section 'Rescuing History'. The following words about the 'Precursor' speak for themselves:

The entire Spanish press, strongly unanimous, has recalled in the national consciousness the sober memory of the services of that illustrious soldier and the great work that he undertook during six years of political, military and civil struggle, as a patrician and a leader. It required two regimes to collapse and the New State to be born in the fiery bowels of a civil war [...] Eleven years on from that downfall and that death, what is left of those who caused it? [...] Luckily, the Caudillo, the Army, the Falange, the flags of the Precursor and his son the Prophet stand erect and triumphal, they have redeemed the country from the sadness of all its injustices and led it, with resolute steps and cosmic joy, to mastery of the lands, the souls and the centuries.³²

As the Franco regime shed its fascist clothing after the Nazi defeat in the Second World War, interest disappeared in presenting Primo de Rivera as the precursor to other dictatorships. Thus, when César González Ruano came to republish his book *Miguel Primo de Rivera* in 1956, mentions of Hitler, Mussolini and Franco that had appeared in the first edition were conveniently nowhere to be seen. In fact, the change in tone when it came to representing Primo de Rivera had been prompted by Franco himself in the climate of the early Cold War. On 22 March 1947, Franco had awarded the posthumous title of 'Captain-General of the Army' to Primo de Rivera. The justification for the decoration was the long 'years of peace and glories' that the Marqués de Estella had 'provided for his Fatherland' and his military capabilities in 'the victorious campaign to pacify the entirety of our Zone of the Protectorate' in Morocco.³³ As before, peace, order and love of the nation were once again the most prominent virtues of Primo de Rivera, but this time the providential features and the notion of the Jerezano as the precursor to the fascist dictatorships would disappear. Five days after his naming as 'Captain-General of the Army', the Franco regime removed the remains of General Primo de Rivera and placed them in his native Jerez de la Frontera. Although the coffin was escorted by soldiers with helmets which unequivocally reminded onlookers of the German army, the Francoist authorities paid homage to the former dictator with a religious ceremony of a decidedly military nature, but far from the fascist-style commemorations of the Falange which had been so noticeable in the first years of the Franco regime.³⁴ Led by the Minister of the Army, Fidel Dávila, the ceremonials surrounding the transfer of the body of this 'glorious soldier' highlighted the shifts in a Francoist dictatorship, which was working hard to adapt to the new international context.³⁵ Three days after the tribute to Primo de Rivera in Jerez, Franco announced the draft of the Law of

Succession, which would declare Spain to be a monarchy and a 'Catholic and Social State'.³⁶

During the 1960s, opponents of the Franco regime once again highlighted the lack of liberties and the repressive nature of the Primo de Rivera dictatorship. For example, in his book *Así cayó Alfonso XIII* (How Alfonso XIII fell), the conservative republican Miguel Maura denounced the 'autocratic' practices of a regime where 'the slightest misdeed is inexorably punished [...] Brute force rules!', in a country where political parties had been unable to stand up to the 'amputation of the most fundamental rights of the citizens'.³⁷ Nonetheless, Miguel Maura wrote that Primo had achieved 'complete' social peace. He also believed that 'the end of the nightmare in Morocco', putting the state coffers in order and the completion of a large number of public works ought to 'appear in the credit column of the dictatorship'.³⁸ Maura's assessment of the dictatorship also returned to the representation of the dictator as a good natured, lively and eccentric man. Primo is described in the book as a 'wild and cheerful native of Jerez', who had launched his uprising with a 'menacing and bullish manifesto'.³⁹ He was a man who used a 'bragging and optimistic tone' in his official notes.⁴⁰ But he was also a dictator who, in the last years of his rule, had explained to the country in an 'eccentric' message in the press that his 'doddering love' for the aristocrat Niní Castellanos had broken down.⁴¹

This picture of the dictator as an eccentric and good-natured man would also be repeated by many historians during the last years of the Francoist dictatorship. In 1970, for example, José Manuel Cuenca Toribio published an article in the magazine *Historia y Vida*, which tried to examine the dictator 'from an objective and scientific perspective'.⁴² Even so, Cuenca Toribio did nothing more in the article than reproduce themes about Primo which had been common during the era of the dictatorship itself. Thus, the Marqués de Estella was presented as kind and paternalistic, while his notorious womanising was acknowledged, but turned into something akin to the 'legendary Sultan from One Thousand and One Nights'.⁴³ The caricatures did not end there. According to Cuenca Toribio, the 'arbitrariness and egoism' which Primo 'displayed in abundance while in power' were 'so much to the taste of the eternal Spanish popular soul' and earned the dictator broad social support.⁴⁴ Leaving to one side the idea that there might be an 'eternal Spanish popular soul', it is clear that such interpretations offer a huge dose of paternalism, not only in terms of Primo himself but also in the historian who claims to be analysing his subject 'scientifically'.⁴⁵ In the very same issue of *Historia y Vida*, Rafael Salazar wrote a 'Personal profile of Primo de Rivera', an article in which he repeated the regime's own mythology surrounding the dictator almost point-by-point.⁴⁶ In it, the Marqués de Estella appears once again as a man of action. He is intuitive, good-natured, patriarchal, beloved by the people and a paternalist.

In a very similar tone of exaltation is the work of Ana de Sagra, *Miguel Primo de Rivera. El hombre, el soldado y el político* (Miguel Primo de Rivera: The Man, the Soldier, the Politician).⁴⁷ Published in 1973 by the city council

of Jerez de la Frontera, the book was the first biography of Primo de Rivera. A friend of the family, the author was an historian from San Sebastián who had been associated with Carlism during the Civil War.⁴⁸ By way of introduction, the book recounts the words of General Franco to the cadets of the General Military Academy in Zaragoza, in which the future dictator praised the patriotism of the 'distinguished officer and glorious caudillo' after his sudden death in Paris.⁴⁹ In the prologue, Pilar Primo de Rivera thanks the author for 'the rigour of precision, the care she has taken researching who my father really was', and highlights how 'close her family and mine have always been'.⁵⁰ Those family connections were certainly important when it came to writing the book, given that the author based much of her information upon anecdotes told by members of the Primo de Rivera family. Unfortunately, the book does not contain any footnotes, and so it is impossible to know which sources precisely were used in preparing it. In any case, this voluminous biography would recycle many of the portraits of Primo which had already emerged during the 1920s and which would later be consolidated under the Franco regime, that is to say as a kind and paternalist man who was adored by the Spanish people. Meanwhile, as with so many apologists before Ana de Sagrera, she turned to the patriotism and religious faith of the Marqués de Estella to explain and justify his political actions.⁵¹

Not all the studies produced in the 1970s proved little more than a crude update on the benign portrait of the Marqués de Estella created by his supporters during the dictatorship. These years also saw the first academic debates over the nature of the Primo de Rivera regime. On the one hand, Marxist historians interpreted the dictatorship as the institutionalisation of Spanish-style Bonapartism, arising from the crisis of the oligarchy under the Restoration Monarchy.⁵² The driving force for this thesis was the political scientist Raúl Morodo, who as early as 1973 presented the Primo dictatorship as the regenerationist institutionalisation of Bonapartism, a revolution from above driven by an authoritarian and paternalist 'iron surgeon'. For Morodo, the dictatorship was made possible by the combination of economic elites and Restoration politicians, but unlike Mussolini in Italy, Primo never sought to create a new state and the regime did not evolve into a fascist phenomenon.⁵³ Following a similar line of argument, the political scientist Manuel Pastor defined the Primo dictatorship as 'preventative Bonapartism' and argued that it did not have fascist features, but was rather a 'political remedy to a political crisis posed in terms of the power struggle between the landowning oligarchy and the industrial-financial oligarchy'.⁵⁴

