Chapter 25
The Second Spanish Republic

[630] The Republican committee that took over the government of Spain on April 14, 1931, was a largely self-appointed group of leaders of several small parties that had been formed within the past two or three years. The prime minister of the new regime, Alcalá Zamora, was a former monarchist politician, but he had no organized party support. There were four principal groups of Republicans: the Republican Action party, the Radical Socialists, the left Catalanists (Esquerra) and left Galicianists (ORGA), and the Radical Republicans. Only the latter, led by Alejandro Lerroux, had an "historic" party with broader national roots. Yet even they were largely reorganized on a new basis in 1931, and despite their name, soon proved themselves to be the only genuinely moderate group among the major Republican organizations. The discontinuity between the personnel and party structure of the new regime, when compared with that of the pre-1923 system, was extreme. Unlike those of France, Germany, and Italy after 1945, representative institutions in Spain were rebuilt largely with new and inexperienced elements. Nevertheless, it is quite clear that in the first months the new regime had either the support or at least the benevolent acquiescence of the great majority of the politically conscious. Hence despite the inexperience and lack of political roots of most of the new leaders and groups, they had an [631] excellent opportunity to lay the basis for a widely popular and progressive new regime.

That this did not happen was in large measure due to the doctrinaire policies and political incompetence of the dominant members of the governing coalition--the Republican left (1) and the Socialists. Their aim was not merely reform or establishment of a new democratic consensus, but rather paying off old scores and building a sectarian leftist regime. The coalition had four goals: a) reform and reduction of the army; b) separation of church and state and sharp restriction of Catholic rights as well as privileges; c) reform of the unitary structure of the Spanish state to permit Catalan regional autonomy; and d) broad social and economic reforms, though the latter remained vague in the planning of all groups save the Socialists. At first the only one of these goals inherently incompatible with the building of a strong consensual democratic regime was the doctrinaire anti-Catholic bent of the left coalition. The tenor of the new government was revealed within less than a month, on May 11, 1931, when mobs led by anarchists (and some Radical Socialists) sacked monarchist headquarters in Madrid and then proceeded to set fire or otherwise wreck more than a dozen churches in the capital. Similar arson and vandalism occurred in a score of other cities in southern and eastern Spain, in most cases with the acquiescence and in several cases with the assistance of the official Republican authorities. The quemada de conventos (burning of convents) set the tone for relations between the Republican left and Spanish Catholicism. The climax came with the passage of the Republican constitution in the autumn of 1931. The new charter separated church and state, prohibited public religious processions, and outlawed much of the work of Catholic orders, with the intention of destroying Catholic education in Spain.

Elections for a constituent Cortes were held in June 1931 and were swept by the left and liberal groups. The two largest parties were the Socialists and the Radicals, followed by the Radical Socialists. Conservative elements had still not recovered from the collapse of the monarchy and were not well organized to contest the elections.
The reform of the army was carried on by the new defense minister, Manuel Azaña, who emerged as the leader of the Republican left. Azaña was by profession a bureaucrat in the judicial registry office and a writer of some note who had produced an eclectic corpus of work, including imaginative literature, translations, and political and social criticism. He was a doctrinaire anticlerical radical of outstanding rhetorical skill and literary style, splenetic in manner, forceful and direct in his political leadership. He was determined to break the autonomy of the Spanish army, and set about accomplishing this by a series of army reforms stretching over a year. The officer corps was cut 50 percent by allowing all who desired to retire at full pay. The size of the army was reduced, some sections reorganized, and several kinds of privileges and special promotions abolished. Moreover, Azaña, whose public manner was frequently biting and sarcastic, rarely wasted an opportunity to impress upon army officers that the military were completely at the disposal of the government and would never again be in a position to protect their institutional prerogatives or exercise political initiative. Azaña's reforms amounted to something less than a total restructuring of the army, but they shook up the Spanish military, and the arbitrary, insulting manner of the defense minister aroused the permanent hostility of many officers. The army reforms, together with Azaña's vigorous prosecution of anticlerical legislation, raised him to the premiership in October 1931. When the writing of the Republican constitution was completed in December, Azaña's predecessor as prime minister, the Catholic moderate Alcalá Zamora, was elected to the presidency of the Republic.

