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Neutrality in the balance

Spanish-German relations during the First World War, 1914 – 1918

by

Anne Rosenbusch, B.A.

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DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

MAYNOOTH UNIVERSITY, NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF IRELAND

MAYNOOTH

HEAD OF DEPARTMENT: Professor Marian Lyons

SUPERVISOR OF RESEARCH: Professor Filipe Ribeiro de Meneses

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Abbreviations

A.G.A.	Archivo General de la Administración
A.M.A.E.	Archivo del Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores
B.A.	Bundesarchiv
B.A.M.	Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv
N.A.	National Archives
P.A.	Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes

Introduction

As we commemorate the 100th anniversary of the First World War a wealth of archival material and scholarly contributions have entered the public domain allowing for lively discussions on various aspects of the war. While many commemorations highlight the individual national sacrifice made, Hew Strachan has stressed the importance of remembering the Great War in comparative terms which emphasise the wars' international dimension.¹ This also includes an examination of those countries, such as Spain, which remained neutral throughout the conflict. Wartime neutrality, a long neglected subject in the history of the First World War, has begun to be included in more recent examinations of the war. *Caught in the middle. Neutrals, neutrality and the First World War*,² a collection of essays edited by Johan den Hertog and Samuël Kruizinga, gives a multi-faceted and multi-national overview of the subject which had hitherto only been addressed to such an extent in Nils Ørvik's *The decline of neutrality 1914-1941*³ and in *Neutral Europe between war and revolution, 1917-1923* edited by Hans Schmitt.⁴

A general history of the war also addressing the subject of neutrality is *Other combatants, other fronts: competing histories of the First World War*, which examines aspects of Dutch and Swiss neutrality.⁵ In addition, the subject is included in the most

¹Hew Strachan, 'Lest we forget the worldwide war' in *The Telegraph*, 28 Jul. 2014, available at (<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/history/world-war-one/10994592/Lest-we-forget-the-worldwide-war.html>) (5 Aug. 2014).

²Johan den Hertog & Samuël Kruizinga (eds), *Caught in the middle. Neutrals, neutrality and the First World War* (Amsterdam, 2011).

³Nils Ørvik's *The decline of neutrality 1914-1941, with special reference to the United States and the northern neutrals* (London, 1971). First published in 1953.

⁴Hans Schmitt (ed.), *Neutral Europe between war and revolution 1917–23* (Charlottesville, 1988).

⁵James Kitchen & Alisa Miller & Laura Rowe (eds), *Other combatants, other fronts: competing histories of the First World War* (Cambridge, 2011).

recent reference works on the war, *A companion to World War I*⁶ and *The Cambridge History of the First World War*.⁷ As Kruizinga points out, previously the issue of neutrality had only been dealt with within national studies rarely published in English.⁸ Therefore, recent efforts in the field allow for a comparative and transnational approach to the topic. By examining the relationship between a belligerent and a neutral state, such as Spain and Germany, the importance of neutrals during wartime becomes evident. Such an examination also demonstrates the effects of war on neutrals, which often found themselves under substantial political and economic pressure. In addition to that, the study of the links between one of the main belligerent powers and a smaller neutral state allows for the analysis of the belligerent's wartime aims from a perspective hitherto less investigated.

In Spain the First World War coincided with a period of great domestic turmoil amidst the rapidly decreasing importance of the country on a global stage. The various competing factions within Spain aligned themselves with either one of the belligerent blocs, causing a split amongst Spanish society which in turn allowed the Entente and the Central Powers to exert their influence on the country. Given Spain's military and economic weakness, as well as its domestic troubles, the country's declaration of neutrality at the outbreak of the First World War was hardly surprising. Although the decision to opt for neutrality was initially met with widespread support amongst Spaniards, it quickly became a contested issue causing great public debate. Various Liberal and Conservative governments struggled to meet demands by both warring parties and maintain neutrality at the same time. While Britain and France were able to exert economic pressure on Spain, threatening to withhold vital coal exports, Germany offered the possibility of gaining colonies and the opportunity to lead peace negotiations

⁶Jean-Jacques Becker, 'War aims and neutrality' in J. Horne (ed.), *A companion to World War I* (Chichester, 2010).

⁷Samuël Kruizinga, 'Neutrality' in J. Winter (ed.), *The Cambridge history of the First World War*, ii: *The State* (Cambridge, 2014), pp 542-75.

⁸Ibid.

at the end of the European conflict. Looking at Spanish-German relations during the First World War sheds light on the extent to which these external pressures on Spain increased during the war and accelerated its domestic instability, contributing to the ongoing civil strife the country was experiencing in the 1920s and 1930s.

While there are many general histories of Spain examining the first half of the twentieth century which also address the period of the First World War⁹, albeit in a more superficial manner, Francisco Romero Salvadó's *Spain 1914 – 1918. Between war and revolution* was the first major publication in English solely dedicated to Spain's war years. Against the backdrop of the general crisis in Europe, the author outlines Spanish domestic politics and argues that the European conflict led to ideological militancy, economic dislocation and social struggle in Spain. According to Romero Salvadó, Spain's policy of neutrality did not help to save the existing regime but only cast doubt over the administration's authority. The debate over belligerence or neutrality further deepened existing divisions within Spanish society. One chapter of the book deals with Spain's international affairs and outlines the pressures on the administration caused by German as well as Allied expectations. Like Romero Salvadó, Manuel Tuñón de Lara also points out the importance of the First World War by arguing that the economic, ideological and political consequences of the war strongly affected the historical process in Spain.¹⁰ The importance of an examination of Spain's experience of the Great War also contributes to a better understanding of the wider causes of the Spanish Civil War which Romero Salvadó addresses in *The foundations of civil war. Revolution, social conflict and reaction in liberal Spain, 1916 – 1923*.

Other Spanish historians have followed Romero Salvadó's footsteps and turned their attention to the First World War, attempting to combat the stereotype that Spain's

⁹See for example, Raymond Carr, *Spain 1808 – 1939* (Oxford, 1966). Sebastian Balfour, *The end of the Spanish empire, 1898 – 1923* (Oxford, 1997). José Alvarez Junco & Adrian Shubert (eds), *Spanish history since 1808* (London, 2000).

¹⁰Manuel Tuñón de Lara, *Poder y sociedad en España, 1900-1931* (Madrid, 1992), p. 28.

neutrality meant the war simply passed without having an effect on the country – an assumption often encountered whenever this dissertation’s topic was raised. In the most recent publication on Spain during the Great War, *España en la Gran Guerra: Espías, diplomáticos y traficantes*, Fernando García Sanz even argues that Spain was not neutral at all but an economic belligerent which played a decisive role during the war. García Sanz’s work is part of a research project on Allied intelligence in Spain during the First World War which seeks to examine Spanish neutrality in an international context.¹¹ Another result of this project is Carolina García Sanz’s book on Gibraltar during the First World War,¹² as are Eduardo González Calleja and Paul Aubert’s monograph on the intelligence war fought by the belligerents in Spain¹³ and the contributions by Fernando García Sanz, Eduardo González Calleja and María Dolores Elizalde Pérez Grueso to the special edition of the *Revista de Historia Militar* on modern and contemporary information services.¹⁴ All these important contributions highlight how Spain became a battleground for the belligerents despite the country’s neutrality.

However, while the above mentioned works mainly examine the Allied effort in Spain, and are so far only published in Spanish, current investigations into Germany’s campaign on the Iberian Peninsula are still outstanding. It is in fact to say that in contrast to the numerous investigations on the connections between Spain and Germany during the Second World War, much less research has been conducted on Spanish-German relationships during the First World War. Although important ground work has been done by German, Spanish and American historians, providing an excellent starting

¹¹‘Espionaje y relaciones internacionales: los servicios de información aliados en España durante la Primera Guerra Mundial’, Principal Investigator: Fernando García Sanz (BHA2002-01143).

¹²Carolina García Sanz, *La primera guerra mundial en el estrecho de Gibraltar: Economía, política y relaciones internacionales* (Madrid, 2011).

¹³Eduardo González Calleja & Paul Aubert, *Nidos de espías: España, Francia y la Primera Guerra, 1914-1919* (Madrid, 2014).

¹⁴M. D. Elizalde Pérez Grueso, ‘Los servicios de inteligencia británicos en España durante la Primera Guerra Mundial’ in *Revista de Historia Militar*, xlix (2005), pp 237–258. F. García Sanz, ‘Información, espionaje y contraespionaje en España durante la Primera Guerra Mundial’ in *Revista de Historia Militar*, xlix (2005), pp 147–178. E. González Calleja, ‘“Nidos de espías”: los servicios de información franceses en España durante la Primera Guerra Mundial’ in *Revista de Historia Militar*, xlix (2005), pp 179–226.

point for this investigation, an analysis encompassing diplomatic, military, political, social and cultural relationships between Spain and Germany during the First World War is still outstanding.

The works that deal directly with Spanish-German relations between 1914 and 1918 are Ron M. Carden's *German policy toward neutral Spain, 1914 – 1918*, Lilian Gelos de Vaz Ferreira's *Die Neutralitätspolitik Spaniens während des Ersten Weltkrieges, unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der deutsch-spanischen Beziehungen* and Jens Albes' *Worte wie Waffen. Die deutsche Propaganda in Spanien während des Ersten Weltkrieges*.¹⁵ In addition to that is Benedikt Rüchardt's work *Deutsch-Spanische Beziehungen 1898–1931*, surveying German-Spanish relations from the end of the nineteenth century until the 1930s.¹⁶

Carden's book provides a good general overview of Spanish-German relations during the First World War. Following the chronology of the war, he centres his narrative around Spanish domestic events and focuses on the actions of some influential individuals such as the German ambassador to Spain, Prince Maximilian von Ratibor und Corvey, and the Spanish King Alfonso XIII. Carden's analysis reveals the extent of the network between both countries to a certain degree but does not consider in great detail how this network was set up and maintained throughout the war. Other questions that are left unanswered are how the flow of information was organised between the two countries and whether information was mainly exchanged through the country's respective ministries for foreign affairs and embassies or whether informal channels between politicians and diplomats existed. Another important aspect that needs to be included is an examination of the role of the German community in Spain and how their

¹⁵Also see Michael Campbell, *Triumph of the word: The German struggle to maintain Spanish neutrality during the First World War* (Madison, 1989). Campbell and Carden mainly used German diplomatic records available in US archives. They did not utilise files of the German embassy at Madrid or those of the Auswärtige Amt news department. Neither Spanish nor British archival material were consulted for their studies. In comparison Benedikt Rüchardt and Lilian Gelos de Vaz Ferreira deliver a more thorough analysis of German activity in Spain during WWI.

¹⁶Benedikt Rüchardt, *Deutsch-Spanische Beziehungen 1898–1931* (Freising, 1988).

self-mobilisation contributed to the German war effort. In what circles did the German diplomats socialise? Were there social gatherings organised by the embassy, if yes who took part in them? How did the embassy exert its influence on local politicians? Since Carden did not consult Spanish sources for his investigation, the picture of Spanish-German relationships during World War I remains incomplete. For his research he mainly utilised published German records available in the United States; those however, do not include the records of the German embassy in Madrid or the files of the news department of the *Auswärtige Amt*, the German Ministry for Foreign Affairs. The lack of Spanish as well as British records leaves his investigation one sided and open to further research.

Similar problems can be encountered in Lilian Gelos de Vaz Ferreira's work *Die Neutralitätspolitik Spaniens während des Ersten Weltkrieges, unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der deutsch-spanischen Beziehungen*. The author focuses her main attention on Spain's policy of neutrality during the First World War as well as the country's domestic politics before and during the conflict. Particular attention is given to German-Spanish relations. However, these are not analysed in great detail and the links between both countries, as well as German activity in Spain, are only outlined superficially. Similar to Carden's investigation, Vaz Ferreira's work follows the chronology of the war and is centred around reactions to the policy of neutrality within Spain. While she has used extensive German records, very few Spanish archival sources have been consulted.

In contrast to the works by Carden and Vaz Ferreira, Jens Albes book on German press propaganda in Spain during World War I draws on a large variety of archival records, including German, Spanish, British, French, Austrian and Italian sources. Therefore it provides an excellent starting point for further investigations into all aspects of German propaganda activity in Spain. Albes outlines the main institutions

that organised German propaganda in Spain and explains in detail how they operated. Furthermore, he juxtaposes German propaganda activity with French and British efforts to influence Spanish opinion. In addition to press propaganda, which is the main focus of this study, Albes also details briefly the use of film propaganda by Germany and the Allies. This analysis, however, is done in a superficial manner and calls for further investigation in particular in relation to cultural propaganda employed by Germany. While Albes details the work of German businessman August Hofer, who ran the German news service for Spain in Barcelona with support of the German embassy in Madrid and the *Auswärtige Amt*, the analysis of Hofer's work can be expanded further, especially in view of portraying the German community in Spain.

Benedikt Rüchardt, in *Deutsch–Spanische Beziehungen 1898–1931*, charts Spanish foreign politics, emphasising the country's interactions with Germany from the time of the Spanish-American War until the establishment of the Second Spanish Republic in 1931. Rüchardt primarily focuses on official diplomatic and trade relations between both countries employing Spanish and German archival material. His examination of the years of the First World War looks at violations of Spanish neutrality, the impact of U-boat warfare on diplomatic relations between Spain and Germany and incidents of German propaganda and espionage activity. Given the longer time span of his investigation, the network that existed between both countries during the war is not considered in great detail and also does not include a look at the informal channels which enabled German propaganda and espionage activity in Spain.

Therefore what remains to be considered is how the various networks between Germany and Spain during the war were set up and maintained. Who were the main protagonists on the German and Spanish side that facilitated communication at an official and unofficial level? In particular, the unofficial effort carried out by the German community in Spain, which was very actively involved in spreading pro-

German propaganda all over the country, serves as an example for self-mobilisation which often took place during the war without official initiatives. While Jens Albes has provided an excellent analysis of the German propaganda effort in Spain during the First World War, his investigation is further expanded in this study by looking at the use of cultural propaganda in greater detail and by examining how the propaganda network was maintained logistically. In addition to that, Spanish journalists and newspaper editors who cooperated with Germany are identified and it is established how the *Auswärtige Amt* and other propaganda institutions built up contacts with them. Since the propaganda effort in Spain was largely organised by private German residents, who worked hand in hand with the embassy and consulates, the correspondence of the embassy as well as the wartime account of private propagandist August Hofer have helped to shed light on how the German propaganda campaign in Spain was orchestrated.

Many of the private German propagandists had been living in Spain prior to 1914 and were therefore able to make use of their pre-existing business connections in the Spanish publishing world. Similarly German diplomats in Spain were fully integrated into Spanish upper class society at the outbreak of the First World War and enjoyed a good reputation. Led by Ambassador Maximilian von Ratibor und Corvey, they aggressively pursued pro-German elements of Spanish society in the hope Spain would maintain a neutrality benevolent to Germany. Since the diplomats had to be careful not to compromise their position, it is interesting to examine how they tried to exert their influence on Spanish public opinion by establishing a good relationship with King Alfonso XIII and also by using the Spanish envoy to Belgium, the Marquis de Villalobar. An extensive examination of German diplomatic files available in Berlin at the *Politische Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes* has also revealed that Spanish politicians from various political spectra were in close contact with the German embassy in the

hope to further their own agenda. Spanish archival material has yielded very little useful information for this investigation. Given Spain's official neutrality during the war it is hardly surprising though that collaboration with one of the belligerents was not officially documented. However, Spanish newspapers as well as contemporary accounts and memoirs have been of great benefit in completing the picture of German diplomatic activity in Spain during the war.

An aspect hitherto overlooked by other investigations into Spanish-German relations during the First World War is the role played by the German military and naval attachés. Arnold Kalle and Hans von Krohn had the official task of informing the *Oberste Heeresleitung* (OHL – German High Command) and admiralty on military matters relevant to the war effort. Military attaché Kalle was also responsible for keeping King Alfonso XIII, whom he had a friendly relationship with, updated on the course of the war. Unofficially Kalle and Krohn organised an intelligence service network which sought to disrupt the Allied war effort by agitating strikes, damaging Allied property, spreading pro-neutrality propaganda amongst Spanish workers and infiltrating workers organisations. In order to cover their tracks, a third man, who took charge of organising the German information service, was brought to Spain. This was no other than Wilhelm Canaris, later the head of Hitler's military intelligence service *Abwehr*, who also played an important role in Spanish-German relations during the Spanish Civil War and the Second World War. During the First World War Canaris built up an extensive intelligence network in Spain which relied on German as well as many Spanish collaborators. However, it is mainly his intelligence work carried out during the Third Reich and his fall from grace, leading to his execution for treason in 1945, which have made Canaris a particularly attractive subject for historians.

Michael Mueller, in his biography *Canaris: the life and death of Hitler's spymaster*, arguably goes into more detail about Canaris's career during the First World

War than his other biographers. Most accounts of Canaris's life largely focus on his spectacular escape from internment in Chile in 1915, after the ship he had served on as an officer had been sunk by the British, and then swiftly move on to his career and activity under the Nazis in the 1930s and 1940s. Mueller, on the other hand, briefly outlines some of the tasks Canaris was entrusted with in Spain during the First World War, namely the setting up of information centres. He also provides some detail on how Canaris managed to reach Spain in 1916 and what difficulties he encountered when attempting to leave the Iberian Peninsula again at the end of that year. Heinz Höhne in *Canaris: Patriot im Zwielficht* points out Canaris's position vis-à-vis the German service attachés Kalle and Krohn, while also offering some useful information on the competitive behaviour between the naval and military attaché. However, both Mueller's and Höhne's account lack detail of Canaris's actual activity in Spain, and they do not outline the network he was able to build up. This shortcoming is addressed in this investigation and Chapter 5 provides a detailed overview of the various German intelligence outposts in Spain during the war as well as an outline of who were the middlemen working for Canaris, Krohn and Kalle, and how they communicated information.

While some of Germany's collaborators were revealed in the Spanish press, causing outrage over the extent of German interference in Spanish affairs¹⁷, it has until now not been clear how the German information service in Spain operated. The surviving archival material of the German admiralty, today available at the Bundesarchiv Freiburg, has allowed for a reconstruction of German covert activity during the war greatly complementing the above mentioned work done by Spanish historians on Allied information services in Spain during the First World War. This

¹⁷See for example, Francisco Romero Salvadó, *Spain 1914 – 1918. Between war and revolution* (London, 1999), pp 166-9. E. González Calleja, 'Nidos de espías': los servicios de información franceses en España durante la Primera Guerra Mundial' in *Revista de Historia Militar*, xlix (2005), pp 179–226.

aspect of Spanish-German relations makes it particularly clear that despite neutrality Spain was not shielded from the effects of war.

The debate over neutrality divided Spanish public opinion and what some termed a civil war of words ensued, especially amongst Spanish writers and intellectuals. While the majority of Spanish intellectuals fell into the pro-Allied camp of the *Francófilos* (or *Aliadófilos*), some, like the writer Pío Baroja and playwright Jacinto Benavente, openly declared their support for Germany and also collaborated with the German administration. This public debate between Spain's supporters of the Allies and the Central Powers has already been highlighted in Fernando Diaz-Plaja's *Francófilos y Germanófilos. Los Españoles en la guerra Europea* and more recently in *España en la Primera Guerra Mundial. Una movilización cultural* by Maximiliano Fuentes Codera.¹⁸ While Diaz-Plaja analyses the divisions within Spanish public opinion without greatly considering the impact of the European war as a catalyst for the debates amongst Spanish intellectuals, Fuentes Codera positions his investigation within the wider framework of cultural mobilisation during the First World War. This approach, rarely applied to a neutral state during wartime, will be continued in this investigation by looking at the works produced by pro-German Spaniards during the war. How those works were utilised by the German administration for the purpose of cultural propaganda will add to the findings of Fuentes Codera. The self-mobilisation of Spanish intellectuals and writers during World War I also stresses the total aspect of the war and shows that, despite Spain's neutrality, Spaniards were not left unaffected by the process of a wider cultural mobilisation in Europe.

German propagandists used their pro-German writings praising German culture, science and social institutions in order to promote a positive image of Germany in Spain

¹⁸Also see Gerald Meaker, 'A civil war of words: the ideological impact of the First World War on Spain, 1914–18' in Hans Schmitt (ed.), *Neutral Europe between war and revolution 1917–23* (Charlottesville, 1988), pp 1-56. Paloma Ortiz-de-Urbina, 'La Primera Guerra Mundial y sus consecuencias: la imagen de Alemania en España a partir de 1914' in *Revista de Filología Alemana*, xv (2007), pp 193 – 206.

and to combat the negative, militaristic portrayal put forward by the Allies. Germanophile intellectuals like Baroja and Benavente formed an anomaly amongst Spanish supporters of Germany, who were mainly found amongst the conservative political circles such as the Carlist Party, the military and the Spanish Catholic Church. By analysing the writings of Baroja and Benavente produced during the war, it becomes evident that these writers viewed Germany as a model for progression which would rid Spain from its backwardness. Other *Germanófilos* hoped a German victory would ensure the maintenance of the status quo and keep modernising forces at bay. By promoting a positive image of Spanish culture in Germany, German propagandists attracted some Spanish collaborators who felt that Spanish culture had not been sufficiently appreciated by Britain and France for example. This aspect of cultural propaganda, previously unexplored, adds to our understanding of the complex picture of Spanish-German relations during the war and explains how the collaboration of groups which should have been opposing each other came about.

The investigation will begin with an introduction to Spain's internal situation and the tumultuous circumstances the country found itself in at the outbreak of the First World War. In order to understand why various often politically opposed groups in Spain decided to collaborate with the German administration during the Great War, we will firstly have to understand the process of political and social reform which began in the nineteenth century, impacting on the privileges of the ruling elite and mobilising those previously excluded from power. The Napoleonic invasion of 1808 and the Carlist Wars facilitated the growth of the army, while the liberal reformers of the Cortes of Cadiz introduced wide-ranging reforms in the Constitution of 1812 which attacked the privileges of the land-owning elite and the Catholic Church. A growing anti-clericalism throughout the nineteenth century also explains why large sections of the Spanish Catholic Church chose not to come to the defence of Catholic Belgium when its

neutrality was violated in 1914 but instead opted for siding with Germany. Preventing the further growth of liberal ideas associated with the Allies seemed to have been of greater importance to the Spanish clergy.

The army also pursued its own agenda in the aftermath of the defeat to the United States in the Spanish-American War of 1898 for which it was largely blamed. After the war and the loss of the last overseas colonies, the army, now with a great officer surplus, insufficiently equipped and in desperate need for modernisation, began to feel alienated from the state due to the public backlash it had to suffer following the military defeat in 1898. The last remaining colonial territories in North Africa became of great importance to the Spanish army as well as the crown. As we will see in Chapters 4 and 5, collaboration between Germany and Spanish military personnel, and indeed the Spanish king himself, was motivated by the desire to re-gain some territory for the empire. Spain's weak economic and military position did not allow her to negotiate aggressively with France and Britain in colonial matters. Therefore, more subversive strategies to restore Spain's former empire were sought out which Germany happily facilitated in an attempt to undermine the Allied war effort.

The young King Alfonso XIII, who had begun his reign under difficult circumstances in 1902 just shortly after the humiliating defeat to the United States, was keen to re-establish Spain amongst the greater European powers and restore some of its former glory. Alfonso wanted to play an active part especially in diplomatic relations and hoped the position of neutrality he maintained throughout the First World War would be looked upon favourably after hostilities had ended. However, he was also acutely aware that Spain needed to strengthen her army and also extend her colonial empire in order to keep up with the development of the great powers. Since those needs were not necessarily compatible, Alfonso's position towards the belligerents was often ambivalent, something which will be closer examined in Chapter 4.

With the outbreak of the First World War the various oppositional movements that had emerged throughout the nineteenth century were now gathering momentum. Chapter 1 will outline the development of the political opposition from Republicans, Socialists and Regionalists, as well as the intellectual opposition as represented by the Generation of 98. The Canovite system¹⁹ that had put an end to military coups and introduced some stability in Spanish domestic affairs at the end of the nineteenth century was coming under severe pressure from those various oppositional groups in the aftermath of the lost Spanish-American War in 1898. Accelerated by the First World War, internal political pressure was growing while the economic situation was worsening. Against this backdrop Chapter 1 will provide the basis for an understanding of the motivation behind Spanish-German collaborations during the war.

Chapter 2 examines the German propaganda effort in Spain, especially focusing on the mobilisation of private residents and their contribution to the war effort. The extensive network set up by the German propagandists in Spain not only permeated Spain's publishing world but also reached into Spanish politics. How it was set up and organised throughout the war, despite the considerable logistical, financial and political difficulties German propagandists faced, will be outlined in this chapter. The German propaganda campaign in Spain was a joint endeavor carried out under the supervision of the embassy and the *Auswärtige Amt* but heavily reliant on private enterprises. An overview of the main private services as well as all official German propaganda institutions in Spain will be given, devoting some special attention to the German news service for Spain, a private service run by Barcelona based businessman August Hofer. The intermingling of official and private activities often lead to confusion regarding

¹⁹Established at the end of the nineteenth century and named after Prime Minister Antonio Cánovas del Castillo, referring to the agreed rotation (*turno pacífico*) in government between the Conservative and Liberal party.

who was responsible for what and also expressed itself in quarrels over how much authority could be given to privateers.

In an attempt to overcome the Allied blockade and cope with the loss of communication cables, which had been cut at the beginning of the war, German propagandists had to employ a lot of ingenuity in order to physically get propaganda material into Spain and receive news from Germany. Their work was also hindered by Allied pressure on Spain which increased during the war, attempting to keep Spanish neutrality benevolent to the Entente. A brief examination of Allied propaganda operations in Spain, however, will highlight how the war of words between both belligerents merely served to further deepen divisions between Spain's *Francófilos* and *Germanófilos*. Relying on their several Spanish supporters, German propagandists sought the cooperation of newspaper editors, journalists, writers and intellectuals and successfully managed to infiltrate the Spanish publishing world which allowed them to influence public opinion in Spain.

Chapter 3 will examine in detail the confrontation between Spain's *Germanófilos* and *Francófilos* and explain how this debate was used by Germany for purposes of cultural propaganda. A war of the manifestos which ensued in the Spanish press between the supporters of Germany and those of the Allies will serve as the backdrop for an analysis of the various arguments brought forward in support for either of the belligerents. In order to understand why some prominent Spanish writers and artists chose to lend their services to the German propaganda machine, Chapter 3 will examine the works produced by those pro-German Spaniards during the war. Since the debate between the *Germanófilos* and *Francófilos* was part of a wider debate on the regeneration of Spain started at the end of the nineteenth century, the views of the Spanish Catholic Church, also a supporter of the Central Powers, will be touched upon in this chapter as well. While the clergy admired the hierarchical structure of German

leadership and saw it as a defender of the monarchy and order, the question of how the Spanish Catholic Church justified their support for a Protestant power at an ideological level is worth further examination, especially in the light of Franco-Belgian Catholic propaganda. This will help to further illustrate how Germany's support for opposing forces within Spain allowed for an increasing instability in the country.

An analysis of official activities carried out by German diplomats in Spain will be given in Chapter 4. Introducing the main protagonists of the German diplomatic corps in Madrid and Barcelona, the assessment will particularly focus on the work of the embassy at Madrid, which functioned as the nerve centre of all German activity in Spain. Similar to the propaganda effort, political and diplomatic work had to be carried out with the help of Spanish collaborators. A closer examination of who these collaborators were and why they worked with the German administration will reveal that, surprisingly, they came from various political backgrounds ranging from monarchists, Carlists to Liberals and Republicans. In their pursuit to influence Spanish public opinion and ensure an upholding of neutrality, German diplomats often resorted to means which breached the rules of diplomacy and threatened to compromise their position in Spain as well as damage official relations between both countries.

The overzealous approach taken by the German ambassador and his men, employing bribery, coercion, and not even shying away from covert activity and assassination plots, needs to be viewed in the context of Allied economic dominance in Spain. The country's reliance on trade with France and Britain did not permit overtly pro-German policies or even an open approximation towards Germany by Spanish governments. Therefore, German diplomatic activity tried to ensure an enforcement of strict neutrality in order to avoid Spain joining the Allied cause. As the war dragged on, this became increasingly difficult, especially with view to Germany's policy of unrestricted submarine warfare and its impact on Spain. The dominant position gained

by the German high command during the First World War also affected the work of German diplomats in Spain, who had to relegate political needs to military demands.

This development could also be observed in the growing importance of the role of the service attachés throughout the First World War. Their position changed from that of advisors to active agents of war. Chapter 5 will provide a closer look at German intelligence activity on the Iberian Peninsula and North Africa. Due to geographical distance, economic blockade and Allied economic dominance in Spain, Germany could not develop close official ties with the country but instead pursued a course of sabotage in order to undermine the Allied war effort. The German military and naval attachés used the growing dissatisfaction amongst Spanish workers, who did not benefit from the country's wartime boom, to stir up strikes in mines delivering to the Allies and to spread pro-neutrality propaganda portraying the Entente as an interventionist force trying to drag Spain into the war. Another way of sabotaging the Allied war effort was by supporting rebellious tribes in French Morocco, an activity which was largely organised from Spain. All files relating to German covert activity in Morocco were destroyed immediately after the First World War. The files that did survive, however, show an involvement of the German military personnel at Madrid who carried out their operations even with the knowledge of King Alfonso XIII. Morocco, the main colonial enterprise left for Spain to pursue, also became the source of contention for Spanish officers stationed on mainland Spain who had to put up with a worsening of living conditions while the introduction of promotion by merit favoured their *Africanista* colleagues. The military juntas, quasi trade unions set up to defend officers' interests, also sought the help of the German administration in Spain, an aspect of German-Spanish relations which will be explored in Chapter 5 as well.

In addition, the chapter will provide a detailed overview of the organisational structure of the German intelligence services in Spain during the war, showing the

extent of the network as well as revealing its participants. As mentioned before, due to the exposure of some of Germany's covert activity in the Spanish press, other investigations of Spain during the First World War have highlighted some of those espionage scandals and some of the key figures involved. Romero Salvadó, for example, details the German embassy's dealings with anarchists and a collaboration with the Barcelona police chief. The Spanish historians involved in above mentioned research project 'Espionaje y relaciones internacionales: los servicios de información aliados en España durante la Primera Guerra Mundial' have also uncovered a number of German agents who were active in Spain during the war. But since those investigations do not include German archival material and primarily consider the work of the Allied intelligence services in Spain, this study can complete the picture of German covert activity in the country at the time of the First World War.

For this investigation the reports produced by military attaché Kalle and naval attaché von Krohn have been an invaluable source in reconstructing German activity in Spain during the First World War. Although the majority of German army records have not survived, vital information relating to Spain can still be found in the diplomatic archives of the *Auswärtige Amt* since the service attachés were officially required to send their reports through diplomatic channels via the embassy. The records produced by the naval attaché in Spain are held in the military archives of the Bundesarchiv in Freiburg which also holds any files relating to Wilhelm Canaris's activity in Spain during the First World War. Thanks to the examination of those records this study can provide a detailed overview of the hierarchical structure of the German intelligence service in Spain as well as a clear outline of how the key figures of the service communicated information. In addition a map has been created, highlighting all German naval intelligence centres in Spain in order to show the extent of the network.

German activity in Spain during the First World War highlights how the concept of total war also extended into neutral territory. This becomes particularly evident in the covert operations carried out by the German military personnel stationed on the Iberian Peninsula. The disregard German military planners had shown for Belgian neutrality at the outbreak of the First World War is also clear to see in Germany's behaviour towards neutral Spain. The country, due to its geostrategic important position and its ability to supply the Allied war industries, quickly became a target for the OHL. Neutrality might have prevented Spain from sending troops to the frontlines, war, however, entered the country nevertheless as is illustrated by Germany's aggressive behavior towards the neutral state.

Chapter 1

Spain in the nineteenth and twentieth century –

From Disaster to World War

At the outbreak of the First World War the Spanish constitutional monarchy was in crisis. Dissatisfaction with the ruling elite had begun to increase after Spain's disastrous defeat in the Spanish-American War of 1898, which not only resulted in the loss of the country's last overseas colonies, but also made the decline of the former European power painfully obvious to all Spaniards. Spain had lost its former glory and status; now, a minor player in Europe, it had been surpassed by more developed and modern nations like Britain, France and Germany. While demands for reform were growing stronger, the ruling elite – which had established a thinly disguised oligarchy based on a system of electoral fraud, patronage and bribery – tried to maintain the status quo. As the reform movement gathered momentum and groups previously excluded from power demanded to have their say in domestic politics, a stable running of the country became increasingly difficult. Internal tensions and factional infighting that plagued Spain from the end of the nineteenth century would become even greater during the war and bring the country close to a revolution.

In order to gain a better understanding of Spanish-German relations during the First World War, we need firstly to examine Spain's domestic situation as well as her international standing at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century. This will help us to understand what motivated various groups within Spanish society and amongst the ruling elite to collaborate actively with the German administration during the conflict. It will also shed light on Spanish wartime neutrality which, despite avoiding an active military participation, did not shield the country from the effects of war. This chapter will begin by tracing back the roots of Spain's social

unrest and demands for reform to the nineteenth century. This time period saw the first introduction of liberal reforms in the Constitution of 1812 against the backdrop of unrest that was created by the Napoleonic invasion. The dominant position of the Spanish Catholic Church was coming under attack and the State frequently had to call on the army to deal with disturbances and maintain order. At the end of the nineteenth century the Canovite system sought to establish some order after decades of military coups and revolutionary overthrows. This period of relative tranquillity, however, was shattered with the defeat in the Spanish-American War. 1898 marked not only a military failure but also the end of the once great Spanish empire.

The debate that was sparked by what became known as *El Desastre* – The Disaster – will form the second part of the chapter. We will look at the reaction from intellectuals and their ideas for a regeneration of Spain as well as the challenges posed to the regime by regionalism and an emerging republican movement. Changing attitudes amongst the military, which became increasingly isolated from Spanish society in the aftermath of the Disaster, will also be considered. With the loss of large parts of her overseas empire, Spain's colonial ambitions were almost exclusively focused on Morocco. How Spanish foreign policy was tied up in the intense power struggles between France, Britain and Germany on the eve of the First World War will form part of the discussion in this section of the chapter. The public backlash against any new colonial enterprise, which culminated in the Tragic Week of 1909, will lead us into the third part of our analysis, which focuses on Spain's situation during the First World War.

Although Spain remained neutral throughout the entire duration of the war, neutrality was a hotly debated issue in Spanish society. How the conflict between *Germanófilos* and *Francófilos* developed and what arguments were brought forward for and against entering the war will be discussed. Spain's wartime neutrality will also be put into context with the position of neutrals during the First World War in general.

Many neutrals found it impossible to maintain a completely impartial neutrality and were pressured from both warring parties either to join the war on their side or show a benevolent neutrality towards them. In Spain the debate regarding neutrality highlights an increasing instability of the country's domestic situation during the First World which could not be halted by various governments. How the different governments tried to deal with an ensuing economic crisis, worsening living conditions and an attempt at a revolutionary overthrow in the summer of 1917 will also be outlined.

Challenges to the established order

The demand for social and political change that came to the fore during the period of the First World War had its origin in the previous century. In nineteenth century Spain we can observe numerous attempts to introduce liberal reforms which, however, were often hampered by the country's social and economic underdevelopment as well as a highly unstable political situation. Spain's crisis arguably began with the French invasion of 1808, which was followed by prolonged periods of civil war and revolution. Against this backdrop the liberal reformers of the Cortes of Cadiz tried to create a new, modern Spain. However, their ideas were not shared or understood by the majority of Spaniards.¹ Some of the reforms though, such as the ones introduced in the Constitution of 1812, were the source of inspiration for liberal reformers across the globe.² That document created a constitutional monarchy which not only limited the powers of the Crown but also established civil rights, personal liberties, freedom of trade and industry and a separation of powers.³ The constitution also attempted to introduce property rights based on contracts by abolishing seigniorial

¹Raymond Carr, *Spain 1808 – 1939* (Oxford, 1966), pp 94-5.

²Stanley Payne, *The collapse of the Spanish Republic, 1933 – 1936. Origins of the Civil War* (Yale, 2006), pp 1-2,

³Isabel Burdiel, 'Myths of failure, myths of success: New perspectives on nineteenth-century Spanish liberalism' in *The Journal of Modern History*, lxx, no. 4 (1998), pp 892-912.

jurisdictions.⁴ Such wide-ranging changes to the foundations of the State were met with internal opposition while in the Spanish colonies the breakdown of authority in Spain gave way to a creole revolution eventually leading to the loss of the empire which, as Raymond Carr states, was the main consequence of the crisis of 1808.⁵ The War of Independence, as Spaniards referred to the struggle against Napoleon, fuelled Spain's liberal reformers, who singled out the Catholic Church which they blamed for the country's backwardness – a clash between Catholicism and liberalism was emerging.⁶

As already stated, the reforms attacking the foundations of Spanish society often created great internal strife and contained potential for even further conflict. In particular, the Spanish Catholic Church experienced an attack on its dominant position and ecclesiastical reforms introduced at the beginning of the nineteenth century attempted to limit the Church's influence. With the Napoleonic invasion came the abolition of the Inquisition and the suppression of religious orders. While affirming Catholicism as 'the only true religion' of the Spanish nation, article 12 of the Constitution of 1812 also stated that the nation would protect religion through 'wise and just laws'. This was interpreted by some as giving the Cortes a legal basis for enacting changes in the Church and implementing reforms.⁷

The absolutist regime installed by a military coup d'état in 1814 gave the Church a brief respite and allowed for the removal of priests who had supported ecclesiastical reforms. But this only produced further resentment against the hierarchy.⁸ As political upheaval continued in Spain, another liberal revolution in 1820 resulted in a further drifting apart between state and religion. Although the Constitution of 1812 had advocated a cooperation between constitution and altar, more extreme liberal groups

⁴Raymond Carr, *Spain 1808 – 1975* (Oxford, 1982), p. 100.

⁵*Ibid.*, p.101; p. 105.

⁶*Ibid.*, p. 116.

⁷William J. Callahan, 'Church and State, 1808-1874' in José Alvarez Junco and Adrian Shubert (eds), *Spanish history since 1808* (London, 2000), pp 49-63.