At the end of the 1970s, Manuel Tuñón de Lara, a key figure in Marxist historiography in Spain, advanced the thesis that the Primo dictatorship was an attempt to forcibly solve the crisis of hegemony emerging within the country's power blocs. He regarded the crucial factors in the establishment of Primo's dictatorship as the influence of Mussolini as an 'external factor for imitation', the crisis of the dynastic parties who were increasingly unable to manipulate the electoral results, and the fear of the 'ruling classes' of the revolutionary

potential of the workers' movement.⁵⁵ At around the same time, the *Colectivo Historia* (History Collective) presented the dictatorship as a means of escaping a dual crisis for the ruling classes. On the one hand, Castilian cereal growers and Catalan industrialists differed in their economic strategies relating to protectionism and interventionism. On the other hand, there was a crisis of dominating the working classes, which, since 1917, had been seen in the rise of working-class organisations, the mobilisation of land workers in Andalucía and the growth in Catalan and Basque nationalism. The dictatorship was an attempt to solve this dual crisis with a strong, Bonapartist figure. It was a regime which would attempt to restore the old alliance between landowners and industrialists, while simultaneously appealing to the reformist sectors of the workers' movement, that is to say, the socialists. For the young historians of the *Colectivo Historia*, the Primo regime was able to bring about the alliance of the elites and the middle classes but was unable to fully integrate the moderate socialists into the system. It nonetheless developed a new nationalistic and protectionist economic programme, which left an ideological and political legacy which would be partially adopted by 'Spanish fascism' during and after the crisis of the Second Republic.⁵⁶

Meanwhile, conservative historiography saw the Primo dictatorship as a regime based on the idea of regenerationist thinking arising from Joaquín Costa, and unlike the Marxist school argued that the origins of the dictatorship were rooted in the political rather than socio-economic crisis of the period.⁵⁷ It was seen as a peculiar regime, akin to a swansong for the elites of the Restoration, who alone in Europe had attempted to revive the liberal system with a temporary dictatorship. For Javier Tusell and Genoveva García Queipo de Llano, the dictatorship had been viewed by Marxist historians simply as a prologue for Francoism, when in truth what was necessary was to recognise the continuities between Primo's regime and the Restoration System. From this perspective, the Primo dictatorship represented a form of 'parenthesis' in the history of Spain, a period in which there were no major transformations 'in the most intimate structures of the political life of the nation', and which was remarkable for the continuity of *cacique* political figures and the constitutional system.⁵⁸ Central to these arguments was the idea that Primo de Rivera retained a liberal regenerationist ideology during his period of office, which prevented him from radicalising the regime in a fascist direction.⁵⁹ This was an idea that had already been circulated by Primo's former collaborators during the Francoist dictatorship. Eduardo Aunós, for example, had claimed in 1941 that 'the liberalism infused mentality of Primo de Rivera' had been an important element when it came to preventing the dictatorship transforming into a new political system removed from the former constitutional system.⁶⁰ Similarly, conservative historians were not exempt from reproducing certain themes from the historiography published under the Franco regime. Javier Tusell, for example, presented the dictator as 'an "iron surgeon" whose regenerationist and messianic longings were shared by most Spaniards', a man who 'relied on his intuition, and as such could change his programme from one

day to the next', as well as a 'likeable' Andalusian who was very 'easy going', even though he might be arbitrary and lacking defined political programmes.⁶¹

At the start of the 1980s, the research of Shlomo Ben-Ami revolutionised historiographical thinking on the Primo dictatorship. Questioning those who argued that the dictatorship was a period in which no great changes took place, Ben-Ami presented the regime as a time of deep and lasting changes. For him, the regime was an attempt at 'revolution from above', in which politics and the economy represented 'two facets of a dictatorial, nationalist enterprise'.⁶² This was no 'parenthesis', but rather a completely new nationalistic political experiment, which clearly intended to liquidate the Restoration System, which sought to reconcile reactionary and modern political models in the hope of creating a stable social majority which would allow the regime to endure. Ben-Ami also criticised the caricature-like depictions of Primo de Rivera as a form of 'national Father Christmas', a 'sympathetic Andalusian', a 'naïve' officer who thought he could regenerate the country, guided merely by his 'intuition' and 'patriotism'.⁶³ In rebuttal of the overused stereotypes about Primo de Rivera's temperament, Ben-Ami took the ideology of the dictator and the leaders of the *Unión Patriótica* seriously and offered a complex portrait which blended conservatism and Catholic corporatism, with economic development overseen by the state, and a form of fascist nationalism. It was this authoritarian and deeply anti-democratic ideological mixture which Primo sought to use to mobilise the population around a 'dictatorship [which] had to "fascisize" itself from above if it wanted to survive'.⁶⁴

Much like Ben-Ami, María Teresa González Calbet criticised the idea of a 'parenthesis' and presented the dictatorship as an authoritarian 'exit' from the Restoration crisis.⁶⁵ Unlike liberal and conservative scholars, González Calbet emphasised rupture with the Restoration System and portrayed the Military Directory as a period of rapid transformation which brought about the swift demise of the old dynastic parties, the irreversible erosion of the monarchy and army as institutional foundations of the political system, and the emergence of new alternative ideologies to the left and right. José Luis Gómez-Navarro, meanwhile, analysed the dictatorship from a multi-disciplinary perspective, which incorporated comparative history, political science and sociology, to arrive at similar conclusions. Far from a parenthesis in which no significant changes occurred, Gómez-Navarro argued that in the last years of Primo's dictatorship, the regime was able to create 'an alternative ideology and politics which [...] would ultimately be adopted by the Franco regime in its early years'.⁶⁶ Gómez-Navarro thus paved the way for linking Primo's ideology and regime with Franco's, a path which would later be transited by many historians.

Both Ben-Ami and Gómez-Navarro offer comparative studies which contextualise Primo's dictatorship within the context of other interwar European dictatorships. This is yet another way in which their works depart from the liberal-conservative approaches of the period. In 1978, for example, Javier Tusell and Genoveva García had suggested that Primo's regime could be compared to some of the Eastern European dictatorships, given that many of them

had been led by military men, that they had not attempted to mobilise the masses politically and that they were removed from extreme-right and fascist ideas. Nonetheless, they had also asserted that comparative approaches were limited, since there were more differences than similarities between Primo's dictatorship and those in Eastern Europe.⁶⁷ Ben-Ami, by contrast, emphasised the similarities and argued that it was precisely corporative nationalism and his mobilising intentions through a single party which made Primo's regime comparable to the regimes of Eastern Europe.⁶⁸ Ben-Ami also underlined the common features between the dictatorship of Primo and that of Benito Mussolini. In both cases, he argued, the dictatorships emerged from middle-class anxieties over leftist mobilisation, within a context of the crisis of oligarchic parliamentarianism, and led to the construction of ultra-nationalist regimes led by self-proclaimed messianic leaders, and whose principal objective was the violent destruction of the 'enemy within'.⁶⁹ Even so, and despite the fact that the ideologues of the *Unión Patriótica* 'dreamt of moving the regime as close as possible to a totalitarian model', they could not mobilise the population with 'fully-fledged fascist policies', which resulted in a 'vacuum of authority' in the Spanish dictatorship.⁷⁰ Primo gambled on a top-down mobilisation, a 'fascism from above', which in many cases meant politically binding those close to the regime through governmental institutions, and which, occasionally, ended up acting as an 'instrument of demobilisation'.⁷¹

For his part, Gómez-Navarro showed that the Primo de Rivera regime belonged to a broad group of dictatorial regimes established in Europe as a response to processes of socio-economic development linked to late industrialisation, the rise of the workers' movement and the political mobilisation of new groups which took place in the first decades of the twentieth century. In such cases, the socio-economic elites reacted to the threat of change by offering political access to hierarchical and relatively efficient institutions, such as the army and state bureaucracy. In most cases, the construction of these dictatorships was based upon a traditional form of legitimacy in the form of monarchical support.⁷² As far as comparisons with fascism were concerned, Gómez-Navarro argued that it was precisely the military nature of Primo's regime and the ideology and actions of the *Unión Patriótica* which were two key elements helping 'to impede the development fascist or totalitarian movements' in 1920s Spain.⁷³ Despite the fact that the regime showed a 'growing ideological inclination' towards fascism as the dictatorship went on, totalitarian movements did not 'fully develop in Spain until they were freed from the straightjacket of the dictatorship in 1930'.⁷⁴