By and large the Republican constitution was a sound document, providing for full civil liberties and representative rights, with the major exception of Catholic rights. Yet the exclusion of the latter left nearly 25 percent of the Spanish people at war with the Republic or at least the political-constitutional structure of it. This split made it impossible to unite a broad democratic majority and left the body politic divided almost from the start of the regime. Since the Republican left regarded constitutional reform to protect Catholic interests as at the very least treason, the Republic as a democratic constitutional regime was doomed from the outset.

The third major project, Catalan autonomy, was somewhat slower to be achieved. Francesc Macià, the aging leader of ultra-Catalanism, had grouped together most of the Catalan lower middle classes in a federation of the Catalanist Esquerra (Left) that demanded full autonomy as well as reform within the region but was willing to cooperate with the new regime in order to achieve it. The opposition in 1931-1932 came not so much from the right, which was unorganized and nearly impotent, as from centrist liberals and the Socialists, who distrusted middle class Catalanism. It was, however, in part to head off the concession of autonomy to Catalonia that a small group of army officers, together with a few monarchist conspirators, staged an abortive revolt in Madrid and Seville on August 10, 1932. This was easily suppressed, and it swung the political pendulum to the left once more. The Catalan Statute was passed in September, providing for broad internal autonomy for a regional government (Generalitat) of Catalonia, with its own regional parliament, president, and prime minister. Macià became the first president of Catalonia, then died the following year, his goal accomplished.

Yet in the 1930s, as before 1923, the Catalanists could not fully dominate Catalonia because of the rivalry of anarcho-syndicalism. The CNT was reorganized in 1930 and sprang back to full life in 1931. Moreover, the most doctrinaire anarchists, alarmed by the attitudes of economic reform and political action among moderates within the CNT, as well as by Communist efforts to penetrate the movement, in 1927 organized the separate Iberian Anarchist Federation (FAI) of elitist revolutionary anarchists, determined to dominate the CNT and keep it on the path of revolutionary anarcho-syndicalism. During the course of 1931 the FAI took over the main part of the CNT (from which several more moderate or politicist elements split off) and launched it on a course of pseudorevolutionary turmoil. Anarchists denounced the Republic as being worse than the monarchy. During 1931-1933 they carried out scores of strikes and terrorist attacks, culminating in the tres ochos of January 8, 1932, January 8, 1933, and
December 8, 1933--small-scale pseudorevolutionary strikes and petty insurrections in scattered parts of the country, with the principal focus in Catalonia. The leaders of the Esquerra had originally hoped to reach an understanding with the CNT for cooperation in the building of an autonomous, democratic, socially progressive Catalonia, but the hostility and terrorism of the anarchists eventually drew reprisals from the Catalan government. Three years of frenzied activity and playing at revolution exhausted the CNT; by the end of 1933 its momentum was spent, the movement waning and losing membership.

The fourth major goal of the left Republican-Socialist coalition--social reform--achieved significant, though by no means complete, success. Francisco Largo Caballero, the most prominent leader of the UGT, became Republican minister of labor and instituted an efficient labor inspectorate for the enforcement of social legislation. A system of labor arbitration committees, weighted in favor of labor interests, was established nationwide and gained major wage increases, especially for the ill-paid rural laborers.

The major issue of socio-economic reform was agriculture. The severity of the Spanish agrarian problem was recognized by nearly all political groups, including some conservatives, and agrarian reform was accepted by most as a foregone conclusion. The Socialists wanted a very extensive reform that would expropriate the land of all save smallholders, and they proposed establishment of numerous collective farms. Yet the Republican left, who held the balance of power, were themselves uncertain and divided. Most of their leaders had little knowledge of agrarian problems and were less concerned with this than with the question of church-state relations and constitutional issues. Only after the suppression of the sanjurjada (the petty revolt of August 1932) was real progress made. Contrary to the Republican constitution, the land of all grandes was confiscated, and a full agrarian reform measure was finally passed. This was an extremely complicated bill that provided for expropriation of several categories of land. Under its terms, the great majority of the approximately 80,000 landowners subject to partial or nearly total expropriation were medium and small-medium holders, not latifundists. Through technicalities, much of the property of some of the larger owners was allowed to escape. Moreover, all expropriations had to be paid for, and the government had almost no money left; expenditures on agrarian reform were limited to 1 percent of the budget. In the meantime a full cadastral had to be completed and initial operations supervised by an agrarian reform institute representing all the major parties, so that little was accomplished during 1933.