⁸*Ibid.*

(known as the *exaltados*), who had gained power by mid-1821, favoured a state-imposed introduction of ecclesiastical reforms. To pay off the national debt, the property of religious orders, more than 800 monasteries and friaries, was sold.⁹ Between 1820 and 1823 the Cortes passed legislation which allowed for the suppression of religious orders such as the Jesuits, the Benedictines and the Cistercians. The Franciscans and Dominicans experienced a reduction in their personnel as well as in the number of their houses.¹⁰ The reforms introduced in that period were largely rejected by the Church and in some regions priests even actively fought against them. The State, on the other hand, was willing to resort to physical force in order to enact the envisaged reforms. After the restoration of Ferdinand VII to the throne in 1823, most of the liberal ecclesiastical legislation was annulled, although the Inquisition was not reinstated. The Church was now able to return to its traditional organisation as well as recover its privileges and wealth.¹¹

With the death of Ferdinand VII in 1833, however, changes to the institutional foundations of the Church could no longer be halted. Political conditions in Spain also created a climate of hostility towards the Church which exploded in the 1830s and saw violent attacks on religious orders in 1834 and 1835 in Madrid, Zaragoza and Barcelona. The worsening of economic conditions in the cities had brought on a political radicalisation of the urban population which resented the religious orders for their defence of absolutism. Many monks and friars fled their residences when confronted with public outbursts of violence directed towards them.¹²

The selling off of Church land continued until late 1830 and a decree in October 1835 abolished male regulars. In 1843 the tithe was replaced by a state salary which was

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Ibid.

paid to bishops and parish priests.¹³ Reforms went even further suggesting the creation of a national Church and a limited contact between the papacy and the Spanish Catholic Church. Such wide-ranging steps, though, were not taken and an agreement with Rome was reached only in the Concordat of 1851, which stipulated that any changes to the traditional organisation of the Spanish Catholic Church had to be agreed with the Vatican. The government ensured financial support for the clergy and accepted the restoration of some male religious orders. Most importantly, the Concordat outlined that the State could not implement or promote any religious reforms.¹⁴ It also proved that the Church was still an important power player in Spain, one whose support was required for the running of the State.¹⁵ The Church's role in late nineteenth century Spain was particularly dominant in the education system as well as in the welfare sector. Nuns, monks and friars worked in schools, poorhouses and hospitals as well as welfare and charitable organisations.¹⁶

Another important institution, and one of the country's main power brokers that underwent profound structural changes as a consequence of the French invasion and the War of Independence, was the Spanish army. The need to bolster the army to counter Napoleon's attack led to an increase in its size by the integration of volunteer guerrilla forces. While the officer corps had been a reserve of the aristocracy, this changed after 1808 with the admittance of volunteers from various social classes. Promotion through merit rather than rank and seniority also created divisions within the army between those newcomers, who had benefited from reforms and were therefore more favourable towards liberalism, and those aristocratic officers who remained loyal to the monarchy.

The Constitution of 1812 had given the king, as commander in chief, the right to declare war and confer ranks while the Cortes was responsible for passing legislation

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Stephen Jacobson and Javier Moreno Luzón, 'The political system of the Restoration, 1875-1914' in José Alvarez Junco and Adrian Shubert (eds), *Spanish history since 1808* (London, 2000), pp 94-110.

regarding discipline, promotions, salaries and training in the army. Leaving military matters in the hands of politicians was another contentious issue between the army and the emerging new State.¹⁷ To defend their own interests, officers were now willing to take action against the State and joined forces with political powers who they hoped would be able to bring about political changes favourable to the position of the army. The military uprising, the *pronunciamiento*, became a prominent feature of nineteenth century Spain from 1820 onward.¹⁸ The liberal regime, on the other hand, lacking popular support in the countryside and being divided into more moderate and extreme factions, became increasingly reliant on military power to secure and strengthen its position against internal enemies.¹⁹ Throughout the nineteenth century the role of the Spanish army was largely reduced to dealing with internal disturbances and maintaining domestic order.²⁰

The First Carlist War from 1833 to 1839 established the army as a political arbiter in Spain. The country's subsequent political instability allowed the army to cement its position as a power-broker. In the period from 1840 to 1868 Spain was almost exclusively governed by generals.²¹ As reaction to any opposition or public disorder a state of martial law was frequently declared.²² The army continued to increase in size due to ongoing civil strife and war in the nineteenth century and throughout the 1860s and 1870s it acted as an autonomous pressure group. Expansion in personnel meant military budgets were mainly spent on paying officers' salaries instead of investing in modernising equipment and training,²³ which resulted in a technologically under-developed army with a large officer surplus. After a short-lived

¹⁷Carolyn Boyd, 'The military and politics, 1808 – 1874' in José Alvarez Junco and Adrian Shubert (eds), *Spanish history since 1808* (London, 2000), pp 64-79.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Stanley Payne, *Politics and the military in modern Spain* (Stanford, 1967), p. 12.

²¹Boyd, 'The military and politics, 1808 – 1874' in *Spanish history since 1808*, pp 64-79.

²²Ibid.

²³Ibid.

Republican experiment in 1873, the Bourbon monarchy was restored, thanks to the military coup of Martínez Campos in December 1874, and the responsibility for the restoration government was handed over to Cánovas del Castillo who attempted to introduce some stability.

The functioning of the government in late nineteenth century Spain was facilitated by the so-called *turno pacífico*. Presided over by the king, two dynastic parties, the Liberals and the Conservatives, agreed to rotate in government. In order to achieve political stability and guarantee the seamless functioning of the *turno*, the party chosen to form a government needed to know in advance if it would have a sufficient majority in parliament, and equally, the party resigning from government needed assurance that that was only a temporary measure. To achieve this, the political system relied on electoral manipulation.²⁴

Although Cánovas put an end to the military *pronunciamento*, he failed to remove the army from Spanish politics altogether. He often resorted to the appointment of generals as prime ministers since disagreements within the Conservative Party did not allow him to stay in office continuously. With the approval of Cánovas the king appointed his favourite generals, which appeased the quarrelling sections amongst the Conservatives and left the often politically inexperienced generals to shoulder the blame for any administrative changes.²⁵ Unable to resolve their disagreements, the political regime resorted to using generals by putting them in charge of transition governments no politician was able or wanted to preside over. As a result of this tactic, some political generals left the Conservative Party to join the Liberals.²⁶ At the same time the regime continued to employ the army in times of public unrest and political leaders became

²⁴Jacobson & Moreno Luzón, 'The political system of the Restoration, 1875 – 1914' in *Spanish history since 1808*, pp. 94-110.

²⁵Payne, *Politics and the military in modern Spain*, p. 48.

²⁶Ibid., p. 49.

increasingly convinced of the army's vital role in maintaining order.²⁷ Due to the army's indispensable part in repressing mounting class struggle at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century, the regime avoided any confrontation with the military leadership and tried to keep generals on its side through promotions, senate memberships as well as political and financial rewards.²⁸

At local level the *turno* system relied on the *caciques*, or power-brokers, who managed affairs primarily by pursuing their own interests, promoting their friends and keeping down their enemies. *Caciquismo* created a political culture which was dominated by personal interest and lacked in a development of political ideas based on long-term goals and objectives. Some have argued *caciquismo* transformed the constitutional Spanish monarchy into an oligarchy, others have argued it provided a necessary link between an indifferent electorate and the politicians, the only link between the countryside and the city, the people and the State.²⁹ The focus on short-term, personal gain meant that political parties were lacking a coherent ideology and were often seen as loose alliances.³⁰ Alvarez Junco has described the political parties of the Restoration period as associations or clubs which were inactive over long periods of time and only galvanised themselves during elections. Ideological matters only received little attention and the focus was often on immediate political matters only.³¹

Despite Spain being a constitutional monarchy since 1875, with a legally established democratic system that granted universal male suffrage, actual power was held by the governing elite and privileged groups like landowners, bankers and industrialists. The Canovite system, however, operated successfully and without facing major opposition from the 1870s to the 1890s. This was largely enabled by an

²⁷Ibid., p. 60.

²⁸Ibid., p. 53.

²⁹Carr, *Spain 1808 – 1975*, pp 369-70.

³⁰Jacobson & Moreno Luzón, 'The political system of the Restoration, 1875 – 1914' in *Spanish history since 1808*, pp 94-110.

³¹José Álvarez Junco, 'Estado y sociedad en España durante la década de 1890' in J. P. Fusi, A. Niño (eds), *Visperas del 98. Orígenes y antecedentes de la crisis del 98* (Madrid, 1997), pp 47-64.

underdeveloped Spanish society. High levels of illiteracy, as well as poor transport and communication links, led to an apathetic and demobilised population. The governing parties made no serious effort to appeal to the masses and instead represented only the interests of the small elite which controlled political life. There was no major distinction in the political agenda of both parties, although it can be said that the Conservatives stressed their clericalism while the Liberals emphasised the defence of civil liberties. The political opposition did not pose any serious threat to the regime, which also benefited from a relatively stable economy.

This temporary period of calm in Spanish politics was to be threatened by events in Spain's overseas colonies which began to demand independence at the end of the nineteenth century. The great political instability and conflict caused by the breakdown of the *ancien régime* and the country's transition to a modernised, liberal state and society, also resulted in Spain's decline as a colonial power. The great Spanish empire of the early modern period had been lost to a large extent by 1825. Civil wars, military uprisings and revolutions did not permit a stable foreign policy and with a focus on internal problems colonial interests were not sufficiently addressed.³² Spanish colonial expansion was particularly rivalled by growing British economic and naval power. The loss of Gibraltar to Great Britain in 1704 and the recovery of the territory by Spain would occupy Spanish diplomats for centuries to come. Franco-Spanish alliances were rendered null and void after the French Revolution and the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805, which resulted in an almost complete destruction of the Spanish navy. This made it impossible to defend a widespread overseas empire.³³ By 1825, with the exception of Cuba and Puerto Rico, all of Spain's American colonies had achieved political independence.

³²Enrique Moradiellos, 'Spain in the world. From great empire to minor European power' in José Alvarez Junco & Adrian Shubert (eds), *Spanish history since 1808* (London, 2000), pp 111-20.

³³Ibid.

Spain's slow process of modernisation also resulted in the country being sidelined in international politics. Industrialisation had not advanced as quickly as in other European countries, making her a less attractive partner for alliances with the greater powers. The preoccupation with domestic affairs, as well as the country's underdevelopment, also prevented the adoption of strong foreign policies.³⁴ While towards the end of the nineteenth century the Great Powers were pursuing their imperialist ambitions, smaller powers had to abandon their plans of expansion and in the case of Spain, were facing increasing difficulties to hang on to their old colonies.³⁵ A struggle for independence in the Spanish colony of Cuba first broke out in 1868 and developed into a ten-year war between the Spanish army and Cuban insurgents. Though the Spanish army managed to contain the uprising temporarily, a final insurrection broke out in 1895 and led to the intervention of the United States in the conflict. The Spanish government, which treated colonial matters as a domestic issue, ultimately failed to respond effectively to tensions arising in the colonies.³⁶ In 1898 the Spanish army and navy were defeated and Spain lost her colonies of Cuba, Puerto Rico, Guam and the Philippines to the United States.

Although the Spanish-American War became known in Spain as the Disaster, it did not have any immediate political consequences or usher in an era of economic depression and financial crisis. With the repatriation of colonial capital and the expenses and insecurities brought on by the war now gone, Spain was able to join the wave of expansion other European countries had begun to experience in the mid-1890s. Some regions of Spain even saw great industrial growth. Asturias and the Basque country especially benefited from a rise in exports and the repatriation of colonial capital which

³⁴Sebastian Balfour, *The end of the Spanish empire, 1898 – 1923* (Oxford, 1997), pp 6–7.

³⁵Idem, "The lion and the pig": Nationalism and national identity in *Fin-de-Siècle Spain* in C. Mar-Molinero & A. Smith (eds), *Nationalism and the nation in the Iberian peninsula* (Oxford & Washington D.C., 1996), pp 107–17.

³⁶Balfour, *The end of the Spanish empire, 1898 – 1923*, p 7.

led to an increase in investment.³⁷ The end of the Spanish-American War allowed the Spanish government to set up economic reforms that promoted technical change.³⁸

However, as Pamela Radcliff assessed, the Spanish-American War certainly caused a crisis of confidence and marked the beginning of a challenge to the established hierarchy and authority.³⁹ While large sections of Spanish society had supported the country's effort in Cuba in a display of patriotism, in the face of defeat that attitude change dramatically and was expressed in disaffection and a mobilisation against the government and established powers. The bad state of the returning troops as well as the government's plans to recover the war debt in a short period of time were met with consternation.⁴⁰ Equally the Spanish Catholic Church was viewed as culprit in the colonial conflict and criticised for attempting to increase its control over Spain's political and social life.⁴¹ Not only did the war cause a loss in confidence in the regime, it also deeply affected the national consciousness.⁴² It brought a stark end to the illusion that Spain was still a great imperial power which stood apart from other nations.⁴³ Alvarez Junco assessed that Spain had become a third rate power long before the Spanish-American War during the reign of Ferdinand VII when the vast majority of the American empire had been lost. The defeat in 1898 simply exposed the rhetoric of imperial grandeur.⁴⁴ In an era where the possession of colonies was viewed as a sign of

³⁷Pamela Radcliff, *From mobilization to war: the politics of polarization in the Spanish city of Gijón, 1900 – 1937* (Cambridge, 1996), p. 20.

³⁸Juan Pan-Montojo (ed.), *Más se perdió en Cuba: España, 1898 y la crisis de fin de siglo* (Madrid, 1998), p. 11.

³⁹Radcliff, *From mobilization to war*, p. 17.

⁴⁰Manuel Pérez Ledesma, 'La sociedad española, la guerra y la derrota' in Juan Pan-Montojo (ed.), *Más se perdió en Cuba: España, 1898 y la crisis de fin de siglo* (Madrid, 1998), pp 91-150.

⁴¹Ibid.

⁴²Juan Pablo Fusi Aizpúrua, 'Centre and periphery 1900 – 1936: National integration and regional nationalism reconsidered' in F. Lannon & P. Preston (eds), *Élites and power in twentieth-century Spain. Essays in honour of Sir Raymond Carr* (Oxford, 1990), pp 33-44.

⁴³Sebastian Balfour, 'The lion and the pig' in *Nationalism and the nation in the Iberian península*, pp 107-17.

⁴⁴José Alvarez Junco, 'History, politics and culture, 1875-1936' in David Thatcher Gies (ed.), *The Cambridge companion to modern Spanish culture* (Cambridge, 1999), pp 67-85.

a strong nation,⁴⁵ the loss of its last overseas colonies severely undermined Spanish national identity.

In the aftermath of the Disaster various ideas to reform Spanish politics were gaining support and dissent against the corruption of the Restoration system was growing. Although criticism had been voiced before the war, the discussion on reasons for Spain's decline and the search for ways of reforming the country became more urgent after the loss of the colonies. Not so much the defeat itself but the way in which Spain's military inferiority had been exposed was what was especially humiliating and in turn led to a debate amongst Spanish intellectuals regarding what they considered Spanish decadence.⁴⁶ Educated middle-class reformers, some of whom had studied in Germany, formed the group that would be referred to as the Generation of 98. The *cacique* system of patronage had excluded the middle classes from political participation and, as well as that, denied them any privileges. But at the beginning of the twentieth century they were seen as the group that would initiate change in Spain. Regenerationism, as the reform movement became known as, envisaged a 'Europeanisation' of Spain following the examples of Britain, France and Germany.⁴⁷

Amongst their most prominent protagonists of the Generation of 98 were Miguel de Unamuno, Joaquín Costa, Ramón del Valle-Inclán, Pío Baroja, José Martínez Ruiz – better known under his pseudonym Azorín, Antonio and Manuel Machado, Ramón Pérez de Ayala, José Ortega y Gasset, Ángel Ganivet and Ramiro de Maeztu. According to Donald Shaw, Spain was in a state of ideological disorder by the time of the 1880s.⁴⁸ Therefore, it is not surprising that the *Generación del 98* was not a uniform group which produced a coherent set of ideologies or ideas outlining practical guidelines for Spain's

⁴⁵Sebastian Balfour, 'The lion and the pig' in *Nationalism and the nation in the Iberian península*, pp 107–17.

⁴⁶Javier Rubio, *El tránsito del siglo XIX al XX. Del Desastre de 1898 al principio del reinado de Alfonso XIII* (Madrid, 2011), p. 106.

⁴⁷Carr, *Spain 1808 – 1939*, pp 68–70.

⁴⁸Donald Shaw, *La generación del 98* (Catédra, 1978), p. 21.

regeneration, but rather a loose collective of thinkers who prioritised the spiritual reformation of the country above everything else.⁴⁹ The name, Generation of 98, was coined by Azorín in 1913, but not all members of the group used that title or referred to themselves as part of a larger intellectual movement.⁵⁰

This cultural response to the Disaster, however, was not unique to Spain and can be seen as being part of a wider European trend at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries which saw a stronger engagement of intellectuals in public debates.⁵¹ Therefore, it can be said that in Spain the Disaster merely served as a catalyst for a reformist movement which already had begun in the first half of the nineteenth century with the introduction of liberal legislation in 1812. In their search for a new national identity, the intellectuals of the Generation of 98 were influenced by German philosophers such as Hegel, Krause, Nietzsche and Schopenhauer.⁵²

Krausism especially had been very popular in Spain from the second half of the nineteenth century. During the revolutionary period of 1868 to 1873, freedom of the press and opinion facilitated a climate of open-mindedness which led to the importation of new ideas to Spain.⁵³ Krausist philosophy mainly advocated a freedom of conscience and investigation, choosing tolerance over doctrine and reason over dogma. Its ideas were based in religion and a Christian rationalism which was expressed in a liberal political attitude that rejected and condemned any form of violence and injustice and instead sought to establish a society in which all individuals and groups lived together harmoniously. In Spain Krausism was seen as a way of life and a way of reforming

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 23.

⁵⁰E. Inman Fox, 'Grupos y posiciones intelectuales del 98' in Jochen Mecke (ed.), *Discursos del 98. Albores españoles de una modernidad europea* (Madrid, 2012), pp 23-34.

⁵¹Edward Baker, 'Fin de Siècle culture' in José Alvarez Junco & Adrian Shubert (eds), *Spanish history since 1808* (London, 2000), pp 155-79.

⁵²Nelson Orringer, 'Redefining the Spanish Silver Age and '98 within it' in *Anales de la literatura española contemporánea*, xxiii, no. 1/2 (1998), pp. 315-326.

⁵³Idem, 'Clarín's Krausism' in Conrad Kent, Thomas Wolber, Cameron Hewitt (eds), *The lion and the eagle. Interdisciplinary essays on German-Spanish relations over the centuries* (New York, 2000), pp 255-72.

Spanish culture, customs and Spanish society in general. This reformation was to be achieved by firstly transforming the individual. Given this approach to societal change it is not surprising that Krausism evolved towards a pedagogical movement which attempted to established social and educational reforms.⁵⁴

Education in Spain, firmly in the hands of the Church, first received new impulses with the establishment of the *Institución Libre de Enseñanza* (Free educational institution), founded in 1876 by Francisco Giner de los Rios. Giner de los Rios was also influenced by Krausism and his schools operated independently from the State and Church. Indeed, most reformers saw education as the main tool to regenerate Spanish society and facilitate progress. The anti-clericalism of the liberal intellectual reformers was not as much directed towards the political and economic power of the Spanish Catholic Church as towards the Church's ethical and ideological role which, as they saw it, obscured the path of Spain's historical progress.⁵⁵ The practices of the Church were also attacked in the *Ateneo*, a cultural institution for Spanish intellectuals, in which the influence of Krausism and positivism were felt at the turn of century. At the end of the nineteenth century, after the Spanish-American War, the *Ateneo* became an important centre for generating public opinion regarding the country's regeneration.⁵⁶

The Spanish intellectuals of the Generation of 98 were questioning the status quo by opposing the political system as well as the Church, but mostly criticised the unreflective, apathetic attitude of the Restoration society.⁵⁷ Although Spain was facing very real problems after 1898, such as poverty, economic under-development, social injustice, political corruption, regional separatism, inadequate education and a lack of investment, the intellectuals of the Generation of 98 saw the origin of those problems in a crisis of ideas and individual – as well as national – beliefs. Their conviction was that

⁵⁴Elena M. De Jongh-Rossel, *El Krausismo y la generación de 1898* (Valencia, 1985), pp 15-7.

⁵⁵Álvarez Junco, 'Estado y sociedad en España durante la década de 1890' in *Visperas del 98*, pp 47-64.

⁵⁶Fox, 'Grupos y posiciones intelectuales del 98' in *Discursos del 98*, pp 23-34.

⁵⁷Baker, 'Fin de Siècle culture' in *Spanish history since 1808*, pp 155-79.

a change in people's attitudes had to occur before a change of social and economic circumstances.⁵⁸ Spanish decadence, as Azorín remarked in 1912, was the result of several wars, a general aversion to work, an abandonment of the land and a lack of intellectual curiosity. For Azorín everything bad originated in the absence of critical thinking and analysis.⁵⁹ Republican politician Manuel Azaña was equally damning in his assessment of Spanish attitudes in 1911. Addressing the 'Spanish problem', Azaña accused his countrymen of having no belief in themselves or in Spain's destiny, but only believing in their own misery.⁶⁰ Faced with a humiliating defeat in 1898, such pessimistic voices were not uncommon. Some saw the reason for the colonial failure in the Spanish race which, they argued, was lacking a capacity to adapt to modern civilisation and showed indifference towards science and learning. Regenerationism, however, had a more positive outlook overall and hoped to achieve a transformation of the country through the introduction of educational and cultural reforms.⁶¹

However, Regenerationism was not a uniform movement with a coherent set of ideas on how to reform the State. While some, like conservative politician Antonio Maura, advocated a revolution from above, others like socialists, anarchists, republicans and Catalan nationalists, were in favour of more radical action which sought to break the dominance of the *turno* parties and allow a wider political participation.⁶² During his 'long government', between 1907 to 1909, Maura failed to introduce wide-ranging social, economic, administrative and political reforms which he had hoped would avoid a revolution from below. The long-term reform programme was to be implemented by parliamentary means and required breaking the *cacique* system. Maura identified

⁵⁸Shaw, *La generación del 98*, pp 263-4.

⁵⁹Vicente Muñoz Puelles, 'La cultura de la Restauración' in *Aula-Historia Social*, no. 1 (Spring, 1998), pp 58-71.

⁶⁰'El problema español. Conferencia pronunciada en la Casa del Pueblo de Alcalá de Henares 4.2.1911' in Juliá Santos, *Discursos políticos – Manuel Azaña* (Barcelona, 2004), pp 21-6.

⁶¹Fox, 'Grupos y posiciones intelectuales del 98' in *Discursos del 98*, pp 23-34.

⁶²*Ibid.*

political corruption as embodied by *caciquismo* as Spain's main evil.⁶³ Similarly, Manuel Azaña argued that the greedy fiscal policies of the State only served to crush the weakest in society, leading to poverty and emigration. For him the country's economic problems stemmed from an inadequate exploitation of its natural resources. Like many other reformers of the time he was convinced a focus on education was the only way to allow Spain to catch up with the development of other European nations. The existing education system, according to Azaña, had only contributed to disorder and confusion rather than producing able reformers.⁶⁴

In truth, some educational reforms were introduced in the first decade of the twentieth century. In 1900 the Ministry for Public Instruction and Fine Arts was created, initially led by members or sympathisers of the *Institución libre de la enseñanza*.⁶⁵ In 1907 the Committee for the expansion of scientific studies and investigations (*Junta de Ampliación de Estudios e Investigaciones Científicas*), presided over by Santiago Ramón y Cajal, was founded and in 1910 the Centre for Historical Studies was established, especially improving university education.⁶⁶ In 1900 the government included the costs for primary education and teachers' pay in the budget and a year later a new curriculum for primary education was introduced.⁶⁷ Although these reforms had an effect on the country's illiteracy numbers, figures overall still remained high. Analphabetism in the last twenty-five years of the nineteenth century was reduced from 67% to 55%. By 1920 that number was further reduced to 39% owing to the educational reforms introduced in the wake of the Disaster.⁶⁸

⁶³ María Jesús González, "Neither god nor monster": Antonio Maura and the failure of conservative reformism in Restoration Spain (1893-1923)' in *European History Quarterly*, xxxii, no. 3 (2002), pp 307-334.

⁶⁴'El problema español.' in *Discursos políticos – Manuel Azaña*, pp 21-6.

⁶⁵Rubio, *El tránsito del siglo XIX al XX*, p. 122.

⁶⁶*Ibid.*, pp 121-2.

⁶⁷*Ibid.*, p. 122.

⁶⁸*Ibid.*, p. 123.

Despite a lively debate, not much actual progress was made in terms of political and social reforms. Writer Pío Baroja was particularly damning in his assessment on the impact of the *Generación del 98* when he said that it had no influence in Spain whatsoever.⁶⁹ Antonio Maura, one of the most important Regeneration politicians, also failed in his attempt to integrate the masses into politics.⁷⁰

While the process of modernisation accelerated in some parts of Spain from 1890 onwards, other regions remained under-developed, which was also a reason for the political instability Spain was facing at the beginning of the twentieth century. The uneven distribution of what social and economic change took place led to the creation of a gap between the modernised and the less developed areas of Spain, which also hindered political stability.⁷¹ The established ruling order began to crumble and protests that had already existed before the Disaster were now gaining in strength. Regionalist tendencies in the Basque Country and in Catalonia were coming to the forefront and gathering momentum.⁷² Spain's imperialist ambitions had held the various regions together and colonial expansion provided a common goal. The loss of the last overseas colonies, however, called national unity into question.⁷³ Catalonia was greatly affected by the loss of the colonies; Cuba in particular had been a market for Catalan textile goods. In the aftermath of the Disaster the dominance of the dynastic parties in this region was in decline and Regionalists as well as Republicans were taking charge of Catalan politics.⁷⁴

To the Catalans the Spanish-American War had highlighted the regime's inability to defend the interests of the region and they were beginning to stress the

⁶⁹Gerardo Ebanks, *La España de Baroja* (Madrid, 1974), p.233.

⁷⁰Walther L. Bernecker, 'El debate sobre hispanocentrismo o europeización: la crisis del 1898 en España' in Jochen Mecke (ed.), *Discursos del 98. Albores españoles de una modernidad europea* (Madrid, 2012), pp 35-54.

⁷¹Carr, *Spain 1808 – 1939*, p. 63.

⁷²Francisco J. Romero Salvadó, *The foundations of civil war. Revolution, social conflict and reaction in liberal Spain, 1916 – 1923* (New York & London, 2008), p. 16.

⁷³Balfour, 'The lion and the pig' in *Nationalism and the nation in the Iberian peninsula*, pp 107–17.

⁷⁴Romero Salvadó, *Spain 1914 – 1918*, p. 3.

difference of their national identity to that of Castile.⁷⁵ According to the Catalan movement, Catalonia's (as well as Spain's) future depended on a change in political structures. At the general elections in May 1901 a new Catalan party, the *Lliga Regionalista*, presented itself to the electorate for the first time. The *Lliga* brought together leading representatives of Catalan industry as well as former members of the *Unió Catalanista*, a federation of different Catalan associations. Mainly representing the moderate and conservative Catalan middle class, the *Lliga*'s aim was to gain autonomy for Catalonia rather than establishing a separate state.⁷⁶ Although the *Lliga* gained in popularity and was politically represented in Barcelona, it did not appeal to the working classes, who saw Catalanism as a bourgeois and clerical movement.⁷⁷ Despite their shared criticism of the regime and similar ideas for reforming the country, Catalans and Republicans failed to come together at the beginning of the twentieth century. As Sebastian Balfour argues, this was mainly due to the dominance of class issues prevalent in the two movements.⁷⁸

Opposition towards the regime from the emerging Republican movement was also directed against the Church which, together with the monarchy, was seen as the reason for Spain's under-development. According to the Republicans, a modern and democratic Spain could only be established along secular lines in a society where its citizens were able to take part in the democratic process, undermining the dominance of the traditional elites.⁷⁹ At the end of the nineteenth century anti-clericalism was what propelled the Republican movement into Spanish politics and initiated an attack on the Church hitherto unseen. Populist Republicans such as Vicente Blasco Ibáñez and Alejandro Lerroux seized the moment to establish Republicanism as a political force in

⁷⁵Balfour, *The end of the Spanish empire, 1898 – 1923*, p. 137.

⁷⁶*Ibid.*, pp 138–46.

⁷⁷*Ibid.*, p. 152.

⁷⁸*Ibid.*, p. 156.

⁷⁹Pamela Radcliff, 'The emerging challenge of mass politics' in José Alvarez Junco & Adrian Shubert (eds), *Spanish history since 1808* (London, 2000), pp 138-54.

Spain. This was facilitated by a new electoral law in 1890 and a rising urban working class which was outside the sphere of control of the *cacique* system.⁸⁰

The Republican movement, which greatly benefited from the popular discontent created by the Disaster, was represented by Republicans and Socialists. As outlined before, the Republicans were already gaining a foothold in Catalan politics and together with the *Lliga* challenged the dominance of the dynastic parties. The Republican Party, however, did not present a united front and was divided by various ideological groupings. With the end of the First Spanish Republic in 1874 the Republicans had split into a number of parties and, as a result, they did not present a united political opposition. Local leaders, like Alejandro Lerroux in Barcelona, who formed and led the Radical Republican Party in 1908, sought to reform the movement.⁸¹

Joining with the Socialists in 1909 further split the party and radical Republicans like Alejandro Lerroux were gaining the upper hand within the labour movement.⁸² The Spanish Socialist Party (PSOE) and its trade union, the *Unión General de Trabajadores* (UGT), advocated Marxist ideas and had their followers in the areas of Castile, Asturias and the Basque Country. Another current within the labour movement was Anarcho-Syndicalism, dominant in Catalonia, Levante and Andalusia.⁸³ This movement was represented in the *Confederación Nacional del Trabajo* (CNT) formed in October 1910. Although the moderate Syndicalists were the dominant force within the organisation, the CNT remained more militant than the UGT, favouring direct action and rejecting parliamentary politics.⁸⁴ Due to its internal divisions the Republican-Socialist movement did not yet pose a serious challenge to the Restoration system. Although the Catalan regionalists were gaining in influence, they were also too weak to implement lasting changes.

⁸⁰Álvarez Junco, 'Estado y sociedad en España durante la década de 1890' in *Visperas del 98*.

⁸¹Radcliff, 'The emerging challenge of mass politics' in *Spanish history since 1808*, pp 138-54.

⁸²Paul Herre, *Spanien und der Weltkrieg* (München & Berlin, 1915), p. 60.

⁸³Romero Salvadó, *Spain 1914 – 1918*, pp 28–9.

⁸⁴*Ibid.*, p. 30.

A third oppositional force arising after the Spanish-American War was the army, which, as has been shown, had been a dominant power in nineteenth century Spain. Although the *turno* system had replaced the army as a catalyst for political change, the military still played a vital part in maintaining order in times of growing public unrest.⁸⁵ However, the army's political influence was declining after 1898 and officers were left disillusioned when blamed for the defeat in the Spanish-American War. Although initially after the war, between July 1898 and February 1899, press censorship was imposed to ensure a respectful treatment of the military in the aftermath of the humiliating defeat, it was not until long though before the heated debates in the Cortes became public.⁸⁶ Being largely made responsible for the loss of the colonies by Spain's political elite directly contributed to a feeling of discrimination and offence amongst the military.⁸⁷ It also led to the development of anti-militarist feelings within Spanish society and a distant and dismissive attitude towards the country's armed forces, particularly from the intellectuals.⁸⁸

In addition, the Disaster revealed structural problems in Spain's armed forces. Although reforms were attempted, the Spanish army remained poorly trained, inefficient and over-staffed. The same was true for the navy, which had lost most of its capital ships at the hands of superior US forces.⁸⁹ Investment in arms and equipment was seen as a first priority by the officer class. Although high-ranking officers enjoyed generous pay, lower ranking officers such as lieutenants had to content with a far smaller income.⁹⁰ The average salary of a lieutenant was not sufficient enough to support a family and with the re-introduction of promotion by merit in 1910 the only way of accelerated progression was by volunteering for service in Morocco. At home the ruling

⁸⁵Ibid., p. 55.

⁸⁶Rubio, *El tránsito del siglo XIX al XX*, p. 128.

⁸⁷Ibid., pp 140-1.

⁸⁸Ibid., p. 160.

⁸⁹Balfour, *The end of the Spanish empire, 1898 – 1923*, pp 164–8.

⁹⁰Jacobson & Moreno Luzón, 'The political system of the Restoration, 1875-1914' in *Spanish history since 1808*, pp 94-110.

regime, in the absence of an adequate police force, still relied on the military to defend it against growing agitation from workers, regionalists and other political opponents.⁹¹

Above army internal issues, the military was also concerned with the state of Spanish domestic politics in general and increasingly viewed itself as the only institution capable of reforming the country. Its confidence in the regime had been shattered with the defeat in 1898, for which officers blamed the government. The challenges posed to the social and economic structures of the State by the working class and regionalist movements were viewed as a great threat.⁹² While becoming increasingly isolated from the rest of Spanish society, the army became a defender of the monarchy rather than the regime.⁹³

While the need for reforming Spanish society was evident, there was an uncertainty as to which group had the competency to bring about the necessary changes. Faith in the governing elite had been considerably damaged and it was doubtful whether those in power were able and willing to implement essential reforms. The newly formed government of Prime Minister Francisco Silvela was therefore facing a great challenge in March 1899. Like his successor Maura, Silvela embarked on a conservative reform programme attempting to exact a revolution from above. The two men sought to reform local government and remove *caciquismo*.⁹⁴ Silvela's finance minister, Raimundo Fernandez Villaverde, focused his attention on correcting the increased reliance on indirect taxation by introducing taxes on salaries, shares and net company profits. Cuts in public expenditure were not welcomed by the military, which hoped for renewed investment in the Spanish army. By raising taxes, Villaverde had also angered businessmen and large parts of the middle classes who reacted with violent protests,

⁹¹Payne, *Politics and the military in modern Spain*, p. 124.

⁹²Sebastian Balfour, *The end of the Spanish empire, 1898 – 1923* (Oxford, 1997), pp 169–76.

⁹³Romero Salvadó, *Spain 1914 – 1918*, p. 56.

⁹⁴Carr, *Spain 1808 – 1939*, p. 477.

leading to shop closures and refusal to pay taxes in many parts of Spain.⁹⁵ Having lost the support of the middle classes, as well as having failed to restore order and stability, Silvela resigned from politics in October 1903. He was succeeded by Antonio Maura, who had been minister of the interior in Silvela's government. Under Maura Spanish domestic politics were becoming even more strained and the Liberals, who did not believe Maura would break with the old oligarchical rule, aligned themselves with the Republicans.⁹⁶

Spain's international position before and during the First World War

While the tense domestic situation remained the main focus of the government, foreign policy, even though not dominant, still featured in Spanish politics. Spain's isolationist position was seen as a contributing factor in the loss of the country's last overseas colonies.⁹⁷ Subsequent governments therefore sought to remedy the shortcomings of international policy in the hope of regaining some territory and to secure mainland Spain. Expansion of the Spanish protectorate of Morocco was seen by many as the last opportunity to add a substantial colony to the former empire. As the Count Romanones later stated, 'Morocco was for Spain her last chance to keep her position in the concert of Europe.'⁹⁸

Despite the loss of colonies and the country's declining importance amongst the world powers, Spain, due to its geo-strategically advantageous situation, still had a role to play in the imperialist expansion plans of the Western countries. Spanish activity in Morocco intensified after 1898 but depended heavily on France and Britain, which also

⁹⁵Balfour, *The end of the Spanish empire, 1898 – 1923*, p. 59.

⁹⁶Carr, *Spain 1808 – 1939*, pp 481–83.

⁹⁷Rubio, *El tránsito del siglo XIX al XX*, p. 267. Moradiellos, 'Spain in the world. From great empire to minor European power' in *Spanish history since 1808*, pp 111-20.

⁹⁸Moradiellos, 'Spain in the world. From great empire to minor European power' in *Spanish history since 1808*, pp 111-20.

had an interest in the country.⁹⁹ Spain's military weakness did not allow for the development of an aggressive colonial strategy and therefore she had to be content with what the greater powers left her. The treaty of 1898 was seen as a humiliation and a disaster for Spain, essentially furthering the slow breakup of the Spanish colonial empire.¹⁰⁰ The Spanish-American War was also part of an increased colonial expansion of the greater powers which had begun in the 1870s. Established colonial empires like Britain and France had to compete with the interests of new powers such as the United States, Germany and Japan. In this intense climate of competition Africa in particular became the focus of European colonial aspirations. Smaller nations like Spain, Italy and Portugal were often drawing the shorter straw when it came to the distribution of territories.

Morocco, situated at the entrance and exit to and from the Mediterranean, held an important strategic position. For the British it was vital to limit French influence in North Africa in order to protect Gibraltar and not lose control of the Straits. Therefore Spain's colonial ambitions in the region were useful to British foreign policy since they prevented French dominance over the area. France, on the other hand, was keen to extend her sphere of influence in order to fight off Germany's commercial interests in North-West Africa. In the Entente Cordiale of 1904 between France and Great Britain, French and Spanish influence in Morocco was marked out respectively after France had to give way to English pressure which insisted on a Spanish presence in the area. Given Spain's difficulties in their former colonies Cuba and the Philippines, France was not convinced Spain would be able to administer a Moroccan protectorate effectively.¹⁰¹ However, Spain's interests in Morocco were recognised and formalised in a subsequent

⁹⁹Jens Albes, *Worte wie Waffen. Die deutsche Propaganda in Spanien während des Ersten Weltkrieges* (Essen, 1996), p. 26.

¹⁰⁰Citing *La Epoca*, 11.12.1898, Rubio, *El tránsito del siglo XIX al XX*, pp 106-7.

¹⁰¹Johannes Lepsius, Albrecht Mendelssohn Bartholdy, Friedrich Timme (eds), *Die Große Politik der europäischen Kabinette 1871-1914. Sammlung der diplomatischen Akten des Auswärtigen Amtes* (Berlin, 1922), 1. Band, Teil I, Nr. 6482, Ambassador von Radowitz to Chancellor von Bülow, Nr. 84, Madrid 6.5.1904.

treaty in October 1904. The territory Spain was granted amounted to 20% of the whole of Morocco.