Comparisons between the Spanish and Italian dictatorships proved very fruitful from the perspective of international relations scholars in the 1980s and 1990s. Already in 1982, Javier Tusell and Ismael Saz had published a study on the political and economic relations between the regimes of Primo and Mussolini.⁷⁵ Shortly afterwards, Susana Sueiro explored the influence of the Italian dictatorship upon the Spanish one, as well as the diplomatic relations between Mussolini and Primo.⁷⁶ Sueiro also dismantled the myth which

presented Primo as a great military strategist who had planned Spain's victory in Morocco single-handedly. Her work revealed the contradictions and weaknesses in the dictatorship's policy towards France, the true colonial power in Morocco.⁷⁷ Meanwhile, Julio Gil Pecharromán offered a competent analysis of the fascist elements of the Spanish dictatorship in *La Europa de las dictaduras: de Mussolini a Primo de Rivera y Salazar* (Europe of Dictatorships: From Mussolini to Primo de Rivera and Salazar). He also included in the book a comparison of the protectionist economic policies of Primo and Mussolini.⁷⁸ Gil Pecharromán argued that Primo's approach had less economic success thanks to the relative lack of competitiveness and limited will to modernise among Spanish industrialists. In short, by the 1990s, comparative history had become a key tool in understanding the Primo dictatorship and the broader European context in which it existed.

Historiography on the dictatorship and the dictator saw a significant boom in the first decade of the twenty-first century. In 2004, for example, Xavier Casals published the first academic biography of Primo de Rivera. Casals bemoaned the fact that Primo had been largely ignored in studies of the early twentieth century, which had focussed more on Alfonso XIII, treating the dictator as a secondary player in the ongoing crisis of the monarchy in the period.⁷⁹ In other cases, the Marqués de Estella had been studied as the father of José Antonio Primo de Rivera, suggesting that his historical relevance was more by virtue of a supposedly more significant figure.⁸⁰ Casals's study adopted a chronological approach and analysed the most important events in the life of the dictator within a changing historical context. For him, far from being a 'parenthesis', the dictatorship was

a crossroads between "the old" (the nineteenth-century system and militarism of the Restoration) and "the new" (economic and social modernisation linked to the participation of the masses in political life), without totally breaking with the liberal system, but without becoming institutionalised in a fascist manner.⁸¹

The dictatorship was also presented as a poisoned legacy. As the title of his book made clear, and in the wake of the theses advanced earlier by Gómez-Navarro, the principal significance of Primo's dictatorship was that he had acted as 'A mirror image of Franco: Francoism had its testing ground and institutional reference point in *primorriverismo*'.⁸²

In 2005, Eduardo González Calleja published what is probably the fullest account of the Primo de Rivera dictatorship. He too rejected the idea of 'parenthesis' and stated that the dictatorship 'provided a model of authoritarianism that was subsequently valued by the winners of the Civil War', while emphasising the 'liquidationist' nature of the Primo regime.⁸³ Primo unleashed 'a completely new political experiment, with a clear aim of liquidating the liberal regime', which reconciled both traditionalist and modernising ideas 'with a view to the creation of a stable social majority that would allow for the

consolidation and perpetuation of the regime'.⁸⁴ At the centre of González Calleja's analysis was the idea that the dictatorship represented an authoritarian model of modernising the country, which not only encompassed the political sphere, but which also produced deep changes in various social and cultural areas. It was a regime which tried to 'arrest the drift towards pluralism and the political rivalries of the undeniable process of socio-economic modernisation that Spain was experiencing in the 1920s, through the imposition of a corporative authoritarian model'.⁸⁵ González Calleja also highlighted the similarities with fascism, such as the establishment of a dictatorship to close down any potential avenue to democratise the liberal system; combatting the workers' movement with coercion and corporativism; and the support that both dictatorships found among the industrial middle classes terrified by the spectre of revolution.⁸⁶ Ultimately, and despite the 'fascistising' drives which the regime's leaders maintained throughout the dictatorship, Primo was not able to adopt a systematic and bureaucratised authoritarianism in the fascist image. Meanwhile, his party, the *Unión Patriótica*, created to hold on to power but not to take it, ended up more like the single parties of the Polish, Hungarian and Portuguese dictatorships than the *Partito Nazionale Fascista*.⁸⁷

Academic interest in the mobilisation of the masses and attempts to homogenise Spanish national identity led to the appearance of a series of studies focussed on the nationalistic nature of the Primo de Rivera dictatorship.⁸⁸ My own book, *Making Spaniards: Primo de Rivera and the Nationalization of the Masses*, explored how the regime used the educational system, the army, the *Unión Patriótica* and the *Somatén* to develop a programme of popular indoctrination without precedent in Spain.⁸⁹ Ultimately this attempt at indoctrination 'from above' was a failure. It led to a 'negative nationalisation', because, the result of the authoritarian, monarchical and Catholic patriotism which the regime sought to impose was the spreading and growing popular support for Catalan and Basque nationalism, and above all, a form of Spanish nationalism which was democratic, republican and secular.⁹⁰ Despite its failure as a nationalising force, the experience of the regime forged an openly antiliberal and 'fascistised' National-Catholicism, which would bequeath its ideas and political personnel to the subsequent Franco regime. The research of Richard Gow, meanwhile, analysed the attitudes of the Spanish population to the ideas of authoritarian citizenship which the dictatorship sought to impose. Gow demonstrated how broad sections of society participated in the culture of denunciations and petitions promoted by the dictatorship, but also how ordinary people appropriated the language of regeneration promoted by the regime to criticise the faults of the regime. As with those historians who saw the dictatorship as a process of authoritarian modernisation, so works on nationalisation and citizenship set out a series of ideas which encouraged the abandonment of a range of assumptions in the theories that emphasised continuity with the Restoration System and minimised the transformative nature of the dictatorship. Very much in line with what we have seen in this present volume, these new studies have strengthened an interpretation of the period as a failed

attempt to construct a new state and a crucial moment in the transformation of Spain into a mass society.⁹¹

In recent years, a series of studies in cultural history have come to reinforce the notion of the Primo dictatorship as essentially a nationalistic regime and have allowed a better understanding of the processes of identity homogenisation. The works of Marta García Carrión and Antonia del Rey on cinema, Sandie Holguin on music, Eric Storm on crafts and exhibitions, Eduardo Hernández Cano on the illustrated press, to name just a few of the leading exponents, have stressed the profound social transformation taking place in Spain through culture in this period.⁹² Analysing the process of the nationalisation of the masses both inside and outside areas of state activity, these works have underlined the importance of nationalistic representations in the regime's imagination, as well as the centrality of Catholicism when it came to building a right-wing symbolic universe in the 1920s. Meanwhile, new studies on cultural diplomacy have highlighted the ascendancy of fascism on the Primo dictatorship, while studies on how foreigners saw Spain and the Spaniards have shown how national stereotypes played a key role in international perceptions of the policies of the dictatorship and the dictator, as we have seen in the present work.⁹³ Within this context of a cultural turn in the historiography of the dictatorship, the question of identity has recently been addressed once again from the perspective of gender studies. The works of Nerea Aresti, María José González Castillejo, Inmaculada Blasco, Teresa María Ortega and Paloma Díaz Fernández on the political participation of women in the institutions of the dictatorship, the mobilisation of working women into workers' spheres and the acquisition of gender consciousness have been complemented by innovative research on masculinities, which have shown how some of the regime's concepts of Spain were reformulated through an imaginary of national virility, with decidedly colonialist and militarist leanings.⁹⁴ This nationalistic virility, as we know, was fully projected in the person of Primo de Rivera himself, although the notorious womanising of the Marqués de Estella would ultimately substantially erode the pictures painted by official propaganda.