The Socialists were greatly disillusioned by the relative frustration of the agrarian reform. Their initial relationship to the Republic had been ambiguous. Only reluctantly had the Socialist leadership allowed the party to be taken into the Republican coalition, and the Socialists themselves, after cooperating with Primo de Rivera's labor tribunals, had done very little to assist the coming of the new regime. Since 1918 Spanish Socialist ideology had become increasingly vague. Many Socialist spokesmen still considered themselves orthodox revolutionary Marxists, though non-Leninist and non-communist, while others ignored the issue altogether. In 1931 the Socialists made it clear that their goal was a socialist republic, not a liberal middle class parliamentary republic, but what this actually meant was far from clear. Nearly all the Socialist leaders accepted full and disciplined collaboration within a parliamentary regime, on the general notion that this would lead to sweeping changes both in social and economic structure and in public attitudes, preparing for the transition to a socialist regime. The elections of 1931, in which the organized Socialists emerged as the largest single party out of a largely disorganized electorate, had seemed a good augury. So did the Republican constitution, which provided for the legal nationalization of property, and the Largo Caballero labor reforms, which resulted in great gains for labor and enabled the UGT to triple its membership, establishing a mass following among rural laborers. Yet by the beginning of 1933 the momentum was not being sustained. The major socio-economic reform was very far from realization, and the political situation was no longer evolving toward the left. A strong reaction was under way in conservative opinion, particularly among Catholics.
and in northern Spain, while the governing republican coalition was losing its strength and unity. The Radicals went into opposition, and the Radical Socialists split into three sections—left, right, and center.

The Azaña government was shaken by a series of blows during the first eight months of 1933. The first was a police scandal—the Casas Viejas affair in Cádiz province. During the anarchist insurrectionary effort of January 1933, a detachment of Assault Guards (the newly formed Republican urban equivalent of the Civil Guards) shot down nearly a score of anarchist prisoners. This brought condemnation of the government from nearly all quarters. Several months later, municipal elections were held in numerous small towns of northern Spain whose promonarchist local governments had been ousted by the Republican regime in Madrid two years earlier. Two-thirds of the new municipal officials chosen represented parties in opposition to the government. Finally, in August the first (indirect) elections to the new Republican supreme court returned a majority from groups to the right of the government. Some of Azaña's own supporters believed that the government had gone too far too fast, and his majority began to break up. Since no other coalition was feasible, new elections were scheduled for November 1933. The Socialists felt deceived by political collaboration with the Republic, feeling they had been compromised into reformism while failing to gain the major structural and political changes which they sought. They were alarmed by the political events of central Europe—the establishment of the Nazi dictatorship in Germany and of the Dollfuss regime in Austria, in the course of which two of the strongest Socialist parties in Europe were going under. Failure to adopt a radical prorevolutionary position in Spain would, many Socialist leaders feared, only encourage a Spanish reaction leading to the same sort of tyranny central Europe was suffering.

The leading representative of Spanish conservatism was the new Catholic confederation, CEDA, led by a young law professor from Salamanca, José Ma. Gil Robles. The CEDA capitalized on the reaction among Catholics against Republican anticlericalism and reformism to form a broad nationwide organization, with plentiful financial support from wealthy interests. Its goal was to return conservative forces to power and restore Catholic privilege. Its leaders refused to declare themselves either monarchist or republican, declaring that government forms were accidental and that it was political values and achievements that counted.

In the 1933 elections the Socialists no longer associated themselves the divided factions of the middle class Republican left, hoping to rally a broad following independently. Conversely, in some districts the CEDA joined forces with the moderate liberal Radicals. Though they did not win a majority, the CEDA emerged with the largest single Cortes representation of any party, and the Radicals had the next largest. The Socialists came third (though second in the popular vote), losing one-third of their seats, while the left Republican parties in their isolation were nearly wiped out.