As Sebastian Balfour has argued, a Spanish presence in North Africa also ensured that neither France nor Britain possessed direct control over the Straits of Gibraltar, which also suited Germany. Berlin now began to show an interest in Spain in an attempt to undermine the Entente Cordiale.¹⁰² German diplomats, who had kept a close eye on Franco-Spanish negotiations over Morocco, assessed that a Spanish withdrawal from North Africa would quite possibly lead to a breakdown of the monarchy and usher in a republic in Spain. In the event of this happening, they also feared that Italy would soon follow suit which would bolster France's position in the south of Europe. This scenario was not advantageous for Germany and therefore German diplomats wished for the southern entrance to the Mediterranean to be under Spanish rather than French control.¹⁰³ Germany began to present herself as a defender of Spanish interests as could be seen in the Kaiser's 1904 visit to Vigo, where he met King Alfonso XIII.¹⁰⁴

The young king had just taken over the throne in 1902 at the age of only 16. His mother, Maria Christina of Austria, had acted as regent until then. When handing over power to her son the queen was hopeful that the difficult times had been overcome and a new era of tranquillity was lying ahead of Spain.¹⁰⁵ This, however, was far from the truth and Alfonso's reign was made difficult not only by the onset of a world war but also by increasing domestic instability which threatened to undermine his rule. The

¹⁰²Sebastian Balfour, 'Spain and the Great Powers in the aftermath of the Disaster of 1898' in Sebastian Balfour, Paul Preston (eds.), *Spain and the Great Powers in the twentieth century* (London, 1999), pp 13-31.

¹⁰³Lepsius, Mendelssohn Bartholdy, Timme (eds), *Die Große Politik der europäischen Kabinette 1871-1914*. 1. Band, Teil I, Nr. 6488, Chancellor von Bülow to Ambassador von Metternich, Nr. 104, Telegram, Berlin 31.5.1904.

¹⁰⁴Balfour, 'Spain and the Great Powers in the aftermath of the Disaster of 1898', in *Spain and the Great Powers in the twentieth century*, pp 13-31.

¹⁰⁵Antonio Ros, *Los gobiernos españoles desde la pérdida de las colonias hasta la caída de Alfonso XIII* (Barcelona, 1980), pp 50-1.

young king had enjoyed a military education and often intervened directly in military matters as well as showing initiative in the country's external affairs. Although his interventions were not as far-reaching as those of Wilhelm II or the Russian tsar, they were not always unproblematic. While Alfonso often did not wish to seek the approval of his ministers in military appointments, his interventions usually fell in line with the general policies of the State when it came to international matters.¹⁰⁶ The king took on a very active role not only in the conception of external policies but also in carrying out these policies, assuming the role of a diplomat and ambassador for the Spanish state. He frequently negotiated directly with foreign representatives over the details of trade agreements and other treaties.¹⁰⁷ The meeting between the Kaiser and Alfonso XIII in 1904 was not welcomed by all of Spain's political elite. A divide, which was to widen during the First World War, was already emerging between those advocating a closer alliance with Germany and those favouring the Entente Cordiale.

Although Spain did not play a major part in Germany's foreign policy at the beginning of the twentieth century, the Spanish-American War raised German attention to Spain's plight since a redistribution of colonies had an impact on global power balances. The German government stayed neutral during the conflict, but German public opinion was sympathetic with the Spanish cause.¹⁰⁸ As a monarchy with an oligarchical rule that favoured traditional values, Spain might have seemed more familiar to Germans rather than the progressive democratic system of the newly emerging power, the United States. The late nineteenth century also saw an expansion of German activity on the world market; this included, by extension, the establishment of German companies in Spain. Electro technical companies like AEG and Siemens-Schuckert-Werke not only founded subsidiaries in Spain but also played a substantial

¹⁰⁶Antonio Niño Rodríguez, 'El rey embajador: Alfonso XIII en la política internacional', in Javier Moreno Luzón (ed.), *Alfonso XIII. Un político en el trono* (Madrid, 2003), pp 239-76.

¹⁰⁷Ibid.

¹⁰⁸Lester Burrell Shippee, 'Germany and the Spanish-American War' in *The American Historical Review*, xxx, no. 4 (Jul., 1925), pp 754 – 77.

part in building up the electricity supply of the major Spanish towns. Krupp Werke supplied the Spanish army with canons and facilitated mining.¹⁰⁹

In addition to German economic activity in Spain prior to the First World War, a German community existed that established various organisations and institutions which served to keep it together and maintain a cultural identity abroad. Some of the community's emblematic institutions, such as the German schools, also aimed at spreading German culture.¹¹⁰ Furthermore, as diplomatic documents show, the German Ministry for Foreign Affairs (*Auswärtige Amt*) kept files on Spanish journalists and generals from 1900 onwards, noting a pro-German stance amongst some influential Spaniards. The First World War intensified this interest and German activity in Spain became widespread.

For Spain's colonial ambitions Germany's aggressive behaviour in the First Moroccan Crisis had the advantage of curbing French expansion. The conference of Algeciras in 1906 recognised the sovereignty of the Sultan as well as stating shared French and Spanish responsibility to ensure stability in the region, which was becoming more and more difficult to uphold in the Spanish protectorate. Alfonso XIII saw Spain's participation in the conference of Algeciras as a sign that the country still held some importance amongst the great powers. Equally he was aware of Spain's limited scope to negotiate any territorial expansion in her North African colony and carefully expressed the hope to not leave the conference empty handed.¹¹¹

Despite internal disagreements over what foreign alliance would be in Spain's best interest, the Cartagena Pact of 1907, in which France, Britain and Spain pledged mutual guarantee against German ambitions, formally brought Spain into the Allied camp. The Entente proved effective during the Second Moroccan Crisis of 1911/1912

¹⁰⁹Albes, *Worte wie Waffen*, p. 41.

¹¹⁰*Ibid.*, pp 42-4.

¹¹¹Niño Rodríguez, 'El rey embajador: Alfonso XIII en la política internacional' in *Alfonso XIII. Un político en el trono*, pp 239-76.

when German-French economic rivalry in Morocco flared up once again. Spain was seeing its influence threatened after France occupied Fez and responded by occupying Larache and Alcazarquivir. The arrival of a German gunboat at Agadir then prompted Britain to come to the aid of France and eventually Germany had to give in to French pressure. As a concession, Germany received a part of the French Congo in return for a smaller territory in Central Africa. In the Treaty of Fez of 1912 the Spanish protectorate in the north and far south-west of Morocco was agreed, while the French protectorate now stretched over most of the country.

In the intensifying rivalry amongst the Greater Powers at the eve of the First World War, Spain was already relegated to a second position. Economically and militarily too weak to negotiate better terms for herself or to pose a serious threat to Britain and France, she was still of strategic importance to the other European powers and therefore not completely side-lined. This position would not change with the outbreak of hostilities in 1914.

Spain's territories in Morocco were to be a source of great trouble and unrest outside and inside the country. Inhabited by rebellious tribes who would not succumb to foreign rule easily, the Spanish government had to engage in a colonial war which was not met with popular support at home. After the Disaster the State was no longer able to re-establish its authority by appealing to the traditional national sentiment as it had done during the Spanish-American War, which meant popular support for any further imperial projects of expansion was difficult to find.¹¹²

When, in the summer of 1909, the government called-up reservists for a campaign in Morocco in order to defend Spanish mining concessions against guerrilla attacks, a general strike was called. During the summer Republicans and Socialists had voiced their opposition against the campaign in Morocco, which was seen as solely

¹¹²Balfour, 'The lion and the pig' in *Nationalism and the nation in the Iberian península*, pp 107– 17.

protecting financial interests of Spanish investors.¹¹³ The general strike on 26 July 1909, called by the Anarchist organisation *Solidaridad Obrera* (Workers' Solidarity), developed into an outbreak of violence in Barcelona and other Catalan towns during which churches and convents were burnt. Maura's government suppressed the revolt violently: 175 people were killed and five more executed after the events, among them the well-known writer Francisco Ferrer.¹¹⁴ Ferrer, who propagated anti-clericalism in the Modern Schools he founded in Barcelona, was well known outside of Spain. His execution caused protest in Europe as well as in the United States. In London the Social Democratic Party organised a protest against Ferrer's execution rallying 8,000 to 10,000 people on Trafalgar Square.¹¹⁵ Demonstrations in Paris even led to violence and saw several policemen injured and one killed.¹¹⁶ In Italy a general strike was called in honour of Ferrer and the Rome Chamber of Labour went so far to suggest a renaming of the Piazza di Spagna to Piazza Ferrer. They also asked the Italian government to break off all diplomatic relations with Spain.¹¹⁷ In New York Socialists used the Ferrer execution as a way of showing their opposition to the Catholic Church.¹¹⁸

The events of what became known as the Tragic Week also caused the different oppositional movements to drift further apart. Catalan conservatives feared the proletarian mob would destroy Spanish society and argued that the violent protests were proof that the working classes were not ready yet for democracy and needed to be restrained with force if necessary.¹¹⁹ The army, which had welcomed the new colonial enterprise in Morocco, reacted with brutal repression to the public backlash which further alienated the military from civil society.¹²⁰ Within the regime the protest against

¹¹³Ibid.

¹¹⁴Romero Salvadó, *Spain 1914 – 191*, p. 4.

¹¹⁵*The Times*, 18 Oct. 1909.

¹¹⁶*The Times*, 16 Oct. 1909.

¹¹⁷Ibid.

¹¹⁸*New York Times*, 24 Oct. 1909.

¹¹⁹Balfour, *The end of the Spanish empire, 1898 – 1923*, p. 154.

¹²⁰Ibid., p. 186.

Ferrer's execution and the general unpopularity of the government were used by the Liberals, who were dissatisfied with Maura's reforms, to oust the Prime Minister from office. The Conservatives' request for a renewal of confidence was mistakenly treated by the King Alfonso XIII as Maura's resignation.¹²¹ Alfonso appointed a new Prime Minister, Segismundo Moret, who was only to last four months in office.

Moret's successor, the Liberal José Canalejas, who took over in March 1910, was equally unable to deal with growing labour protests since his reforms to improve the situation of the working classes did not go far enough. Like his predecessors, Canalejas reacted with repression to workers protests and strikes. In November 1912 he was assassinated in Madrid by an Anarchist.¹²² According to the rules of the *turno pacífico* it would have been the turn of the Conservative Party now to form a new government but the Liberal speaker of the lower chamber, Count Romanones, used the opportunity to declare his right to temporarily take charge of the premiership. Outraged by Romanones' actions, Maura consequently refused to work within the system and rotate in government with the Liberals. When the Romanones government fell apart in October 1913, the Conservative party did not support their old leader Maura in his refusal to adhere to the rules of the *turno* and instead enabled Eduardo Dato to take over the premiership.¹²³

By 1914 the Restoration system was still intact, even though it had been challenged and endured severe criticism. The political instability created in the aftermath of the Disaster was to increase during the First World War. At the outbreak of the Great War the Conservative Dato government declared Spain's neutrality. This move was hardly surprising given the country's military and economic weakness as well as its domestic troubles. Spain was also not tied to any of the warring parties. Even though

¹²¹Carr, *Spain 1808 – 1939*, p. 486.

¹²²Romero Salvadó, *The foundations of civil war*, pp 21–2.

¹²³*Ibid.*, p. 22.

treaties with France and Britain regarding African colonies had been signed, they did not force Spain to join the fight of the Entente.¹²⁴ While some, like Maura, hoped neutrality would enable Spain to lead peace negotiations at the end of the war,¹²⁵ others, such as the leader of the *Lliga Regionalista*, Francesc Cambó, viewed the country's neutrality negatively. Cambó declared that since Spain had no national ideal and was only able to maintain a civil war, there was no other possibility than opting for neutrality.¹²⁶

However, the majority of Spaniards initially welcomed the decision of the Dato government to opt for neutrality.¹²⁷ As the conservative newspaper *ABC* pointed out, Spain had been deserted by the Western European powers during the Spanish-American War; therefore, the country should not feel obliged now to enter into a conflict which pursued interests of no relevance to Spain. A minority of politicians and journalists though, disagreed with the government's decision.¹²⁸ Among them were the far-Right Carlists who supported Germany and the Central Powers. On the side of the Allies, the Republicans, in particular Alejandro Lerroux, advocated direct intervention in the conflict.¹²⁹ Although Lerroux claimed to be a pacifist and declared to be an enemy of the wars of adventure and conquest which only aimed at territorial expansion,¹³⁰ he thought that the conflict facing Europe in 1914 was too great in its scope and significance for any nation to remain neutral. Lerroux stated in this case neutrality was selfish and cowardly.¹³¹

¹²⁴Herre, *Spanien und der Weltkrieg*, p. 64.

¹²⁵Romero Salvadó, *Spain 1914 – 1918*, p. 6.

¹²⁶Fernando Diaz-Plaja, *Francófilos y Germanófilos. Los Españoles en la guerra Europea* (Madrid, 1973), p. 15.

¹²⁷Francisco Romero Salvadó, 'Fatal Neutrality': Pragmatism or Capitulation? Spain's Foreign Policy during the Great War' in *European History Quarterly*, xxxiii, no. 3 (July, 2003), pp 291–315.

¹²⁸*ABC*, 25 Aug. 1914.

¹²⁹Romero Salvadó, *Spain 1914 – 1918*, p. 7.

¹³⁰Alejandro Lerroux, *España y la guerra: la verdad a mi país* (Madrid, 1915), p. 115.

¹³¹*Ibid.*, p.117.

Opposition to neutrality from an unsuspected side came from the Liberal Party leader, Count Romanones. An article with the title *Neutralidades que matan* (Fatal neutralities) was published in the liberal newspaper *El Diario Universal* in the wake of the government's declaration of neutrality. Although Romanones denied being the author of the article, his pro-Allied stance and favouring of intervention in the war would become clear during his administration from 1915 to 1917. In his autobiography the Count admitted to having written *Neutralidades que matan* but the political climate in Spain at the outbreak of the war did not permit him to put his name under it at the time. As Romanones saw it, the rapid German invasion convinced many Spaniards of an equally quick German victory while he always believed in a victory of the Allies.¹³² The article itself declared Spain should align herself with the Allies, but did not go as far as promoting entry into the war. Nevertheless, it argued that only by siding with the Allies would Spain be able to regain a position of significance in Europe. Romanones' private economic interests as a shareholder of mining industries in Morocco and coal and pyrite mines in Asturias and southern Spain rendered him vulnerable to the accusation of seeking to align Spain's foreign policy with his own financial needs. The king's sentiments throughout the conflict were not entirely clear and he maintained the appearance of neutrality, hoping to take on a mediating role at the end of the war.¹³³ As mentioned before, Alfonso took an active part in the country's foreign policy and while the defence of the Moroccan protectorate was of great importance to the king, a claim for Gibraltar was always under discussion¹³⁴ and frequently used by the Spanish monarch in negotiations with both belligerents.¹³⁵

Despite Spain's neutrality, the war would soon deepen existing divisions within Spanish society and accelerate the process of reform started at the end of the nineteenth

¹³²Conde de Romanones, *Notas de una vida* (Madrid, 1999), pp 379–80.

¹³³Romero Salvadó, *Spain 1914 – 1918*, p. 13.

¹³⁴Julian Cortes-Cavanillas, *Alfonso XIII y la guerra del 14* (Madrid, 1976), p. 48.

¹³⁵See chapter four.

century. The ideological gap between the ruling elite and its critics was now marked by their respective allegiances with one of the belligerents. In Spain, the European conflict played out as a confrontation of the *Germanófilos*, supporters of Germany and the Central Powers, and the *Francófilos*, supporters of the allies. These camps embodied a clash of ideals: the preservation of traditional values and a hierarchical society versus modernisation and a liberal government.

Controversies between *Germanófilos* and *Francófilos* offered the Central Powers and the Allies ammunition for propaganda and allowed both sides to maintain their interests in Spain. Although not a major player in the conflict, Spain's geographical position was of great strategic importance for the greater European powers since it allowed control over the sea routes to the western Mediterranean as well as the eastern Atlantic. The Spanish coastline offered an ideal refuge for submarines. The country was also able to produce and provide a wide variety of foodstuffs and military supplies vital for the war effort of the Allies and the Central Powers.¹³⁶ Britain in particular depended on Spanish supplies of iron ore and pyrites. In return, Spain urgently needed coal and cotton as well as other supplies which could only be obtained from the Allies. This co-dependency was used by the British government to pressure Spain into cooperating with the demands of the Entente.¹³⁷ Given Spain's geographical proximity to Britain and France as well as its economic reliance on both countries, Germany never seriously considered for Spain to actively join the Central Powers in their war effort. Instead the German effort in Spain was focussed on enforcing strict neutrality and therefore ensuring the country would not join the Entente.

Despite their neutrality, European states such as Spain, the Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden, Norway and Switzerland were not left unaffected by the conflict and

¹³⁶Ron M. Carden, *German policy toward neutral Spain, 1914 – 1918* (New York, London, 1987), pp 2–3.

¹³⁷N.A., CAB/24/7, Image ref. 0064, Cabinet Papers, War Cabinet, Memorandum by the Minister of Munitions, 14.3.1917. Also see, NA, CAB/24/35, Image ref. 0073, Cabinet Papers, Intelligence Bureau, Department of Information 1917, Weekly report on Spain XV, 13.12.1917.

although they did not make an active military contribution, they participated in the war in many other ways. As Jean-Jacques Becker pointed out, neutral states performed an essential task in keeping financial and diplomatic channels open between the warring parties.¹³⁸ Therefore, it is vital to highlight the neutral's role during the First World War and to investigate their relationship with each of the warring parties. The Allies as well as the Central Powers attempted to influence neutral European states through diplomacy, economy and propaganda.¹³⁹ By trading with neutral countries, Europe's war economy was kept alive and countries like Spain provided vital goods for the home and battle fronts of the belligerent nations. Furthermore, the neutral zones in Europe played an important part in keeping up communication by facilitating the exchange of information and propaganda material. This was of great significance in particular for the Central Powers, which had to overcome allied information blockades. The neutral territories also provided the Allies and Central Powers with suitable posts for setting up espionage networks that would enable both sides to closely observe enemy activity.

Although there cannot be a generalised explanation as to why some countries opted for official neutrality at the outbreak of the war, a closer look at them highlights some similarities. These include, for example, a lack of military resources enabling them to take part in a large-scale conflict. The European countries which at the outbreak of the war had not been directly attacked, or were not forced by treaty obligations to come to the aid of an ally, had the opportunity to assess their options and decide what was best in the national interest. As pointed out before, neutrality during war time did not mean passivity. It is evident by looking at the examples of Spain and the Netherlands that despite their official neutrality, those countries tried to make an impact on international politics in areas other than the battlefield. At the beginning of the

¹³⁸Jean-Jacques Becker, 'War aims and neutrality' in J. Horne (ed.), *A companion to World War I* (Chichester, 2010), pp 202–16.

¹³⁹Albes, *Worte wie Waffen*, p. 8.

twentieth century, the two states which had held dominant positions in early modern Europe, had lost their significance on the European stage. The Netherlands used their neutrality as a reflection of their national history, emphasising a moral and cultural superiority by placing their interests above power politics and military ambitions.¹⁴⁰ The concept of neutrality during wartime, however, was not clearly defined, allowing belligerents to infringe on the rights of neutral states which did not possess the commercial and financial resources to resist the pressures put on them.¹⁴¹

The Hague Conventions of 1899 and 1907 forbade belligerents to move troops, ammunition or any other war supplies across neutral territory.¹⁴² Selling weapons and ammunition to a belligerent, however, was legal for private companies of neutral countries. Spanish munition factories did not want to miss out on a considerable profit and despite German protestations and boycott attempts, the arms trade between Spain and the Allies continued throughout the First World War.¹⁴³ Issues also arose from the neutrals' economic dependency on either one of the belligerents and their need to keep up trade, which eroded the concept of neutrality during the First World War. Spain's dependency on British coal was often used to pressure the country into cooperating with the demands of the Entente.

The International Naval Conference of London in 1909 attempted to establish laws of naval warfare which would clarify and regulate diplomatic relations during wartime. Although it was intended to grant '[...] widest possible freedom for neutrals in the unhindered navigation of the seas [...]'¹⁴⁴, the legal framework set up by the Hague Conventions and the Declaration of London failed almost completely when put to test

¹⁴⁰Maartje M. Abbenhuis, *The art of staying neutral - the Netherlands in the First World War, 1914-1918* (Amsterdam, 2006), p. 29.

¹⁴¹*Ibid.*, pp 117–8.

¹⁴²Roderick Ogley, *The theory and practice of neutrality in the twentieth century* (London, 1970), p. 36.

¹⁴³See chapter five.

¹⁴⁴C. H. Stockton, 'The International Naval Conference of London, 1908–1909' in *The American Journal of International Law*, iii, no. 3 (Jul., 1909), pp 596–618.

during the Great War.¹⁴⁵ Germany's policy of unrestricted submarine warfare, which also targeted Spanish merchant vessels, put a great strain on Spanish-German relations during the war.¹⁴⁶

Beside economic pressures some neutral states, such as the Netherlands and Denmark, also had to fear invasion from one of the warring parties due to their geographical location. Danish governments therefore, opted for a neutrality favourable to Germany and the Central Powers despite large pro-Allied sympathies prevalent amongst the Danish king, army, press and the Danish people.¹⁴⁷ Conversely, Norway depended on Great Britain to maintain its economic welfare and therefore, opted for neutrality which favoured the Entente.¹⁴⁸ Although Spain never seriously had to fear invasion by any of the belligerents, neutrality remained a contested issue throughout the war. Most neutrals were unable to maintain strict and impartial neutrality during the First World War due their weak political and economic standing amongst the greater powers.¹⁴⁹

Indeed, those countries that abandoned neutrality, like Romania and Italy for example, hoped to improve their position in a post-war Europe in addition to gaining territory. In Spain any serious considerations of entering the war were always accompanied by demands for more territory, particularly in North Africa. The return of Gibraltar and a free hand in Portugal were also on top of the agenda when it came to negotiations with either of the belligerents. Neither the Entente nor the Central Powers could offer great enough territorial gains, though, for Spain to seriously consider joining their war effort. Ultimately a neutral Spain was of greater benefit for both

¹⁴⁵Nils Ørvik, *The decline of neutrality 1914-1941, with special reference to the United States and the northern neutrals* (London, 1971), pp 35–8.

¹⁴⁶See chapter four.

¹⁴⁷Carsten Holbraad, *Danish neutrality: a study in the foreign policy of a small state* (Oxford, 1991), pp 49–51.

¹⁴⁸Olav Riste, *The Neutral Ally: Norway's relations with belligerent powers in the First World War* (Oslo, 1965), p. 226.

¹⁴⁹Holbraad, *Danish neutrality*, p. 52.

belligerents.¹⁵⁰ Besides lacking the military power necessary to make a serious impact on the war, something that did not stop Portugal or Romania from joining the fighting, large sections of the governing elite feared an active participation in the European conflict would inevitably lead to an overthrow of the conservative monarchic regime in Spain.

Efraim Karsh notes that maintaining neutrality was far more complex for smaller states than for a great power. In a war between great powers a small neutral state is exposed to pressure from both belligerents and therefore needs to use all its resources in order to keep up a policy of neutrality that satisfies both belligerents.¹⁵¹ Spanish neutrality often vacillated between the belligerents. The position of King Alfonso XIII was especially difficult to ascertain during the war and despite his open, impulsive and emotional character, he was able to conceal his personal convictions in this matter.¹⁵² From the early stages of the war Alfonso tried to position himself as a mediator between the warring parties. His attempts to form a neutral alliance with Romania and Italy, however, did not bear fruits.¹⁵³ Similarly, the suggestion of a joint mediation with the United States, sent by the Spanish foreign minister to the American Department of State at the beginning of the war, fell on deaf ears since Woodrow Wilson thought the timing was not right to make a peace proposal.¹⁵⁴ The Dutch also failed to obtain the support of the United States, a great-power neutral with the ability to make an impact on the belligerents. To protect the rights of neutrals, the Dutch, who also had aspirations to

¹⁵⁰See chapter four.

¹⁵¹Efraim Karsh, *Neutrality and small states* (London and New York, 1988), p. 4, quoting from Quincy Wright *A study of war*.

¹⁵²Niño Rodríguez, 'El rey embajador: Alfonso XIII en la política internacional' in *Alfonso XIII. Un político en el trono*, pp 239-76.

¹⁵³*Ibid.*

¹⁵⁴Javier Ponce, 'Spanish neutrality during the First World War' in Hertog, Johan den; Kruizinga, Samuël (eds), *Caught in the middle. Neutrals, neutrality and the First World War* (Amsterdam, 2011), pp 53-66.

hold a peace conference at The Hague, suggested a Dutch-American alliance. This was rejected by the Americans since they were unwilling to be tied down in any alliance.¹⁵⁵

Other neutral countries tried to form alliances in order to defend their rights during wartime. The three Scandinavian countries came together and subsequently tried to attract other neutrals to join them. In October 1914 Norwegian, Swedish, Danish and Dutch representatives met in Stockholm to discuss neutral rights in wartime trade, in particular the effects war was having on maritime commerce. The United States declined to join the conference and the Netherlands eventually stopped participating in the joint neutral effort. However, the three Scandinavian countries drafted a declaration regarding neutral rights based on the idea of the freedom of the seas which was forwarded to the belligerent governments in November 1914.¹⁵⁶ Without the support from the United States the effort of the Scandinavian countries made little impact on the warring parties.¹⁵⁷

To protest the British blockade and the restrictions on trade arising from it, several Latin American countries approached the American government but no concerted neutral effort resulted from this initiative.¹⁵⁸ Germany was particularly interested in a neutral alliance and hoped that pressure exerted from the neutral countries would force Britain to loosen the blockade and also lead to peace terms more favourable to Germany. The *Auswärtige Amt* encouraged the Spanish and Dutch governments respectively to work closer together with the Scandinavian neutrals.¹⁵⁹

Without support from the US, Spain saw no merit in joining the alliance of Northern European neutrals.¹⁶⁰ It was believed the neutral alliance would have little

¹⁵⁵Marc Frey, *Der Erste Weltkrieg und die Niederlande. Ein neutrales Land im politischen Kalkuel der Kriegsgegner* (Berlin. 1998), pp 102-3.

¹⁵⁶Riste, *The Neutral Ally*, p. 60.

¹⁵⁷Holbraad, *Danish neutrality*, p. 52.

¹⁵⁸Frey, *Der Erste Weltkrieg und die Niederlande*, pp 104-5.

¹⁵⁹*Ibid.*, p.107.

¹⁶⁰P.A., R20518, Weltkrieg, WK Nr. 2b, Zusammenschluss der neutralen Staaten zwecks Wahrung ihrer Neutralität 1916–19, Romberg (Bern) to Auswärtiges Amt, 15.12.1916.

practical success and would not enable Spain to withstand Allied economic pressure. King Alfonso, who harboured ambitions to act as arbiter at peace negotiations, thought it best to wait for the end of the war when belligerents and non-belligerents would come together to make lasting agreements.¹⁶¹ It was Alfonso's wish for Spain to regain a position of importance amongst the European powers. He thought by hosting a peace conference this could be achieved. Berlin encouraged the Spanish king in his hopes, since the conservative monarch was seen to be more favourable to the German cause.¹⁶²

Economic crisis and political instability 1915 – 1917

Beside an increased foreign interest, the Great War also provided Spain with an economic boom. The country's neutrality allowed it to trade with both warring parties, while, conversely, its domestic market was benefiting from the sudden lack of foreign competition. By early 1915 imports were decreasing drastically while the volume and prices of exports were rising. Economic prosperity, however, was not evenly distributed across all regions and sections of society in Spain. The sudden influx of money sparked off inflation, which was reflected in a substantial increase in the prices of essential items. A reduction in imports meant that foodstuffs were becoming scarce, which particularly affected the rural and urban workers whose living conditions were worsening.¹⁶³ The social and economic inequality, aggravated by the conditions of the war, caused civil unrest in Spain, leading to the outbreak of food riots, mutinies and popular protests. Failing to find a solution for the country's economic problems as well as not being able to deal with mounting protest, Eduardo Dato resigned and the Liberals formed a new government in December 1915, led by the Count Romanones. Dato's

¹⁶¹P.A., R20518, Weltkrieg, WK Nr. 2b, Zusammenschluss der neutralen Staaten zwecks Wahrung ihrer Neutralität 1916–19, Lancken to Auswärtiges Amt, 18.7.1917; Ratibor to Auswärtiges Amt, 25.8.1917.

¹⁶²P.A., R20518, Weltkrieg, WK Nr. 2b, Zusammenschluss der neutralen Staaten zwecks Wahrung ihrer Neutralität 1916–19, Jagow to Lancken, 19.9.1916.

¹⁶³Romero Salvadó, *Spain 1914 – 1918*, pp 22–4.

administration had shown that there was still an unwillingness to break with the old regime. It was the local leaders, *caciques* and business elites who benefited from the war and the government was not prepared to take away their privileges.¹⁶⁴

The government of Romanones, however, was equally unable to deal effectively with Spain's economic situation. Electoral fraud still persisted and ensured the dominance of the dynastic parties. In the general elections of April 1916 the Republican-Socialist coalition was not only defeated, but the predominance of dynastic politicians, who were also linked by family ties, prompted the labour movement into action. The UGT congress in May 1916 demanded from government and parliament the introduction of immediate measures to improve the situation in Spain. If their demands were not met, the labour movement would resort to more aggressive measures against the regime.¹⁶⁵ Despite their ideological differences, the UGT and the CNT formed a coalition in order to present a united front against the government.¹⁶⁶

While the labour movement was proving increasingly challenging to the regime, Catalan regionalists also continued their offensive, demanding not just Catalan autonomy but actual participation in the political process and the destruction of the *turno*.¹⁶⁷ As reaction to the growing popular protest and the deteriorating economic situation, the minister for finance, Santiago Alba, introduced the Plan of National Reconstruction in June 1916. This ten-year plan sought to reform the country and Alba hoped to finance it by taxing war profits of industry and trade which brought on resistance from the *Lliga Regionalista*, which tried to exert pressure on Madrid in order to obtain economic concessions for Catalonia.¹⁶⁸ The Socialists also doubted whether the government would be able to introduce the suggested reforms. They therefore sided

¹⁶⁴Ibid., pp 25–6.

¹⁶⁵Francisco J. Romero Salvadó, 'The Great War and the crisis of liberalism in Spain, 1916 – 1917' in *The Historical Journal*, xlvii, no. 4 (Dec., 2003), pp 893–914.

¹⁶⁶Idem, *Spain 1914 – 1918*, p. 36.

¹⁶⁷Idem, 'The Great War and the crisis of liberalism in Spain, 1916 – 1917' in *The Historical Journal*, pp 893–914.

¹⁶⁸Idem, *Spain 1914 – 1918*, p. 44.

with the *Lliga*.¹⁶⁹ Facing strong opposition, Alba's ambitious reform programme for Spain failed and the labour movement began to mobilise asking for solutions to food shortages, unemployment and inflation.

Due to their lack of action, the government allowed the economic crisis to worsen, which brought the country close to a revolutionary uprising. At the beginning of 1917 the Socialists, increasingly exasperated with the government's inefficiency, decided drastic measures were needed to bring about change.¹⁷⁰ Strikes and food riots were a common feature of the rising social unrest Spain was experiencing in the first months of 1917. The overthrow of the Tsarist regime in Russia also gave Spanish Socialists hope that an offensive against the regime might be successful and a Republic could be established.¹⁷¹ UGT and CNT agreed to launch a general strike in the hope of overthrowing the regime and modernising the State. The economic crisis, however, did not only affect the working classes but also threatened the living standards and salaries of public sector workers, including the army. To protect their interests, mid-ranking army officers organised themselves into *Juntas militares de defensa*, modelled on trade unions. Officers stationed on mainland Spain had watched with mounting concern how their colleagues in the colonies received promotions based on their war achievements. A military reform programme introduced in 1914 which proposed the introduction of promotion by merit, and was financed by reducing the great officer surplus, further aggravated the military.¹⁷²

Amongst growing domestic tension, the government of Count Romanones was also faced with outside pressures which called the country's policy of neutrality into question. Germany's pursuit of unrestricted submarine warfare, which necessarily

¹⁶⁹Idem, 'The Great War and the crisis of liberalism in Spain, 1916 – 1917' in *The Historical Journal*, pp 893–914.

¹⁷⁰Idem, *Spain 1914 – 1918*, p. 41.

¹⁷¹Idem, 'The Great War and the crisis of liberalism in Spain, 1916 – 1917' in *The Historical Journal*, pp 893–914.

¹⁷²Ibid.

resulted in the targeting of Spanish vessels, gave the pro-Allied Romanones an argument for abandoning neutrality and joining the Entente. Following the sinking of the Spanish steamer *San Fulgencio* in April 1917, the Count was prepared to deliver an ultimatum to Germany which could have resulted in a break of diplomatic ties and a closer cooperation with the Allies. However, it would not come to that. Shocked by events in Russia and concerned about the tense domestic situation, King Alfonso XIII, who had maintained a position of neutrality throughout the conflict, sided with the *Germanófilos* and ensured the fall of Romanones.¹⁷³

A campaign against the Prime Minister, largely supported by the German embassy, was orchestrated in the Spanish press accusing him of leading Spain into war out of personal financial interests. Romanones felt the crusade against him was becoming more and more violent, creating a suffocating atmosphere.¹⁷⁴ With the Liberal leader, the Marquis of Alhucemas, and the speaker of the lower chamber of the Cortes, Miguel Villanueva, insisting on the continuation of neutrality,¹⁷⁵ Romanones failed to obtain support from some of his own party colleagues and eventually had to resign.¹⁷⁶ The Count was replaced by Garcia Prieto, the Marquis of Alhucemas, who formed a new liberal cabinet on request of the king.¹⁷⁷ The debate over neutrality revealed the reluctance of the Spanish ruling elite to pursue an active foreign policy, fearing that a closer alliance with the Entente would bring about drastic changes in Spain and infringe on their power and influence. Therefore Alfonso XIII's actions have to be viewed as a defence of the monarchy rather than an agreement with the German cause. Worried about the army turning against him, he ordered the dissolution of the military *juntas*, to which the officers reacted with revolt.

¹⁷³Romero Salvadó, *Spain 1914 – 1918*, p. 84.

¹⁷⁴Romanones, *Notas de una vida*, p. 395. Also see chapter four.

¹⁷⁵Romero Salvadó, *Spain 1914 – 1918*, p. 83.

¹⁷⁶Lilian Gelos de Vaz Ferreira, *Die Neutralitätspolitik Spaniens während des Ersten Weltkrieges – unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der deutsch-spanischen Beziehungen* (Hamburg, 1966), p. 68.

¹⁷⁷Romero Salvadó, 'Fatal Neutrality' in *European History Quarterly*, pp 291–315.

The liberal cabinet of Alhucemas only lasted two months and was replaced by the Conservative administration of Eduardo Dato in June 1917.¹⁷⁸ Ignoring the revolutionary mood in the country, the king was adamant to enforce the *turno*, continuing to exclude Socialists, Republicans, army officers and the Catalan bourgeoisie from power. Their discontent, however, was growing and in the summer of 1917 the various groups opposing the regime came close to joining in their effort to stage a revolutionary uprising. A challenge to the oligarchy was mounted when the *Lliga* called for a Constituent Assembly seeking to alter political structures in Spain. On 19 July 1917 Catalan regionalists organised an alternative parliament in Barcelona which hoped to implement change by peaceful means.¹⁷⁹ The Assembly of Parliamentarians demanded truthful elections as well as a constitutional reform. Backed by the Republicans and Socialists, the assembly movement, as it became known as, sought the help of Antonio Maura, who had also been approached by the military *juntas*. Under Maura's leadership the various movements could have combined their efforts, possibly leading to an overthrow of the regime. Despite Maura's criticism of the *turno* system, he was not prepared to participate in an attack on Spain's monarchy and refused any collaboration with the movement.¹⁸⁰

The Dato administration desperately tried to control public unrest by promising to meet the demands of the military *juntas* and denouncing the Assembly movement as a Separatist and Communist threat.¹⁸¹ The workers' movement, on the other hand, inspired by events of the summer, hoped to have the support of the bourgeoisie and the army and staged a general strike on 13 August 1917. Their attempt to overthrow the regime, however, went wrong, and instead of joining the revolutionary action, the

¹⁷⁸Francisco Romero Salvadó, *Twentieth-century Spain. Politics and society in Spain, 1898 – 1998* (London, 1999), pp 35–6.

¹⁷⁹*Ibid.*, p. 36.

¹⁸⁰*Ibid.*, pp 36–7.

¹⁸¹*Ibid.*, p. 38.

bourgeoisie remained passive while the army reacted with brutal oppression.¹⁸² Seventy people were killed during the unrest of August 1917, several hundred injured and approximately 2,000 arrests were made. The actions of the army resulted in a loss of popularity which the *juntas* had gained as an opposition movement against the government.¹⁸³ In the aftermath of the events of the summer of 1917 the Socialists argued that the strike had been provoked by the government putting pressure on Dato to step down. In an attempt to restore their popularity, the military *juntas* now demanded the restoration of constitutional rights. The pressure on the Prime Minister was growing with Cambó and the Assembly movement actively trying to oust him and even Maura blaming him for the country's instability. The state of war was finally lifted and constitutional rights restored on 7 October 1917.¹⁸⁴

Realising that it had been used by the government, the army delivered an ultimatum to Alfonso on 26 October 1917, demanding the formation of a new cabinet within seventy-two hours. If their demands were not met, the officers were prepared to take matters into their own hands. Under pressure from army and king the Dato cabinet collapsed on 27 October 1917 and despite the continued prominence of the dynastic parties, which were now divided into several competing factions, the *turno pacífico* was destroyed. After an eight-day-long crisis, a new government, led by Garcia Prieto, was finally formed from a coalition of Liberals, Conservatives, Independents as well as the *Lliga Regionalista*.¹⁸⁵ The Catalan regionalists abandoned their alliance with the working class movement while the crown as well as the army were able to strengthen their authority in the aftermath of the crisis of 1917.¹⁸⁶

Political instability and civil unrest, however, continued and 1918 saw the *crisis de subsistencias* which was marked by the unavailability of affordable foodstuffs.

¹⁸² Ibid., p. 39.

¹⁸³ Gelos de Vaz Ferreira, *Die Neutralitätspolitik Spaniens während des Ersten Weltkrieges*, p. 77.