Despite the huge historiographical advances in recent decades, the more conservative readings of the dictatorship and the dictator have not disappeared in the twenty-first century. In 2005, for example, Julio Escribano Hernández argued that it was the dictator's 'naïve thinking' and 'emotional character' which led him to act against the 'old politicians [who] had destroyed the nation'.⁹⁵ Primo was 'a patriot of the militia' who 'united the people', and his coup an attempt to revive the Spanish nation.⁹⁶ Escribano presented the dictatorship as a project in which the Marqués de Estella 'drew upon the civic spirit of the nation and sought to put it into action with the help of a group of officers who represented the views of the Army'.⁹⁷ Beyond the author's dubious fondness for coups and military dictatorships, Escribano's work offers a good example of how a collection of clichés created by the regime and later repurposed by the Franco regime have endured in some academic circles until recently.

Not all benign readings of the dictator and his dictatorship involve such a faithful reproduction of the Primo mythology. In 2008, for example, Ramón Tamames published a biography of the Marqués de Estella which was pointedly entitled *Ni Mussolini ni Franco: la dictadura de Primo de Rivera y su tiempo* (Neither Mussolini nor Franco: the Primo de Rivera dictatorship and its Time). Following the lead of Carlos Seco Serrano in the 1960s, Tamames defined Primo as a

truly national genius, who was sufficiently like the popular masses that they could see themselves in him: spontaneous, intuitive, irritable in the face of obstacles, imaginative, intensely patriotic, given to simplistic opinions, to cutting Gordian knots, to solving complex problems with simplistic solutions.⁹⁸

Generally speaking, the book offers a positive image of the dictator, above all for his ‘integrity’ and his successful investment in public works schemes, while it strives to present the regime as a unique political system, as removed from Italian fascism as it was from the later Franco regime.⁹⁹ It is hard to believe that Tamames could be completely unaware of the corrupt conduct and double standards of Primo de Rivera, to say nothing of his criminal actions both before and after he assumed power. The emphasis on the ‘integrity’ of Primo therefore seems somewhat bizarre and there is little here to support the distinctions drawn between Primo’s and other deeply dishonest dictatorships such as those of Mussolini and Franco. This generous reading of Primo’s dictatorship and its contraposition with the Franco regime also has a more pressing political intent for Ramón Tamames. On the last page of his book, Tamames writes that between 1975 and 1978 there was a ‘restorative transition of Spain’, which had ‘finally [involved] the establishment of a republic with a crown’, and as such it was not politically appropriate, as the end of 2007 approached, ‘to restore so-called *historical memory*’, because

it could mean shattering the consensus of 1978, since which point Spanish society has appeared to be maturing definitively [...] And I hope that it continues to do so, despite a small but active minority who do not want it to.¹⁰⁰

This political use of an interpretation of the Primo de Rivera dictatorship to attack movements for the recuperation of historical memory and the civil associations which were demanding justice for the victims of Francoism can be understood within a context of a mobilisation of some conservative historians in response to the so-called Law of Historical Memory, which was tabled by the government of José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero and finally approved by the Spanish Congress of Deputies on 31 October 2007. In May 2006, for example, Carlos Seco Serrano published an article in *ABC* entitled ‘Miguel Primo de Rivera. The dictator who spilled no blood’, in which he offered a highly

sanitised view of the Marqués de Estella and insisted upon his difference to Francisco Franco.¹⁰¹ For this veteran historian of Spain's Royal Academy of History, 'in these times of ours, so eager to recover historical memory – of course, that which is determined by the "memorialists" –' it was necessary to make a clear distinction between the political ideas and human virtues of Primo, who was an 'Andalusian, open, compromising, with a liberal spirit which he never gave up', and Franco, a 'Galician [...] trapped by an antiliberal and anti-democratic obsession; convinced that, as the sword arm of God, that any abuse was permissible'.¹⁰² Once more, and in a perverse and morally questionable way, an idealised representation of Primo de Rivera was counterposed with that of Franco to attack those who sought reparation and justice for those murdered, imprisoned and tortured by the regime of the general from Galicia.

Elsewhere, historical comparisons in the press served to defend the monarchy of Juan Carlos I. On 14 September 2003, for example, one day after the eightieth anniversary of Primo's *coup d'état*, Javier Tusell published an article in *El País* entitled 'The coup that changed history'.¹⁰³ In it, Tusell discusses the role of Alfonso XIII in the moments after the coup of 13 September 1923 and shows how the King, without being an active participant, nonetheless ended up by supporting the dictatorship of the Marqués de Estella.¹⁰⁴ In the final paragraph, Tusell criticises those who compared the situation in 1923 with that which had faced Juan Carlos during the military coup of 23 February 1981, saying 'the conduct of the Head of State, the grandson of Alfonso XIII, was resolute and very different. Without doubt, in this and in many other things, he had learned from history'.¹⁰⁵

Notwithstanding the political use which has been made of readings of the Primo de Rivera dictatorship in parts of the Spanish media in the first years of the twenty-first century, the Marqués de Estella's regime has passed almost unnoticed in the historical memory of most Spaniards in recent decades. Compared to other major events of Spanish history in the twentieth century, the Primo dictatorship has not become a crucial reference point for any political group. Unlike what has happened with the Spanish Second Republic, the transition to democracy, and even, much more recently and linked to the rise of the far-right, with Francoism, practically nobody has claimed the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera as a historical period from which positive lessons might be drawn in the present. As such, Primo's regime has remained on the margins of the Spanish 'memory wars' of recent years, which in some ways means it has been relegated to a secondary status in the historical memory of Spanish society.

This 'political forgetting' of the Primo de Rivera dictatorship in the collective memory has recently offered some exceptions among some far-right groups. In November 2020, for example, the reservist Air Force General Francisco Beca Casanova expressed in a Whatsapp group he shared with other retired officers that Primo de Rivera and Franco had brought 'peace and prosperity to Spain', while suggesting that 26 million Spaniards be shot.¹⁰⁶ Beca was also one of the signatories of a letter sent to King Felipe VI in the same month, in

which more than 70 retired commanders of the armed forces claimed that the coalition government of the PSOE and *Unidas Podemos* – which they defined as ‘social-communist, supported by ETA-lovers and independentists’ – was a threat to ‘national cohesion’.¹⁰⁷ Nonetheless, this use of Primo de Rivera as a political reference point, linked here to Franco, has not been very common among far-right groups, precisely because the dictatorship which arose from the Spanish Civil War has, for obvious reasons, been the preferred period of nostalgia for these extremists in the twenty-first century.

The scarce use of the Primo dictatorship as a political reference point has been accompanied by a certain disinterest in media, educational and cultural representations of the regime in recent decades. The number of documentaries, radio and television programmes, magazine features and newspaper articles dedicated to Primo’s dictatorship pales in comparison to the enormous journalistic outpouring about any other Spanish regime in the twentieth century, including that of the Restoration Monarchy. The popular documentary series *Memoria de España* (Memory of Spain), for example, produced by Radio Televisión Española in 2004, dedicated just 12 minutes to the Primo dictatorship, while the period of the reign of Alfonso XIII from 1902 to 1923 had its own chapter lasting more than one hour. The series, developed with the aim of creating a historical narrative of Spanish national continuity from prehistory until the twenty-first century, and overseen by the historian Fernando García de Cortázar, offered a somewhat generous reading of the Primo years and praised the ‘very positive influence on the Spanish economy’ that the dictatorship’s public works schemes had, even though it concluded that the attempts to institutionalise the regime were ultimately ‘a complete political failure’.¹⁰⁸

On the other hand, in recent years television programmes on far-right media platforms have revived themes from the propaganda of the Primo regime. In the case of *Tiempos modernos* (Modern Times), for example, a history programme on *El Toro TV*, part of the far-right *Intereconomía* media group, the episode dedicated to Primo de Rivera spoke of a coup which enjoyed the support ‘of most social and political groups in Spain’, and a dictator who promoted big infrastructure projects, who was a scourge of ‘oligarchs’, the ‘inventor of social security’ and creator of a ‘social regime’ comparable to ‘Mussolini’s Italy’.¹⁰⁹ ‘Objectively, the balance [of the Primo de Rivera government] is very favourable’, commented the presenter of the show, José Javier Esparza, while his invited guest, the Professor at the Universidad de San Pablo CEU and militant Falangist, Luis Togores, agreed in the assessment, stating that ‘the dictatorship, at the end of the day, was on balance positive’. Even though it is true that such television programmes have a very limited audience, this type of portrait of the dictatorship demonstrates the persistence of the regime’s mythology in the more right-wing parts of the Spanish media.