The parliament chosen in 1933 was made up mainly of moderate liberals and moderate conservatives, which ought logically to have led to a moderate conservative coalition government based on the CEDA, the largest party. But the president of the Republic, Alcalá Zamora, was hostile to the CEDA, which refused to commit itself completely to Republican institutions. Moreover, the Socialists had made it clear that they would not accept a government made up even in part of the supposedly "fascist" CEDA, and threatened revolutionary insurrection. In turn, since the Republican left had harped on the theme that the Republic must be anti-Catholic and that Catholic political groups could not be true Republicans, prevailing pressures naturally worked against the CEDA leadership espousing a position of outright Republicanism. Alcalá Zamora sought a temporary way out of the dilemma by encouraging the formation of a minority Radical-led government that excluded the CEDA. Several transitory Radical ministries under Alejandro Lerroux and one of his lieutenants governed for ten months, until October 1934. The CEDA accepted this arrangement temporarily but soon demanded participation in power, which was its constitutional right as the single largest parliamentary group. At the beginning of October 1934, Alcalá Zamora could resist no longer and appointed a coalition government under
Lerroux, this time including three CEDA ministers. That became the signal for revolutionary insurrection in Catalonia and Asturias.

The 1934 revolt sprang from two different sources: radical middle class Catalanism and proletarian revolution. In Catalonia, the Esquerra had retained control of the regional government and then won the municipal elections of January 1934. It had passed a considerable amount of regional legislation in 1933-1934 affecting local affairs, education, sanitation, roads, and so forth, but its most important bill was a Law of Cultivation Contracts that would allow long-term renters (for fifteen years or more) to purchase their land at reasonable rates. The law was fought by landowners. Under the Republican constitution, Catalan agrarian affairs were under the jurisdiction of the Generalitat, but the terms of legal contracts in Catalonia were required to conform to the Spanish norm. The case was referred to the Spanish supreme court, which ruled that until national norms governing revision of rental contracts were determined by legislation pending in the Spanish parliament, the Catalan bill was unconstitutional. This created a great uproar among radical Catalanists, already chafing under the limitations of their broad but not complete autonomy. The Catalan Generalitat in effect renounced the Spanish constitutional system, declared that it would not respect the judicial decision, and passed the legislation once more. The radical youth section of the Esquerra federation, Estat Català (Catalan State), came to the fore, its leaders heading a secret resistance committee to prepare for armed revolt. A compromise was eventually negotiated for the Catalan agrarian reform project, but it was completely ignored by the radical Catalanists, who were determined to exploit the latent polarization for their own purposes: an armed revolt to establish absolute Catalan autonomy, amounting to virtual independence, and the federalization of the Spanish state.

Meanwhile, the Socialists had become fully disillusioned about the possibilities of winning power by parliamentary means, and many of their leaders talked of direct action. Largo Caballero was hailed by youthful militants as leader of the revolutionary "bolshevizing" trend. Revolutionaries gained control of the UGT as well as the Socialist Youth. Though they realized the Socialists were too weak to win power in a coup d'état, they obtained the agreement even of the moderates that entrance of the CEDA into the government must be avoided by force. Meanwhile, the small Marxist parties of Catalonia had formed a broad Worker Alliance in 1933. The Socialists joined this in 1934 as a means of broadening the strength of the working class parties for revolution, but save in Asturias, the CNT remained aloof.

The signal for revolt was in a sense given by the leaders of the small middle class left parties, who handed the president of the Republic virtually identical notes when the new cabinet was formed, announcing that they "were breaking off all association with existing institutions." The subsequent rebellion in Barcelona was pure farce. The Catalanists did not cooperate with the Worker Alliance and were themselves uncertain and divided. After a few timid gestures, the Catalan government offices were occupied by a comparatively small force of army troops from the local garrison.

The revolutionary insurrection of October 1934 in Asturias was entirely different. It was a revolt of Socialist workers, supported by the CNT and the Communists, that occupied the entire mining and industrial district making up the central portion of the province of Asturias. Elite troops had to be called in from Spanish Morocco to quell the revolt, which lingered on for two weeks. More than 1,000 were killed, the majority revolutionaries, and there were atrocities on both sides. The revolutionaries shot nearly 100 people in cold blood, most of them policemen and priests, and an almost equal number of rebels--possibly even more--were executed out of hand by the troops that suppressed the revolt.

The result was to leave government in the hands of the moderate conservative coalition for the next fourteen months. In 1934, when Lerroux and the Radicals largely administered the government, a moderately progressive policy had been followed, continuing agrarian reform, expanding education, and only partially altering the extreme prolabor character of the labor tribunals. In 1935 government policy became reactionary, reforming the agrarian reform to reduce it to ineffectiveness, packing the
tribunals with antilabor majorities, and in general, fostering the interests of the possessing classes at the expense of the working classes.