¹⁸⁴ Romero Salvadó, *Spain 1914 – 1918*, pp 138–142.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 147.

¹⁸⁶ Romero Salvadó, *Twentieth-century Spain*, pp 39–41.

Demanding cheaper food, people took to the streets looting shops and bakeries. In January 1918 Malaga and Alicante experienced two general strikes at which several women were killed. While civil unrest initially took place in the cities, protest was spreading to the Andalusian countryside over the course of 1918.¹⁸⁷ Workers living conditions worsened during the First World War and the centre and the south of Spain were particularly badly affected by unemployment and recession. In addition to Spanish workers forced to return home from abroad with the onset of war, internal migration to the cities caused further social tension. Living conditions for migrant workers in Barcelona, for example, were especially poor.¹⁸⁸ At the same time divisions within the Spanish working class movement were further deepening. While the PSOE leadership opted for a cautious approach, viewing the Bolshevik revolution in Russia as detrimental to the Allied war effort, the more radical party members advocated strict neutrality and began to form a separate group. The CNT, on the other hand, emerged as the leading organisation representing Spanish workers who, faced with increasing costs of living, were becoming more militant.¹⁸⁹ As previous governments, the coalition led by Garcia Prieto was equally unable to halt Spain's socio-economic instability.

In foreign politics, the government continued a policy of neutrality. A possible revolution in Spain would have been especially damaging to Allied trade, therefore France and Britain limited their support for Spanish Socialists and Republicans, allowing German agents to infiltrate Anarchist groups.¹⁹⁰ Despite the German submarine campaign and Allied economic pressure, the Spanish government did not take decisive actions against Germany.

¹⁸⁷Idem, *Spain 1914 – 1918*, pp 150–1.

¹⁸⁸Ibid., pp 30-1.

¹⁸⁹Ibid., pp 151–2.

¹⁹⁰Ibid., p. 165.

In domestic affairs, the elections of February 1918 did not produce any clear winner and no party held an overall majority.¹⁹¹ The coalition government was also faced with a serious threat from within their own cabinet. The minister for war, Juan de la Cierva, introduced a military reform bill which was passed by royal decree, thereby circumventing the parliament. Cierva, who argued the government should not be allowed to rule since it did not receive a majority, began to act like a dictator supported by the king and the army. When Garcia Prieto agreed to dissolve the cabinet at the beginning of 1918, Cierva refused to resign, leading to a continuation of the government with the concession that the military reform bill would not take effect until July 1918. Cierva was eventually forced to resign in March 1918 in the aftermath of the chaos he had created by transferring all postal services to the Ministry of War as a reaction to a strike of postal workers. Like the military reform bill, this transfer was passed by royal decree further highlighting the anti-constitutional behaviour of king and army. Cierva's actions ensured the final collapse of the Prieto government in March 1918.¹⁹² The newly formed cabinet, led by Antonio Maura, only managed to last until the end of the First World War despite its high profile members, Eduardo Dato, Garcia Prieto, Francesc Cambó and Count Romanones.¹⁹³

Conclusion

Following the events of 1917 several governments failed to halt the political instability and social conflict which Spain had been experiencing since the end of the nineteenth century. The opportunity to transform Spanish society and modernise the State was missed, largely due to the incompatibility of the different opposition

¹⁹¹Ibid., p 159.

¹⁹²Ibid., pp 160–2.

¹⁹³Ibid., pp 163–4.

movements and the resilience of the ruling elite. At the end of the First World War Spain had not managed to gain a position of greater importance amongst the world powers, despite concessions to both belligerents. Throughout the war King Alfonso XIII had harboured ambitions for Spain to organise a peace conference after the conflict. He had hoped that a new role as arbiter of peace would allow the country to achieve some significance in a post war world order. His hopes, however, were dashed when the invitation to the Paris negotiations did not arrive. Continued efforts to expand the Spanish colonial empire during the war, also proved fruitless. Negotiations with Britain, France and Germany regarding Gibraltar and Tangier failed since Spain was unable to make an active military contribution to the war.

The pressures Spain experienced during the First World War exacerbated the country's internal conflicts, foreshadowing the civil war of the 1930s. While the Allies relied on their economic dominance to keep Spain on their side, Germany and the Central Powers pursued their interests on the Iberian Peninsula with a remarkable vigour. To ensure a Germanophile and neutral Spain, German diplomats and residents went after various sections of Spanish society, forging the most unlikely collaborations ranging from supporting the conservative monarchy and traditional values of the Catholic Church to working with Anarchist organisations.

The debate over Spain's regeneration, which had its roots in the nineteenth century and became more urgent after the Spanish-American War in 1898, was further complicated with the outbreak of the First World War. Before 1914 a Europeanisation of Spain was seen as the best path for the country, but since the war also represented an ideological struggle amongst the European powers, Spanish reformers were divided over what European model to follow. Those that publicly expressed their admiration for German culture and philosophy came under attack from reformers who favoured French and British liberalism. As we will see in Chapter 3, some of the pro-German

intellectuals and writers extended their support for Germany by offering their services to the German administration. This was partly motivated by strong anti-clerical sentiments and a wish to diminish the influence of the Catholic Church in Spain. The Church, which had experienced an erosion of its power since the first half of the nineteenth century, paradoxically also favoured Germany in the war. Reasons for this can be found in the Church's desire to maintain the status quo and a fear a closer alliance with the Entente might lead to further liberal reforms.¹⁹⁴

The army, which had become alienated from Spanish society in the aftermath of the Spanish-American War, was also a supporter of Germany during the First World War. Mainly preoccupied with its internal reforms, the Spanish military did not advocate joining either of the belligerents on the frontline. The colonial war in Morocco was of greater importance than the European conflict and at home the army was frequently called upon to deal with growing civil unrest. In its defence of the monarchy, the army sought to align itself with groups that could increase their power and ensure no restrictions were placed on the military budget. This was particularly important in light of anti-militarist feeling developing after the defeat in 1898.

The Spanish king continued his role as his country's ambassador throughout the First World War. His diplomatic efforts were carried out with the hope of re-establishing Spain amongst the great powers which also meant extending her diminishing colonial empire. Though his true allegiances could not be pinned down, the king kept in close contact with the German administration during the war and often initiated diplomatic activity regarding colonial expansion, which could be viewed as pro-German, without the knowledge of his government.¹⁹⁵ Alfonso kept his policies flexible in accordance with the course of the war and with an acute awareness of Spain's economic dependence on the Allies.

¹⁹⁴See chapter three.

¹⁹⁵See chapters three and four.

As the war led to an economic boom in Spain, those industries that benefited from wartime expansion had no intention of abandoning the policy of neutrality. The Catalan textile industry, which had suffered after the loss of its Cuban market, was flourishing under the demand for uniforms and other war materiel. This industrial spurt strengthened the Catalan middle class and allowed the growing regionalist movement to become a serious political power. Wartime profits, however, did not benefit all and the economic boom came at the price of a subsistence crisis and inflation which mainly affected the working classes and rural workers. Republicanism, Socialism and Anarchism were on the rise, demanding better living conditions and political participation for all Spaniards. The working-class movement in Spain saw no merit in war to further their position and was therefore an ardent supporter of neutrality. This was exploited by Germany which began to present itself as a defender of Spanish neutrality and the Allies as interventionist powers who were trying to drag Spain into the war. The contested issue of neutrality became the focal point of the German propaganda campaign which tried to influence Spanish public opinion mainly through the press and ensure that Spain remained neutral throughout the war. How this campaign was organised and who was involved in staging it quite successfully will be discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 2

Mobilising the community – the German propaganda effort in Spain

Often described as a total war, due to its all-encompassing nature, the First World War mobilised communities in their entirety, including the home fronts. Marked by conflicting ideologies, the Great War also developed into a war of words in which the struggle for the opinion of the belligerents as well as the neutrals became an important factor. According to Eric Hobsbawm, ‘[...] the war had to be fought on both sides by mobilising public opinion, i.e. by claiming some profound challenge to accepted national values, such as Russian barbarism against German culture, French and British democracy against German absolutism, or the like.’¹ A hitherto unknown propaganda campaign, particularly employing press and print media,² was carried out by the Allies and Central Powers, who not only attempted to sway neutrals but also sought to control opinion at home.

Spain, as an important outsider in the conflict, quickly became a battleground for both warring sides. With little regard for the country’s neutrality, the Central Powers as well as the Entente bribed newspaper editors and journalists, bought control over entire publications, fed newspapers with their articles and distributed their own publications all over Spain. The division between *Germanófilos* and *Francófilos* enabled foreign propagandists to interfere in Spanish public opinion. As we have seen in Chapter 1, a debate regarding Spain’s regeneration had already been started after the Spanish-American War in 1898 and was now intensifying during the First World War. The

¹Eric Hobsbawm, *The age of extremes. The short twentieth century 1914 – 1991* (London, 1994), p. 29.

²Niall Ferguson, *The pity of war* (London, 1998), p. 212.

ideological struggle between the Entente and the Central Powers was mirrored in Spain by the debate over neutrality. This debate not only highlighted the country's struggle to position itself amongst the greater powers, but also showed how the gap between the reformers and the elite was becoming increasingly insurmountable. Germany seized upon those divisions in Spanish society and sought to influence public opinion in a large scale propaganda effort which was aimed at maintaining Spanish neutrality.

How Germany and the Central Powers were able to set up a widespread propaganda network gaining control over large parts of the Spanish publishing world is worth further consideration, especially in view of the economic dominance of the Western Powers in Spain. The chapter will begin with an examination of German activity in Spain prior to 1914 which makes it clear that Germany's impressive media campaign was largely facilitated by a small but very active German business community which was even further mobilised during the war. Highlighting some of those private as well as official propaganda activities brings to light an extensive German network in Spain which also relied on the collaboration of Spanish journalists, editors, politicians and diplomats. We will outline how the propaganda effort was organised in the initial phases of the war and what official and private institutions responsible for propaganda in Spain existed.

Particular attention will be given to the work of August Hofer, a German businessman in Barcelona, who ran the German News Service for Spain, one of the most important propaganda offices during the war. Using some of Hofer's and other propagandist's publications we will look at the main themes employed by German propaganda in Spain. Conversely the chapter will also provide a brief overview of the various Allied propaganda initiatives which, although smaller in scale, gave German propagandists many headaches and much cause for concern. In order to influence Spanish public opinion, the German propaganda effort had to rely on collaborators in

the Spanish publishing world. The examination will introduce some of the journalists who were among the main conspirators of the German administration. This chapter will outline how their work was facilitated and supported by the German embassy and Berlin, which in turn will elucidate how Germany was able to maintain its propaganda campaign throughout the war.

Although the German effort in Spain greatly benefited from the lack of press censorship laws for most of the war, an issue that will also be addressed in the chapter, German propagandists had to overcome many financial, logistical and communication difficulties. The chapter will explain how this was done, further outlining the extent of the German network in Spain. Our examination of the German propaganda campaign in Spain during the First World War will conclude with a look at how the German administration tried to consolidate its various private and official efforts towards the end of the war, when a German victory was becoming less and less likely.

That the German network was maintained throughout the war despite various difficulties not only shows the perseverance of the propagandists, but also stresses the importance of Spanish neutrality for Germany and the Central Powers. An examination of the German effort in Spain also refutes the theory Germany's unsuccessful propaganda campaign was to blame for the loss of the war³ – a popular argument most famously brought forward by General Ludendorff and Adolf Hitler.

Organisation of the German propaganda network in Spain

In *Mein Kampf* Hitler described Germany's propaganda effort as worse than insignificant, insisting the German system of information completely failed and

³Peter Grupp, 'Voraussetzungen und Praxis deutscher amtlicher Kulturpropaganda in den neutralen Staaten während des Ersten Weltkrieges' in W. Michalka (ed.), *Der Erste Weltkrieg, Wirkung, Wahrnehmung, Analyse* (München, 1994), pp 799–824.

claiming the country did not produce any propaganda at all. Hitler asserted that the propaganda effort carried out was useless and to some extent harmful to Germany's cause.⁴ Ludendorff argued Germany was unable to respond to the overwhelming power of enemy propaganda which he saw as exceptionally clever and conceived on a large scale.⁵ German propaganda abroad, according to Ludendorff, was only implemented and carried out with great difficulty, achieving very few results.⁶ It was his estimation that, especially in neutral countries, German propaganda activity completely failed to make an impact. In his memoirs he wrote: 'The way to the soul of the neutrals was barred to us. We did not know how to open it.'⁷ Ludendorff's and Hitler's assessment, however, can be refuted – at least in relation to German propaganda in Spain – by the following contemporary analysis of the Spanish novelist Eduardo Zamacois: 'From the first day of the war the Germans have been campaigning in Spain. From the first they realised the tremendous value and power of publicity [...] They went after public opinion and kept after it with the same precision and the same constancy with which they have pursued the rest of their war programme. They have spent millions of dollars, bought entire control of newspapers and magazines.' He concluded 'The Allies have not conducted a campaign in my country at any time.'⁸

Germany's propaganda campaign in Spain was already initiated prior to the First World War, albeit on a very modest scale. At the beginning of the twentieth century the Spanish press was largely supplied with news reaching Spain via the French agency *Havas* and its Spanish subsidiary, *Fabra*. *Havas* was covering the news market for Southern Europe, the French colonial empire and was also influential in Latin America. The German news agency *Wolffsche Telegraphenbureau*, on the other hand,

⁴Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf* (London, 1972), p. 106.

⁵Erich Ludendorff, *Concise Ludendorff memoirs, 1914–1918* (London, 1933), p. 14, p. 168.

⁶*Ibid.*, pp 174–5.

⁷*Ibid.*, p. 169.

⁸*The New York Times*, 18 Mar. 1917.

was responsible for Central Europe, Russia and Scandinavia.⁹ Reports or news from Germany rarely made it into Spanish publications. As a correspondent of the German newspaper *Kölnische Zeitung* assessed in 1905, the strong French influence made it difficult to have an impact on the press in Spain.¹⁰ The dominance of *Havas-Fabra* was also a problem that had been identified by Alexander Bruns, director of the Berlitz language school in Madrid. His attempts in 1906 to establish an office of the German *Wolffsche Telegraphenbureau* in Madrid, however, failed. *Wolff* was contractually obliged to send its news via Paris to Spain, therefore, prohibiting a direct news exchange between Germany and Spanish readers.

Bruns' activity in Spain was welcomed by the *Auswärtige Amt*, which encouraged him to place German news in Spanish newspapers.¹¹ Thanks to his contacts with the Madrid paper *Epoca* as well as other publications, Bruns succeeded in doing just that¹² and by 1908 he had gained support from the Spanish government regarding an improved news exchange between both countries.¹³ It is important to note, however, that even before the outbreak of the war German propaganda had to be carried out carefully as not to provoke a reaction from France or Britain. Although the German embassy welcomed the publication of several pro-German articles in the *Correspondencia* during 1908, concerns about aggravating the French embassy were raised. Since the *Correspondencia* had hitherto been opposed to German ideas, German diplomats did not want to use the paper too frequently in order to avoid drawing attention to their propaganda attempts.¹⁴

⁹Jörn Leonhard, *Die Büchse der Pandora. Geschichte des Ersten Weltkrieges* (München, 2014), pp 707-8.

¹⁰P.A., R11866, Spanien No. 46 geheim, Bd. 1, Subventionierung spanischer Zeitungen, Ambassador Radowitz to Auswärtiges Amt, 21.6.1905.

¹¹Ibid., Tschirschky to Radowitz at Embassy Madrid, 17.5.1906.

¹²Ibid., Radowitz at Embassy Madrid to Reichskanzler von Bülow, 20.6.1906.

¹³P.A., R11867, Spanien No. 46 geheim, Bd. 2, Subventionierung spanischer Zeitungen, Oberndorff at Embassy Madrid to Reichskanzler von Bülow, 5.12.1908.

¹⁴Ibid., Oberndorff at Embassy Madrid to Reichskanzler von Bülow, 15.11.1908.

Besides Bruns, another active German propagandist was August Hofer, the manager of a printing business in Barcelona who had lived in Spain since 1906. Hofer also blamed the lack of a direct news exchange between both countries for the negative portrayal of Germany in the Spanish press and argued French ideas were being forced onto Spaniards.¹⁵ From 1910 onwards he supplied Spanish papers with German news, with little success, however.¹⁶ Although his idea of a German news agency received wide-spread interest amongst Spanish newspaper editors in 1912, the *Auswärtige Amt* would not support his plans and deemed news communication between both countries sufficient.¹⁷ Undeterred by Berlin's rejection of his plans, Hofer vowed he would not rest until he had achieved his goal of reducing French and British influence in Spain.¹⁸

It can be said that beside official diplomatic efforts, the German community in Spain played an important role in fostering German-Spanish relations during the conflict. Thanks to the work of private propagandists such as Hofer and Bruns before 1914, Germany was able to quickly establish a network that would help to ensure Spanish neutrality remained benevolent to Germany and the Central Powers. In general, private individuals became greatly involved in propaganda during the First World War. As Niall Ferguson noted, the majority of propaganda activity during the war was initiated by independent organisations or private individuals while official institutions were often only responsible for their co-ordination.¹⁹ The ideological struggle between the warring nations mobilised all groups in society, therefore enabling wartime propaganda without the initiative of governments.²⁰ German propaganda

¹⁵P.A., R11868, Spanien No. 46, Bd. 3, Subventionierung spanischer Zeitungen, Report A. Hofer regarding suggestions for the organisation of a Spanish-German news service for the press, 5.3.1912.

¹⁶August H. Hofer, *Deutschtum in Spanien* (Barcelona, 1918), p. 71.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, p. 72.

¹⁸P.A., R11868, Spanien No. 46, Bd. 3, Subventionierung spanischer Zeitungen, A. Hofer to Ambassador Ratibor, 30.1.1913.

¹⁹Ferguson, *The pity of war*, p. 226.

²⁰*Ibid.*, p. 229.

activity in Spain during the First World War offers a prime example for this process of cultural mobilisation or rather self-mobilisation. In the initial phase of the war all major belligerents experienced this phenomenon of self-mobilisation bringing together various social groups and institutions which rallied behind their nation's war effort.²¹ As Stéphane Audion-Rouzeau and Annette Becker have argued, propaganda was to some extent an upsurge from below which was sustained by a large number of individuals.²² There was no need for private citizens to be given a mobilisation order. As the case of German private propagandists in Spain confirms, in the initial phases of the war a general consensus amongst the citizens of the belligerent nations existed which acknowledged the vital role non-combatants had to play in the war effort.²³ Carl Coppel, owner of a watch factory in Madrid, who published regular information leaflets under the title *Por la patria y por la verdad* (For fatherland and truth) reporting on the course of the war,²⁴ later explained his propaganda effort was motivated by a sense of duty towards his country.²⁵

With the outbreak of the war the *Auswärtige Amt* made more concerted efforts to gain Spain's favour and ensure the country's neutrality. The need to establish a propaganda network in the Iberian Peninsula became suddenly very urgent. The embassy at Madrid, led by Ambassador Prince Maximilian von Ratibor und Corvey, became the headquarters for all German propaganda activity. Ratibor himself never tired in his pursuit of courting Spanish public opinion and defending the German cause. Within the first weeks of the war he arranged for pro-German articles to be placed in the

²¹John Horne, 'Introduction: mobilizing for 'total war', 1914–1918' in J. Horne (ed.), *State, society, and mobilization in Europe during the First World War* (Cambridge, New York, 1997), pp 1–18.

²²Stéphane Audion-Rouzeau & Annette Becker, *14-18. Understanding the Great War* (New York, 2003), p. 109.

²³Troy R.E. Paddock (ed.), *World War I and propaganda* (Leiden & Boston, 2014), p. 10.

²⁴P.A., R11868, Spanien No. 46, Bd. 3, Subventionierung spanischer Zeitungen, Ratibor to Auswärtiges Amt, 6.11.1914

²⁵Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Abteilung Historische Drucke, Signatur Krieg 1914, 5966/1, Carlos Coppel, *Por la patria y por la verdad. Resumen de cinco años de propaganda* (Madrid, 1920), p. 3.

Spanish press since German news and publications only reached the country at the end of August 1914.²⁶ While Alexander Bruns' efforts were rewarded during the war, when he became press officer at the German embassy,²⁷ August Hofer was less successful in joining forces with the diplomatic corps. Even though he seemed an ideal candidate as director of a German press bureau, Ratibor deemed him unsuitable for such a position due to his character and temper.²⁸ This was not the only time the private propagandist would clash with the German diplomats in Spain.

Although supported by the *Auswärtige Amt* and the embassy at Madrid, Hofer never received official diplomatic status but, undeterred by this, he carried on with his work. With the outbreak of the war he published a weekly pamphlet called *La guerra mundial* – The World War – which gave an overview of war events from a German perspective. Hofer distributed 10,000 copies of this publication and had plans to turn it into a regular newspaper. Those plans, however, were not realised.²⁹ Despite differences, the embassy was grateful for the work done by privateers and was heavily reliant on their contacts in Spain. In November 1914 the ambassador was able to report to the *Auswärtige Amt* on the early successes of German propaganda which, as he pointed out, were only achieved with the help of the German communities in Barcelona and Madrid.³⁰ The British Foreign Office also attributed the success of German propaganda to the 'army of agents' recruited from German residents in Spain.³¹ With the outbreak of the war members of the German colony initiated campaigns to spread pro-

²⁶P.A., R11862, Spanien No. 46, Bd. 1, Presse, Ambassador Ratibor to Bethmann Hollweg, 12 October 1914.

²⁷Carden, *German policy toward neutral Spain*, p. 56.

²⁸P.A., R11868, Spanien No. 46, Bd. 3, Subventionierung spanischer Zeitungen, Ambassador Ratibor to Bethmann Hollweg, 15.3.1914.

²⁹Ibid., Ambassador Ratibor to Bethmann Hollweg, 6.11.1914.

³⁰Ibid., Ambassador Ratibor to Auswärtiges Amt, 5.11.1914.

³¹N.A., CAB/24/31, Image ref. 0040, Cabinet Papers, Intelligence Bureau, Department of Information 1917, Weekly report on Spain XIII, 7.11.1917.

German news in Spain in an attempt to win over Spanish public opinion by influencing the press.³²

German propagandists in Spain often operated with a certain degree of subtlety in order to get their articles printed in Spanish papers. A private news service in Madrid informed the *Auswärtige Amt* in November 1914 that news should be distributed to Spanish newspapers in typed form rather than printed. It was hoped that this would give the impression that the news was not generally distributed to all newspapers, therefore lending it a special status. Pro-Allied publications were also targeted with German propaganda in the hope that editors might prefer printing German news instead of writing their own articles.³³

In addition, German publications were sent to influential Spanish personalities in an effort to refute Allied atrocity claims during the German invasion of Belgium and in the hope to keep Spanish neutrality benevolent to Germany. For example, at the opening of the Cortes in November 1914, the German embassy sent out official documents relating to the outbreak of the war to all senators and deputies.³⁴ Further incidents suggest that this was done on a regular basis. In August 1915 the Foreign Minister, Marques de Lema, confirmed to Ambassador Ratibor that he had received a copy of the German white book – *Die völkerrechtswidrige Führung des belgischen Volkskrieges* – (Violation of human rights during the Belgian people's war).³⁵

In the early stages of the war the German propaganda initiative was far from coherent and private initiatives worked alongside and often in competition to official German propaganda institutions. The central bureau for German propaganda abroad during the First World War was the – *Zentralstelle für Auslandsdienst* – (Central

³²P.A., R11868, Spanien No. 46, Bd. 3, Subventionierung spanischer Zeitungen, Ambassador Ratibor to Bethmann Hollweg, 6.11.1914.

³³P.A., R11862, Spanien No. 46, Bd. 1, Presse, Wilhelm Rautzenberg to Nachrichtendienst Frankfurt/Main, 9.11.1914.

³⁴Ibid., Ambassador Ratibor to Bethmann Hollweg, 6.11.1914.

³⁵A.M.A.E., H1346, Correspondencia embajadas y legaciones Alemania, Notas verbales 1911–16, 12.8.1915.

administration for services abroad – Zfa), which operated under the supervision of the *Auswärtige Amt*, that in addition, maintained its own news department, also responsible for propaganda abroad. The Zfa was founded in October 1914 and led by Alfons Freiherr von Mumm, who in turn was assisted by a number of representatives from the *Auswärtige Amt*.³⁶ It was responsible for producing and distributing propaganda material such as flyers, posters, newspapers, magazines and books. It also had a department for photographs, illustrations and films. The propaganda of the Zfa mainly targeted neutral countries like Switzerland, the Netherlands, the Scandinavian countries and the United States, but also included to some extent propaganda in Spain.³⁷

A private organisation especially dedicated to Spanish and Portuguese-speaking countries was the *Nachrichtendienst für Länder spanischer und portugiesischer Zunge* (News service for Spanish and Portuguese-speaking countries), based in Frankfurt am Main. Founded in August 1914, the news service was managed by personalities from industry, banking, press and the diplomatic world. The news service in Frankfurt hoped to curb the influence of *Reuters* and *Havas* and supplied material to private news services in Spain as well as the embassy and the consulates.³⁸ Other official German propaganda institutions were the German military, which was in charge of censorship. In Spain the main German propagandists were the embassy at Madrid as well as the various German consulates which collaborated with the *Auswärtige Amt* and other private propaganda operations such as August Hofer's service and the *Deutscher Nachrichtendienst* (German news service) in Madrid. The service in Madrid, founded in 1914, was run by AEG vice director Wilhelm Rautzenberg. Other subsidiaries of AEG in Spain carried out similar propaganda work in collaboration with

³⁶Martin Creutz, *Die Pressepolitik der kaiserlichen Regierung während des Ersten Weltkriegs: die Exekutive, die Journalisten und der Teufelskreis der Berichterstattung* (Frankfurt am Main, 1996), p. 20.

³⁷Albes, *Worte wie Waffen*, pp 91–2.

³⁸*Ibid.*, p. 101.

the head office in Madrid.³⁹ In contrast to Hofer's service, which was specialised in the fast transmission of German news, Rautzenberg's service translated longer articles from German publications and tried to place them in Spanish newspapers.⁴⁰ AEG had been a well-established company in Spain prior to 1914 and therefore its propaganda service was able to build on existing business connection. It mainly focused on newspapers in which the company placed advertisements.⁴¹

As can be seen from these initial campaigns, no centralised propaganda effort in Spain existed at the beginning of the war despite attempts by the German embassy to coordinate, or at least keep track of, the various initiatives. Berlin was content to support the different private institutions in their efforts without taking direct control over their activities. No directive specifically outlining a propaganda policy for Spain was issued and the *Auswärtige Amt* mainly left matters in the hands of the diplomats and privateers on the ground. In the early stages of the war Spain did not have such great significance for Germany as other neutrals, such as the United States, which explains the freedom the German diplomats and privateers enjoyed in Spain. This, however, was to change as the war dragged on longer than initially anticipated.

As already outlined, the *Auswärtige Amt* was able to solicit the aid of several private propagandists who readily offered their services to the German cause. The activities of this community were also noted by outside observers. *The Times* reported in November 1915 of the existence of an ant-like industry organised with the involvement of all German residents.⁴² It is difficult to give a precise figure of how many Germans lived in Spain during the period of the First World War since residents were not obliged to register with the embassy or consulates. British estimates put the

³⁹Ibid., p. 151. P.A., R11868, Spanien No. 46, Bd. 3, Subventionierung spanischer Zeitungen, 1912–14, Ratibor to Auswärtige Amt, 6.11.1914.

⁴⁰Albes, *Worte wie Waffen*, p. 152.

⁴¹Carden, *German policy toward neutral Spain*, pp 73–4.

⁴²*The Times*, 23 Nov. 1915.

German community at between 50,000 and 80,000 strong.⁴³ According to German statistics these estimates seem to have been exaggerated. Before the war there were approximately 7–8,000 Germans residing in Spain. During the war those were joined by refugees from Cameroon and Portugal bringing the total number of German residents to somewhere between 10,000 and 30,000.⁴⁴

Although the British and French communities in Spain were far larger than the German, the Allies failed to capitalise on this advantage and did not mobilise their expatriates from the start of the war, leaving the field to Germany and the Central Powers.⁴⁵ Eager to make their contribution to the war effort, German residents organised themselves and became active propagandists for the German cause in Spain. Another article published in *The Times*, in February 1916, described them as ‘a veritable army in discipline and cohesion. There is not an idle man among them [...] Every German is a natural tout and canvasser for his country [...]’.⁴⁶

August Hofer was arguably one of the most active private propagandists in Spain during the First World War. In the summer of 1914 Hofer was busy organising a trip for Spanish publishers to a book fair in Leipzig but with the outbreak of the war his plans changed dramatically. Since his wife and his sisters were in Italy, and unable to leave, Hofer agreed to meet them in Switzerland and then travel back to Spain together. He had to undertake an arduous journey via France to Geneva where he was reunited with his family. They then quickly made their way back to Spain. During their trip they avoided speaking German and instead conversed in Spanish in order to not

⁴³Ibid., 12 Sept. 1916. N.A., FO371/2760, Foreign Office, Spain & Portugal (War) 1916, Secret report Spain, 22.1.1916.

⁴⁴B.A., R901/30168 Die Überwachung der Auswanderung aus Deutschland nach Spanien 1908–20, German consulate Madrid to Auswärtige Amt, 6.2.1920. B.A., R1001/3977, Internierung der Kamerundeutschen in Spanien, Ratibor to Auswärtige Amt, 7.2.1916. Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Krieg 1914/5966, *Por la patria y por la verdad* (No 1) 16.3.1915. Dirk Zeiseler, *Spanien im Kalkül der britischen Kriegspolitik 1914 – 1918. Die politische, wirtschaftliche und propagandistische Bedeutung eines neutralen Landes für Großbritannien im Ersten Weltkrieg* (Berlin, Vienna, 2002), p. 111. Albes, *Worte wie Waffen*, p. 174.

⁴⁵Zeiseler, *Spanien im Kalkül der britischen Kriegspolitik*, p. 111.

⁴⁶*The Times*, 26 Feb. 1916.

draw any attention to them while traveling through France.⁴⁷ After two days of traveling they arrived in Barcelona, where Hofer almost immediately put his propaganda machine into operation. The *Deutscher Nachrichtendienst für Spanien* (German News Service for Spain) was to emerge as one of the most important German news services operating in the country.⁴⁸

The lack of German news reaching the Iberian Peninsula, already a problem before the war, was an even greater problem and cause of concern for the German propagandists during the conflict. In his book – *Deutschtum in Spanien* – (German culture in Spain) – published in 1918, Hofer recalled the turbulent first few days of the war when excited crowds would gather on Barcelona’s main boulevard, *Las Ramblas*, queuing outside kiosks to read the latest news no matter how exaggerated and outrageous.⁴⁹ The German community of Barcelona would meet in the rooms of the ‘Germania club’. Unable to concentrate on anything else, discussions centred exclusively around the conflict in Europe and worry about the lack of news from home. Since Hofer believed *Reuters* and *Havas*, from which Spanish papers received the majority of their news, were pro-Allied, he decided to set up his own telegram service sending daily news from Berlin to Barcelona.⁵⁰ Thanks to access to a radio transmitter, Hofer was able to receive telegrams from Germany which he would translate and then print and distribute to Spanish newspapers as well as sending them to South and Central America. Furthermore, he circulated his news to private individuals who requested them, mainly the German community in Spain and Latin America.⁵¹ Any information

⁴⁷Hofer, *Deutschtum in Spanien*, pp 6–8.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 8.

⁴⁹Ibid.

⁵⁰Ibid.

⁵¹P.A., R11862, Spanien No. 46, Bd. 1, Presse, Ambassador Ratibor to Bethmann Hollweg, 12.10.1914.

provided by the German News Service for Spain carried the seal of the German consulate at Barcelona, which gave it an official status.⁵²

Hofer's enterprise was growing fast and in the first year of the war his news service already had thirty-five employees, amongst them Germans and Spaniards.⁵³ Besides the distribution of German news, Hofer's service also published a daily newspaper called *Correspondencia Alemana*. From 1917 onwards the newspaper's main editor was a Spanish general who, while fulfilling his duty for the Spanish army, wrote articles for the German publication⁵⁴. Other Hofer publications included the weekly illustrated paper *La Neutralidad*, published in Barcelona,⁵⁵ and *Germania*, published on a fortnightly basis. *Germania* was aimed at Spanish intellectuals and its editorial team consisted entirely of Spaniards, amongst them publishers, writers, journalists, lawyers, members of the Cortes, professors, librarians, architects and doctors.⁵⁶

In a country which, like Spain, was noted for its high illiteracy rate, visual propaganda employing posters, photographs and film was very important. Therefore, Hofer passed on photographs and illustrations he received from Germany to Spanish magazines and bookshops in Madrid and Barcelona for exhibition in their shop windows. He also distributed his publications and news telegrams to the German news service in Madrid, all German consulates and societies in Spain as well as to 115 Spanish newspapers.⁵⁷ The service also published numerous German propaganda works aimed at countering Allied publications and keeping Spanish public opinion benevolent to Germany. In his attempt to sway Spanish opinion, Hofer also sought out links with

⁵²Hofer, *Deutschtum in Spanien*, p. 10. P.A., Botschaft Madrid, Karton 124, Nachrichtendienst Hofer, Hofer to Ratibor, 14.9.1914.

⁵³Hofer, *Deutschtum in Spanien*, p. 15.

⁵⁴*Ibid.*, p. 57.

⁵⁵P.A., R11862, Spanien No. 46, Bd. 1, Presse, Ambassador Ratibor to Bethmann Hollweg, 12.10.1914.

⁵⁶B.A., R901/72302c, Auswärtiges Amt, Zentralstelle für Auslandsdienst, Deutscher Nachrichtendienst für Spanien, Bd. 2, Jan. – Mai 1915, A. Hofer to Zentralstelle für Auslandsdienst, received 10.4.1915.

⁵⁷P.A., R11862, Spanien No. 46, Bd. 1, Presse, A. Hofer to Nachrichtendienst für die Länder spanischer und portugiesischer Zunge, Frankfurt/Main, 7.11.1914.

publications naturally adverse to German ideas. Socialist and workers newspapers were fed pro-neutrality articles undermining the Allied position by claiming that France and Britain were trying to drag Spain into the war.⁵⁸ The success of Hofer's service was even noted in the English press, which, although it described the news service as slanderous and dishonest, also had to concede it was cleverly edited as well as full, clear and interesting.⁵⁹

Beside his active role in press propaganda, Hofer was also involved in promoting German culture in Spain. In order to combat the negative, militaristic image employed time and again by the Allies, German propagandists were conscious of the need to highlight Germany's cultural achievements. Peter Grupp has argued that German officials did not take cultural propaganda too seriously.⁶⁰ Given Germany's effort in Spain, however, it is clear that cultural propaganda was employed quite successfully. At the time though propagandists might not have made any distinctions between their various propaganda efforts and only after the First World War did the effort to influence public opinion become more sophisticated, using cultural propaganda on a larger scale.⁶¹ However, during World War I Germany already hoped to make a positive impression on neutrals by stressing the country's success in the areas of culture and science. Themes of cultural propaganda ranged from town planning, industry, religion and philosophy, to literature and theatre.⁶² Hofer, for example, organised lectures on new technological developments, Germany's social policies and German music, the latter being accompanied by piano recitals. Evidence from Spanish newspaper reviews suggests that concerts featuring music by German composers

⁵⁸Hofer, *Deutschtum in Spanien*, p. 14.

⁵⁹*The Times*, 26 Feb. 1916.

⁶⁰Grupp, 'Voraussetzungen und Praxis deutscher amtlicher Kulturpropaganda' in *Der Erste Weltkrieg, Wirkung, Wahrnehmung, Analyse*, pp 799–824.

⁶¹Ibid.

⁶²Ibid.

frequently took place and were received with great enthusiasm by Spanish audiences.⁶³

The German embassy also promoted the staging of German plays in Spanish theatres.⁶⁴

Research on German cultural propaganda in other neutral countries such as Sweden and Switzerland shows that it was often taken less seriously than press propaganda and left to private individuals to organise.⁶⁵ In Spain August Hofer requested German war films to be sent over from Berlin but German film propaganda was not able keep up with the effort by the Allies, who had a more developed film industry.⁶⁶ A report from the German embassy from August 1916 described French film propaganda in particular as very strong and conceded that it was not possible to compete with the Allies in the area of visual propaganda such as illustrations, photos and films.⁶⁷ Nevertheless, at the beginning of 1917 Berlin sent two propaganda films via submarine to Spain for the attention of naval attaché von Krohn. Krohn was ordered to have the films shown at the Spanish royal court and afterwards distribute them across the country with the help of private propagandists like Hofer in Barcelona and Rautzenberg in Madrid.⁶⁸

Themes of German propaganda mainly focused on fostering the idea of a defensive war which Germany had been forced into, justifications for the violation of Belgian neutrality, and reasons for the continuation of unrestricted submarine warfare. Other popular topics frequently highlighted in pro-German articles were the export of contraband to the Allies and the use of Spanish ship space for England and France. The Roger Casement trial and execution was also highlighted by German propagandists,

⁶³*Arte Musical*, 31 May 1915.

⁶⁴P.A., R123009, Spanien 2, Bd. 1, Die Presse in Madrid, Ambassador Ratibor to Auswärtiges Amt, 22.5.1917.

⁶⁵Grupp, 'Voraussetzungen und Praxis deutscher amtlicher Kulturpropaganda' in *Der Erste Weltkrieg, Wirkung, Wahrnehmung, Analyse*, pp 799–824.

⁶⁶Albes, *Worte wie Waffen*, p. 113.

⁶⁷P.A., R123013, Beeinflussung der spanischen Presse 1915–17, Report embassy Madrid, signed Stohrer, 8.8.1916.

⁶⁸B.A.M., RM5/2414, Admiralstab der Marine, Schrift–pp. Verkehr mit Vertretern der Marine, ab Sept. 1916 dem Marineattaché, und anderen Personen in Madrid Bd. 7 Okt. 1916 – März 1917, Picture and Film Office Berlin to Captain Ackermann Admiralty, 31.1.1917.

especially in the Spanish republican press.⁶⁹ Those themes were also reflected in Hofer's publications, with titles such as *¿Crímenes alemanes?* (German crimes?), *El Origen de la Conflagración* (Reasons for the outbreak)⁷⁰, *Calumnias inglesas* (English slander)⁷¹, *La agencia Reuter o la fábrica de embustes ingleses* (Reuter – factory of English lies)⁷², *Cómo Bélgica rompió su neutralidad* (How Belgium broke its neutrality), *¿La guerra submarina, es legal?* (Submarine warfare – is it legal?),⁷³ and *Asesinato de la tripulación de un submarino alemán por soldados inglesas* (Assassination of a German submarine crew by English soldiers)⁷⁴. Other publications of his service, for example *La guerra alemana y el catolicismo por católicos alemanes* (The German war and Catholicism for German Catholics)⁷⁵, were aimed at Spain's largely Catholic population.