In the field of journalism and the biggest ‘best sellers’ in Spanish history, the representation of the dictatorship has largely reproduced conservative mythology about Primo de Rivera. Arturo Pérez Reverte, for example, in his widely selling *Una historia de España* (A History of Spain), described ‘a somewhat

brutal military man, paternalist and with good intentions. But the job proved too big for him, and nor was a dictatorship the answer.¹¹⁰ Similarly, neither the Marqués de Estella 'nor Alfonso XIII were up to the challenge of the global chaos of the 1920s'.¹¹¹ The rehashing of old topics did not end there. Pérez Reverte added that Primo was

a well-intentioned man, with the wrong methods and bad luck. Above all, he was not a politician. His programme was based on the lack of a programme, except to maintain public order and the unity of Spain, which was heading to hell thanks to nationalist pressure, particularly from Catalonia.¹¹²

Meanwhile, Primo 'did not lack common sense', because he tried 'to create Spanish citizens with patriotic sentiments, to educate them in schools fit-for-purpose, and to create a modern country for them, in line with the times'.¹¹³ This historian's account indicates a Spanish patriotism in which the processes of nationalising the masses is seen as 'common sense' and part of the modernisation of the country, while the fact that this indoctrination process was based on Catholic, monarchist and anti-democratic principles is skirted over. Meanwhile, it exaggerates the threat posed to the unity of Spain by regional nationalisms – the territorial integrity of the country was not 'heading to hell' in 1923 – while ignoring the repression of opponents, the murder of trades unionists and the use of chemical weapons against civilian targets. Occasionally, it is worth considering what is not said as much as what is said. In the case of Pérez Reverte, the representation of Primo and his dictatorship is particularly significant, given that *Una historia de España* is composed of articles that he published in his column in *XL Semanal*, one of the most widely read Sunday supplements in Spain.

On other occasions, references to Miguel Primo de Rivera and his dictatorship in the conservative press have had more obvious political aims. On 15 August 2019, for example, the historian – and future advisor to the right-wing Madrid President, Isabel Díaz Ayuso – Jorge Vilches, published an article in the daily newspaper *La Razón* entitled 'Primo de Rivera, author of votes for women'. In the article, he explained that the 'award' of votes for women was the work of Primo de Rivera and not the Second Republic, as is often thought. Vilches stated that the dictatorship 'established' in the Municipal Statute of 1924 the 'political vote for single adult women' and that 'the municipal elections of 1925 allowed them to become councillors' in various cities and towns throughout Spain, even though he was forced to acknowledge that 'all of these posts were by governmental appointment, given that the municipal elections were not held'. The article was also somewhat misleading when it stated that in the plebiscite of 1926 'women voted, to the tune of 40% of those who were eligible'. As is well known, nobody voted in the 1926 plebiscite. The event was a farse in which men and women signed their support for the dictatorship at polling stations set up by the UP and members of the government without

any form of oversight and without the option of signing in opposition to the Primo regime. In any case, this type of journalistic article is not intended to create a better understanding of what happened during the Primo de Rivera dictatorship but rather must be understood within the context of a conservative campaign in the last decade which has sought, through various means, to downplay the democratic achievements of the Second Republic.

In the field of fictional series, the dictatorship has been represented in few (albeit very successful) productions. *La Señora*, for example, a series broadcast on Radio Televisión Española from 2008 to 2010, obtained very impressive audience figures telling the story of a love triangle between youngsters from different social classes in 1920s Spain.¹¹⁴ With the Primo de Rivera dictatorship as the backdrop for most of its episodes, *La Señora* delved into the fight for women's emancipation and social conflicts in a portrait of the period in which, of course, fictional aspects took precedence over historical reality, and the class struggle was presented 'as a dramatic device to underscore the impossibility of a relationship between the two protagonists'.¹¹⁵

Another undoubtedly successful television series and one with a long run was *El secreto de Puente Viejo* (The Secret of Puente Viejo). It aired between 2011 and 2020 and included a representation of the period of the Primo dictatorship. Broadcast on *Antena 3*, this period soap opera began in the Spain of 1885 and ended, 2324 episodes later, in 1931. The programme, which achieved record audiences, formed part of what has been termed the 'hereditary revival', with a format of historical representation of the Restoration period which was reminiscent of classic Spanish television series such as *Fortunata y Jacinta*.¹¹⁶ By all accounts, the series was the first fictional television programme in which General Primo de Rivera appeared as a character in the plot. In episode 1452, the general arrives at the fictitious town of Puente Viejo while travelling to Italy on his visit with Alfonso XIII, and some locals ask him to intercede in the case of a *delegado gubernativo*, named Cristóbal Garrigues, who had tried to condemn one of the protagonists in the series to death 'for the good of Spain' and who had manufactured incriminatory evidence against him.¹¹⁷ The dictator says that he is not going to do anything because it cannot be 'allowed the outrages committed by a man so close to the government to become public'.¹¹⁸ In order to justify his inaction and exacerbate the image of running a profoundly corrupt regime, the dictator adds 'this man has more benefactors than I myself do'.¹¹⁹ As with *La Señora*, clearly, *El Secreto de Puente Viejo* prioritises fiction over its historical representation, but once again the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera is portrayed as a time of great injustices, where social influence depends on the benefactors one has and where the powerful stood above the law.

Las chicas del cable (The Cable Girls), a production of Netflix España, also boasted high viewing figures in its five seasons between 2017 and 2020. In its first three seasons, the series told the story of a group of female telephone operators in Madrid during the last years of the Primo dictatorship. As with *La Señora*, so here the fight for women's emancipation and social conflict both

play a crucial role in the story. Like the other series just mentioned, the Netflix production does not intend to offer a reflection of the dictatorship but rather sought for the historical context to be plausible rather than true. That is to say, viewers would consider the representations shown of the past as credible, based upon their prior knowledge of the period.¹²⁰ Meanwhile, much like *La Señora*, class conflicts and the marginalisation of women in political life and in the domestic sphere are presented in *Las chicas de cable* through the filter of universal melodramatic devices, which made them powerful when it came to appealing to a wider audience, but also less specific to the historical moment of the Primo dictatorship.¹²¹ In any case, with its emphasis on sexism, gender violence, the persecution of homosexuality, and the political fractures and contradictions under the dictatorship, *La Señora*, *El secreto de Puente Viejo*, and above all *Las chicas de cable*, significantly contributed to questioning the idealised image of the happy 1920s as a time of political order, social stability and economic progress.¹²²

If the production of a series such as *Las chicas de cable* can be viewed within an international context of increasing feminist demands at the end of the 2010s and the start of the 2020s, the memory of the Primo dictatorship has also been affected by the wave of antiracist and anti-colonialist movements in recent years. The reactivation of the Black Lives Matter movement, after the brutal killing of George Floyd, a person of colour, at the hands of the US police, led to massive protests against racism throughout the world in the spring and summer of 2020. In some cases, the protestors attacked statues dedicated to people linked to European imperialism or considered as symbols of white supremacy. On 6 June 2020, for example, the statue of the slave trader Edward Colston was sprayed with red paint, torn from its pedestal and thrown into the river at the British port of Bristol, while various social groups demanded the removal of monuments dedicated to anyone who had contributed to the expansion and maintenance of racism under the British Empire.