In May 1935 the cabinet was reorganized to give the CEDA five seats, including the vital ministry of war for Gil Robles. It was widely rumored that the CEDA was planning either a coup d'etat or imminent constitutional reform to turn the Republic into a clerical, corporative state. In fact, Gil Robles's primary goal as minister of war was to revitalize the Spanish army and secure it against leftist influence, in which task he achieved some success. The more important goal of constitutional reform was harder to bring about. A two-thirds majority was required for constitutional changes, and since the CEDA's religious goals were controversial, the party, with less than half the seats in parliament, might have had difficulty in raising the necessary votes. On the other hand, four years after passage of the Republican constitution, that is, after December 1935, constitutional amendments might be effected by a simple majority vote. Hence no serious effort was made to carry out fundamental constitutional reform during 1935.

Altogether, the year was one of frustration. Some aspects of the economic depression grew worse, and in certain sectors unemployment mounted. The governing coalition limited itself to undoing many of the changes of the Azaña administration without offering viable new policies in their place. This was partly thanks to the heterogeneous nature of the alliance, having to placate both liberal Radicals and reactionary elements on the right. The Radicals suffered especially in these compromises, and by the end of 1935 found themselves morally discredited by a series of minor financial scandals which their enemies succeeded in magnifying out of all proportion.

The judicial prosecution of the 1934 revolutionaries was largely ineffective. At least 15,000 militants were held in prison, and many were tried and sentenced to long terms. The president and the Radicals, however, prevented conservatives from imposing major sanctions against the revolutionaries. None of the revolutionary leaders were condemned to death, and only four of the rank and file were executed, three of them common murderers. None of the leftist organizations were outlawed, and they were allowed to continue official work. In the aftermath of the repression, however, there were cases of police brutality and torture in Asturias. Though the main phase of this lasted little more than a month, the theme of atrocious repression gave rise to a virulent leftist propaganda equal to that of the right, which exaggerated the extent of the "red terror" in Asturias. The whole effect of the insurrection, the repression, and the stagnation of government in 1935 was to polarize political opinion ever more sharply toward the extremes of left and right.

The CEDA planned to remain in power, with the Radicals, through 1936, and to enjoy plenty of time to effect institutional reforms. Yet the real moderating power was not held by the CEDA but by Alcalá Zamora. Though the Catholic president favored moderate constitutional reform, he feared the CEDA and resented its able young leader. Alcalá Zamora took the position that since there was no senate in the Spanish Republican system, it was up to the president to serve as a moderating influence and prevent power from swinging too sharply to one extreme or the other. When the existing ministry collapsed over a minor issue in December 1935, he refused to allow the CEDA leaders to form the next government, and they in turn refused to serve further as subordinate members of a broad coalition. Such an impasse made regular government impossible, so Alcalá Zamora appointed a caretaker ministry under a personal crony, Portela Valladares, who closed parliament for a month. Elections were then scheduled for February 1936.

Alcalá Zamora's dissolution of parliament gave the left its great opportunity for a political comeback. Two major divergent forces were at work among the Spanish left in 1935. One was the struggle by the moderate middle class leftist parties and the moderate, nonrevolutionary sector of the Socialists to build a broad and essentially moderate leftist alliance for electoral purposes, one that could regain government power. This was the origin of the subsequent Popular Front. The other was the rise of the
hitherto minuscule Spanish Communist party and the "bolshevization" of the bulk of the Socialist movement, a movement directly opposite to the broad cooperative trend of the moderate left. It was the Communists who gained the propaganda advantage from the 1934 insurrection on the left, falsely claiming for themselves the main role in that tragic drama. The Popular Front alliance was not formed until January 1936, after the new elections were announced. The Socialists agreed to join only because of the need to win amnesty for thousands of imprisoned militants and to remove the moderate conservative government from power. The Socialists were indispensable for a leftist victory, and it was at their insistence that the Communists were included as well. The goal of the Popular Front program was further extension of all the earlier reforms and the "republicanization" of official institutions, eliminating all conservative influence.