Among the main arguments brought forward against the Allies was the British blockade against Germany which, it was claimed, constituted a cruel transgression from international law and was seen as an attempt to starve the country.⁷⁶ German propaganda in Spain also appealed to the country's colonial and territorial ambitions in Morocco, Gibraltar and Portugal, which in the past had been subject to negotiations with the Allies and often led to Spain drawing the shorter straw.⁷⁷

Although the invasion and occupation of neutral Belgium presented a substantial obstacle to German propaganda, Spanish *Germanófilos* were less concerned with the matter. As outlined in Chapter 1, in Spain the European conflict was used to project the opposing viewpoints of traditional monarchists and liberal reformers by siding with one

⁶⁹P.A., R123013, Beeinflussung der spanischen Presse 1915–17, Report embassy Madrid, signed Stohrer, 8.8.1916.

⁷⁰Hofer, *Deutschtum in Spanien*, p. 17.

⁷¹Ibid., p. 22.

⁷²Ibid., p. 23.

⁷³Ibid., p. 24.

⁷⁴Ibid., p. 25.

⁷⁵Ibid., p. 17.

⁷⁶Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Abteilung Historische Drucke, Signatur Krieg 1914, 5966, Carlos Coppel, *Por la patria y por la verdad*, no. 10, 2.3.1915.

⁷⁷N.A., FO371/2470, Foreign Office, Spain & Portugal (War) 1915, Hardinge to Grey, 3.1.1915.

belligerent who was thought best to represent Spain's future. German propagandists often simply had to employ anti-British sentiments amongst Spaniards in order to explain the violation of Belgian neutrality. Since Spain was economically dependent on Britain and France, which frequently used this dependency to exert pressure on the Spanish government to show a pro-Allied neutrality, Germany's explanation of a defensive war, forced upon it by the Allies out of fear for German economic dominance, seemed plausible to many Spaniards.

An alleged letter from an English-man originally printed in the *Gaceta Militar de Santiago de Chile* in October 1914 and reproduced in the *Correspondencia Alemana de la Guerra* stated that Germany had become a venomous poison for English commerce. According to the letter, 'made in Germany' had turned into an unbearable nightmare for Britain and English businesses were suffering from being under-priced by German competitors. France, Belgium and Russia were also affected by this perceived German economic dominance and, as the writer argued, it was those countries, Belgium in particular, that first formed an alliance against Germany in order to curb its power.⁷⁸ To further emphasise the point of a defensive war, the *Correspondencia Alemana de la Guerra* argued that before the German occupation of Belgium Belgian soldiers with the help of the French were pillaging their own towns and it was therefore necessary to take measures against this behaviour.⁷⁹

Those arguments culminated in the aforementioned German white book, *Violation of human rights during the Belgian people's war*, published by the *Auswärtige Amt* in May 1915. The book sought to justify the German occupation of Belgium and to refute accusations of atrocities committed by the German army. It was seen as

⁷⁸Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Abteilung Historische Drucke, Signatur 4 Krieg 1914/27614, *Correspondencia alemana de la Guerra*, no. 36 [1915?].

⁷⁹Ibid., no. 1 [Aug?] 1914.

particularly vital to distribute the publication in neutral countries.⁸⁰ Violence committed against civilians during the German invasion of Belgium had not only brought on outrage from the international community but also turned important neutrals such as Italy and the USA against Germany.⁸¹ In Spain, however, the violation of the rights of a fellow neutral, Catholic country did not cause widespread consternation or diminish support for Germany and the Central Powers.

The German media campaign successfully presented the Central Powers as defenders of traditional, Catholic values and supporters of the Spanish monarchy and ruling order⁸². Equally Germany secretly supported the pro-neutrality sentiment of the Spanish working class movement while the Allies were portrayed as a pro-interventionist force only using Spain to further their war effort. German propagandists ensured Spain would enforce its policy of strict neutrality and not join the war on the side of the Entente. As propagandist Carl Coppel wrote in 1920, ‘What was Germany asking from Spain? Nothing. The abstention from a war in which the Spaniards had nothing to avenge nor claim from the Germans. What were England and France, the authors of Spanish decadence, asking from Spain? A break from neutrality, intervention, ruin. In return for what? What was the compensation? Nothing more than the honour to be enlisted amongst the whites, blacks and yellows of the great guard.’⁸³

Since joining Germany in the war was not a possibility, the *Germanófilos* showed their support for the Central Power’s by defending strict neutrality. Their support was hidden behind declarations of patriotism and rejection of any outside

⁸⁰John Horne & Alan Kramer, *German atrocities, 1914: a history of denial* (New Haven, 2001), p.239.

⁸¹Alan Kramer, *Dynamic of destruction: culture and mass killing in the First World War* (Oxford, 2007), p. 23.

⁸²Romero Salvadó, *Spain 1914 – 1918*, p. 10.

⁸³Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Abteilung Historische Drucke, Signatur Krieg 1914, 5966/1, Carlos Coppel, *Por la patria y por la verdad. Resumen de cinco años de propaganda* (Madrid, 1920), p. 210.

interference in Spanish affairs.⁸⁴ Left-wing publications, on the other hand, argued that a departure from neutrality would negatively impact on the working classes.⁸⁵

The success of German propaganda campaigns, such as Hofer's, was further facilitated by the lack of any major opposition from the Allies. Indeed, France and Britain were slow to initiate a cohesive propaganda operation combating German activity.⁸⁶ The Allies' initial inactivity was openly criticised by some Spaniards and visitors to Spain⁸⁷ and it was concluded that the passive position taken by Britain and France could only be viewed as indifference.⁸⁸ Although the Foreign Office was well aware of German intrigues in Spain and also realised the ineffectiveness of its own propaganda, British diplomats were confident that Spain would not join Germany in the war.⁸⁹ An intervention was seen as unnecessary, at least in the initial stages of the war, since it was felt that Spaniards would be able to judge the shortcomings and advantages of each warring party for themselves.⁹⁰ The illusion of a short war probably also played a part in the Allies' decision not to stage a large propaganda campaign in a neutral country immediately after the outbreak of hostilities, as did Spain's economic reliance on France and Britain, which allowed the Entente to assert sufficient pressure on the country.

Soon, however, the Allies realised the need to counter German propaganda. As the war continued activities of the German embassy were increasingly carried out in the open and German influence on the Spanish press as well as the political world was becoming more widespread.⁹¹ Amongst the Entente powers, it was France that most

⁸⁴Romero Salvadó, *Spain 1914 – 1918*, p. 11.

⁸⁵*Ibid.*, p. 68.

⁸⁶Albes, *Worte wie Waffen*, p. 191.

⁸⁷N.A., CAB/24/35, Image ref. 0073, Cabinet Papers, Intelligence Bureau, Department of Information 1917, Weekly report on Spain XV, 13.12.1917.

⁸⁸*The Times*, 23.11.1915.

⁸⁹N.A., CAB/24/35, Image ref. 0073, Cabinet Papers, Intelligence Bureau, Department of Information 1917, Weekly report on Spain XV, 13.12.1917.

⁹⁰*Ibid.*

⁹¹*Ibid.*

actively tried to counter pro-German news in Spain. Similar to the German propaganda effort, the French relied on private initiatives and organisations such as the *Institut Français* in Madrid, which formed a propaganda committee. They published their own newspapers and also distributed propaganda material sent from France. Attempts were also made to influence the Spanish press through *Havas* and its Spanish subsidiary, *Fabra*.⁹²

The British pursued their propaganda in Spain very cautiously. Official British documents relating to the outbreak of the war were circulated amongst newspaper editors and private individuals. Also, the British embassy financially supported the various French propaganda activities. Allied propaganda during the first year of the war, however, was still not matching heightened German activity in Spain. Only from the second half of 1915⁹³ onwards did the Allies follow a more aggressive strategy in the struggle for Spanish opinion. Following Italy's entry into the war in May 1915, German diplomats in Spain expressed their concern over increased Allied propaganda activity aimed at shifting Spanish sympathies towards the Entente. Ambassador Ratibor was not very concerned about that development though, since he was convinced the majority of Spaniards were in favour of strict neutrality. He suggested, however, an immediate increase in propaganda activity, in particular by winning over important Spanish newspaper and possibly influencing politicians.⁹⁴ The *Auswärtige Amt*, alarmed by Italy's entry into the war, agreed with Ratibor and insisted on boosting the German campaign in Spain stating 'A few million more or less should not matter.'⁹⁵ Ratibor was

⁹²Albes, *Worte wie Waffen*, pp 187–90.

⁹³Ibid., p. 191.

⁹⁴P.A., R123013, Beeinflussung der spanischen Presse 1915–17, Ratibor to Auswärtige Amt, 31.5.1915.

⁹⁵P.A., R21239, Weltkrieg Nr. 11q Geheim Bd. 1 – Unternehmungen und Aufwiegelungen gegen unsere Feinde in Spanien, Kocherthaler to Vogel, 29.5.1915.

ordered to take all necessary measures immediately and unlimited financial support for propaganda purposes was assured to him.⁹⁶

The British increased their propaganda effort by giving financial support to several Spanish newspapers and also supplying them with propaganda material.⁹⁷ In February 1916 a British propaganda office was established in Madrid. A month later the French started a telephone news service sending news from the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Spain.

French propagandists in particular were very active in the area of cultural propaganda. They organised talks and lectures of French intellectuals and artists who would travel through Spain and conversely invited Spanish intellectuals to France. Joint exhibitions of Spanish and French artists took place on initiative of French propagandists.⁹⁸ With the entry of the United States into the conflict in 1917, the Allied propaganda campaign in Spain received additional support with the establishment of an American press bureau in Madrid. American news items from the Committee on Public Information were translated and forwarded to the Spanish news agency *Fabra*. The Americans also employed film propaganda but instead of war films they used films on the advantages of US agriculture and industry. Also, American companies and businesses exhibited propaganda photos in their shop windows.⁹⁹

Until the end of the war, however, Allied expenditure for propaganda in Spain never surpassed that of the Germans.¹⁰⁰ At the beginning of 1917 the British overall investment in propaganda in Spain was approximately 24,000 pesetas. In 1916 the German embassy had paid 35,000 pesetas per month to *El Dia* alone.¹⁰¹ This did not

⁹⁶B.A.M, RM5/2408, Admiralstab der Marine, Schrift–pp. Verkehr mit Vertretern der Marine, ab Sept. 1916 dem Marineattaché, und anderen Personen in Madrid Bd. 1 1914–15, Auswärtige Amt Zimmermann to deputy head of admiralty, 4.6.1915.

⁹⁷Albes, *Worte wie Waffen*, pp 190–1; p. 249.

⁹⁸Ibid., pp 250–3.

⁹⁹Ibid., pp 380–1.

¹⁰⁰Ibid., p. 376.

¹⁰¹Romero Salvadó, *Spain 1914 – 1918*, pp 68–9.

prevent the German propagandists from frequently complaining about the Allied propaganda effort which they felt was far greater than their own.¹⁰² Official and private propagandists argued the Allies had a greater advantage in Spain since the beginning of the war thanks to larger financial investments.¹⁰³ Although their perception of the allied propaganda effort in Spain did not reflect reality, it could be explained by the need to pressure the *Auswärtige Amt* into spending more money and also stressing the importance of their own work. Both sides employed similar propaganda techniques during the Great War but each warring party was convinced of each other's superiority.¹⁰⁴

Collaboration between Spanish newspapers and journalists and the German embassy

The propaganda network the Germans had built up in Spain depended on the collaboration of Spanish journalists and newspaper editors as well as businessmen, politicians and diplomats. Some of those collaborations were achieved with bribery. Since many Spanish newspapers were struggling financially due to rising prices in paper, financial contributions by German diplomats and private propagandists offered a welcome relief during times of economic hardship. Further pressure was put on newspaper editors when German businesses stopped buying advertisement space in pro-Allied newspapers, ensuring a loss of circulation amongst these publications.¹⁰⁵ Many Spanish editors and journalists however, were more than willing to make a contribution to the German war effort in the hope this would be to the advantage of Spain.

¹⁰²P.A., R11868, Spanien No. 46, Bd. 3, Subventionierung spanischer Zeitungen, Ambassador Ratibor to Auswärtiges Amt, 5.11.1914.

¹⁰³P.A., R11862, Spanien No. 46, Bd. 1, Presse, Ambassador Ratibor to Bethmann Hollweg, 25.11.1914.

¹⁰⁴Ferguson, *The pity of war*, p. 215.

¹⁰⁵*The Times*, 26 Feb. 1916.

While the German embassy, with the help of private news services, established contacts with Spanish journalists who would write pro-German articles, Spanish newspapers favourable to German opinion were targeted and subsequently published articles praising the German war effort. In October 1914 Ambassador Ratibor was able to report back to the *Auswärtige Amt* that *La Tribuna* and *El Pais* were willing to print pro-German propaganda under the guise of Spanish nationalism.¹⁰⁶ However, it is unlikely that the liberal and pro-Allied publication *El Pais*¹⁰⁷ formed a lasting relationship with the German embassy and evidence suggests that the contact was an isolated incident.

The collaboration with *La Tribuna*, an illustrated evening paper with a circulation of approximately 20,000 copies,¹⁰⁸ was seen as particularly useful since the paper did not have a particular political stance and was therefore read by a wide audience. Contact between the paper and the German embassy had been initiated by AEG director Armbruster, who, as mentioned before, had founded a propaganda service in Madrid. He had known *La Tribuna*'s owner, Canovas Cervantes, for several years. Canovas was willing to hand over his paper to the Germans in return for financial contributions.¹⁰⁹ In July 1915 the German embassy was able to buy over two thirds of the shares for a newspaper trust which included *La Tribuna* as well as *Día Grafico*,¹¹⁰ an illustrated morning paper with a circulation of 30,000 copies.¹¹¹ The Foreign Office

¹⁰⁶P.A., R11868, Spanien No. 46, Bd. 3, Subventionierung spanischer Zeitungen, Ambassador Ratibor to Auswärtiges Amt, 20.10.1914.

¹⁰⁷Romero Salvadó, *Spain 1914 – 1918*. Salvadó refers to *El Pais* as 'mouthpiece of the Allied cause', p. 15.

¹⁰⁸P.A., R123013, Beeinflussung der spanischen Presse 1915–17, Aufzeichnung Betr. Dia Grafico und La Tribuna in Barcelona [undated].

¹⁰⁹P.A., R11868, Spanien No. 46, Bd. 3, Subventionierung spanischer Zeitungen, Ambassador Ratibor to Bethmann Hollweg, 6.11.1914.

¹¹⁰P.A., R123013, Beeinflussung der spanischen Presse 1915–17, Ratibor to Bethmann Hollweg, 21.7.1915.

¹¹¹*Ibid.*, Aufzeichnung Betr. Dia Grafico und La Tribuna in Barcelona [undated].

called *La Tribuna* 'Spanish only in name' due to the direct influence of the German embassy.¹¹²

Alexander Bruns was able to make use of the various contacts he had established before the war and continued to successfully provide Spanish newspapers with pro-German articles and news. Publications favourable to German ideas such as the Carlist papers *Correo Español* and *El Universo* were at the disposal of the embassy right from the outset of the war. The German propagandists however, realised the need to win over newspapers which did not have any strong political tendencies in either direction.¹¹³ August Hofer ensured German propaganda in Spanish newspapers focused on the issue of strict neutrality by paying Spanish journalists to write pro-neutrality articles.¹¹⁴

German propagandists were also able to rely on news correspondents of German publications who had been reporting from Spain prior to the war. The *Kölnische Volkszeitung*, for example, enjoyed good relations with the Madrid paper *El Debate* and assured the *Auswärtige Amt* in the pro-German leanings of the publication.¹¹⁵ German propagandists cleverly manipulated Spanish public opinion to their advantage and sought collaboration with publications from across the political spectrum. German propaganda activity in Spain reached such heights that by the end of 1917 the Foreign Office declared half the Spanish press was bought by Germany.¹¹⁶ Approximately 500 Spanish newspapers were in the hands of the Central Powers by the end of the First World War.¹¹⁷ The main Madrid papers controlled by the German embassy were *La Tribuna*, *Correo Español*, *ABC* and several smaller publications. Pro-

¹¹²N.A., FO371/2759, Foreign Office, Spain & Portugal (War) 1916, Vaughan to Grey, 28.4.1916.

¹¹³P.A., R11862, Spanien No. 46, Bd. 1, Presse, Ambassador Ratibor to Bethmann Hollweg, 12.10.1914.

¹¹⁴B.A., R901/71832, Politische, wirtschaftliche und militärische Lage in Spanien 1917, Undated note by A. Hofer, not clear who addressed to.

¹¹⁵B.A., R901/72240, Deutsch-Spanische Gesellschaft, Feb. – Okt. 1916, Publishing company J.P. Bachem-Koeln to Mr. Grautoff at Zentralstelle für Auslandsdienst, 4.4.1916.

¹¹⁶N.A., CAB/24/35, Image ref. 0073, Cabinet Papers, Intelligence Bureau, Department of Information 1917, Weekly report on Spain XV, 13.12.1917.

¹¹⁷Romero Salvadó, *Spain 1914 – 1918*, p. 69.

Allied newspapers such as *El Imparcial*, *El Heraldo*, *Vanguardia*, the Republican papers *Diluvio* and *España Nueva* were also to some extent influenced by German diplomats.¹¹⁸ Although the collaboration with *Diluvio* was not seen as very successful, the embassy maintained its financial support in order to avoid the paper being taken over by the Allies.¹¹⁹

Hofer's German News Service for Spain was able to call on the help of the journalist Fabré y Oliver and also attracted the interest of the head of *Agencia Central de la Prensa*, Jose de Guiller-Garcia. Fabré y Oliver, who had worked for *Vanguardia*,¹²⁰ would write articles for different publications based on German material and Guiller-Garcia, also supplied with material from the German propaganda service, would give presentations in Spanish workers' clubs. By praising German social institutions, Hofer was hoping to achieve a positive influence on Spanish workers.¹²¹ To guarantee a successful collaboration with journalists, German propagandists not only had to offer financial rewards but also facilitate trips to Germany or the Western front. Writer and journalist Ricardo Leon was lavished with attention by German officials during his stay in Germany. He was able to visit different social and industrial facilities and was also introduced to German politicians. In return, it was hoped that the positive reception he received would lead to a favourable portrayal of Germany in the Spanish press.¹²²

To avoid any suggestions of bribery, which could have impacted negatively on the propaganda effort, Berlin preferred foreign journalists to approach the German

¹¹⁸P.A., R123013, Beeinflussung der spanischen Presse 1915–17, Jagow to Grünau, 15.9.1916; Ratibor to Bethmann Hollweg, 10.6.1916.

¹¹⁹Ibid., Ratibor to Bethmann Hollweg, 21.7.1915; Jagow to Grünau, 15.9.1916.

¹²⁰P.A., R123013, Beeinflussung der spanischen Presse 1915–17, Report Hofer, 21.5.1915

¹²¹B.A., R901/72303, Auswärtiges Amt, Zentralstelle für Auslandsdienst, Deutscher Nachrichtendienst für Spanien, Bd. 3, Jan. – Sept. 1915, A. Hofer to Nachrichtendienst Frankfurt/Main, 11.2.1915.

¹²²P.A., R123009, Spanien 2, Bd. 1, Die Presse in Madrid, Unsigned report, given to Freiherr v. Mumm for review, 10.7.1916.

government rather than the other way around.¹²³ Ambassador Ratibor was eager though to find more Spanish literary personalities willing to travel to Germany and took matters into his own hands.¹²⁴ However, he was not successful in attracting great attention. Fernando Weyler, son of General Valeriano Weyler – former governor general of Cuba, signalled his interest in such an undertaking to the German embassy.¹²⁵ At the beginning of the twentieth century Weyler senior had served as minister for war and had also been in close contact with German diplomats in Spain. In February 1914 for example, he attended a banquet of the German colony in Barcelona in honour of the birthday of Kaiser Wilhelm II.¹²⁶

The *Vanguardia* correspondent Enrique Dominguez Rodiño, reporting from Bremen, was a frequent collaborator of the German administration and received financial support from the *Auswärtige Amt*.¹²⁷ Curiously, he had first come to the attention of German diplomats for articles which painted Germany in a less than favourable light. In February 1914 the German consulate at Barcelona informed the chancellor of an article by Rodiño which, as the German diplomats saw it, demeaned German institutions and painted the German military as war mongers.¹²⁸ In his article he claimed the German people did not want war and it was only the military, convinced of a victory, that was advocating, what he called a ‘suicidal struggle’. He went on to describe the German soldier as self-deluded, believing he was god-like and invincible while German officers were painted as rich and pleasure loving.¹²⁹

¹²³P.A., R11998, Spanien 61 – Die politischen Beziehungen zwischen Spanien und Deutschland 1911–16, Auswärtige Amt (Mumm) to War press office, 22.3.1916.

¹²⁴P.A., R123009, Spanien 2, Bd. 1, Die Presse in Madrid, Ambassador Ratibor to Auswärtiges Amt, 1.11.1916.

¹²⁵Ibid., Ambassador Ratibor to Auswärtiges Amt, 3.3.1917.

¹²⁶*La Ilustración Artística*, 2 Feb. 1914.

¹²⁷P.A., R123007, Spanien 1, Bd. 1, Die Presse in Spanien (außer in Madrid), Report Welzceck Auswärtiges Amt, 5.6.1917.

¹²⁸P.A., R11861, Spanien No. 46, Bd. 3, Die Spanische Presse Januar 1906–April 1914, Consulat Barcelona to Bethmann Hollweg, 13.2.1914.

¹²⁹Ibid.

Rodiño, however, quickly changed his tune and the consulate was already able to report in March 1914 that he had written a more complimentary article after an encounter with the Kaiser himself.¹³⁰ In it the Kaiser was described as a friendly, caring and hardworking ruler rather than a war monger. Rodiño stated his admiration for the German emperor had grown after seeing him up close and he even went so far as to describe him as the ideal citizen.¹³¹ After the outbreak of the war his support was sought by the consulate at Barcelona and Rodiño was even facilitated in his wish for interviews with German politicians. In his account of the war years Rodiño detailed interviews he conducted in Belgium with Cardinal Mercier and the German governor general of Belgium, von Bissing. Though he mentioned that these interviews were organised with the help of the Spanish representative at Brussels,¹³² the Marquis de Villalobar, a frequent collaborator of the German administration,¹³³ he did not mention his close collaboration with the German diplomats and propagandists. Rodiño did not see himself as an unconditional *Germanófilo* but instead as an impartial foreigner who had lived and reported from Germany for many years. He saw Germany as a cultured country and rejected any notion of German barbarism.¹³⁴

Using the occasion of the 300th anniversary of Cervantes' death, an interview between Rodiño and the German state secretary von Jagow was arranged in April 1916 and it appeared in the German sponsored publication *La Correspondencia de España*. Only shortly afterwards though, the German embassy had to give up its financial support for the paper as it appeared the *Correspondencia* was receiving larger funds from the Allies. The paper's editors were therefore not interested in a collaboration with the German administration anymore, highlighting that collaboration

¹³⁰Ibid., Consulat Barcelona to Bethmann Hollweg, 28.3.1914.

¹³¹Ibid.

¹³²Enrique Domínguez Rodiño, *Las primeras llamas. Diario de un testigo-cronista de la guerra* (Madrid, 1917), pp. 365-377.

¹³³ See chapter four.

¹³⁴Domínguez Rodiño, *Las primeras llamas*, p. 177.

with the belligerents was also opportunistic and motivated by financial needs rather than political convictions.¹³⁵ The occasion of the interview between Rodiño and von Jagow, however, was seen as a good opportunity to show appreciation for Spanish culture without being overtly political.

In the interview von Jagow praised Cervantes' work, comparing him to Homer and Shakespeare, whom he called eternal figures of the world of literature with which German people were as familiar with as with Goethe. He went on to state that Don Quijote as well as Cervantes' works *La gitanilla* and *Novelas ejemplares* were known to Germans and that 'Germany would willingly give testament to admire, honour and venerate Cervantes work, his noble language and the genius of Spain.'¹³⁶ The lavish praise was quickly followed by an attempt at damage limitation regarding the sinking of the passenger ship *Sussex*, which had claimed the life of Spanish composer Granados. The state secretary confirmed that Germany would respect the rights of neutral countries and promised that an investigation into the incident would be carried out.¹³⁷ The interview between Rodiño and von Jagow serves as an excellent example to illustrate how cultural propaganda was instrumentalised to distract from the negative impact the war was having on neutral countries. Spain, which was often side-lined by the greater powers in international matters,¹³⁸ also felt her culture was not appreciated enough by the Entente, something German propaganda used to its advantage.¹³⁹

The interview between Rodiño and von Jagow also served to voice sympathy for the 16,000 Spaniards that had signed a pro-German manifesto.¹⁴⁰ Ongoing arguments between *Francófilos* and *Germanófilos* had produced several manifestos

¹³⁵P.A., R123013, Beeinflussung der spanischen Presse 1915–17, Ratibor to Bethmann Hollweg, 10.6.1916; Ratibor to Auswärtige Amt, 15.6.1916.

¹³⁶*La Correspondencia de España*, 23 Apr. 1916.

¹³⁷*La Correspondencia de España*, 23 Apr. 1916.

¹³⁸See chapter one.

¹³⁹See chapter three.

¹⁴⁰P.A., R123007, Spanien 1, Bd. 1, Die Presse in Spanien (außer in Madrid), Report Horstmann, given for review to Freiherr v. Mumm, 8.4.1916.

published by Spanish intellectuals who wished to express their solidarity with one of the warring parties.¹⁴¹ The first of those publications was a pro-Allied manifesto which appeared in *Iberia* on 10 July 1915.¹⁴² As a response a pro-German manifesto followed, written by Literature Nobel prize laureate and well known Spanish playwright Jacinto Benavente. It was published in *La Tribuna* on 18 December 1915 under the title ‘German–Spanish friendship’. Besides expressing admiration for the German state and German culture, it also claimed that German and Spanish interests were harmonious while at the same time affirming Spanish neutrality.¹⁴³ Amongst the signatories were intellectuals, scholars and religious figures. It was also claimed that many army officers and businessmen agreed with the ideas expressed in the manifesto but were reluctant to sign it out of fear of being blacklisted.¹⁴⁴ The manifesto was reproduced by Hofer’s news service which distributed 30,000 copies of it in 1916.¹⁴⁵ The text was also reprinted in the German press, as *ABC* was able to report.¹⁴⁶

Journalists working with the embassy or other German propaganda institutions were carefully investigated by the *Auswärtige Amt* to ensure their pro-German leanings. It was often difficult to establish the true motives of collaborators as can be seen in the example of Javier Bueno, who was reporting from Germany. Bueno was often difficult to control¹⁴⁷ and frequently complained about the measures of the German censors which he thought were hindering his work supporting Germany in the Spanish press¹⁴⁸. Despite those difficulties, the *Auswärtige Amt* was keen to keep Bueno on their books and tolerated his behaviour. Bueno, who also wrote under the pseudonym

¹⁴¹See chapter three.

¹⁴²Paloma Ortiz-de-Urbina, 'La Primera Guerra Mundial y sus consecuencias: la imagen de Alemania en España a partir de 1914', in *Revista de Filología Alemana*, xv (2007), pp 193–206.

¹⁴³*Ibid.*

¹⁴⁴Díaz-Plaja, *Francófilos y Germanófilos*, pp 26–7.

¹⁴⁵Hofer, *Deutschtum in Spanien*, p. 25.

¹⁴⁶*ABC*, 30 Dec. 1915.

¹⁴⁷P.A., R123009, Spanien 2, Bd. 1, Die Presse in Madrid, Welzcek to Legationsrat Deutelmöser, news department, Auswärtiges Amt, 18.12.1917.

¹⁴⁸P.A., R123010, Spanien 2, Bd. 2, Die Presse in Madrid, Javier Bueno to Legationsrat Deutelmöser, news department, Auswärtiges Amt, 23.1.1918.

Antonio de Azpeitua,¹⁴⁹ was a controversial and paradoxical character who prior to the war had been the long-time editor of the anarchist paper *El Radical* and a confidante of Alejandro Lerroux.¹⁵⁰

During the First World War, however, he changed his political direction and started writing pro-German propaganda for *La Tribuna* and other Spanish publications.¹⁵¹ Before the outbreak of the war Bueno had caused a controversy while working as a correspondent in France. In an article published in *La Tribuna* he had described Raymond Poincaré as a statesman with little representative force and a wardrobe with not much left to desire. This resulted in a hostile campaign against Bueno in the French press with journalists asking for his expulsion from France.¹⁵² During the war he was frequently criticised by fellow journalists for his pro-German propaganda and also accused of making up his articles.¹⁵³ Bueno's character and political background remained ambivalent. *La Correspondencia de España* in 1915 described him as a Republican journalist working for *España Nueva* under the pseudonym Carlos Roig.¹⁵⁴ Given this ambiguity as well as his personal difficulties – he was shot at as a result of an argument with the director of the newspaper *El Parlamentario*¹⁵⁵ – it is surprising that the German administration sought to collaborate with him.

Another prominent Spanish journalist at the service of the German administration was Juan Pujol. He had worked as a war correspondent for *ABC* in various European capitals from 1914 onwards but left the paper at the end of 1916 due to disagreements. Subsequently he became co-director of the pro-German paper *La*

¹⁴⁹*España*, 30 May 1918.

¹⁵⁰*El Mentidero*, 26 Sept. 1914.

¹⁵¹*El País*, 4 Oct. 1914.

¹⁵²*Ibid.*, 13 Jan. 1914.

¹⁵³*España*, 1 Nov. 1917.

¹⁵⁴*La Correspondencia de España*, 23.10.1915.

¹⁵⁵*La Época*, 22 Oct. 1915.

*Nación*¹⁵⁶ and was also part of the editorial team of the Hofer publication *Germania*.¹⁵⁷ In his articles from the front line Pujol gave the impression of being courted by German generals who were trying to gain *ABC*'s favour.¹⁵⁸ Similar to Bueno's publications, doubts were raised over the authenticity of Pujol's work and whether he had actually visited the places at the front which he was describing in his articles.¹⁵⁹ While some liberal publications, such as *Los Aliados*, welcomed Pujol as their adversary,¹⁶⁰ others like *España* criticised him for accusing their writer Luis Araquistáin of being paid by the British government while Pujol himself was supported by the German. The accusations against Araquistáin were denied by the British embassy, which claimed not to exert any pressure on the Spanish press, unlike other countries.¹⁶¹

Araquistáin, however, did negotiate with the Foreign Office over subsidising a pro-Allied publication which could have served as an instrument to spread Allied propaganda in Spain. Though his suggestion of founding a paper possibly called *Union Latina*, *Alianza Latina* or *Politica Latina* was not picked up by the British, he approached British diplomats again by the end of 1915 with another idea. This time he offered to sell 10,000 mules to the British army in order to create a pro-Allied paper with the profit which, however, did not come about. Araquistáin pressed on though, and eventually informed the British about *España*'s financial difficulties. They agreed to finance the publication by contributing 1,000 pesetas per edition. The use of *España* as a pro-Allied propaganda tool did not sit well with its director and founder, philosopher José Ortega y Gasset, who feared this would lead to relinquishing intellectual control

¹⁵⁶*La Nación* (Madrid, 1916), available at Biblioteca Nacional de España, Hemeroteca Digital, (<http://hemerotecadigital.bne.es/details.vm?q=id:0003935583&lang=en>) (6.10.2014).

¹⁵⁷B.A., R901/72302c, Auswärtiges Amt, Zentralstelle für Auslandsdienst, Deutscher Nachrichtendienst für Spanien, Bd. 2, Jan. – Mai 1915, A. Hofer to Zentralstelle für Auslandsdienst, received 10.4.1915.

¹⁵⁸*España*, 29 Jul. 1915.

¹⁵⁹*La Renovación Española*, 30 Apr. 1918.

¹⁶⁰*Los Aliados*, 5 Oct. 1918.

¹⁶¹*España*, 16 Mar. 1916.

over the publication.¹⁶² The publication, founded in 1915 as a weekly journal of culture and politics, provided a platform for many of the writers and thinkers of the Generation of 98 who voiced their political ideas in its pages as well as discussing culture and arts.¹⁶³ During the First World War the newspaper frequently criticised activity by pro-German journalists and condemned actions initiated by German propaganda.

Despite his own collaboration with one of the belligerents, Araquistáin was quick to criticise other Spanish journalists for working with the German administration. In an article published in the *Daily News*, Araquistáin accused some Madrid newspapers of having sold themselves to Germany. As a response to his article several newspaper directors came together demanding reparations from Araquistáin, staging a *tribunal de caballeros* (a gentlemen's tribunal) against the writer and protesting against his accusations.¹⁶⁴ This tribunal, also involving General Primo de Rivera, was mainly of symbolic character rather than entailing any legal implications for the *España* writer. It did not seem to have amounted to anything other than protesting against the accusations. Among the papers that protested were *El Correo Español*, *El Universo*, *El Debate*, *La Tribuna* and *ABC*,¹⁶⁵ all papers which received financial support from Germany for printing pro-German propaganda.

Since no censorship laws existed, journalists and editors could not be prosecuted for collaborating with one of the belligerents. The Spanish constitution of 1876 guaranteed freedom of the press. This right was only revoked in times of civil unrest such as the summer of 1917, when *España* was temporarily suspended for supporting the parliamentary assembly and Araquistáin and some of his colleagues were arrested.¹⁶⁶ Similarly in August 1918 freedom of the press was revoked until October of

¹⁶²Manuel Alzamora Menéndez, *La Generación del 14. Una aventura intelectual* (Madrid, 2006), p. 305.

¹⁶³Baker, 'Fin de Siècle culture' in *Spanish history since 1808*, pp 155-79.

¹⁶⁴*ABC*, 2 Mar. 1916.

¹⁶⁵*Ibid.*

¹⁶⁶Juan Francisco Fuentes & Javier Fernández Sebastián, *Historia del periodismo español: prensa, política y opinión pública en la España contemporánea* (Madrid, 1997), p. 197.

that year as a response to violent revolutionary strikes.¹⁶⁷ It was only in July 1918 that a law to ensure neutrality was introduced, which also enabled the government to censor articles and images relating to the war.¹⁶⁸ The bill of neutrality gave the government the right to prohibit publication, issue, transmission or circulation of any news it considered contrary to the respect due to neutrality or the security of Spain. Any breach of the law was subject to penalties of imprisonment or fines ranging from 500 to 100,000 pesetas. Equally, spreading news of events abroad which caused unrest amongst Spaniards or defaming the head of a foreign state verbally or in writing led to punishment. The Spanish government also reserved the right to enforce the new law by censorship.¹⁶⁹

In the same month another law was passed that would create a support system for publishers granting advance payments to make up for the difference in the price of paper.¹⁷⁰ According to reports from the Foreign Office the neutrality bill led to strong protests from the Liberal Party as well as the Republicans and Socialists, all of whom viewed it as an attack on the freedom of the press and saw it as a way for the government to mute any criticism levelled against it. British diplomats were also concerned that the bill would not only hinder their own propaganda but also interfere with British intelligence in Spain and prevent any criticism of the war, however reasonable or moderate.¹⁷¹

Enforcing strict neutrality in the press, however, played into the hands of German diplomats who throughout the war had attempted to portray the Allied campaign in Spain as an interventionist one. By extending the commitment to neutrality to the print media as well, it was now very unlikely Spain would openly join the Entente in the war – the goal the German propagandists had pursued all along. Prior to the

¹⁶⁷Fernando Cendán Pazos, *Historia del derecho Español de prensa e imprenta (1502-1966)* (Madrid, 1974), p. 155.

¹⁶⁸*Ibid.*, p. 154.

¹⁶⁹N.A., FO371/3375, Foreign Office, Spain & Portugal (War) 1918, Translation of bill to preserve neutrality, undated.

¹⁷⁰Cendán Pazos, *Historia del derecho Español de prensa e imprenta*, p. 155.

¹⁷¹N.A., FO371/3375, Foreign Office, Spain & Portugal (War) 1918, Hardinge to Balfour, 8.7.1918.

enactment of censorship laws the only other means of suppressing inflammatory articles was by enforcing a press law which forbade attacks and abuses of a friendly foreign sovereign.¹⁷² When the Carlist publication *Correo Español* printed an attack on the French ambassador to Spain, it was subsequently prosecuted for it.¹⁷³ Equally the editor of *La Tribuna* was charged for allowing the publication of an offensive caricature of the King of Italy. The paper also received a warning that it might be suspended if there were any repeated incidents.¹⁷⁴

Anti-German propaganda, to some extent, was also curbed by the Spanish press law. The *Voz de Guipuzcoa*, for example, was temporarily suppressed after printing articles condemning German cruelties in Belgium which also contained attacks on the Kaiser.¹⁷⁵ The Foreign Office tried to restrict anti-British propaganda by complaining to the Spanish government, though not always with success. Arguing that Spain was not in a state of siege and officially neutral, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs could not always prevent defamatory articles from being printed.¹⁷⁶ The lack of wide-ranging censorship laws for most of the war also allowed German propagandists to carry out their work. However, they had to face numerous other obstacles in their campaign for Spanish public opinion.

Difficulties of German propaganda in Spain

News embargos, disruption of telegraphic communication and the logistics of sending material made the work of propagandists very difficult. Sending material from Germany to Spain was a constant problem and alternative routes had to be found in order to keep up the supply of propaganda material. In the first months of the

¹⁷²N.A., FO371/2106, Foreign Office, Spain & Portugal (War) 1914, Hardinge to Grey, 21.10.1914.

¹⁷³N.A., FO371/2470, Foreign Office, Spain & Portugal (War) 1915, Hardinge to Grey, 5.3.1915.

¹⁷⁴Ibid., Hardinge to [? probably Grey], 19.5.1915.

¹⁷⁵N.A., FO371/2106, Foreign Office, Spain & Portugal (War) 1914, Hardinge to Grey, 21.10.1914.