Just over two weeks later, on 23 June 2020, leftist groups demanded that the council of Jerez de la Frontera remove the statue dedicated to Miguel Primo de Rivera in the Plaza de Arenal and began a petition on Change.org to gather signatures to that end. Organised by a local resident, Francisco Cuevas Noa, a member of the CNT (the headquarters of which was in the Plaza de Arenal) the petition, explained that the monument honouring Primo should be removed because its 'militarist, authoritarian and colonialist values resoundingly collide with the democratic values and human rights as we understand them in 2020'.¹²³ The petition also explained that during Primo's dictatorship 'relations were established with Fascist Italy, opponents were executed using the *garrote*, intellectuals, students and militant workers were persecuted', and it issued a reminder that during the war in Morocco, 'the dictator had no problem using chemical weapons, committing an authentic genocide, launching phosgene, diphosgene, chloropicrin and mustard gas into market places and rivers in the Rif region [...] All of this with the support of the Monarchy'.¹²⁴

Demands for the removal of the statue of Primo de Rivera had a certain history in Jerez. Already in 2004, social and cultural associations of the city asked the council to remove the statue for being ‘a symbol of the most violent and outdated fanaticism and warmongering’, but the council ignored the demand.¹²⁵ Later, in 2015, various groups asked for the Law of Historical Memory be applied and the monument be closed down, not only because it ‘commemorates the colonialist warmongering of the generals at that time’, but also because the officers from the Moroccan wars who appeared at the base of the statue with Primo de Rivera (José Sanjurjo, Ignasi Despujol, Emilio Fernández Pérez and Leopoldo Saro) later took part in the military coup of July 1936.¹²⁶ Once again in 2015, the council ignored the petition, but in the context of international protests against racism and colonialism in 2020 things were now different. After the new request to the council and the setting-up of the petition on Change.org in June 2020, the green, feminist and anti-fascist group *Abrir Brecha Jerez* placed a series of banners around the monument which denounced the crimes of the Primo regime and demanded the removal of the dictator’s statue by the end of July.¹²⁷ When the town awoke on the morning of 12 August 2020, the statue was partially covered in red paint.¹²⁸ The PSOE-led city council was under pressure to condemn those who had vandalised the statue, who was said to be looking ‘to upset the coexistence’ and expressed their hope that the authors of the attack would be arrested quickly.¹²⁹ Ramón Aumesquet, at that time the coordinator for the Jerez branch of the far-right *Vox* party, explained that he felt it was necessary:

To remind these ignorant progressives that, according to our History, thanks to Primo de Rivera large parts of Spain of were reforested, the battle of Alhucemas was won against the Moroccans, the modernisation of the road network was achieved with the creation of more than 7000 kilometres, and the railway was extended throughout the whole national territory, schooling was promoted [...] It was a period of economic expansion which saw the creation of the National Spanish Telephone Company and companies such as Campsa.¹³⁰

Unsurprisingly, the history ‘lesson’ by the Vox leader was an exact replica of the discourse around Primo de Rivera promoted by the Spanish far-right media in the twenty-first century, namely, a victorious officer and supplier of public works, whose dictatorship was justified by reference to economic growth (Figure 8.2).

Far from easing controversy over the statue, the debate ended up in the Jerez city council. At the insistence of the Platform for Democratic Memory of Jerez, the socialist council decided to commission a technical and legal report on the possibility of removing the statue. In November 2020, the cabinet of the city council voted against moving the statue of the dictator, pointing to the fact that the report of the council’s own experts argued that, since the monument had been inaugurated in 1929, it fell outside the chronological



Figure 8.2 Statue of Primo de Rivera in Jerez. On 12 August 2020, the pedestal was covered in red paint by anti-colonial and anti-racist protesters who demanded the removal of the monument. Credit: eMIRA.es.

remit established by the Andalucían Law of Historical Memory, which covered the period from the proclamation of the Second Republic on 14 April 1931 until the coming into force of the Andalucían Statute of Autonomy on 11 January 1982.¹³¹ Not surprisingly, the memory groups felt cheated by what they regarded as a trick ‘against the town of Jerez with technical subterfuges and legal feints around this depressing and anti-democratic statue’, as well as a decision that was ‘politically incomprehensible, unacceptable and contrary to the most basic democratic demands’.¹³²

In February 1930, when Primo de Rivera sat down to write his memoirs of the dictatorship in Paris, the general began a battle over the memory of his regime which continued to rage almost a century later. The continuation of this battle is hardly surprising. Francisco Villanueva’s question in that same year of 1930 – ‘What happened here?’ – has had very different responses depending on the historical moment in which it has been asked. In the 1930s, criticism of the regime from liberals and progressives was in the ascendancy, even if public space was shared with a minority of Primo nostalgists who perpetuated the mythology they themselves had created. In the first years of the Franco dictatorship, those same collaborators of Primo were entrusted with presenting the Marqués de Estella as a precursor of fascism. As it mutated, however, the Franco regime first moved to present the figure of Primo de Rivera as a glorious military officer, and later as the good-natured, happy, paternalist dictator who was beloved by the people. In the last years of Franco’s dictatorship there also appeared the first academic studies of Primo and his dictatorship with Marxist, liberal and conservative schools of thought. Such academic studies of the Primo dictatorship grew sharply in number from the end of the 1970s until the mid-90s, a period in

which we find the classic studies of Javier Tusell, Genoveva García, Shlomo Ben-Ami, María Teresa González Calbet and José Luis Gómez-Navarro. In the twenty-first century, academic historiography on the Primo de Rivera dictatorship has undergone a substantial renewal thanks to the contribution of studies inspired by social, cultural and gender history.

Even so, this historiographical modernisation has not been reflected directly in the collective memory of the dictatorship. On the one hand, conservative historiography, which in the twentieth century praised the military successes and economic achievements of the dictator, has kept its narrative very much present through various media in the last two decades, in an attempt to defend the constitutional monarchy, preserve the myth of the exemplary transition to democracy in the second half of the 1970s and to attack memory movements. On the other hand, movements for the recovery of historical memory have constructed a narrative which has stressed the direct links between Primo and Italian Fascism, Francoism and the war crimes committed in the Rif. In general terms, this reading of the dictator has found less traction in the media in the twenty-first century, where benign conservative interpretations have continued to predominate. Even so, the international revival of feminist and anti-racist movements has prompted a re-reading of the Primo de Rivera dictatorship in various areas of popular culture, particularly in television series, which cast serious doubt on the more conservative interpretations of years which were so critical in the history of Spain. As usual, it is the historical context of the present which offers the key to our interpretation of the past.

As we have seen throughout this book, Miguel Primo de Rivera was a complex and contradictory character. As was the case with many other dictators in interwar Europe, the life of the Marqués de Estella did not lend itself to a linear reading and was full of incoherencies. From a position of social privilege and with the contacts provided by his family environment, Primo pursued an ambitious military career which was at the same time political. His actions were conditioned by deeply nationalistic beliefs which would often allow him to present his own interest as something that was for the good of the country. The salvation, regeneration and indoctrination of Spaniards were not merely abstract concepts, but goals for a national redemption in which Primo genuinely believed, and which the dictator thought would overcome the social conflicts between classes. The 'national revolution' that the dictator promised would be achieved with rhetoric and innovative and modernising populist policies, which sought to integrate the various classes into a discursive and emotional whole, while maintaining the privileges of the country's socio-economic elites. This far-right populism was embodied in a person who was profoundly demagogic, whose lies, double standards and a lack of scruples were key parts of his political *modus operandi*. Primo was an intelligent, affable man with a great ability to read the historical and political moment in which he lived, prepared to take risks in life as well as in gambling, and able to show compassion to his enemies. At the same time, Primo was a vengeful, capricious and corrupt general, an autocrat, with a profound contempt for the law, prepared

to order the murder of political enemies and decree the bombing of civilians with chemical weapons.

As Primo de Rivera himself well understood, his dictatorship was the result of the historical context of interwar Europe. The use of nationalism as a tool of social integration aimed at overcoming social conflict, the attack upon liberal elites, the repression of the workers' movement and democratic ideas, and the adoption of populist discourses, were all common features of the counter-revolutionary dictatorships in Spain, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Bulgaria, Greece and Yugoslavia in the 1920s. One hundred years after Primo's *coup d'état*, Europe is witnessing a new rise of the far-right. History does not repeat itself, either as farce or tragedy, and the world in which we live is very different from that time. But the experience of interwar Europe should serve as a warning against those nationalists who demonise enemies of the nation, show contempt for democracy and social justice and offer simple solutions to complex problems.