<table>
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<td>Basque Nationalists</td>
<td>125,714</td>
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<td>1,866,981</td>
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The conservatives responded with a National Front built around the CEDA, but it was not fully unified and never published an official program. The aim of Alcalá Zamora and Portela Valladares was to build a centrist third force, but they lacked organizational cadres, popular support, or a convincing propaganda line. It has been said that the election of 1936 was in a way a plebiscite on the 1934 insurrection. This is partly correct; the main rightist slogan was "Against the revolution and its accomplices." The slender margin of popular support won by the Popular Front, however, was not so much an expression of enthusiasm for revolutionary insurrection as it was a positive response to Popular Front propaganda, which stressed the "atrocities" wreaked by the repression in Asturias and the need for a renewal of Republican reform.

On the eve of the election, most informed opinion expected a victory for the right. The slender Popular Front triumph came as a surprise even to the leading leftists, and the margin was very close, as indicated in table 32, drawn from the only detailed scholarly study of the electoral results.

Under the majority bloc system, what counted was not so much the total popular vote as the way it was concentrated province by province. Thus a slender plurality of votes for the left was transformed into a decisive majority of Cortes deputies. At the same time the [641] center was wiped out. The only previously strong national centrist party, the Radicals, had been discredited by the scandals and frustrations of 1935--a discrediting in which the president had played a major role. To Alcalá Zamora's own discomfiture, this cut the ground from under the possibility of any third force alternative. Hence his gamble was a complete failure.
The first electoral returns were the signal for a new leftist outburst in the streets of many cities, opening jails and bringing minor disorders. The Portela government abruptly resigned three days after the elections, before the results were fully tabulated and certified, and before the second round elections were held. A new all-left Republican cabinet under Azaña was hastily sworn in and then presided over the registration of the electoral results. After this was completed the Popular Front ended up with a clear majority of the seats in the new Cortes, a majority made even stronger by the work of the credentials committee of the new Cortes, which annulled the election of 17 rightist and 3 centrist deputies. This finally resulted in 271 seats for the Popular Front, 137 for the right, and 40 for the center, though the Socialist president of the credentials committee, Indalecio Prieto, resigned in protest over the fraud.

Thus the Popular Front had complete control over Spanish government in 1936, with an even stronger majority than Azaña had held in 1931-1932. The new ministry proposed to carry out the Popular Front program immediately, and an amnesty was promulgated for all leftist prisoners without bothering to observe full constitutional requirements. Measures were taken to prepare for reinstatement of and full compensation for leftist workers fired for political reasons. Catalan autonomy, partially suspended since the insurrection, was reestablished. Measures were taken to extend the agrarian reform and to appoint more left Republicans to government service.

The Azaña ministry was, however, outflanked almost immediately by the revolutionaries. Without waiting for the extension of the agrarian reform, the UGT peasant sections occupied large sections of land, mostly in Badajoz province, amounting to 250,000 hectares. These seizures were then legalized ex post facto by the government. By July 535,000 hectares had been expropriated, much of it not according to regulations. During the spring, a wave of revolutionary strikes began whose object was not to win economic improvements but to break the Spanish economic structure. At one point in June a million workers were out on strike, roughly 25 percent of the labor force. During May and June a number of small and medium-sized businesses were forced into bankruptcy. Capital fled the country, the exchange balance [642] and peseta value declined, and it became increasingly difficult to fund the national debt.

A new wave of terrorism and political street violence began the day after the elections, initiated by the victorious revolutionary groups. Their main targets were members of the Falange, the small (10,000-to 20,000-man) Spanish fascist movement organized in 1933 by José Antonio Primo de Rivera, eldest son of the late dictator. After the Falangists struck back in an abortive attempt on the life of a Socialist professor, the party's leaders were arrested in mid-March and most of its local sections closed.

Pressure against the government was maintained not from the right, which had lost most of its parliamentary leverage and was quite disoriented, but from the revolutionary left. The Socialists and Communists called for the immediate completion of the Popular Front program and then the implementation of radical social and economic changes. Though moderate Socialists retained control of the executive commission of the party, the revolutionaries gained the support of most of the membership, and were the main factor in the Spanish disorders of the spring of 1936. The Communists were growing by leaps and bounds and claimed to have expanded from 30,000 to 100,000 members between February and July. They pressed a hyper-revolutionary line, calling for a transition to a "worker-peasant" government as soon as Azaña completed the Popular Front program, and had organized their own paramilitary militia (MAOC). The "bolshevizing" trend won the sympathy of most young Socialist leaders, and in April the Socialist and Communist youth movements were unified under Communist control. The CNT was also expanding and engaged in a helter-skelter policy of revolutionary rivalry with the UGT, contributing to further violence and economic disorder.