¹⁷⁶Ibid., Grey to Hardinge, 6.10.1914.

war distribution took place via Genoa. Increased news blockades meant propaganda publications could only be smuggled.¹⁷⁷ In April 1915, in a letter to the German chancellor, the German consulate at Genoa confirmed that large quantities of German propaganda material had been received in the Genoese port since the outbreak of the war. The received material was then sent on to Spain, Portugal and America either via post marked with Italian stamps to classify them as Italian dispatches or shipped as freight.

The shipping of material on neutral vessels was already creating difficulties for the German diplomats in Genoa. After the British government decided on 15 March 1915 to clamp down on German goods and material being smuggled on neutral ships, Italian shipping companies demanded certificates of origin authenticated by British consulates for all goods carried on board in order to avoid searches by the French or British authorities. Therefore, any German deliveries arriving in Genoa subsequently had to be sent to Spain by land route. To avoid any suspicions, the Genoese consulate also suggested posting propaganda material separately in small parcels or letters. Alternatively, propaganda material could be printed in Holland and then distributed to its required destination.¹⁷⁸ Only shortly after the consulate's report to Bethmann Hollweg, Italy entered the war on the side of the Allies, forcing German officials to find alternative routes via Switzerland and in some cases Holland, Sweden and Denmark.¹⁷⁹ Switzerland, with a German propaganda office established in Bern, was seen as a relatively safe route for sending propaganda material to Spain.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁷Albes, *Worte wie Waffen*, p. 93.

¹⁷⁸B.A., R901/72655, Auswärtiges Amt, Zentralstelle für Auslandsdienst, Geschäftsführung, Bd. 1, 1914–16, German consulate at Genua to Bethmann Hollweg, 16.4.1915.

¹⁷⁹Ibid., Unsigned, internal report, 13.8.1915.

¹⁸⁰B.A., R901/72303, Auswärtiges Amt, Zentralstelle für Auslandsdienst, Deutscher Nachrichtendienst für Spanien, Bd. 3, Jan. – Sept. 1915, August Hofer to Nachrichtendienst Frankfurt/Main, 11.2.1915.

However, posting material via Bern was not always reliable and often German propagandists in Spain had to be supplied through deliveries from Holland.¹⁸¹

It was not only delivery routes that posed a problem; how material was dispatched also became an issue. Large parcels and packets often aroused the suspicion of the French authorities. Therefore, propaganda material had to be sent in letters, making the whole procedure much more costly.¹⁸² The postal route from Spain to Germany was equally difficult. In order to keep the *Auswärtige Amt* informed of their activities, German propagandists had to resort to sending their reports via Sweden and Holland.¹⁸³ This obviously led to long delays in sending propaganda material to Spain and the German embassy and private propagandists were often hindered in their work. In August 1916 embassy secretary von Stohrer reported that they were happy to have received new material from Germany after being without propaganda supplies for several months.¹⁸⁴ The extent and effort German propagandists went through in order to get propaganda material into Spain also shows the importance of Spanish neutrality for the German war effort.

Telegraphic communication between Spain and Germany was another obstacle the German propagandists had to overcome. Due to allied blockades, news from home was reaching the German diplomatic corps and residents with long delays, causing a great deal of anxiety and uncertainty amongst them.¹⁸⁵ In addition to the Emden-Vigo cable, another cable existed at Tenerife connecting German cables with Monrovia (Liberia), Pernambuco (Brazil) and via Lome (Togo) to Douala (Cameroon). While the Emden-Tenerife cable was cut by the Allies at the outbreak of the war, the

¹⁸¹Ibid., August Hofer to Zentralstelle für Auslandsdienst, 22.7.1915.

¹⁸²B.A., R901/72655, Auswärtiges Amt, Zentralstelle für Auslandsdienst, Geschäftsführung, Bd. 1, 1914–16, German embassy at Bern to Zentralstelle für Auslandsdienst, 28.5.1915.

¹⁸³B.A., R901/72304, Auswärtiges Amt, Zentralstelle für Auslandsdienst, Deutscher Nachrichtendienst für Spanien, Bd. 4, Mai 1915 – Okt. 1916, Annual report of Hofer's news service received via Holland, 19.5.1916. Pamphlet by Hofer received via Sweden, 8.8.1916.

¹⁸⁴P.A., R123013, Beeinflussung der spanischen Presse 1915–17, Report embassy Madrid, signed Stohrer, 8.8.1916.

¹⁸⁵Hofer, *Deutschum in Spanien*, p. 8.

Tenerife-Monrovia connection was used to send news items from Germany to the German community in Tenerife who then positioned those news in publications on the island until this connection was also eventually cut off in November 1914.¹⁸⁶

With the cutting of the German Emden-Vigo cable in August 1914, the German community in Spain had to obtain current news from radio transmissions from Norddeich, received by German ships interned in Spanish ports.¹⁸⁷ In the first weeks of the war August Hofer was able to obtain news from a radio transmitter on the German steamer *Düsseldorf*. He would copy the news and then distribute them on a daily basis to the most important Spanish and Portuguese newspapers. Soon, though, the Allies put an end to the radio communication and the Spanish government decreed in August 1914 that all radio transmitters on foreign ships lying in Spanish ports had to be dismantled.¹⁸⁸ Hofer was not deterred by this and was able to install a radio transmitter in his own house in a suburb of Barcelona.

A second radio station working for Hofer was run by Spaniards who, when threatened with closure, appealed to the local governor and were granted permission to continue their work. Naturally, they did not disclose that they were in the service of German propaganda.¹⁸⁹ Although he was under constant surveillance by the Spanish police and Allied agents, Hofer managed to maintain his radio communication with Germany, forming the basis for his German News Service for Spain.¹⁹⁰ He was also able to undermine Allied propaganda efforts by ensuring the shutting down of two French radio transmitter stations.¹⁹¹ Beside Hofer's illegal transmitter, communication between Germany and Spain was facilitated through the Spanish military wireless station at

¹⁸⁶Javier Ponce, 'Propaganda and politics: Germany and Spanish opinion in World War I', in Troy R.E. Paddock (ed.), *World War I and propaganda* (Leiden & Boston, 2014), pp 274-92.

¹⁸⁷P.A., R11862, Spanien No. 46, Bd. 1, Presse, Ambassador Ratibor to Bethmann Hollweg, 12.10.1914.

¹⁸⁸Hofer, *Deutschtum in Spanien*, p. 10.

¹⁸⁹P.A., Botschaft Madrid, Karton 124, Nachrichtendienst Hofer, Hofer to Ratibor, 26.9.1914.

¹⁹⁰Hofer, *Deutschtum in Spanien*, p. 11. P.A., Botschaft Madrid, Karton 124, Nachrichtendienst Hofer, Hofer to Ratibor, 1.10.1914.

¹⁹¹P.A., Botschaft Madrid, Karton 124, Nachrichtendienst Hofer, Hofer to Ratibor, 26.9.1914.

Carabanchel, which had been installed by AEG, and connections via Austria-Hungary (Pola) as well as the stations at Norddeich, Königswusterhausen and Eilvese. The offer by the Spanish *Compania nacional de telegrafia sin hilos* (National wireless telegraphy company) at the end of 1914 to establish a German-Spanish wireless service was turned down by the German administration. It was feared that the service was too closely connected to Britain.¹⁹²

The importance of maintaining radio transmission for the transfer of news and for propaganda purposes was seen as vital by the Germany military, which also stressed the importance of continuing these networks after the war. In the case of another European wide conflict communication systems needed to be in place and not be, like in the First World War, set up from scratch.¹⁹³ It is interesting to note that by the beginning of 1917 German military planners had not only learned their lessons regarding the importance of communication networks but also did not rule out another large conflict between the greater powers.

Private initiatives such as Hofer's were often financed by the individuals themselves and relied on contributions from the German community in Spain. Officials in Berlin did not view Spain as the most important neutral country to be targeted with propaganda. Italy and the United States, while they were still neutral, were seen as the main targets of German propaganda. Indeed, both those countries, as well as Switzerland, experienced major propaganda campaigns from both warring sides.¹⁹⁴ Although the *Auswärtige Amt* wanted to ensure good relations with Spain, especially in view of establishing trade links after the war, it expected that a large part of the propaganda effort was financed from within the German business and diplomatic

¹⁹²Rüchardt, *Deutsch-Spanische Beziehungen*, p. 175.

¹⁹³B.A.M., RM5/1751, Admiralstab der Marine, F.T. – Verkehr mit Spanien Bd. 1 1915–17, Kanzlei to Auswärtige Amt, 17.2.1917.

¹⁹⁴Horne & Kramer, *German atrocities*, p. 250.

community in Spain.¹⁹⁵ Therefore, official and private propaganda efforts were hindered by limited finances and despite contributions from Berlin, propagandists had to constantly ask for more money in order to keep up their work in Spain.¹⁹⁶

The various activities by different private and official organisations hindered a coherent effort in the pursuit of Spanish public opinion and often led to confusion. The lack of cohesion became apparent in the correspondence between the Saxony Royal Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the *Auswärtige Amt* from May 1915. The ministry in Saxony had received a request for the publication of articles from the *Oficina de información Alemana* (Office for German news) and now asked for confirmation from Berlin whether this bureau was an official German institution and if their articles had been subject to censorship. An investigation by the *Auswärtige Amt* amounted to nothing and it could not be established whether the service was the same as Rautzenberg's service in Madrid.¹⁹⁷

The multitude of participants also created great competition between the various propaganda institutions, a fact that was recognised by the diplomats themselves. German naval attaché von Krohn described German propaganda efforts in Barcelona as incoherent, due to the lack of leadership by the German consul there who, according to von Krohn, was not very popular amongst Spanish and German circles and also lacked an understanding of Spanish culture and institutions. He assessed that this situation resulted in a race amongst propagandists who, rather than working together, ensured their competitors would not overtake them. Krohn wrote, 'The head which guides the

¹⁹⁵B.A., R901/72655, Auswärtiges Amt, Zentralstelle für Auslandsdienst, Geschäftsführung, Bd. 1, 1914–16, Report for meeting, 29.3.1915.

¹⁹⁶P.A., R11868, Spanien No. 46, Bd. 3, Subventionierung spanischer Zeitungen, Ambassador Ratibor to Auswärtiges Amt, 5.11.1914.

¹⁹⁷P.A., R123009, Spanien 2, Bd. 1, Die Presse in Madrid, Saxony Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs to Auswärtiges Amt, 19.5.1915.

movements of the individual parts is missing.¹⁹⁸ Equally ambassador Ratibor was not pleased with Consul Ostmann's propaganda efforts in Catalonia and complained to the *Auswärtige Amt* about the consul's lack of initiative.¹⁹⁹

The hierarchy amongst German private and official propaganda efforts in Spain was often unclear. Private propagandists were expected to follow the lead of the embassy and the *Auswärtige Amt*, yet a high degree of initiative in their work was also expected from them. Due to the lack of any official guidelines outlining the collaboration between state and private propaganda institutions, the *Auswärtige Amt* was not always able to control all activity carried out by private propagandists who fought hard for the attention of Berlin with the hope of receiving financial support. Although the work of services such as Hofer's was highly valued and supported by the German embassy and the *Auswärtige Amt*, he largely had to finance the service with his own money and contributions from the German and Austro-Hungarian community in Spain. The ambitious Hofer frequently clashed with German officials who were concerned with his indiscretion regarding propaganda activities and also wanted him to curb his expenses.²⁰⁰ Undeterred by this, Hofer continued to request financial support as well as some official recognition which would grant him diplomatic immunity. In his requests he naturally praised his own work while criticising the official propaganda efforts of his main competitor, the German vice consul at Barcelona, Alfred von Carlowitz-Hartitzsch.

Whether out of financial need or motivated by a lack of recognition, Hofer not only resorted to discrediting the vice consul's work but also cast doubts over whether Carlowitz's character was suitable for representing the German cause in

¹⁹⁸B.A.M., RM5/2413, Admiralstab der Marine, Schrift-pp. Verkehr mit Vertretern der Marine, ab Sept. 1916 dem Marineattaché, und anderen Personen in Madrid Bd. 6 Juli – Nov. 1916, Report von Krohn, 25.8.1916.

¹⁹⁹P.A., R123013, Beeinflussung der spanischen Presse 1915–17, Ratibor to Auswärtige Amt, 17.10.1915.

²⁰⁰P.A., Botschaft Madrid 125, Nachrichtendienst Hofer, Carlowitz to von Stohrer, 25.9.1916.

Spain.²⁰¹ According to Hofer, a German vice consul should not have been seen frequenting bars and attending a costume ball during the battle of Verdun as Carlowitz had. The private propagandist felt that the vice consul's two year stint in Paris and Nice had left a deep impression on Carlowitz which, as Hofer argued, led to the diplomats less than gallantly behaviour in his affair with Baroness Ostmann.²⁰² It is unclear whether the affair between the vice consul and the consul's wife was a rumour made up by Hofer but his accusations certainly did not help to consolidate the German propaganda effort in Barcelona.

Petty quarrels between Hofer and the German diplomatic corps in Spain brought his career as a propagandist to an abrupt end. In December 1917 he was faced with allegations of having written an anonymous letter to Ambassador Ratibor in which he discredited Vice Consul Carlowitz, referring to an incident in which the consular official had brought about the dismissal of *Vanguardia* journalist Rubio. The letter, signed by 'An editor of the *Vanguardia*', urged Ratibor to reinstate the journalist, otherwise the paper would publish a sensationalist article damaging the reputation of the German embassy and the consul.²⁰³ Although Hofer denied having written the letter, he admitted to having provided a manuscript on the incident with the *Vanguardia* which was then used for the letter. In the wake of a growing scandal, Hofer agreed to hand over his news service to the German embassy in December 1917.²⁰⁴

Negotiations over the management of Hofer's news service after its founder's fall from grace also highlight the more interventionist approach the German authorities were taking towards the end of the war. While a high degree of self-mobilisation was noted in all belligerent countries at the beginning of the war, the

²⁰¹B.A., R901/71832, Politische, wirtschaftliche und militärische Lage in Spanien 1917, August Hofer to Zentralstelle für Auslandsdienst, 28.6.1917.

²⁰²P.A., R123013, Beeinflussung der spanischen Presse 1915–17, August Hofer to Zentralstelle für Auslandsdienst, 16.8.1916.

²⁰³P.A., Botschaft Madrid, Karton 126, Nachrichtendienst Hofer, Carlowitz to Ratibor, 4.3.1916.

²⁰⁴Ibid., Hofer to Ratibor, 7.12.1917.

longer duration of the conflict, high number of casualties and waning prospects of victory, forced governments to take more control over private activities such as propaganda.²⁰⁵ The end of Hofer's career as a propagandist for the German cause can therefore be seen as part of an attempt to streamline the German propaganda effort. Despite the fact that his enterprise was a private one, the embassy at Madrid and the consulate at Barcelona determined who would be Hofer's successor. The businessman Eduard Kröger was chosen to continue Hofer's work strictly collaborating with the German administration while still largely financing the service out of his own pocket.²⁰⁶

Just before the end of the war an additional German propaganda office in Madrid was created to relieve the embassy of some of its press propaganda activities and to concentrate all propaganda efforts in one agency. The *Sociedad de Estudios Economicos* (Society for economic studies), ambiguously named in order to avoid any connections with the embassy,²⁰⁷ also continued its work after the war collaborating with Spanish partner publications.²⁰⁸ At the beginning of 1919 August Hofer's creation, the German news service for Spain, was dissolved but its founder was keen to pick up his propaganda work again by trying to revive the *Correspondencia Alemana*.²⁰⁹

Conclusion

German influence on Spanish public opinion ensured a heated debate over neutrality which further widened the gap between *Germanófilos* and *Francófilos*. Contemporaries even described the conflict as a civil war of minds which did great

²⁰⁵Horne, 'Introduction' in *State, society, and mobilization in Europe during the First World War*, pp 5–7.

²⁰⁶P.A., Botschaft Madrid, Karton 126, Nachrichtendienst Hofer, Carlowitz to Ratibor, 13.12.1917.

²⁰⁷P.A., Botschaft Madrid, Karton 103 Spezialpressebüro der Botschaft Dr. Zechlin – Motschmann, Report to all imperial consulates 17.10.1918.

²⁰⁸P.A., Botschaft Madrid, Karton 103 Spezialpressebüro der Botschaft Dr. Zechlin – Motschmann, Motschmann (Sociedad de Estudios Economicos) to embassy, 25.11.1919.

²⁰⁹Ibid., Report Dr. Zechlin to representative of the German empire, 11.1.1919.

harm to Spain.²¹⁰ Widespread German propaganda activity in the face of great allied economic advantage as well as much larger British and French communities in Spain, is further proof for the effectiveness of German propaganda during the First World War. The effort organised by German private propagandists and diplomats refutes the claim of Allied superiority in the struggle for neutral opinion.²¹¹ In Spain the German administration with the help of private residents staged an efficient and determined assault on public opinion.

Undoubtedly the Allies had hoped their advantageous position in Spain would render an intensive campaign unnecessary. The country's dependence on British coal²¹² was frequently used as a bargaining tool not only to receive vital goods and resources in return but also to put pressure on Spain to align herself with the Allies and curb German influence. Various Spanish governments during the war, however, did not diverge from a policy of strict neutrality and avoided an open declaration of sympathy for one of the warring parties. This can also be attributed to the efforts of portraying Germany and the Central Powers as champions of Spanish neutrality and to a clever manipulation of the ideological differences within Spanish society. Although Allied economic supremacy ensured Spain would not join the Central Powers either, the lack of effective Allied propaganda countering German efforts meant that insufficient measures were taken to convince the conservative Germanophile elements of Spanish society of the merits of democracy and liberal ideas. As Spain's civil war of words continued, Spanish intellectuals and writers, spurred on by the cultural mobilisation created by the

²¹⁰Diaz-Plaja, *Francófilos y Germanófilos*, p. 14.

²¹¹Cate Haste, *Keep the home fires burning: propaganda in the First World War* (London, 1977) Haste argues German propaganda to neutrals was in general less efficient than British. Germany failed to seize initiative not only in counteracting allied propaganda to neutrals about German war guilt but also in exploiting in simplest terms, using simple images, those events which could denigrate the enemy. p. 39. Troy R.E. Paddock (ed.), *A call to arms: propaganda, public opinion, and newspapers in the Great War* (Westport & London, 2004) Paddock argues that the Entente powers had the upper hand in the propaganda battle for neutral powers and that Germans did not overcome the disadvantage of admitting to having violated Belgium neutrality. p. 204.

²¹²Zeiseler, *Spanien im Kalkül der britischen Kriegspolitik*, p. 247; p. 252.

European war, continued their search for a regeneration of Spain which had begun at the end of the nineteenth century.

Chapter 3

Pro-German Spaniards and the search for a new Spain

As outlined in Chapter 1, the war in Spain was mirrored in a confrontation between supporters of Germany and the Central Powers (*Germanófilos*) and those of the Entente (*Francófilos*). This chapter will closely analyse this debate, paying particular attention to the ideas of pro-German Spaniards which emerged during the First World War. The examination will be put into context with the process of cultural mobilisation during the war, a phenomenon which is often exclusively applied to the belligerent countries but has rarely been used to discuss the wartime experience of a neutral state.¹ However, as the example of Spain demonstrates, despite the country's official neutrality a process of self-mobilisation amongst Spanish intellectuals and writers did occur. While this was an extension of the discussion on Spain's regeneration, ongoing since the end of the nineteenth century, it was also partly exacerbated by the belligerents' propaganda campaigns and the tangible prospect of political and social change emerging in Spain between 1914 and 1918.

We have already seen in Chapter 1 that the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century marked a period of great change for Spain with various groups in society attempting to reform the country. The First World War made this desire for change even more imminent. Relatively little research has been done investigating the impact of World War I on Spanish intellectuals by trying to place them within the wider context of cultural mobilisation during the war.² However, the works produced by pro-

¹With the exception of Imee Tames, 'How a pro-German minority influenced Dutch intellectual debate during the Great War' in Jenny Maclead & Pierre Purseigle (eds), *Uncovered Fields: Perspectives in First World War Studies* (Brill, 2004), pp 261-78.

²With the exception of Maximiliano Fuentes Codera, *España en la Primera Guerra Mundial. Una movilización cultural* (Madrid, 2014).

German Spaniards during the First World War contain the central ideas from which later emerged Spanish nationalist thought and therefore call for a closer examination. The themes championed by the *Germanófilos*, such as the negative impact of democracy, parliamentarism, English imperialism on the one hand and the transformative potential of science, order and German state socialism on the other, influenced Spanish nationalism, which began a transformative process in the inter-war period.³ The First World War therefore, can be seen as a facilitator of intellectual self-mobilisation in Spain, which turned writers, intellectuals, journalists and philosophers into what Maximiliano Fuentes Codera has called catalysts of national opinion. In their writings during the war *Germanófilos* and *Francófilos* sought to propose models of reform for Spain influenced by other European writers and spurred on by the intellectual mobilisation created by the war.⁴

While the national question had already preoccupied the Generation of 98, they fell short of developing a coherent ideology and failed to formulate a programme of national reform. Stanley Payne has attributed this shortcoming to the subordinated role writers and intellectuals had played in Spanish public life until the end of the nineteenth century.⁵ Traditionally it had been the institution of the Catholic Church that was meant to provide national unity for all Spaniards. However, at the beginning of the twentieth century the Church's power had been significantly eroded and intellectuals were gaining greater influence in the shaping of public opinion. Spain's experience of the First World War not only highlights the emergence of writers and intellectuals in forming a national ideology, but it also underlines the struggle of the Spanish Catholic Church to find its

³Idem, 'Germanófilos y neutralistas: proyectos tradicionalistas y regeneracionistas para España (1914-1918)' in *Ayer. Revista de Historia Contemporánea*, Dossier: La Gran Guerra de los intelectuales: España en Europa, xci, no. 3 (2013), pp 63-92.

⁴Idem, Introduction in *Ayer. Revista de Historia Contemporánea*, Dossier: La Gran Guerra de los intelectuales: España en Europa, xci, no. 3 (2013), pp 13-31.

⁵Stanley Payne, 'Spanish Nationalism in the twentieth century' in *The Review of Politics*, xxvi, no. 3 (Jul., 1964), pp 403-22.

position in an increasingly secularised society in which alternative voices sought to redefine Spanishness.

As we have seen in the previous chapter, German propagandists successfully managed to maintain a hold on Spanish public opinion by highlighting Germany's defence of Spanish neutrality and stressing the interventionist intentions of the Allies. To counter Allied accusations of barbarism, the German propaganda campaign emphasised the country's cultural achievements. In that effort German propagandists in Spain were aided by the works produced by pro-German Spanish writers. In this chapter we will turn our examination to the arguments brought forward by Spain's *Germanófilos* to justify their support for the Kaiserreich. Close attention is paid to views and opinions of intellectuals, as represented by writers, journalists, and artists, as well as leading religious figures in Spain. It soon will become apparent that this support was born out of various, often contradictory, reasons. The motivation of the Spanish Catholic Church to support tacitly the German war effort was entirely different, in fact opposed to, those of intellectuals and artists – further deepening the schism within Spanish society. Nevertheless, the fact that this support emerged from the ranks of Spaniards of all classes and outlooks made it especially valuable to the German cause.

Spain's *Germanófilos* were not a homogenous group of conservative nationalists but also included artists such as playwright Jacinto Benavente and writer Pío Baroja, whose ideas of liberalism and spiritual regeneration did not always fit in with orthodox Germanophile thinking. The investigation will focus on some of the literary works produced by Benavente and Baroja during the First World War in order to gain a better understanding of their pro-German arguments. Many *Germanófilos*, influenced by German wartime mobilisation in their search for Spain's regeneration, used their writings to criticise the existing regime and what they perceived as the ills of the country. The Spanish Catholic Church, on the other hand, was concerned by the spread

of liberal ideas, which the clergy mainly associated with France, and therefore supported Germany. How the Catholic hierarchy in Spain justified its support of a predominantly Protestant power will also be discussed in the chapter.

The majority of Spanish intellectuals favoured the side of the Entente during the war and heavily criticised their pro-German colleagues in various manifestos and other publications. The arguments brought forward against Germanophile thinking will be outlined in the discussion by looking at the different manifestos produced in Spain during the First World War. Finally the chapter will detail how the work of *Germanófilos* was used by the German administration for propaganda purposes which mainly focused on highlighting the positive achievements of German culture. Many *Germanófilos* happily collaborated with the German diplomatic corps in Spain, and by writing articles, editing German sponsored publications and holding lectures, they contributed to galvanise Spanish public opinion.

Wartime mobilisation during the Great War also extended into the field of culture where intellectuals, writers and artists began to defend their respective warring side. The German 'Manifesto of the 93' or *An die Kulturwelt* (Appeal to the Civilised Nations) published at the beginning of October 1914 propagated the idea of a defensive war forced onto Germany, and sought to defend German culture. A month earlier a British manifesto published in the *New York Times*, and signed by prominent British writers such as H. G. Wells, Rudyard Kipling, Arthur Conan Doyle and others, had appealed to readers to come to the defense of civilisation. Manifestos produced by Russian intellectuals and scientists in 1914 also appealed to the civilised world, denouncing the actions of the Central Powers. German academics and intellectuals responded to Allied manifestos by denying accusations of war crimes and pledging their full support to the German military. Each side sought to defend their idea of civilisation

and by producing manifestos, articles, books and pamphlets, intellectuals and writers made their contribution to the war effort by trying to rouse public opinion.⁶

That this form of cultural mobilisation could be observed in the belligerent countries is not so surprising, given the immediate impact of the war on every-day life and the fact that writers and intellectuals also actively fought at the front. At first glance the situation in a neutral country should have been quite different, since there was no need to rouse public opinion, and strengthen the nation's resolve, in order to boost the war effort. This was not, however, necessarily the case in Spain.

Philosopher Ortega y Gasset described Spain's situation at the beginning of the First World War in the following terms: 'Two Spains, gentlemen, are locked in an incessant battle: one Spain is dead, barren and desolate and the other is a new Spain, prosperous, and competitive, promoting life. Everything is in place so that this new Spain can triumph.'⁷ Ortega y Gasset's hope for the emergence of a new Spain had also not diminished by the end of the war when he wrote, 'There is a fabulous immanence in the air: the minutes are shuddering by. The time has come for the grand modernisation of Spain.'⁸ It was this hope for change, as described by Ortega y Gasset, as well as the European conflict, that mobilised Spanish writers and intellectuals.

Spain's Germanófilos – Motivation, arguments and works by pro-German

Spaniards

An article which appeared in the German newspaper *Kölnische Volkszeitung* in June 1916 outlined the contradictory behaviour of Spanish public opinion. It explained

⁶Anne Rasmussen, 'Mobilising Minds' in Jay Winter (ed.), *The Cambridge History of the First World War, Vol. II, The State* (Cambridge, 2014), pp 390-417.

⁷As quoted in Vicente Muñoz Puelles, 'La cultura de la Restauración' in *Aula-Historia Social*, no. 1 (Spring, 1998), pp 58-71.

⁸As quoted in Francie Cate-Arries, 'Poetics and Philosophy: José Ortega y Gasset and the Generation of 1927' in *Hispania*, lxxi, no. 3 (Sep., 1988), pp 503-511.

that Spain's anti-clericalists valued German culture and education and hoped a German victory would establish a freedom of conscience in Spain, the only country in Europe, as claimed in the article, which had not yet introduced religious freedom. The majority of Spaniards, however, were pro-German for entirely opposite reasons the author argued.⁹ Gerald Meaker assessed the phenomenon of Germanophilism as a form of Spanish nationalism which mainly championed Spanish themes, interests and traditions. He identified three groups of *Germanófilos*: ultra-Catholic traditionalists, moderate Catholic nationalists and national regenerationists.¹⁰ Maximiliano Fuentes Codera, on the other hand, divides the *Germanófilos* into two large categories: those who wanted to see England and France humiliated and those who wished for Spain to follow the German model for social, cultural and economic development in order to enable a national rebirth.¹¹

In the first category identified by Fuentes Codera fall those like Carlist leader Vazquez de Mella, who rejected the international politics of England and the Republican ideals of France.¹² Meaker assigns the Carlists to his first group of *Germanófilos* – ultra-Catholic traditionalists – who he viewed as more staunchly anti-French, more so than anti-British.¹³ Fuentes Codera, however, argues that while the Carlists viewed Britain as the main enemy of Spain, and saw France as less dangerous, they nevertheless regarded French aspirations as completely incompatible with those of Spain. According to Fuentes Codera, the Carlists thought of the First World War mainly as a conflict

⁹P.A., R11806, Kirchen- und Schulangelegenheiten Spaniens, 1911–19, extract from *Kölnische Volkszeitung* 27.6.1916.

¹⁰Gerald Meaker, 'A civil war of words: the ideological impact of the First World War on Spain, 1914–18' in Hans Schmitt (ed.), *Neutral Europe between war and revolution 1917–23* (Charlottesville, 1988), pp 1-56.

¹¹Maximiliano Fuentes Codera, 'Germanófilos y neutralistas: proyectos tradicionalistas y regeneracionistas para España (1914-1918)', in *Ayer. Revista de Historia Contemporánea*, Dossier: La Gran Guerra de los intelectuales: España en Europa, xci, no. 3 (2013), pp 63-92.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Meaker, 'A civil war of words' in *Neutral Europe between war and revolution*, pp 1-56.

between Germany and England; therefore, supporting Britain would have been against the interest of Spain, as Vazquez de Mella argued.¹⁴

As a second group of *Germanófilos*, Meaker recognised the more moderate Catholic nationalists who opposed British imperialism and military power. They were represented by writers such as Edmundo González-Blanco, whose work *Alemania y la Guerra Europea y la culpa de los Aliados* (Germany and the European war and the fault of the Allies) was published in 1915. Fuentes Codera puts González-Blanco in his first category of those who wished to see England and France humiliated.¹⁵ In his writings a clear antipathy for Britain and France is evident, although his hatred for the former seems to have been stronger. This became clear in an article he wrote for *La Nación*, in which he outlined his reasons for opposing the Entente:

The geographical and historical interests of England are conflicting with those of our homeland. From there arise ideal motives of support and sympathy for Germany. Contrary to England, Germany does not have geographical or historical interests opposed to ours. Germany needs a strong partner in the Mediterranean and it is obvious that it cannot be France or Italy. Germany's interests are in agreement with our interests and that is why a large part of the Spanish nation has more sympathies for Germany.¹⁶

González-Blanco also blamed the Allies for the outbreak of the First World War and, similar to Carlist leader Vazquez de Mella, believed that the war mainly represented the outburst of the commercial rivalry between Britain and Germany initiated and spurred on by the British policy of encirclement.¹⁷ His hatred for Britain became particularly evident when he wrote:

The cheek of England is repugnant. [...] Under the most flimsy pretexts they try to reduce Germany to a position of immorality and illegality, saying to neutral countries: Here is the criminal against whom all attacks are legitimate. [...] Very clear are the schemes of England which has been pursuing militarist policies in the last twenty years, as demonstrated in the Bosnian crisis and events at Agadir.¹⁸

¹⁴Fuentes Codera, 'Germanófilos y neutralistas' in *Ayer. Revista de Historia Contemporánea*, pp 63-92.

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶*La Nación*, 18 Jun. 1917.

¹⁷*Renovación Española*, 18 Jul. 1918.

¹⁸Ibid.

When it came to attributing blame for the outbreak of the war, the *Germanófilos* were quick to point the finger at Britain or indeed Russia. González-Blanco argued in *El Origen de la Guerra Europea* (The origin of the European war) that the war was unavoidable and that while Britain was responsible for it as much as Russia, he saw Russia as the main culprit. Referencing the German white book, González-Blanco concluded Russia had wanted the war. As proof he cited a telegram sent by the Tsar to Wilhelm II on 31 July 1914 expressing his wish for a successful outcome of negotiations in Vienna despite the fact that Russia had begun to mobilise the day before.¹⁹ The book was published in 1916, while the above-cited article from *Renovación Española* was written in July 1918. It is possible that after the Russian Revolution González-Blanco began to view the war as a conflict between Germany, France and Britain exclusively, explaining the shift in his later writings to attributing the sole responsibility for the outbreak of the war to Britain.

The invasion of Belgium, in González-Blanco's assessment, was a tactical error on Germany's behalf because it immobilised half of its military power. He also saw the violation of Belgian neutrality as a political mistake because it led to alienating Germany from the sympathies of the entire civilised world. However, he also stated that the war was unavoidable since Britain wanted it at any cost.²⁰ Belgium, he argued, was only a pretext for Britain in line with 'its hypocrisy'²¹ which attempted to disguise its aggressive imperial ambitions. Germany, on the other hand, was merely defending its borders against attacks from the 'arrogant and proud Albion enraged to see its empire under threat.'²²

Other *Germanófilos* such as playwright Jacinto Benavente also defended Germany against accusations of aggressive militarism. He argued that there was no

¹⁹Edmundo González-Blanco, *El origen de la guerra europea y la culpa de los aliados* (Madrid, 1916), p. 74.

²⁰Ibid., pp 70–1.

²¹Ibid., p. 105.

²²Ibid., p. 71.

other nation more militant than France and that the Napoleonic wars made two or three German wars in the nineteenth century look insignificant in comparison.²³ While Germany's critics decried its empire, Benavente sarcastically wrote Britain and Russia could hardly be called Republics. To him, the empire of Napoleon I was the most despotic and militarist that had ever existed in the modern world.²⁴ In his defence for Germany he went so far as to describe German colonial activity as a merely peaceful extension of trade, quite unlike the unrest and oppression caused by French activities in Morocco.²⁵ As outlined above, many *Germanófilos* like Benavente resented France's and Britain's influence on Spain, which was perceived as a subjugation and dependence, hindering the country's development as a strong nation. Contrary to his critics, Benavente saw Germany as a well organised and strong country with a democratically functioning parliament and a free press. Moreover, he believed the country to be a model for socialism, which he saw as the future form of governance in the world.²⁶ The wish for Spain to be a strong nation again was also expressed by González-Blanco who hoped the country would be 'free to choose its own friendships and arrange its alliances'. He added,

we wish to be independent to live our own life, without having our politics dictated and our destiny marked by the cabinets in Paris and London. We demand, in summary, the right to continue our national existence not in the shadow of the supremacy of France and that of the hegemony of England but in the light of international autonomy or of a more serious alliance more in accordance with our future.²⁷

British and French dominance, and economic dominance in particular, was also cause of resentment for the third group of *Germanófilos* as identified by Meaker. They

²³P.A., R21240, Weltkrieg Nr. 11q Geheim Bd. 2 – Unternehmungen und Aufwiegelungen gegen unsere Feinde in Spanien, extract of article by Jacinto Benavente, *El Imparcial* 2.8.1915.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵P.A., R11998, Spanien 61 – Die politischen Beziehungen zwischen Spanien und Deutschland 1911–16, extract of article in *Kölnische Volkszeitung* 19.8.15, 'Die Kriegführenden und die Neutralen. Der spanische Dramatiker Benavente gegen die Franzosenfreunde'.

²⁶P.A., R21240, Weltkrieg Nr. 11q Geheim Bd. 2 – Unternehmungen und Aufwiegelungen gegen unsere Feinde in Spanien, extract of article by Jacinto Benavente, *El Imparcial* 2.8.1915.

²⁷*Renovación Española*, 18 Jul. 1918.

were the national regenerationists who wished for Spain to reform along the lines of Germany, following its lead on matters such as science, education and efficiency.²⁸ For Fuentes Codera they fall into the second category of pro-German Spaniards. Many economists could be found among this group of *Germanófilos* who voiced their ideas in the *Revista Nacional de Economía* (which was founded in 1916) and in the weekly publication *Renovación Española*, which existed between January and November 1918 only. The leading advocates of this group of pro-German Spaniards were Emilio Rúa, Eloy Luis André and Vicente Gay. The latter published a work called *El pensamiento y la actividad alemana en la guerra europea* (German thought and activity during the European war).

Wartime economic mobilisation had left a great impression on these regenerationists, described by Meaker as national socialists, and the economic centralist policies employed by the belligerents were seen as a model of reform for Spain. Admiration for German social discipline as well as a relatively low level of German economic investment in Spain re-enforced their pro-German attitudes. They hoped a German victory would break Spain's economic dependence on France and Britain and bring an end to the imperialist policies which, as they saw it, had turned Spain into a semi-colonial country. Eloy Luis André advocated an almost total nationalisation of Spanish society in order to reform the country's underdeveloped economy.²⁹ Edmundo González-Blanco saw some important lessons to be learned from Germany's wartime mobilisation. In an article entitled 'Lessons of the war', published in *Renovación Española* in June 1918, he wrote:

The triumphs of Germany are owed to patriotic discipline, to a complete subordination of particular interests of the state to the militarisation of the entire nation, represented in a notable result to which we should all pay attention. [...] In wars those who triumph are those who obey not with a sense of servility but with a consciousness for the necessity of discipline. When the moment arrives

²⁸Meaker, 'A civil war of words' in *Neutral Europe between war and revolution*, pp 1-56.

²⁹Ibid.

they, like Nietzsches' ideal soldier, are able with the awareness of their great and proud obedience to leave their rank and take command.³⁰

González-Blanco's admiration for the German military leadership and the importance he placed on discipline and the necessity of sacrifice for a greater cause could also be interpreted as a criticism of Spain's ruling elite. As outlined above, ideas such as expressed by Eloy Luis André and Edmundo González-Blanco show the emergence of nationalist thought.

All groups of *Germanófilos* were staunch advocates of absolute neutrality.³¹ Amongst them were also a number of scholars. Many of the university professors in the central region of Spain were pro-German. Vincente Gay, for example, was a professor of economy at the University of Valladolid. Cervantes scholar and director of the National Libray, F. Rodríguez Marín, as well as the director of the Cisneros Institute in Madrid, Francisco de Carracido, secretary of the Royal Academy, Emilio Cotarelo y Morí and Professor Adolfo Bonilla y San Martín, a philosopher and legal scholar, could also be found amongst the supporters of Germany.³²

In addition to *Revista Nacional de Economía* and *Renovación Española*, another important outlet for Germanophile ideas was the Hofer publication *Germania – Revista de confraternidad hispano-alemana*.³³ In *Germania* a position of strict neutrality was advocated. Moreover, neutrality was portrayed as being hispanophile and therefore synonymous with Spanish patriotism.³⁴

A strict categorisation of Spain's *Germanófilos* is difficult to achieve since, as the example of Edmundo González-Blanco demonstrates, most of their ideas could be assigned to either of the categories proposed by Gerald Meaker and Maximiliano Fuentes Codera. Two supporters of Germany that stood apart from Spain's

³⁰*Renovación Española*, 6 Jun. 1918.