Notes

- 1 *La Vanguardia*, 11 February 1930.
- 2 *La Vanguardia*, 11 February 1930.
- 3 The articles would later be published in Miguel Primo de Rivera, *La obra de la dictadura. Sus cuatro últimos artículos* (Madrid: Sáez Hermanos, 1930).
- 4 The figure for the fee and the clause can be seen in a letter from Primo de Rivera to his faithful propagandist Manuel Delgado Barreto, the director of *La Nación* in Madrid, in Ana de Sagra, *Miguel Primo de Rivera: el hombre, el soldado y el político* (Jerez de la Frontera: Ayuntamiento de Jerez de la Frontera, 1973), pp. 370–371.
- 5 Julián Cortés Cavanillas, *La dictadura y el dictador: rasgos históricos, políticos y psicológicos* (Madrid: Talleres Tipográficos Velasco, 1929), pp. 303–310. For the quotation, see p. 310.
- 6 Julián Cortés Cavanillas, *La dictadura y el dictador: rasgos históricos, políticos y psicológicos* (Madrid: Talleres Tipográficos Velasco, 1929), p. 70.
- 7 Julián Cortés Cavanillas, *La dictadura y el dictador: rasgos históricos, políticos y psicológicos* (Madrid: Talleres Tipográficos Velasco, 1929), p. 71.
- 8 Miguel Gandarias, *Perfiles síquicos del dictador y bosquejo razonado de su obra* (Madrid: Escuelas Profesionales Salesianas, 1929), pp. 8–9.
- 9 See, for example, Emilio Rodríguez Tarduchy, *Psicología del dictador y caracteres más salientes morales, sociales y políticos de la dictadura española* (Madrid: Junta de Propaganda y Ciudadana, 1929), pp. 150–151; José Pemartín Sanjuán, *Los valores históricos en la dictadura española* (Madrid: Arte y Ciencia, 1928), p. 50; Julián Cortés Cavanillas, *La dictadura y el dictador: rasgos históricos, políticos y psicológicos* (Madrid: Talleres Tipográficos Velasco, 1929), pp. 316–317.
- 10 For Primo's hot temper, see Emilio Rodríguez Tarduchy, *Psicología del dictador y caracteres más salientes, morales, sociales y políticos. de la dictadura española* (Madrid: Imp. Artística Sáez Hermanos, 1929), pp. 74–77. For his 'intuitiveness', see José Pemartín Sanjuán, *Los valores históricos en la dictadura española* (Madrid: Arte y Ciencia, 1928), pp. 596–561.
- 11 Primo's remarks at the University of Salamanca during the award of his honorary doctorate are in Julián Cortés Cavanillas, *La dictadura y el dictador: rasgos históricos, políticos y psicológicos* (Madrid: Talleres Tipográficos Velasco, 1929), pp. 326–327.

- 12 Cited in Julián Cortés Cavanillas, *La dictadura y el dictador: rasgos históricos, políticos y psicológicos* (Madrid: Talleres Tipográficos Velasco, 1929), p. 312.
- 13 *La Nación*, 27 November 1926.
- 14 Alejandro Quiroga Fernández de Soto, 'Cirujano de hierro. La construcción carismática de Primo de Rivera', *Ayer*, 91 (2013), pp. 155–156.
- 15 Numerous reports on the creation of public schools can be found in AHN, Presidencia del Gobierno, legajo 358.
- 16 *La Nación*, 30 September 1929.
- 17 *La Nación*, 30 September 1929.
- 18 José Montagut Roca, *Los errores de la Dictadura y réplica al libro de Cambó* (Barcelona: EPCSA, 1930).
- 19 Ignacio Fernández de Henestrosa y Mioño, *El Marqués de Estella, soldado, dictador, hombre de estado* (Madrid: Antonio Marzo, 1930), p. 7.
- 20 General X, 'Marruecos 1893–1925', in Gabas Giner (ed.), *Yunque y martillo* (Madrid: Caro Raggio), pp. 11–30. As noted in Chapter 1, it is clear that the author of the chapter was Primo de Rivera himself. Despite the title, the events narrated conclude in 1911.
- 21 The quotation is from an interview which José Antonio gave to *Heraldo de Madrid* on 14 March 1930, and can be found in Joan Maria Thomàs, *José Antonio. Realidad y mito* (Barcelona: Debate, 2017), p. 94. A similar tone of praise for his father, alongside a resentful attack on the intellectuals who opposed the dictator, is José Antonio's 'Prólogo', in Marqués de la Vega de Anso (ed.), *La dictadura de Primo de Rivera juzgado en el extranjero: opiniones de hombres de estado, diplomáticos, técnicos, periodistas, etc.* (Madrid: Saez Hermanos, 1931), pp. v–x.
- 22 Francisco Villanueva, *¿Qué ha pasado aquí?* (Madrid: Javier Morata, 1930).
- 23 Francisco Villanueva, *La dictadura militar: II tomo de "Obstáculos tradicionales". Crónica documentada de la oposición y la represión bajo el Directorio, 1923–1926* (Madrid: Javier Morata, 1930); Quintiliano Saldaña García-Rubio, *Al servicio de la justicia. La orgía áurea de la dictadura* (Madrid: Javier Morata, 1930); Gabriel Maura Gamazo (Duque de Maura), *España bajo la dictadura. Siete años sin ley* (Madrid: El Sol, 1930–1933); Rafael Salazar Alonso, *La justicia bajo la dictadura* (Madrid: Zeus, 1930).
- 24 Armiñan, *Epistolario*, p. 35.
- 25 Melchor Fernández Almagro, *Historia del reinado de Don Alfonso XIII* (Barcelona: Montaner y Simón, 1934), p. 488.
- 26 Raúl Morodo, 'Una revision de la Dictadura: Acción Española', *Cuadernos Económicos del ICE*, 10 (1979), pp. 92–108.
- 27 José Pemartín, 'Vida cultural', *Acción Española*, 43 (1933), p. 729.
- 28 José Pemartín, *Qué es 'lo nuevo'. Consideraciones sobre el momento español presente* (Santander: Cultura Española, 1938), p. 25. The first edition of the book was published in 1937 in Seville by the Álvarez Zambrano printers.
- 29 César González Ruano, *Miguel Primo de Rivera. La vida heroica y romántica de un general español* (Madrid: Nuestra Raza, 1935), p. 174.
- 30 Eduard Aunós Pérez, *El general Primo de Rivera, soldado y gobernante* (Madrid: Alhambra, 1944), pp. 12–20.
- 31 Eduard Aunós Pérez, *El general Primo de Rivera, soldado y gobernante* (Madrid: Alhambra, 1944), pp. 238–240.
- 32 Rosa Cal Martínez, 'La censura de prensa y el sepelio de Primo de Rivera', *Historia y Comunicación Social*, (5) (2000), pp. 168, 170.
- 33 'Decree awarding the title of Captain-General of the Army to the most excellent Lt-General, deceased, don Miguel Primo de Rivera y Orbaneja', 22 March 1947, in Aurelio Guaita Martorell, 'Capitanes y capitanías generales', *Revista de Administración Pública*, 111 (1986), fn. 5.