A major aim of the Popular Front was to completely eliminate conservative influence from Spanish government. The only remaining nonleftist authority in Spain was that of the president, Alcalá Zamora,
who was removed from office on the specious and hypocritical charge of having exceeded his authority by dissolving parliament twice. The constitution provided that when a president dissolved the Cortes a second time during one term in office, his action would be reviewed by the new Cortes, and the Popular Front forces, who before January had demanded that the president dissolve parliament immediately, then used this technicality to get rid of him for acting upon their own insistence. He was the last remaining guarantee of moderation within the government, and the elevation of Azaña to the presidency in May 1936 established full leftist control of power.

Yet by that time Azaña had worked himself into a hopeless situation. He was not a revolutionary and wanted to preserve the Republican constitution while eliminating the power of the conservative elements. He more than anyone else was responsible for the organization of the Popular Front alliance, but in the spring of 1936 he found the power of the left being used to bypass the Republic and its constitutional system. The revolutionary parties had control of the streets and insisted on a constantly accelerating program of radical changes. The middle class left parties behind Azaña were too weak to govern by themselves, the center had been eliminated, and all bridges to the conservatives burnt. Azaña found himself the virtual prisoner of the extreme left, and disheartened by the situation, withdrew to the less active role of president. He was replaced as prime minister by a close associate, Casares Quiroga, who completely lacked the balance, tact, and insight for governing a country undergoing a process of civic dissolution.

Much of the Spanish middle class was benumbed by the experiences of the spring of 1936. The conservative groups were impotent, their leaders barely allowed to speak in parliament. The government and the leftist parties made it clear that they did not intend to permit conservative groups to regain a major voice in Spanish affairs. Given the complete leftist control of civic processes, the weakness of the organized right, and the incipient collapse of the political system, a purely political reaction was impossible.

Elements of the Spanish army officer corps had begun to conspire as early as 1933, but a serious military revolt against the government did not start to develop until May 1936. It took root only among a minority of military activists, most of them of junior and middle rank. Their leader was General Emilio Mola, commander of the garrison in Pamplona, who had first won notice in the Moroccan campaigns and then served as the last national police director under the monarchy. It proved very difficult to develop a firmly committed conspiracy, however, for the Azaña government had given nearly all the senior command positions to officers of liberal or moderate principles, and most rank-and-file officers were reluctant to take a stand, being aware of the failure of most military interventions in politics and dubious of the success of a revolt against the leftist government and the mass revolutionary movements.

Last minute support was won, however, by the wave of reaction that followed the climax of political terrorism. On July 12, leftist police officers and Communist militia, enraged by the killing of a leftist officer by Falangists, dragged from his home and murdered a leader of the parliamentary opposition, José Calvo Sotelo, head of a small protofascist movement (Bloque Nacional) and former finance minister under Primo de Rivera. It was a political murder without precedent in the history of west European parliamentary regimes and symbolized the breakdown of the Republican constitutional system. It became the signal for the start of the Spanish Civil War.

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Bibliography for Chapter 25

[710] The most extensive and fully documented history of the Second Republic in one volume will be found in Ricardo de la Cierva's *Historia de la Guerra Civil española*, vol. 1, *Antecedentes: Monarquía y República 1898-1936* (Madrid, 1969). Gabriel Jackson's *Spanish Republic and Civil War* (Princeton,
1965) is a concise, well-written account from the viewpoint of the moderate middle class left. Joaquín Arrarás, *Historia de la segunda República española*, 4 vols. (Madrid, 1956-1967), is the most detailed narrative and is quite hostile to the Republican experience. The *Historia de la segunda República española*, 4 vols. (Barcelona, 1940-1941), by José Pla, is more moderate. Though limited to formal politics, it was an impressive achievement in the immediate aftermath of the Civil War. Some new perspectives are offered in a symposium edited by Raymond Carr, *The Republic and Civil War in Spain* (London, 1971).


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**Note for Chapter 25**

1. The Republican Action party was later reconstituted under the label Republican Left, but used genetically, the term refers to the sectarian, ultrarepublican groups-- Republican Action, the Radical Socialists, and the left regionalists.