³¹Meaker, 'A civil war of words' in *Neutral Europe between war and revolution*, pp 1-56.

³²Ibid.

³³See chapter two.

³⁴Fuentes Codera, 'Germanófilos y neutralistas' in *Ayer. Revista de Historia Contemporánea*, pp 63-92.

Germanófilos were the aforementioned Jacinto Benavente and writer Pío Baroja. Their Germanophilism took on a more apolitical, cultural and even spiritual or philosophical dimension in contrast to the political and economic reforms proposed by other *Germanófilos*. As discussed in Chapter 2, playwright and Nobel Prize laureate Jacinto Benavente, who had penned the pro-German manifesto published in December 1915, was one of the most prominent Germanophiles. Although he had criticised German imperialism and the Kaiser in his works prior to the war and harboured a liberal attitude towards social questions, he was also strongly motivated by a belief in Spanish national traditions and a severe dislike for France and Britain.³⁵

Robert Louis Sheehan assessed that Benavente believed in the inevitability of socialist reforms which would have a positive effect on mankind. This social revolution, however, was based on love and individual regeneration and not force.³⁶ In his eyes war was evil, causing needless slaughter for which both sides were responsible. He could not understand why fellow socialists would advocate a war which defended the interests of kings and emperors such as the English king and the Russian tsar. Due to heavy criticism of his pro-German writings he was forced to stop writing newspaper articles and became isolated from the intellectual community in Spain.³⁷ Luis Anton de Olmet thought Benavente's literary importance diminished considerably after he publicly sided with Germany.³⁸ In an interview with *La Nación*, Azorín said of Benavente's work that he used to like it but not anymore. Works such as *Campo de armiño*, *La propia estimación* and *El collar de estrellas* were described by Azorín as 'as bad as they make them.'³⁹

In the works he produced during the war Benavente championed the themes of neutrality, patriotism and a concern for the poverty of the Spanish people. For example,

³⁵Robert Louis Sheehan, *Benavente and the Spanish panorama* (Chapel Hill, 1976), pp 79–81.

³⁶*Ibid.*, p. 79.

³⁷*Ibid.*, pp 83–4.

³⁸Díaz-Plaja, *Francófilos y Germanófilos*, p. 35.

³⁹*La Nación*, 13 May 1917.

in *La ciudad alegre y confiada* (first staged in Madrid in May 1916), the rulers of the city have to decide whether to make a pact with the Republic of Venice or declare war. The following excerpt from the play can be interpreted as a criticism on Spain's wartime economic situation: 'There's a lot of hunger in the city. You know when everything is getting more expensive, men are getting cheaper.'⁴⁰ In another passage from the same play Benavente seems to comment on neutrality as well as on those profiting from the war when he wrote, 'Nobody wants the war. [...] And is it enough not to want it? We live in peace with the whole world. [...] we are trading with everyone and providing what is needed. And many are enriching themselves. Profiting today, impoverished tomorrow. Today they are selling at a good price what they need tomorrow but cannot find at any price.'⁴¹ By declaring 'War is inhumane,'⁴² Benavente made his anti-war stance particularly evident.

As will be outlined in Chapter 5, the economic boom Spain experienced during the First World War only benefited a few while the working classes and rural population in particular had to suffer food shortages and declining living conditions. This subsistence crisis is also commented on in Benavente's comedic operetta *Mefistofela*, whose storyline revolves around the concern over a lack of women in hell, referred to as a '*crisis de las subsistencias*' (subsistence crisis). The idea to solve the problem is to marry women off to the demons. In the songs of the operetta Benavente criticized Spain's political situation, writing, for example, 'Renovation, Renovation, there is no other solution, in this difficult situation, we have to accept evolution in order to avoid a revolution.'⁴³

In another song Benavente referred to Spain's dependency on British coal which the country received in return for iron ore and pyrites supplies, vital for the British war

⁴⁰Jacinto Benavente, *Obras completas* (Madrid, 1956), vol. iii, p. 1135.

⁴¹Ibid., pp 1136-7.

⁴²Ibid., p. 1188.

⁴³Jacinto Benavente, *Obras completas* (Madrid, 1956), vol. iv, p. 320.

effort.⁴⁴ This co-dependency, often used by the British government to pressure Spain into cooperating with the demands of the Entente, was a thorn in the eye of *Germanófilos* like Benavente who resented Allied influence in Spain. The playwright commented on this situation in a sarcastic manner in his operetta *Mefistofela*: ‘And what about the coal? No need to worry, that’s the easiest problem. If the husband is a demon and this demon is a friend of ours, we will have coal in abundance with the coal of her husband.’⁴⁵

In *La ciudad alegre y confiada* Benavente not only voiced his views on war in general but also on Spain’s specific situation as caused by the country’s neutrality. The Germanophile’s playwright defence of neutrality becomes very apparent in the following passage from the play:

Rivalry between sovereigns, insult of an ambassador, territorial disputes are just laughable pretexts for a war. Underneath these superficial causes are more profound reasons of interest, competition, commercial rivalry. And these are still not the real reasons. Because above all this there is in every war the wish of one nation to dominate another nation, one race above another race, new ideas over outdated ideas. This, however, can only become evident with time, with adequate distance. That is why, when you look at this war today, you get excited and passionate because it tells you: hate, blood, violence. You are inclined to one or the other side, spreading hate and violence yourself without knowing on which side is reason and justice. But if you read about past wars in history with a serenity that only time allows, you will see that in all wars, even those that brought humiliation and destruction to your motherland, triumphed what should always triumph, the idea of God. [...] True strength is the spiritual strength because it is only the spirit which puts the light of intelligence into the swords.⁴⁶

Like most *Germanófilos*, Benavente was also a defender of the Spanish patria and advocator of Spanish independence. Again, in *La ciudad alegre y confiada* this theme of patriotism was picked up when he stated, ‘Look at my face reddened with shame from listening to you speaking ill of this noble city which is our motherland, it

⁴⁴See chapter four.

⁴⁵Benavente, *Obras completas*, vol. iv, p. 320.

⁴⁶Idem, vol. iii, pp 1136-7.

sounds like it would not be important to you to see her dominated by outsiders, that would come as you say and impose their culture on us.’⁴⁷

As stated above, another champion of Germany was the writer Pío Baroja, who could be found amongst the editorial team of the Hofer publication *Germania*. Baroja’s ideas of Germanophilism, however, did not sit well with the majority of pro-German Spaniards, which made him into an outsider not just among the *Germanófilos* but also amongst Spanish intellectuals in general.⁴⁸ Political opponents of Baroja seemed to have admired in Germany what he detested and vice versa.⁴⁹ Similar to Benavente, his Germanophilism appeared to have stemmed from a strong resentment against Britain and France and, as he saw it, their role in Spain’s decline. Like many other Spanish intellectuals and writers of the *Generación del 98* Baroja was influenced by the German philosophers Arthur Schopenhauer and Friedrich Nietzsche.⁵⁰ The latter could be described as the spiritual leader of the regenerationist movement of intellectuals that formed in the wake of the Spanish-American War.⁵¹

Nietzsche, along with historian Heinrich von Treitschke and General Friedrich von Bernhardi, became a key figure of Allied propaganda which utilised the German philosopher in order to demonise the enemy. This effort was done in order to prove German aggression and drive for expansion were to blame for the outbreak of the war.⁵² Aspects of Nietzsche’s philosophy, such as his opposition to Christianity, his rejection of conventional moral codes and his glorification of strength, were misinterpreted for this propaganda effort in order to show the inherently war-like nature of the German

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 1142.

⁴⁸Meaker, ‘A civil war of words’ in *Neutral Europe between war and revolution*, pp 1-56.

⁴⁹Santos Juliá, ‘La nueva generación: de neutrals a antigermanófilos pasando por aliadófilos’ in *Ayer. Revista de Historia Contemporánea*, Dossier: La Gran Guerra de los intelectuales: España en Europa, xci, no. 3 (2013), pp 121-44.

⁵⁰Álvaro Alcalá Galiano, *España ante el conflicto europeo 1914–1915* (Madrid, 1916), p. 201, p. 203. Alfredo J. Sosa-Velasco, *Médicos escritores en España, 1885–1955. Santiago Ramón y Cajal, Pío Baroja, Gregorio Marañón y Antonio Vallejo Nágera* (Woodbridge, 2010), p. 63.

⁵¹Paul Ilie, ‘Nietzsche in Spain: 1890–1910’ in *PMLA*, Vol. 79, No. 1 (Mar., 1964), pp. 80–96.

⁵²Nicholas Martin, ‘Fighting a Philosophy’: The figure of Nietzsche in British propaganda of the First World War’ in *The Modern Language Review*, xcvi, no. 2 (Apr., 2003), pp 367-80.

enemy. Allied atrocity propaganda attributed the crimes committed by the German army during the invasion of Belgium to the influence of Nietzsche's philosophy.⁵³

However, it was the anti-clerical stance of the German philosopher that particularly appealed to Pío Baroja. Besides German philosophy Baroja admired the country's science, order and technology, which he hoped would have a positive influence on Spain and sweep away the 'myths of religion or democracy, and ... the force of Christian charity.'⁵⁴ He believed Germany was the only country that could crush the influence of the Catholic Church in Spain.⁵⁵ A self-confessed agnostic and hater of religious dogma, he saw the effect of Christianity on society as harmful and stifling the progress in culture, science, politics, social justice and personal relationships.⁵⁶ The Spanish writer had little interest in political systems and viewed parliamentarianism as a 'joke which could only be discredited by a country like Germany.'⁵⁷ Unsurprisingly Baroja was often described as a nihilist and an anarchist due to his dislike of any political system. Instead he favoured an individualism based on Nietzschean philosophy.

Baroja's anti-clerical position was completely opposed to that of the Spanish Catholic hierarchy, a tacit supporter of Germany, which tried to minimise the influence of liberal philosophy which undermined its power and influence. Therefore it is not surprising that Baroja's Germanophilia was described as being contrary to that of other *Germanófilos*.⁵⁸ Baroja personified the contradictions of cultural mobilisation encouraged by the war. He rejected the notion that liberalism was only reserved for those supporting the Allies and supporters of Germany were seen as conservative and militarist. As a liberal, in a largely apolitical sense mainly opposing all forms of

⁵³Ibid.

⁵⁴Meaker, 'A civil war of words' in *Neutral Europe between war and revolution*, pp 1-56.

⁵⁵Diaz-Plaja, *Francófilos y Germanófilos*, p. 47, quoting from *Nuevo tablado de Arlequin*.

⁵⁶Arthur L.Owen, 'Concerning the Ideology of Pío Baroja', in *Hispania*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (Feb., 1932), pp. 15-24.

⁵⁷*La lectura dominical*, 13 Mar. 1915.

⁵⁸Juliá, 'La nueva generación' in *Ayer. Revista de Historia Contemporánea*, pp 121-44.

restriction and absolutism,⁵⁹ and a *Germanófilo*, Baroja certainly stood apart from other pro-German, conservative intellectuals during the war. In the Catholic newspaper *La Lectura dominical* the writer was described as a ‘*Germanófilo* without germanophilism [...] a plate of meat [...] without meat so to speak.’⁶⁰

As was shown in Chapter 1, with the advance of liberal ideas the Spanish Catholic Church had been experiencing a gradual erosion of its powers since the nineteenth century. The State’s increased effort in gaining greater control over Church affairs saw the the closure of religious houses and the sale of Church property. In an attempt to deal with growing social unrest and anti-clerical tendencies from the middle of the nineteenth century onwards, the Catholic Church tried to win back working class Spaniards from socialist and anarchist organisations. Catholic social action, however, did not address the underlying problems of poverty and class conflict but instead was limited to gestures and appeals to the faithful rather than decisive actions.⁶¹ Although the Spanish constitution of 1876 guaranteed religious freedom, Catholicism was the confirmed religion of the State. The Spanish Catholic Church was in charge of many charities, orphanages, hospitals and asylums and, most importantly, held almost complete control over primary and secondary education. With growing social unrest and the rise of liberal ideas advocating the separation of Church and State, the Church had to face the challenges posed by industrialisation in order to maintain its influence.⁶²

By 1913 the Church’s dominant role in education came under attack when the Ministry of Public Instruction attempted to make religion voluntary in secondary schools as well as demanding academic titles from professors of religious colleges and

⁵⁹Victor Quimette, ‘The Liberalism of Baroja and the Second Republic’ in *Hispania*, lx, no. 1 (Mar., 1977), pp 21-34.

⁶⁰*La lectura dominical*, 9 Dec. 1916.

⁶¹Frances Lannon, *Privilege, persecution, and prophecy. The Catholic Church in Spain 1875–1975* (Oxford, 1987), p. 146.

⁶²Romero Salvadó, *The foundations of civil war*, p. 4. Also see chapter one.

introducing state run inspections in private educational institutions.⁶³ This policy of secularisation, which undermined the Church's power, was vehemently opposed by the Catholic hierarchy. The reforms were seen as an offence to Catholic beliefs in Spain and as an attempt to dechristianise Spanish society. Public opinion was rallied in order for the educational reforms to be halted and subsequently the Royal decree of 26 December 1913 maintained the compulsory teaching of the catechism for Catholic children in all public schools.⁶⁴ Alarmed by the states' encroachment on what the Church viewed as its own domain, urgent action was advocated by the clergy. A focus on 'producing teachers and good Catholics that would fight off the sectarian forces threatening to dechristianise schools'⁶⁵ was suggested as well as an attempt to form political alliances with the 'true Catholics' in the Cortes in addition to galvanising social action from the parents of families concerned by the educational reforms.⁶⁶

Attempts by the Church to engage with the working classes met with little success, since no substantial solutions to alleviating poverty or preventing exploitation could be offered. Church-sponsored trade unions mainly played into the hands of employers by breaking strikes and generally represented the wealthy, land owning elite.⁶⁷

With the outbreak of war in Europe in 1914 the Spanish Catholic Church followed the official line of the State, which was that of strict neutrality, condemning any attempts to drag Spain into the war. Those who advocated intervention the Church deemed 'internal enemies of Spain – bad Spaniards.'⁶⁸ The Allies, however, saw the

⁶³Manuel de Puelles Benitez, 'Secularización y enseñanza en España (1874-1917)' in José Luis García Delgado (ed.), *España entre dos siglos (1875-1931). Continuidad y cambio* (Madrid, 1991), pp 191-212.

⁶⁴Ibid.

⁶⁵*La lectura dominical*, 30 May 1914.

⁶⁶Ibid.

⁶⁷Romero Salvadó, *The foundations of civil war*, p. 4.

⁶⁸*La lectura dominical*, 2 Sep. 1916.

Spanish Catholic hierarchy as a bulwark of the *Germanófilos*.⁶⁹ English residents reported anti-English campaigns being carried out by Spanish clergy and priests denouncing France and Britain from the pulpit.⁷⁰ A priest in the province of Toledo was heard asking for an offertory after mass proclaiming, ‘Germany needs guns, we good Catholics are bound to help her get them.’⁷¹ In an attempt to sway Spanish clerical and religious circles and combat prejudices against France and Britain, Allied propaganda particularly highlighted atrocities committed by Germans in Catholic Belgium.⁷²

Propaganda works like the French publication *La Guerra alemana y los catolicos* (The German war and the Catholics), written by the rector of the Catholic university in Paris, were aimed at neutral countries like Spain. The publication stressed France’s service to the ‘true religion’ despite successive French governments’ persecution of the Church and sectarian politics. At the same time Germany was portrayed as the Protestant, rationalist nation that Catholics should not trust.⁷³ In contrast, German Catholic propaganda blamed France for the moral corruption in the world while arguing that the propaganda war by the Allies was just as cruel and lasting as the war in the trenches. The Spanish Catholic publication *La lectura dominical* assessed that the war would lead to the discrediting and destruction of what they termed social and philosophical utopias such as internationalism, pacifism, cosmopolitanism and French Jacobinism.⁷⁴

Some, like the Archbishop of Tarragona, argued that claims of rampant Germanophilism amongst the Spanish clergy were exaggerated and that the Spanish

⁶⁹Zeiseler, *Spanien im Kalkül der britischen Kriegspolitik*, p. 119. Also see García Sanz, *España en la Gran Guerra*, p. 235.

⁷⁰N.A., FO371/2106, Foreign Office, Spain & Portugal (War) 1914, Adrienne de Albenzi (English resident in Spain) to Churchill, received 28.10.1914.

⁷¹*The Times*, 8.9.1915.

⁷²N.A., FO371/2472, Foreign Office, Spain & Portugal (War) 1915, Hardinge to Grey, 5.9.1915. Also see, N.A., FO371/2470, Foreign Office, Spain & Portugal (War) 1915, Hardinge to Grey, 5.3.1915. Primate of Toledo and Bishop of Madrid shocked at German atrocities in Belgium trying to discourage pro-German sentiments in Spanish clerical press.

⁷³*La lectura dominical*, 15 May 1915.

⁷⁴*Ibid.*

Catholic hierarchy, whose highest dignitaries, according to him, were not pro-German, was merely concerned with the anti-clerical policies of the French government. The archbishop believed that there was a confusion between French politics and the national sentiment of the French which he saw as being Catholic. He thought it absurd that Spanish Catholics should aid the cause of Lutheran Germany and forget that France and Italy were the two great Catholic nations despite the separation of Church and State in both countries. In his diocese he forbade his clergy any forms of protest against France.⁷⁵ A report of the *Auswärtige Amt* put the attitude of the Spanish Catholic Church more into perspective and supported the archbishop's assessment by stressing that the Spanish clergy was merely reticent to support the pro-Allied movement in Spain since it was mainly represented by anti-clerical groups such as the Radicals, Republicans and Socialists. The Archbishop of Toledo stated that the clergy was purely pro-Spanish and saw no reason to support the Entente.⁷⁶

In an attempt to persuade the Spanish clergy to assume a more pro-Allied position, the Bishop of Southwark visited Spain in October 1915. The bishop, who was from Gibraltar and had a Spanish background, expressed his regret over the fact that the Spanish supporters of Britain could be mainly found amongst the followers of anarchists and revolutionaries like Radical Republican Alejandro Lerroux. He urged Spanish journalists not to engage in anti-English propaganda as that would also damage the Church in general since the Roman Catholic Church was not an opponent of Protestantism and British rationalism.⁷⁷

The Germanophilism of the Spanish clergy was based in a fear of French sectarianism, whose increase was also thought of being the reason for the success of Spanish politicians like Lerroux. A French victory, Spain's Catholic Church worried,

⁷⁵Ibid., 9 Dec. 1916.

⁷⁶P.A., R11806, Kirchen- und Schulangelegenheiten Spaniens, 1911–19, Vatikanische Bemerkungen, Abschrift A 31914 pr. 27.9.1917 [unsigned, could be from German papal nuncio].

⁷⁷*La lectura dominical*, 9 Oct. 1915.

would lead to a further rise of sectarianism.⁷⁸ While supporting Catholic France, the Spanish Catholic Church opposed the ‘official, sectarian France’.⁷⁹ On the other hand, the invasion of Belgium was condemned by some Spanish clergy, such as P. Marcelino Arnaiz, professor at the Novitiate of the Augustinians at El Escorial, who also praised the efforts of Cardinal Mercier and the Belgian episcopate.⁸⁰ Arnaiz, however, saw himself as a *Germanófilo* due to his fear of the spread of French liberal ideas.⁸¹

In the context of the two opposing sides in the world war Germany, although not a Catholic country, could be seen as a bulwark of conservatism against an emerging new order. The Germanophilism of the Spanish Catholic Church was mainly aimed against France which it deemed ungodly and French persecution of Catholics was seen as the main reason for Catholic support for Germany in neutral countries.⁸² Support of the Spanish Catholic Church for Germany should be viewed as part of an attempt to maintain the status quo and to ensure that conservative elements of Spanish society stayed in power. Therefore the Church served as another important weight putting pressure on public opinion to not deviate from the course of neutrality, making an alliance with the Entente almost impossible.

‘War of the manifestos’ – Criticism of pro-German ideas

As mentioned above, Germanophile intellectuals hoped following the German model would usher in an era of progressive, anti-clerical thinking. In their beliefs they were confronted by the majority of Spanish intellectuals and artists who supported the Allies. The conflict between *Germanófilos* and *Francófilos* during the First World War led to a series of manifestos which showed support for either of the belligerents and also

⁷⁸Ibid., 9 Oct. 1915.

⁷⁹Ibid., 10 Jun. 1916.

⁸⁰Ibid., 9 Oct. 1915.

⁸¹Ibid.

⁸²Ibid., 1 Jan. 1916.

often attacked the opposing Spanish camp. The frenzied discussions carried on in these publications were aptly described by Alzamora Menéndez as the war of the manifestos.⁸³ As outlined at the beginning of this chapter, this public debate amongst scholars, intellectuals and writers formed part of the process of wartime cultural mobilisation that could be observed in the belligerent countries but was also present in neutral Spain.

Even prior to the First World War Spanish intellectuals used the form of the manifesto in order to address fellow intellectuals or the government in an appeal for the regeneration of the country after the failed war of 1898. An example of this was the Manifesto of National Union written in 1900 and signed by, amongst others, Ramon y Cajal and Miguel de Unamuno. Similar appeals followed that sought to influence civil society by applying social science to the ills of everyday life, advocating the introduction of compulsory education for example. Further manifestos were prompted by events of the Tragic Week and the Ferrer execution in 1909.⁸⁴ Paul Aubert has suggested that the First World War produced a different type of manifesto in Spain, a manifesto which began not only to criticise the existing order but also proposed programmes of reform essentially criticising the functioning and foundations of the constitutional monarchy. The appeals of Spanish intellectuals in favour of the Allies therefore symbolically represented a break with the dynastic Spain.⁸⁵

After the outbreak of the war, the first manifestos in Spain began to appear at the end of 1914. The *Germanófilos* used their appeals to defend Germany's conduct of the war. In the pro-German manifesto published in *La Tribuna* on 18 December 1915⁸⁶ Benavente pointed out that French militarism was far worse than German while stressing that France and Britain had never been friends of Spain, citing their failure to

⁸³Alzamora Menéndez, *La Generación del 14*, p. 277.

⁸⁴See chapter one.

⁸⁵Paul Aubert, 'Intelectuales y cambio político', in José Luis García Delgado (ed.), *Los orígenes culturales de la II República* (Madrid, 1993), pp 25-100.

⁸⁶See chapter two.

come to Spain's aid in the Spanish-American War. Therefore, so the playwright urged, Spanish neutrality should not be viewed as betrayal or disloyalty to anybody. Benavente expressed the wish for peace and for Spain to be independent from any outside influence.⁸⁷ As already discussed above, the strong economic dependence on Britain and France was a cause of resentment for many Germanophiles. The active private German propagandist August Hofer claimed he won over Benavente and Rodríguez Marín for the manifesto and also gathered 1,500 signatures for it.⁸⁸ It appears though, that many manifestos came about independently and were only subsequently used for propaganda purposes by the belligerents. Hofer's claim might have been an exaggeration designed to elevate his achievements in the eyes of the *Auswärtige Amt*. In the pro-German manifesto Benavente reiterated many points he had made in his previous articles on the war.

1915 was also the year which saw the publication of other, mainly pro-Allied, manifestos. The most important one was the *Manifiesto de los intelectuales españoles* (Manifesto of Spanish intellectuals) published in *Iberia* on 10 July.⁸⁹ This manifesto was attributed to writer Ramón Pérez de Ayala and expressed solidarity with the Allied cause, described as the only cause that also represented the interests and ambitions of the Spanish nation. The manifesto stated, 'We give our support to the cause of the Allies and that which they represent, their ideals of justice – the only thing that can coincide with the deepest and most urgent political interests of the nation.'⁹⁰ Earlier in the year Eugenio d'Ors in the *Manifiesto de los amigos de la unidad moral de Europa* (Manifesto of the friends of moral unity of Europe) had advocated European unity writing that, 'The principle that divides us is that the terrible war which is today

⁸⁷Díaz-Plaja, *Francófilos y Germanófilos*, pp 340–3.

⁸⁸P.A., R123013, Beeinflussung der spanischen Presse 1915–17, Hofer to Zentralstelle für Auslandsdienst, 14.12.1915.

⁸⁹Ortiz-de-Urbina, 'La Primera Guerra Mundial y sus consecuencias' in *Revista de Filología Alemana*, pp 193 – 206.

⁹⁰Díaz-Plaja, *Francófilos y Germanófilos*, pp 24–5.

shattering the body of our Europe, constitutes by definition a civil war.⁹¹ In April 1915 Catalan artists, writers, intellectuals, politicians and industrialists published a manifesto in *España* declaring their solidarity with their neighbour France.⁹² To highlight the anniversary of the destruction of the University of Louvain a number of Spanish lawyers, law professors and journalists produced a Catholic manifesto, also published in *España* on 23.9.1915.⁹³

At a later stage of the war, on 18 January 1917, the manifesto of the *Liga Anti-Germanofila* appeared in *España*.⁹⁴ The *Liga Anti-Germanofila*, which was founded with the help of the British embassy,⁹⁵ especially attacked those who claimed to defend neutrality. Signed by leading intellectuals such as Miguel de Unamuno, Manuel Azaña, Luis Araquistáin and Melquíades Álvarez, the manifesto accused the *Germanófilos* of hiding behind the concept of neutrality which simply served to mask their devotion to Germany and their hate for the Allied countries.⁹⁶ The *Liga* was founded in the hope of clearing up persisting opinions that Germanophilism meant neutrality while being pro-Allied stood for interventionism. Germanophilism was viewed by the *Liga* as false, as anti-neutrality.

Concerned with the movement gathering a greater momentum during a time when Spain was warned by the Allies to comply with its obligation as a neutral in the matter of supplying belligerent submarines, the *Liga Anti-Germanofila* refuted the claim that this posed a threat to Spanish neutrality as argued by pro-German Spaniards. The neutrality defended by the *Germanófilos*, according to the manifesto of the *liga*, would have enabled Germany to continue taking advantage of Spain by violating international

⁹¹Alzamora Menéndez, *La Generación del 14*, p. 277. D'Ors manifesto was published on 5.2.1915 in *España*.

⁹²Ibid., p. 279.

⁹³Ibid., p. 281.

⁹⁴Ortiz-de-Urbina, 'La Primera Guerra Mundial y sus consecuencias' in *Revista de Filología Alemana*, pp 193 – 206.

⁹⁵González Calleja, 'Nidos de espías' in *Revista de Historia Militar*, pp 179–226.

⁹⁶Díaz-Plaja, *Francófilos y Germanófilos*, p. 25.

law.⁹⁷ Stating that they were not anti-German but in opposition to the German state, which to them represented the negation of small nations in its foreign policies as well as the negation of democracy and the civic spirit in general, the *Liga Anti-Germanofila* vowed to fight Spain's internal enemies. Those enemies, they argued, diverted Spain from its course of liberty, of its interests and its international security.⁹⁸

Other critics of Spanish Germanophilism argued while Germany was seen as a model of progress and 'the guiding light of civilization',⁹⁹ its supporters conveniently overlooked the archaic and oppressive nature of German politics and the country's responsibility in the war. While many Spaniards harboured admiration for German culture and art, recognizing the achievements of Goethe, Schiller, Wagner and others, they were unable to show sympathy for a country which in their eyes had resurrected barbarity with the military despotism displayed in the outbreak of the war. *Germanófilos* were therefore often viewed as representing the most antiquated elements of Spanish society who in their support for Germany sought to defend tradition and feudalism.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷Ibid., pp 355-6.

⁹⁸Ibid.

⁹⁹Alcalá Galiano, *España ante el conflicto europeo*, p. 51.

¹⁰⁰Ibid.

The front cover of *España* on 8 February 1917 illustrated this view quite well with its customary sarcastic cartoon by Luis Bagaria: ‘The good *Germanófilo*. *Germanófilo*: ‘Germany, the cultured land, the land of great men!’ Listener: ‘Oh, you’re an admirer of Kant, Goethe, Nietzsche, Hegel, Schopenhauer...’ *Germanófilo*: ‘No, lies!’¹⁰¹



¹⁰¹ *España*, 8 Feb. 1917.

Some were accused of opting for Germanophilism simply because it was fashionable at the time. Commenting on the large number of Spaniards, according to British ambassador Hardinge thousands, visiting the German embassy at Madrid in February 1916 to sign a list to congratulate the Kaiser to his birthday, Hardinge concluded that in certain sections of Madrid society it was considered ‘*de bon ton*’ to be pro-German.¹⁰² At the beginning of 1918 German ambassador Ratibor confirmed to the Auswärtige Amt that approximately 8,000 congratulatory notes had been received on the Kaiser’s birthday.¹⁰³ While prior to the war the Spanish upper classes would have flocked to Paris or London, practising Anglo-Saxon sports and regularly speaking English, with the war they suddenly turned into Anglophobes.¹⁰⁴ A contemporary commentator pointed out the contradictions of the *Germanófilos* who, on the one hand claimed to defend national independence and renounced any foreign influences, and on the other hand published a publication called *Germania*.¹⁰⁵

Luis Araquistáin, a writer for the liberal publication *España* who, as seen in the previous chapter, was very vocal in criticising the *Germanófilos* and their ideas, pointed out that the debate between supporters of the Allies and supporters of the Central Powers was futile since it did not produce any original contribution to explain the origins of the war.¹⁰⁶ According to Araquistáin the motivation of some to support either one of the belligerents lay in their personal affiliation to a particular country and its culture. Being a *Germanófilo* because Gibraltar belonged to Britain, or because of Napoleon’s attacks on Spanish independence, or because of a fondness for Viennese operettas or beer from Munich or Wagner’s music, was simply no valid reason for him to take sides in a war in which the basis of international law and the achievements of

¹⁰²N.A., FO371/2760, Foreign Office, Spain & Portugal (War) 1916, Hardinge to Grey 1.2.1916.

¹⁰³P.A., R12005, Spanien 61 – Die politischen Beziehungen zwischen Spanien und Deutschland Februar – April 1918, Ratibor to Auswärtige Amt, 30.1.1918.

¹⁰⁴Alcalá Galiano, *España ante el conflicto europeo*, pp 80–1.

¹⁰⁵*Ibid.*, p. 88.

¹⁰⁶Luis Araquistáin, *Polémica de la guerra: 1914-1915* (Madrid, 1915), p. 43.

ethics were under threat. Equally Araquistáin believed it was foolish to be a *Francófilo* merely because Paris was the best city in the world for pleasure, being pro-British because of the great English tailoring, pro-Russian because Tolstoi was a great writer, or a supporter of the Japanese because of their genius at painting. Araquistáin described the controversy between *Franco-* and *Germanófilos* in Spain as a ‘debate in a madhouse not fit for making a decision about the war.’¹⁰⁷

Araquistáin put the responsibility for the outbreak of the war firmly at the feet of Germany. Not at the feet of the German people however, who he saw as ignorant to the true causes, but at those of the German military that, according to Araquistáin, had planned the war for years and finally provoked it.¹⁰⁸ Citing Bernhardt’s *Deutschland und der nächste Krieg* (Germany and the next war) he outlined the ideology proclaimed by this, as he called it, criminal caste who saw war as a biological necessity, a law of human evolution before which all other legal agreements become irrelevant.¹⁰⁹ This mentality which proclaimed the benefits of a war for the sake of war and elevated the violation of international law to the status of a philosophical principle was seen by Araquistáin as a great threat to the world.¹¹⁰

Spain’s Germanófilos in the service of Germany – German cultural propaganda in

Spain

Beside an immense output of Germanophile literature in Spain during the war, pro-German Spanish intellectuals, as well as members of the Spanish Catholic Church, could also be found actively assisting the German administration in Spain. Only a few months into the war, the British Foreign Office already reported the discovery and

¹⁰⁷Ibid., pp 42–3.

¹⁰⁸Ibid., p. 37.

¹⁰⁹Ibid.

¹¹⁰Ibid., p. 42.

subsequent dismantling of a wireless apparatus in a convent in Bilbao. Consul Madden commented on the incident by stating ‘these priests are so terribly pro-German and very anti-English.’¹¹¹ The convent in question was a Carmelite convent at Portugalete near Bilbao.¹¹² Though it remained unclear whether the priests in said convent were working with the German administration or acting on their own initiative, German military documents reveal that collaboration with Spanish clergy took place in other instances. Writing to the head of the German admiralty in December 1914, naval attaché Krohn informed his superiors that through Carlist leader Vasquez de Mella contact could be made to the local priest in Algeciras who was also working in Gibraltar. De Mella, a frequent collaborator of Germany,¹¹³ assured the German naval attaché that the priest was pro-German and willing to pass on information to the German embassy at Madrid.¹¹⁴ From the documents it remains inconclusive whether the priest was used as an agent by Krohn. However, an outpost of the German intelligence network in Algeciras did exist until 1918.¹¹⁵

Evidence suggests that members of the Spanish clergy acted as informants for German military personnel in Spain. In one of his telegrams to the admiralty Krohn mentioned a Jesuit priest who he described as a well-informed and trustworthy agent.¹¹⁶ The president of the *Juventud Catolica* (Catholic Youth), Ferrol, also offered his support to the German consulate at Vivero by agreeing to distribute German propaganda flyers at a Republican meeting taking place in the summer of 1915.¹¹⁷ Amongst the well wishers on the occasion of the Kaiser’s birthday at the beginning of 1918 a priest from

¹¹¹N.A., FO371/2106, Foreign Office, Spain & Portugal (War) 1914, Consul Madden to Hardinge 15.10.1914.

¹¹²Ibid., Hardinge to Grey 21.10.1914.

¹¹³See chapter five.

¹¹⁴B.A.M., RM5/2408, Admiralstab der Marine, Schrift–pp. Verkehr mit Vertretern der Marine, ab Sept. 1916 dem Marineattaché, und anderen Personen in Madrid Bd. 1 1914–15, Krohn to Head of Admiralty, Madrid, 8.12.1914.

¹¹⁵B.A.M., RM5/1693, Schriftwechsel in Sachen Fa. Tarnow (Nachrichtendienst Spanien), Krohn to Head of Admiralty, Zurich, 11.5.1918.

¹¹⁶B.A.M., RM5/1691, Marineattaché Madrid, Spanien Bd. 1 1918–19, Head of Admiralty, Decipher Bureau, Telegram from Madrid 6.11.1918 [unsigned].

¹¹⁷P.A., Botschaft Madrid, Karton 124, Nachrichtendienst Hofer, Consulate Vivero to Ratibor 17.7.1915.

Segovia could be found as well. To his congratulatory note he attached 25 pesetas to be given to the German seaman who would be the first to sink an American ship. Apparently similar donations had been received throughout the war.¹¹⁸ The Catholic newspaper *La lectura dominical* commented favourably on the captain of the German cruiser *Emden* who according to the paper ‘had brilliantly fought English ships in the Indian Ocean and surrendered gloriously in the north of the Keeling Islands to the English fleet.’¹¹⁹ In February 1915 the union of *Jaimistas* organised a concert in aid of the German and Austro-Hungarian Red Cross which was attended by approximately 8,000 spectators in the *Ateneo Tradicionalista* in Barcelona.¹²⁰ As British residents had already reported to the Foreign Office,¹²¹ Ratibor too informed the *Auswärtige Amt* about newspaper reports of Spanish clergy including the Kaiser in their sermon prayers.¹²²

Although these examples of collaborations between Spanish clergy and the German diplomatic corps give an indication of attitudes prevalent amongst the religious elite in Spain, conclusions cannot be drawn whether the Catholic hierarchy condoned such activity or even actively encouraged it. As already discussed, Spain’s Catholic Church maintained a position of neutrality, supporting neither side, but found it difficult to extend its sympathies to the *Francófilos* due to their anti-clerical views. Allied attempts to moderate pro-German attitudes of the Spanish clergy, such as the visit of the Bishop of Southwark to Spain in 1915, were met by efforts of the Germany embassy to assert influence on Spanish clergy through the Vatican. Ratibor voiced concern over a trip to the French-English frontline undertaken by the archbishops of Tarragona and

¹¹⁸P.A., R12005, Spanien 61 – Die politischen Beziehungen zwischen Spanien und Deutschland Februar – April 1918, Capelle (secretary of the marine ministry) to Auswärtige Amt 18.2.1918.

¹¹⁹*La lectura dominical*, 21 Nov. 1914.

¹²⁰B.A., R901/82313 Sammlungen, Spenden, Stiftungen Spanien 1914–16, Consulate Barcelona, Ostmann, to central committee of the German associations of the Red Cross 15.2.1915.

¹²¹See above.

¹²²P.A., R12005 Spanien 61 – Die politischen Beziehungen zwischen Spanien und Deutschland Februar – April 1918, Ratibor to Auswärtige Amt, 30.1.1918.

Granada in October 1917.¹²³ As discussed above the Archbishop of Tarragona was quite vocal about his pro-French leanings. Fearing the trip would result in negative propaganda which could have been detrimental to the German war effort, the nuncio in Germany was contacted who promised to send a telegram to Rome immediately. The nuncio also described the archbishop of Tarragona as difficult to influence and not quite sane.¹²⁴ Ratibor had heard similar complaints about the archbishop, whose behaviour had already led to suggestions for him to resign. The nuncio in Spain told Ratibor he strongly disapproved of his colleagues' views and had reported about him to Rome.¹²⁵

Many pro-German writers and intellectuals collaborated with the German administration in their propaganda effort in Spain. In Chapter 2 we could already observe how German propagandists attempted to highlight German cultural achievements in order to combat the negative, militarist image employed in Allied propaganda. The aforementioned Vincente Gay not only wrote pro-German articles for *La Tribuna* and *Día Grafico*¹²⁶ but also gave public lectures organised by August Hofer.¹²⁷ In May 1915 Eloy Luis André held a conference in the *Ateneo* on the topic of German ethics and the moral education of the German people.¹²⁸ Efforts by the German embassy to invite leading Spanish pro-German intellectuals to Germany were not met with much enthusiasm. Although Jacinto Benavente assured the embassy secretary von Stohrer personally of just how proud he was being able to support the German cause,¹²⁹ it was doubtful he would consent to travelling to Germany on the embassy's behest. Stohrer described the playwright as an oddball who was shy and reserved, although he would accept invitations, he often would not show up if it did not suit him. Equally, Pío

¹²³P.A., R11806, Kirchen- und Schulangelegenheiten Spaniens, 1911–19, Ratibor to Auswärtige Amt 26.10.1917.