- 34 *La Vanguardia*, 28 March 1947, 29 March 1947, 30 March 1947.
- 35 The quotation is in *La Vanguardia*, 30 March 1947.
- 36 *La Vanguardia*, 1 April 1947.
- 37 Miguel Maura, *Así cayó Alfonso XIII. De una dictadura a otra* (Madrid: Marcial Pons, 2007), pp. 119–122. The book was first published in 1962, and according to Joaquín Romero Maura, ‘was published in Mexico, but in truth was printed in the Barcelona offices of Ediciones Ariel’. See Joaquín Romero Maura, ‘Sobre esta edición’, in Miguel Maura (ed.), *Así cayó Alfonso XIII, De una dictadura a otra* (Madrid: Marcial Pons, 2007), p. 15.
- 38 Miguel Maura, *Así cayó Alfonso XIII, De una dictadura a otra* (Madrid: Marcial Pons, 2007), pp. 121–122.
- 39 Miguel Maura, *Así cayó Alfonso XIII, De una dictadura a otra* (Madrid: Marcial Pons, 2007), p. 119.
- 40 Miguel Maura, *Así cayó Alfonso XIII, De una dictadura a otra* (Madrid: Marcial Pons, 2007), p. 124.
- 41 Miguel Maura, *Así cayó Alfonso XIII, De una dictadura a otra* (Madrid: Marcial Pons, 2007), p. 125.
- 42 José Manuel Cuenca Toribio, ‘Miguel Primo de Rivera a escala histórica’, *Historia y Vida*, 22 (January 1970), pp. 50–58. For the quotation, see p. 50.
- 43 José Manuel Cuenca Toribio, ‘Miguel Primo de Rivera a escala histórica’, *Historia y Vida*, 22 (January 1970), p. 54.
- 44 José Manuel Cuenca Toribio, ‘Miguel Primo de Rivera a escala histórica’, *Historia y Vida*, 22 (January 1970), p. 54.
- 45 José Manuel Cuenca Toribio, ‘Miguel Primo de Rivera a escala histórica’, *Historia y Vida*, 22 (January 1970), p. 54.
- 46 Rafael Salazar, ‘Perfil humano de Primo de Rivera’, *Historia y Vida*, 22 (January 1970), pp. 58–65.
- 47 A similar approach based upon family anecdotes was used by Rocío Primo de Rivera in her book, *Los Primo de Rivera* (Madrid: Esfera de Libros, 2005). The book has little academic merit. Rocío Primo de Rivera presents her book ‘like a film based upon real events’ where no distinction is made between ‘reality and fiction’, and in which the author considers her genetic link to the subjects as a window for exploring the ‘souls’ of her ancestors (pp. 16–18).
- 48 Her true name was Ana María de Azpillaga y Yarza. See *Tradición Viva*, 8 October 2018, <https://www.tradicionviva.es/2018/10/08/fallece-la-historiadora-ana-de-sagrera/>.
- 49 Ana de Sagrera, *Miguel Primo de Rivera: el hombre, el soldado y el político* (Jerez de la Frontera: Ayuntamiento de Jerez de la Frontera, 1973), p. iii.
- 50 Ana de Sagrera, *Miguel Primo de Rivera: el hombre, el soldado y el político* (Jerez de la Frontera: Ayuntamiento de Jerez de la Frontera, 1973), p. iii.
- 51 Ana de Sagrera, *Miguel Primo de Rivera: el hombre, el soldado y el político* (Jerez de la Frontera: Ayuntamiento de Jerez de la Frontera, 1973), p. 3.
- 52 Raúl Morodo Leoncio, ‘El 18 de Brumario español: la dictadura de Primo de Rivera’, *Triunfo*, 572 (15 September 1973), pp. 22–27; Manuel Pastor, *Los orígenes del fascismo en España* (Madrid: Túcar, 1975); Manuel Tuñón de Lara, ‘En torno a la Dictadura de Primo de Rivera’, *Cuadernos Económicos del ICE*, 10 (1978), pp. 9–35; Colectivo de Historia, ‘La Dictadura de Primo de Rivera y bloque de poder en España’, *Cuadernos Económicos de ICE*, 6 (1978), pp. 178–216. For a thorough analysis of the Marxist historiography on the regime, see Ignacio Olábarri Gortázar, ‘Principales interpretaciones de la Dictadura de Primo de Rivera (1923–1930)’, *Hispania*, 55:189 (1995), pp. 315–525.
- 53 Raúl Morodo Leoncio, ‘El 18 de Brumario español: la dictadura de Primo de Rivera’, *Triunfo*, 572 (15 September 1973), pp. 22–27; Raúl Morodo Leoncio, ‘La proyección constitucional de la Dictadura: la Asamblea Nacional Consultativa

- (I)', *Boletín Informativo de Ciencia Política*, 13–14 (August–December 1973), pp. 83–91.
- 54 Manuel Pastor, *Los orígenes del fascismo en España* (Madrid: Túcar, 1975), p. 14. For his definition of the dictatorship as 'preventative Bonapartism', see Manuel Pastor, 'Notas para una interpretación de la Dictadura primorriverista', *Revista de Estudios Políticos, Nueva Época*, 6 (1978), pp. 137–143.
- 55 Manuel Tuñón de Lara, 'En torno a la Dictadura', *Cuadernos Económicos del ICE*, 10 (1978), pp. 10–11.
- 56 Colectivo de Historia, 'La Dictadura de Primo de Rivera', *Cuadernos Económicos de ICE*, 6 (1978), pp. 178–179.
- 57 Javier Tusell Gómez, *La crisis del caciquismo andaluz (1923–1931)* (Madrid: Cupsa, 1977); Javier Tusell Gómez & Genoveva García Queipo de Llano, 'La Dictadura de Primo de Rivera como régimen político. Un intento de interpretación', *Cuadernos Económicos de ICE*, 10 (1979), pp. 38–63. For an updated version of the same thesis, see Carlos Seco Serrano & Javier Tusell Gómez, 'La España de Alfonso XIII. El Estado y la política (1902–1931). Vol II: Del plano inclinado hacia la Dictadura al final de la Monarquía, 1922–1931', in José María Jover Zamora (ed.), *Historia de España de Menéndez Pidal* (Madrid: Espasa Calpe, 1995), vol. XXXVIII, pp. 11–51.
- 58 For the notion of 'parenthesis', see Javier Tusell Gómez, *La crisis del caciquismo andaluz (1923–1931)* (Madrid: Cupsa, 1977), p. 15; Javier Tusell Gómez & Genoveva García Queipo de Llano, 'La Dictadura de Primo de Rivera como régimen político. Un intento de interpretación', *Cuadernos Económicos de ICE*, 10 (1979), p. 56. The quotation is from Javier Tusell Gómez & Genoveva García Queipo de Llano, 'La Dictadura de Primo de Rivera como régimen político. Un intento de interpretación', *Cuadernos Económicos de ICE*, 10 (1979), p. 48.
- 59 Javier Tusell Gómez, *La crisis del caciquismo andaluz (1923–1931)* (Madrid: Cupsa, 1977), pp. 92–93, 468; Javier Tusell Gómez & Genoveva García Queipo de Llano, 'La Dictadura de Primo de Rivera como régimen político. Un intento de interpretación', *Cuadernos Económicos de ICE*, 10 (1979), pp. 49, 56.
- 60 Eduardo Aunós, *Calvo Sotelo y la política de su tiempo* (Madrid: Españolas-Diana, 1941), pp. 52–53.
- 61 Javier Tusell Gómez, *La crisis del caciquismo andaluz (1923–1931)* (Madrid: Cupsa, 1977), pp. 15, 24–26.
- 62 Shlomo Ben-Ami, *La dictadura de Primo de Rivera, 1923–1930* (Barcelona: Planeta, 1983), p. 11. The idea that Primo's dictatorship represented a 'revolution from above', albeit more discursive than real, can also be found in James Hugh Rial, *Revolution from above: The Primo de Rivera Dictatorship in Spain, 1923–1930* (London: Associated University Press, 1986).
- 63 Ben-Ami's critique of caricature-like depictions of Primo had already been mooted in his earlier works at the end of the 1970s. See, for example, Shlomo Ben-Ami, 'The Dictatorship of Primo de Rivera: A Political Reassessment', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 12:1 (1977), pp. 65–84. The quotations are from p. 65. A similar criticism was offered in Shlomo Ben-Ami, *La dictadura de Primo de Rivera, 1923–1930* (Barcelona: Planeta, 1983), pp. 9–10.
- 64 Shlomo Ben-Ami, *La dictadura de Primo de Rivera, 1923–1930* (Barcelona: Planeta, 1983), p. 94.
- 65 María Teresa González Calbet, *La Dictadura de Primo de Rivera* (Madrid: El Arquero, 1987), p. 11.
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