¹²⁴Ibid., Telegram from Munich to Auswärtige Amt signed Treutler 10.11.1917.

¹²⁵Ibid., Ratibor to Auswärtige Amt 15.11.1917.

¹²⁶P.A., R123013, Beeinflussung der spanischen Presse 1915–17, Carlowitz to Ratibor 10.12.1915.

¹²⁷Ibid., Stohrer to Horstmann 8.8.1916.

¹²⁸*La Epoca* 2.5.1915

¹²⁹P.A., R21240, Weltkrieg Nr. 11q Geheim Bd. 2 – Unternehmungen und Aufwiegelungen gegen unsere Feinde in Spanien, Stohrer to Bethmann Hollweg 4.8.1915.

Baroja was reluctant to undertake any propaganda trips to Germany on behalf of the German embassy. Other Spanish intellectuals, such as Ramon y Cajal, who were approached by the embassy, were also evasive.¹³⁰

In Barcelona a series of academic lectures was organised by the embassy in which members of the University of Barcelona as well as members of the Institute for Catalan Studies took part, amongst other academics. The banquet held at the end of the series in June 1917 was also attended by Prof. Fabregas, Father Clascar, Prof. Bosch-Gimpera, Dr. Dal-Guardiola, Dr. Ballvé, Prof. Westermann, Dr. Jokers and Dr. Simon.¹³¹ Pro-German Catalan intellectuals had also formed a union of friends of Germany, the *Comite de'amichs de Germania*. Many of its members had studied in Germany and also worked for Hofer's news service and its publication *Germania*. Amongst them were Dr. Ballvé, Dr. Manuel de Montliu, Prof. Pedro Bosch, Dr. Barnils and Luis Almerich (director of *Germania*). Hofer also intended to approach influential Catalans such as Francesc Cambó and Prat de la Riva.¹³² A memorandum of the *Comite de'amichs de Germania* (Committee of friends of Germany) sent to the German embassy at the beginning of 1916 stated a commitment to defend German culture and finished with the promise that those who wished to see German culture flourish in Spain had to count with Catalonia.¹³³ While in other countries German culture, for example music by German composers, was banned during the war, in Spain it was celebrated as could be seen in numerous concerts.¹³⁴

As part of the German propaganda effort in Spain attempts were made to promote Spanish culture and art in Germany. Translation of Benavente plays, for

¹³⁰P.A., R123013, Beeinflussung der spanischen Presse 1915–17, Stohrer to Horstmann 8.8.1916.

¹³¹P.A., R12001, Spanien 61 – Die politischen Beziehungen zwischen Spanien und Deutschland Dezember 1916 – Juni 1917, Ratibor to Auswärtige Amt 4.6.1917.

¹³²P.A., R123013, Beeinflussung der spanischen Presse 1915–17, Hofer to Ratibor, 31.5.1916.

¹³³[*ibid.*, Memorandum of the pro-German Catalans to the embassy at Madrid [not dated or signed, filed after Hofer's letter to Ratibor from 31.5.1916.]

¹³⁴See chapter two.

example, were offered to the Deutsches Theater.¹³⁵ Since 1914 works by Spanish playwrights such as Pedro Calderon de la Barca, Tirso de Molina and Jacinto Benavente had been staged in Germany.¹³⁶ Various German-Spanish associations were founded throughout Germany.¹³⁷ Indeed, the positive reception of Spanish culture was welcomed by Spanish artists who felt it had hitherto not received the recognition it deserved. Germanophiles, such as Rodriguez Marín, the head of the National Library, expressed his gratitude to German scholarship for acknowledging Spain's literary achievements by carrying out detailed studies which helped to highlight the wealth of Spanish literature in the world.¹³⁸ This interest in Spanish culture Marín contrasted with what he perceived as ignorant and prejudicial stereotyping by other nations, which ridiculed Spain by portraying it as the country of the tambourine, its women with a dagger in their suspender. He criticised Alexander Dumas for stating Africa began at the Pyrenees.¹³⁹ Germany to him also exemplified the 'brave and strong hero patriotically fending off threats by several attackers without the need to bolster their army with foreign soldiers – in contrast to those who even considered bringing the Japanese to Europe to fight for them.' Anybody with manly blood running through their veins and possessing a manly heart, argued Marin, had to admire such display of masculinity.¹⁴⁰

Conclusion

¹³⁵P.A., R123009, Spanien 2, Bd. 1, Die Presse in Madrid, 1915–17, Ratibor to Auswärtige Amt, 26.5.1916.

¹³⁶Marició Janué I Miret, 'Imperialismus durch auswärtige Kulturpolitik: die Deutsch-Spanische Gesellschaft als "zwischenstaatlicher Verband" unter dem Nationalsozialismus' in *German Studies Review*, xxxi, no. 1 (Feb., 2008), pp 109-32.

¹³⁷P.A., R12004, Spanien 61 – Die politischen Beziehungen zwischen Spanien und Deutschland Dez. 1917 – Jan. 1918, Prof. Obermaier to Chancelor Graf Herling, 12.12.1917.

¹³⁸P.A., R11998, Spanien 61 – Die politischen Beziehungen zwischen Spanien und Deutschland 1911–16, extract of article in *Kölnische Volkszeitung* 20.9.1915, 'Vermischte Kriegsnachrichten. Ein spanischer Gelehrter über Deutschland'.

¹³⁹Ibid.

¹⁴⁰Ibid.

The positive image of Germany defended by Spain's *Germanófilos* was largely a reflection of their own hopes for Spain to transform itself and become a strong nation again. It therefore represented a form of Spanish nationalism which was galvanised during the First World War. This indirectly benefited Germany in its pursuit of Spanish neutrality since the defense of the German conduct of war and the highlighting of the perceived short-comings of the Allies ensured a lively debate putting further pressure on Spanish wartime governments not to join the Entente. This debate, however, did not need to be encouraged by German agitators but was a product of the cultural mobilisation which Spain experienced during the First World War despite its neutrality. This process could be seen as an extension of the reformation movement that had begun in the nineteenth century and received further strength in the wake of the Spanish-American War.

World War I and its subsequent uneven economic development in Spain made the discussion over regeneration even more urgent and also more heated. As the war was presented as a battle between ideologies so was the conflict in Spain marked by opposing ideas how to modernise the country and halt its decline. The search for the reasons for Spain's decline as well as ways of reforming the country now found its expression in the negative portrayal of France and Britain in pro-German writings. Resentment against the Allies by the *Germanófilos* stemmed from Spain's historic ties with France and Britain, as well as the resentment against Allied economic dominance in Spain. By decrying British imperialism, *Germanófilos* indirectly voiced their bitterness over Spain's declining empire and its dependence on France and Britain. Germany as a model for social, cultural and economic reform was seen as a way out of Spain's crisis by pro-German Spaniards. Inspired by Germany's wartime mobilisation and its strong military leadership, *Germanófilos* developed ideas which contributed to new nationalist thought. It is therefore not surprising that some Spaniards who were

pro-German during the First World War assumed important positions in the Franco regime. Writer and journalist Vincente Gay, for example, was appointed head of the Press and Propaganda Ministry in 1937.¹⁴¹

While liberal intellectuals such as writer Pío Baroja supported Germany in the hope of diminishing the influence of the Catholic Church in Spain, the Spanish clergy supported Germany, fearing the spread of French secularism and liberal ideas which would further undermine the power of the Church. That liberal and conservative Spaniards alike supported Germany for completely opposing reasons represents another perplexing facet of Spanish neutrality during the First World War contributing to the country's instability. The German diplomatic corps at Madrid took advantage of the divisions within Spanish society and agitated public opinion even further by actively meddling in the country's domestic affairs.

¹⁴¹P.A., R123008, Die Presse in Spanien (außer in Madrid) 1918-39, Faupel Embassy Salamanca to Auswärtige Amt, 22.1.1937.

Chapter 4

Wartime diplomacy:

Germany's attempts to maintain Spanish neutrality

With the introduction of the neutrality law in July 1918¹ the Spanish government not only attempted to curb widespread German and Allied propaganda, it also sought to control outside interference in domestic politics and to counter covert operations carried out by both belligerents in the peninsula. Just like the private propagandists and businessmen vying for Spanish public opinion, who were discussed in Chapter 2, the German diplomatic corps in Spain was active in pursuing influential Spaniards and trying to ensure Spanish neutrality. Ironically, Germany's efforts to keep Spain neutral meant a complete violation of all laws guarding the rights of a neutral state during wartime. German diplomacy in Spain during the First World War was marked by bribery, coercion, covert activity and did not even stop at plotting assassinations.

Spain's dependence on trade with Britain and France made it difficult for the German diplomats on the ground to push for a break with the Entente. Therefore, this chapter will firstly examine Spain's close economic ties with the Allies in order to gain a better understanding of the heightened German activity on the Iberian Peninsula. Although the German diplomatic corps in Spain acted with a certain amount of independence, its members ultimately had to follow instructions from Berlin and fall in line with governmental foreign policies. The power struggle between the German civilian government and the military leadership which emerged during the First World War also had an effect on diplomatic relations between Spain and Germany. What has

¹See chapter two.

been termed a ‘Silent Dictatorship’² of the *Oberste Heeresleitung* (OHL – German High Command) will be briefly discussed to illustrate the deteriorating effects of submarine warfare on Spanish-German relations during the war. Introducing the main protagonists of the German diplomatic corps in Spain and their Spanish collaborators, the chapter gives a detailed analysis of the activities of the German embassy and its diplomatic outposts. The role of the Spanish king, vital in the German diplomatic effort, is also outlined, while his relief work and that of other Spanish diplomats is briefly highlighted. Despite the damaging effect of the German U-boat campaign on Spain's economy as well as the scandals caused by German interference in Spanish domestic politics, Spain never broke off relations with the Kaiser Reich. This was largely owed to the work of the German diplomatic corps which restlessly mobilised pro-German and pro-neutrality elements of Spanish society.

As was seen in Chapter 1, Spain's rich mineral reserves made her an attractive trading partner. Due to the blockade enforced by the Allies almost immediately after the commencement of hostilities, it was mainly Great Britain and France which benefited from those resources. Since the middle of the nineteenth century Spain, in return for coal, had been supplying Britain with iron ore, copper, lead and other minerals.³ During the war Spanish imports of iron ore became particularly vital for the British arms industry. About 70% of Britain's overall iron ore supplies came from Spain.⁴ A disruption of deliveries, the British munitions office feared, would have brought the manufacture of explosives to a complete halt within three months.⁵ Therefore, it was not only in Britain's utmost interest to preserve good diplomatic relations with Spain and nurture a position of neutrality benevolent to the Entente, it was also in her interest to

¹Martin Kitchen, *The silent dictatorship: the politics of the German High Command under Hindenburg and Ludendorff, 1916–1918* (London, 1976).

³Zeiseler, *Spanien im Kalkül der britischen Kriegspolitik*, pp 247, 252.

⁴Ibid., p. 274.

⁵Ibid., p. 167.

ensure stability in Spanish domestic politics by avoiding any upheaval which could have hampered trade.

The Foreign Office observed German activity on the Iberian Peninsula with concern, often attributing workers' strikes to agitation incited by the German embassy.⁶ In November 1917 the Foreign Office assessed that while German diplomats had lost influence in other neutral countries, Spain was the exception. Due to the heightened activity of the German diplomatic corps a large part of the Spanish aristocratic, official and clerical world favoured Germany and the Central Powers during the war. As British diplomats saw it, German propaganda in Spain cleverly employed the aristocracy's dislike for democratic notions struck by the Entente, the military's admiration for the German army, the Church's hatred of French anti-clericalism and the general resentment of French colonial policy towards Spain in Morocco. The Foreign Office had to concede that German diplomacy and propaganda in Spain during the First World War achieved its goal to a large extent.⁷

The work of German diplomats in Spain had to be carried out amidst the conflict between political and military needs which arose throughout the war. The *Auswärtige Amt* was caught in a constant struggle with the military demands of the OHL to defend the need to keep up good diplomatic relations with neutral countries. This in turn also affected diplomatic relations between Spain and Germany during the First World War and would become particularly evident in the U-boat campaign.

In Martin Kitchen's assessment, the OHL managed to gain a dominant position in German politics during the First World War due to the Kaiser's failure to fully assume

⁶N.A., CAB/24/31, Image ref. 0040, Cabinet Papers, Intelligence Bureau, Department of Information 1917, Weekly report on Spain XIII 7.11.1917. Also see A.M.A.E., H1346, Correspondencia embajadas y legaciones Alemania, Notas verbales 1911-16. Ratibor to ministry of state 18.08.1916. Ratibor complained that the Spanish press was printing 'French lies' about Germans being involved in stirring up strikes in Spain.

⁷N.A., CAB/24/31, Image ref. 0040, Cabinet Papers, Intelligence Bureau, Department of Information 1917, Weekly report on Spain XIII, 7.11.1917.

his constitutional role.⁸ The wide-ranging, almost dictatorial rights, of the generals were backed up legally by the law on the state of siege. This imperial law had been used by Bismarck during the Franco-Prussian War but only to a limited extent. During the First World War, however, it was applied all over the German Reich. The Prussian law on the state of siege from 1851 gave the military executive power in curbing revolutionary unrest or fending off any threats from foreign aggressors. This elevated its leaders into a position of independence from civil government and parliamentary bodies.⁹

The law of state of siege allowed the suspension of several civil liberties such as freedom of speech and assembly and freedom from unlawful search and seizure. Usually it was only the Kaiser who was able to suspend any of these rights but with the declaration of 31 July 1914 the right was granted to the German military command.¹⁰ As the war went on the OHL maintained its supreme authority, not allowing any criticism. Censorship was justified by the overriding need to keep up morale and support for the war effort.¹¹ The issue of unrestricted submarine warfare illustrates perfectly how military matters were prioritised over civilian rights and how political consequences were ignored. With the appointment of Hindenburg and Ludendorff in August 1916 it became evident that all resources had to be mobilised in order to win the war.¹² This also meant extending German activity into neutral countries and not only mobilising the diplomatic corps but also the German communities living in those countries.

The work of the German diplomatic corps in Spain during World War I

⁸Kitchen, *The silent dictatorship*, p. 272.

⁹*Ibid.*, p. 50.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, p. 51.

¹¹*Ibid.*, p. 274.

¹²Wilhelm Deist, 'Strategy and unlimited warfare in Germany: Moltke, Falkenhayn and Ludendorff' in R. Chickering, S. Förster (eds), *Great War, Total War. Combat and mobilization on the Western Front, 1914–1918* (Cambridge, 2000), pp 265-80.

The man at the head of the German diplomatic community in Spain during the war was Prince Maximilian von Ratibor und Corvey, member of the Hohenlohe family. He was appointed ambassador at Madrid on 27 February 1910,¹³ a month after the passing of his predecessor Count Tattenbach. Ratibor, who had previously served at Vienna, Athens, Budapest, Belgrade and Lisbon, was described by his British counterpart, Sir Arthur Hardinge, as ‘a pleasant colleague, frank and good-natured of jovial appearance, a keen sportsman’.¹⁴ Hardinge also noted in his assessment, expressed in a report from 1913, that Ratibor had not engaged in any particular political activity or intrigues aimed at arousing Spanish feeling against France.¹⁵ Of course this was to change dramatically with the outbreak of the war. The European crisis was to transform Ratibor into Germany’s leading agent in Spain, relentless in his attempt to conquer Spanish public opinion. In his work the ambassador was assisted by embassy secretaries Eberhard von Stohrer and Franz Grimm. Von Stohrer, who had served as embassy secretary in Madrid since 1913, would return to Spain after the First World War when Adolf Hitler appointed him as ambassador on 25 July 1936, the same day the Führer decided to come to the aid of the nationalist coup that would eventually propel General Franco to power.¹⁶

Prior to 1914 the German embassy, with its central location on the Paseo de la Castellana, was the place to be for Madrid’s upper class society, in particular for the city’s affluent youth.¹⁷ Well known for their parties and dances, the Ratibors kept an open and welcoming house, lavishing considerable hospitality on Madrid society.¹⁸ In his social functions ambassador Ratibor was greatly helped by his wife, the Princess of

¹³P.A., Botschaft Madrid, Karton 362, Äuswärtige Amt to Legationskasse 14.3.1910.

¹⁴N.A., FO371/2103, Foreign Office, Spain & Portugal (War) 1914, Report on Heads of Missions for 1913, Hardinge to Grey, received 31.1.1914.

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶P.A., Botschaft Madrid Karton 23 Ausschnitt Artikel Stuttgarter Neuen Tagesblatt 31.8. [no year given]

¹⁷*La Esfera*, 6.5.1916.

¹⁸N.A., FO371/2103, Foreign Office, Spain & Portugal (War) 1914, Report on Heads of Missions for 1913, Hardinge to Grey, received 31.1.1914.

Ratibor (nee Countess d'Orsay), and their six daughters. The wife of the German ambassador was referred to as the Doyenne of the diplomatic corps in Madrid.¹⁹ Princess Ratibor also founded a hospital in Madrid for her German, Austrian and Swiss compatriots. It was located at Paseo de Ronda and was led by a Dr. Wendel.²⁰ Ratibor's daughters seamlessly integrated into Spanish society, speaking perfect Castilian and identifying with Spanish customs and culture.²¹ The British ambassador noted the regard given to Ratibor and his family by the Spanish king.²² One of Ratibor's daughters, for example, attended hunts organised by the Spanish royal family.²³

Although Madrid was the centre of German activity, Barcelona was of no lesser importance to the diplomats. Baron Ostmann von der Leye, the German consul at Barcelona, and vice consul Alfred von Carlowitz-Hartzsch were equally active in the pursuit for Spanish public opinion as their superior at Madrid. Pro-German sentiment amongst Spanish officials in Barcelona was already evident before the war when the German community of the Catalan capital celebrated the birthday of Kaiser Wilhelm II with a banquet that was also attended by the mayor of the city, former governor general of Cuba, Valeriano Weyler,²⁴ and other leading Spanish authorities.²⁵ The German diplomats did not shy away from joining in with Spanish customs such as carnival, frequently attended by vice consul Carlowitz who in 1916 dressed up as a Parisian Apache celebrating at the *Circulo Artístico*.²⁶ In February 1917, a disgruntled August Hofer noted, Carlowitz even held a party in his apartment at which he was dressed as a woman and his wife was dressed as a man.²⁷ Despite the seriousness of their mission,

¹⁹*La Esfera*, 6 May 1916.

²⁰*Ibid.*

²¹*Ibid.*

²²N.A., FO371/2103, Foreign Office, Spain & Portugal (War) 1914, Report on Heads of Missions for 1913, Hardinge to Grey, received 31.1.1914.

²³*La Esfera*, 16 Feb. 1918.

²⁴ See chapter two.

²⁵*La Ilustración Artística*, 2 Feb. 1914.

²⁶B.A., R901/71832, Politische, wirtschaftliche und militärische Lage in Spanien 1917, Hofer to Zfa, 28.06.1917.

²⁷*Ibid.* See chapter 2 for the confrontation between August Hofer and Vice Consul Carlowitz.

German diplomats did not lose sight of the more enjoyable advantages of serving in a neutral country. A lengthy exchange of letters stretching over the course of five years shows ambassador Ratibor's pursuit to recover several bottles of wine and champagne which had gone missing at the beginning of the war.²⁸ The partying lifestyle of the German diplomats did not indicate a lack of interest in their diplomatic work, nor was it detrimental to the German cause; on the contrary, it allowed them to mingle with the Spanish upper class, winning the trust of some while simultaneously being able to observe shifts in public opinion and subtly assert their influence.

As outlined in Chapter 1, Spanish society was divided over the issue of the country's neutrality and in its sympathies towards the belligerents. Attempting to manipulate Spanish public opinion to their advantage, Germany and the Central Powers, as well as the Allies, dedicated considerable amount of time to analysing Spain's fractious domestic situation and trying to identify political groups favourable to their respective cause. Ambassador Ratibor's assessment of Spanish attitudes prior to the war bluntly stated Spaniards could generally be regarded as xenophobes but if they had any sympathies for another nation it would be for Germany.²⁹ In February of 1913 he wrote to chancellor Bethmann Hollweg confirming pro-German tendencies amongst the Carlists, who fully supported Germany, the majority of the Conservative party and even amongst some members of the Liberal and Republican parties. Although Ratibor could confirm clear pro-German tendencies at the Spanish royal court, he also concluded that there was a reluctance to firmly support one side.³⁰ The British Foreign Office attributed Spanish sympathies for Germany to the lack of conflict between both countries, a far

²⁸A.G.A., 54/1510, Comercio Alemania, Ministry of State to German Embassy, 3.1.1919.

²⁹P.A., R11950, Spanische Staatsmänner 1913–17, Ratibor to Äuswärtige Amt 6.11.1913.

³⁰P.A., R11998, Spanien 61 – Die politischen Beziehungen zwischen Spanien und Deutschland 1911–16, Ratibor to Bethmann Hollweg 23.2.1913.

cry from the situation that applied to both France and England, which had clashed with Spain on numerous occasions in history.³¹

Amongst Germany's most important collaborators was the Marquis de Villalobar, Spanish ambassador in Belgium, who kept in close contact with Baron Oscar von der Lancken, chief political advisor to the German governor general in Belgium. Lancken had been embassy secretary at Madrid from 1906 to 1907.³² Though not resident in Spain, Villalobar proved to be a useful ally, particularly when it came to influencing King Alfonso XIII. His frequent visits to the royal court allowed for German ideas to be transmitted through him.³³ Regular meetings between Villalobar and von der Lancken also enabled a better insight into Spanish domestic affairs and opinions which were reported back to the *Auswärtige Amt* and the embassy at Madrid. Villalobar's hope was that a German victory would also elevate Spain into a position of power and allow her to fulfil territorial ambitions by reclaiming Gibraltar and annexing Portugal.³⁴ According to von der Lancken's memoirs, Villalobar was first and foremost a Spaniard and an ardent monarchist who believed that the future of the Spanish throne would be much more secure with the German Kaiser Reich by its side. This was so despite having been embassy secretary in London for several years and having many friends amongst the British aristocracy, even being part of the inner circle of King Edward VII. In Brussels he was a popular guest at the royal court owing to the great admiration he held for the king of Belgium. Villalobar's wide-ranging connections and his great diplomatic skills made him a very valuable collaborator for Germany.³⁵

Not only conservative Spanish politicians supported Germany during the war but also liberals who wished to defend Spanish neutrality against the interventionist

³¹N.A., FO371/2470, Foreign Office, Spain & Portugal (War) 1915, Hardinge to Grey 3.1.1915.

³²Oscar Freiherr von der Lancken Wakenitz, *Meine dreissig Dienstjahre, 1888-1918. Potsdam – Paris – Brüssel* (Berlin, 1931), pp 43-7.

³³P.A., R11950, Spanische Staatsmänner 1913–17, Lancken to Auswärtige Amt, 9.10.1916. Villalobar sent telegram to King to inform him about activities of Count Romanones.

³⁴P.A., R123013, Beeinflussung der spanischen Presse 1915–17, Lancken to Auswärtige Amt, 11.7.1915.

³⁵Lancken Wakenitz, *Meine dreissig Dienstjahre*, pp 164-5.

tendencies within their own party. As outlined in Chapter 1, it can be argued that *caciquismo* allowed for the development of a political culture based on personal interest which could explain the support for Germany and the Central Powers from various political groupings within Spain. Miguel Villanueva, a leading Liberal, was minister for foreign affairs in 1915 and minister for finance and speaker of the lower house of the Cortes in 1916. He was another collaborator who held good relations with Ratibor. He belonged to the faction of the Liberal party which rivalled that of Count Romanones. When the latter was appointed prime minister in December 1915 he chose Villanueva, a supporter of strict neutrality, as his foreign minister in order to appease his opponents who accused him of having interventionist ambitions.³⁶ Alfonso XIII also assured German diplomats the appointment of Villanueva was proof that Romanones would be kept under control in his pro-Allied tendencies.³⁷

Villanueva openly declared to the ambassador that he was a friend of Germany and worked on an approximation between Spain and Germany.³⁸ He had been actively involved in the Morocco Crisis with von der Lancken³⁹ and was known to the Foreign Office as a pro-German.⁴⁰ Though he supported the German administration, Villanueva insisted that the German diplomats accept the liberal tendencies within his party and that the embassy would not seek a collaboration with reactionary elements in Spanish politics, such as the Carlists.⁴¹ When Villanueva became speaker of the lower house of the Cortes in April 1916 and Romanones gave Amalio Gimeno, a confidant of the Count, the foreign affairs portfolio, the Germans feared a departure from strict neutrality

³⁶Romero Salvadó, *Spain 1914 – 1918*, p. 62.

³⁷Carden, *German policy toward neutral Spain*, pp 104–5.

³⁸P.A., R11998, Spanien 61 – Die politischen Beziehungen zwischen Spanien und Deutschland 1911–16, Ratibor to Äuswärtige Amt 6.12.1915.

³⁹P.A., R11950, Spanische Staatsmänner 1913–17, Ratibor to Äuswärtige Amt, 6.12.1915. Ratibor describes Villanueva as not completely reliable but pro-German nevertheless. P.A., R11950, Spanische Staatsmänner 1913–17, Lancken to Äuswärtige Amt, 11.12.1915. Lancken reports he has been friends with Villanueva for several years and worked with him in Cauterets during the Morocco Crisis.

⁴⁰N.A., FO371/2469, Foreign Office, Spain & Portugal (War) 1915, Telegram Hardinge 9.12.1915.

⁴¹P.A., R11998, Spanien 61 – Die politischen Beziehungen zwischen Spanien und Deutschland 1911–16, Ratibor to Äuswärtige Amt 6.12.1915.

and remained sceptical about the move despite assurances by the Prime Minister that Spain would stay out of the conflict.⁴²

The Carlists and their leader, Vazquez de Mella, were the principal champions of the German cause in Spain.⁴³ German diplomats and Carlist leaders maintained close if unofficial relations throughout the war, in order not to antagonise Berlin's other Spanish collaborators.⁴⁴ De Mella not only openly propagated the German cause in public speeches⁴⁵, he also collaborated with German military intelligence recommending suitable agents for covert activities.⁴⁶ His public speeches were seen as useful propaganda for the German cause and attempts were made to publish them in German newspapers.⁴⁷

Niceto Alcalá-Zamora and Juan de la Cierva were two high-ranking and influential politicians who could also be found amongst Germany's supporters in Spain. Alcalá-Zamora, a Liberal deputy, and later a president of the Second Spanish Republic, had been minister for public works in 1917 and had held other ministerial posts prior to that. He was also editor of the German sponsored newspaper *El Día*. Cierva was a Conservative politician and a former minister of the interior. Commenting on the cabinet formation under Prime Minister Garcia Prieto in November 1917, Ratibor described both men as Germany's friends.⁴⁸ Alcalá-Zamora in particular held close relations with the German embassy.⁴⁹

⁴²Carden, *German policy toward neutral Spain*, p. 113. Also see Romero Salvadó, *Spain 1914 – 1918*, p. 62.

⁴³N.A., FO371/2759, Foreign Office, Spain & Portugal (War) 1916, Vaughan to Grey 28.04.1916.

⁴⁴P.A., R11915, Die Karlisten 1912-20, Unsigned report dated 20.8.1916.

⁴⁵P.A., R21240, Weltkrieg Nr. 11q Geheim Bd. 2 – Unternehmungen und Aufwiegelungen gegen unsere Feinde in Spanien, Ratibor to Äuswärtige Amt 16.9.1915.

⁴⁶B.A.M., RM5/2408 Admiralstab der Marine, Schrift–pp. Verkehr mit Vertretern der Marine, ab Sept. 1916 dem Marineattaché, und anderen Personen in Madrid Bd. 1 1914–15, Krohn to Admiralstab der Marine 8.12.1914. Also see chapter five.

⁴⁷P.A., R123013, Beeinflussung der spanischen Presse 1915–17, Rautzenberg to news service Frankfurt, 23.6.1915.

⁴⁸P.A., R11951, Spanische Staatsmänner 1917–19, Ratibor to Äuswärtige Amt 3.11.1917.

⁴⁹P.A., R12003, Spanien 61 – Die politischen Beziehungen zwischen Spanien und Deutschland September – November 1917, Report Welzceck Berlin 5.11.1917.

Alcalá-Zamora's support of the German administration could be explained with reference to his devotion to absolute neutrality. In his autobiography *Memorias*, Alcalá-Zamora claimed to have been a defender of Spain's neutrality during the First World War since he believed it was what the majority of Spaniards wanted and in the country's best interest. He saw no advantages in entering the conflict.⁵⁰ He further claimed that while the Spanish people and most of the military were for neutrality, most of the major parties, with the exception of the Carlists, and the majority of leading newspapers had an interventionist agenda and were not very enthusiastic about neutrality.⁵¹

According to Alcalá-Zamora, Conservative politicians González Besada, Antonio Maura, the journalist and politician Julio Burell as well as Liberal Miguel de Villanueva and Alcalá-Zamora himself formed the exception amongst Spanish politicians in regards to the issue of Spanish neutrality. Alcalá-Zamora stated it was his obsession which he pursued with tireless tenacity, similar to another German collaborator, Villanueva. Alcalá-Zamora argued his efforts for Spanish neutrality formed an exceptional case.⁵² His memoirs, however, do not mention any collaboration with the German administration during the war. The willingness of liberal Spanish politicians to engage with the German administration demonstrates how lines were blurred during the war allowing for collaborations which would have been otherwise unthinkable. In their pursuit to maintain Spain's neutrality and despite conflicting ideologies, conservative and liberal Spanish politicians alike sought the help of the German government, to the detriment of Spain's political stability.

Also of great help to the German diplomatic effort in Spain were the Spanish representatives at Berlin. Ambassador Polo de Bernabé was a conservative *Germanófilo*

⁵⁰Niceto Alcalá-Zamora, *Memorias* (Barcelona, 1998), p. 66.

⁵¹*Ibid.*, p. 64.

⁵²*Ibid.*, pp 64-5.

who was in favour of strict neutrality.⁵³ Major Valdivia, the Spanish military attaché at Berlin, was equally pro-German. Like other collaborators, the Spanish diplomats in Berlin mainly facilitated a more direct news exchange between both countries which allowed the *Auswärtige Amt* to gain an insight into Spain's domestic politics, observe shifts in opinion of influential power players and plan a strategy accordingly.

German diplomats made good use of their political contacts and asserted their influence on Spanish politics in various ways. They resorted to election bribery, a common feature of Spanish politics at the time, in order to ensure a balance between *Francófilos* and *Germanófilos* in the Spanish government. Similarly to the German propaganda effort, no costs were spared to influence neutral Spain. In June 1915 state secretary von Jagow confirmed to ambassador Ratibor that any amount of money would be at his disposal to win over leading Spanish politicians.⁵⁴

As was already seen in Chapter 2, rather than forcing Spain to side with the Central Powers, Germany was cleverly portrayed as a champion of Spanish neutrality, fostering an anti-interventionist mood in Spain and therefore avoiding the country defecting to the side of the Allies. While trying to advance neutrality amongst the working class movement in particular, the German diplomats also exacerbated divisions within Republicans and Socialists. Rumours of a possible revolutionary uprising in Spain financed by Britain and France prompted German diplomats to support anti-interventionist elements amongst the Spanish left, leading to further infighting.⁵⁵ In June 1915 Ratibor reported to the *Äuswärtige Amt* that he had successfully recruited a Republican leader in Barcelona who propagated neutrality and worked towards causing a split amongst supporters of Lerroux's Radical Republicans.⁵⁶ The embassy hoped to achieve this with the help of a lawyer, Llado, who planned to publish a socialist pro-

⁵³Romero Salvadó, *Spain 1914 – 1918*, pp 62–3.

⁵⁴P.A., R123013, Beeinflussung der spanischen Presse 1915–17, v. Jagow to Ratibor 2.6.1915.

⁵⁵P.A., R21239, Weltkrieg Nr. 11q Geheim Bd. 1 – Unternehmungen und Aufwiegelungen gegen unsere Feinde in Spanien, Ratibor to Äuswärtige Amt 18.6.1915.

⁵⁶P.A., R123013, Beeinflussung der spanischen Presse 1915–17, Ratibor to Äuswärtige Amt 25.6.1915.

neutrality newspaper which would also be used to encourage sympathy for the socialist and republican parties in Germany. Although Ratibor did not deem this type of propaganda as strictly necessary, since he assessed the mood for Germany as steadily improving, he nevertheless thought it useful to curb French influence.⁵⁷

To limit British influence in Spain political propaganda using events such as the 1916 Easter Rising in Ireland was employed by German diplomats. The *Imparcial* printed an article entitled ‘A tribute to green Erin’, pointing out the close ties between Ireland and Spain and calling for sympathy for the defeated Irish.⁵⁸ Concerned by the negative press against Britain, the Foreign Office tried to stop proposed services in Barcelona which were to take place in honour of the Irish revolutionaries killed in the rebellion.⁵⁹ Anti-British activity initiated by the German embassy, however, did not stop at propaganda but also targeted British diplomats deployed to Spain. When news of a possible recall of British ambassador Sir Arthur Hardinge reached Ratibor, the German ambassador tried to keep his British colleague in office since he deemed him harmless. According to Ratibor, Hardinge had failed to gain sympathies in political and society circles and even managed to look ridiculous at times. His rumoured replacement, the former British ambassador to Spain – Maurice de Bunsen – enjoyed a better reputation and would have been a more dangerous adversary for Ratibor. Therefore, the German ambassador spread rumours about Hardinge’s recall in the Spanish press stating that pro-German circles were pleased about the development. Ratibor hoped his tactics of reverse psychology would prompt the British to keep Hardinge in Spain.⁶⁰ Hardinge indeed remained in the country until the end of the First World War and was only replaced in 1919.

⁵⁷P.A., R21239, Weltkrieg Nr. 11q Geheim Bd. 1 – Unternehmungen und Aufwiegelungen gegen unsere Feinde in Spanien, Ratibor to Auswärtige Amt, 16.8.1915.

⁵⁸N.A., FO371/2758, Foreign Office, Spain & Portugal (War) 1916, Hardinge to Grey, Confidential report May 1916, 6.5.1916.

⁵⁹Ibid., Hardinge to Grey, 7.6.1916.

⁶⁰P.A., R11984, Spanien No. 59, Bd. 4, Das diplomatische Korps in Madrid 1913–20, Ratibor to Auswärtige Amt, 18.7.1918.

The 'highlight' of German meddling in Spanish domestic affairs, however, could well be the events that led to the resignation of Count Romanones' in April 1917.⁶¹ While the German contribution to the prime minister's fall should not be overstated, it is necessary to point out how a feverishly organised campaign by ambassador Ratibor helped to turn public opinion against Romanones and increase his isolation even within his own party.⁶² The Count, who had made his pro-allied stance clear from the outset of the war, favouring intervention, though unable to break off relations with Germany and the Central Powers, tried to curb German activities in Spain, angering ambassador Ratibor. Romanones also faced an increasingly pro-German public opinion and felt that towards the middle of the war support for the Allies in Spain was waning.⁶³

German diplomatic correspondence gives the impression of a personal vendetta carried out by the ambassador, who abandoned all rules of diplomacy in his pursuit of Romanones' downfall. In his memoirs Count Romanones remarked that Germany showed a tenacity unlike any other country in its attempts to drag Spain into the war. Romanones described Ratibor as an adversary who carried out the instructions of his government with more zeal than discretion.⁶⁴ The Spanish prime minister was wrong, though, in his assumption Germany wanted Spain to join the war. Berlin tried to ensure Spain would not join the Allies. Even the *Äuswärtige Amt* was of the opinion Ratibor's methods to remove Romanones were too dangerous and could have compromised the position of their diplomats on the Iberian Peninsula.⁶⁵

At the beginning of September 1916 Ratibor requested permission to do everything necessary to dispose of the pro-allied prime minister,⁶⁶ causing a discussion

⁶¹N.A., CAB/24/146, Image ref. 0013, Cabinet Papers, Appreciation of the attached western and general report, No. 13, 26.4.1917.

⁶²See chapter one.

⁶³Romanones, *Notas de una vida*, p. 383.

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 385.

⁶⁵P.A., R12013, Spanien 61 secr. – Die Beziehungen zwischen Spanien und Deutschland 1916, signed Jagow 15.9.1916.

⁶⁶Ibid., Ratibor to *Äuswärtige Amt* 9.9.1916.

amongst diplomats in Berlin and the OHL about how to proceed in the matter. State secretary von Jagow suggested involving the Marquis de Villalobar and using the king in order to get rid of Romanones.⁶⁷ However, Villalobar deemed Ratibor too indiscrete to instigate swaying the king by using persons close to him and instead thought it more useful to let Alfonso know Germany was fully committed to entrusting him with peace negotiations.⁶⁸ The king had expressed his wish to take a role in peace negotiations throughout the war and hoped Spain's role as a neutral would be recognised favourably.⁶⁹

Ignoring Villalobar's advice, General Ludendorff demanded that Ratibor be authorised to find a way of removing Romanones without putting pressure on the Spanish king.⁷⁰ Finally the *Auswärtige Amt* had to give way to requests from the OHL and prompted Ratibor into action. As outlined at the beginning of the chapter the German military leadership gained substantial power during the war which allowed it to have a decisive say in political matters. The military's interference in diplomatic relations with Spain highlights how political considerations were subjugated to military demands despite the risk of turning a hitherto friendly, neutral state against Germany. Portugal's entry into the war on the side of the Entente in March 1916 must have certainly played an important part in the decision to pursue a more aggressive campaign in Spain. Germany could not risk losing another neutral state to the Allies. In November 1916 the ambassador was able to confirm his plan to remove Romanones, consisting of supporting the neutrality campaign, instituting press propaganda and influencing

⁶⁷Ibid., Jagow to embassy Madrid 12.9.1916.

⁶⁸Ibid., Lancken to Langwerth 14.9.1916.

⁶⁹See chapter one.

⁷⁰P.A., R12013, Spanien 61 secr. – Die Beziehungen zwischen Spanien und Deutschland 1916, Legationsrat Grünau to Äuswärtige Amt 15.9.1916.

Alfonso XIII, was in place.⁷¹ From Belgium Villalobar had begun to discredit Romanones in front of the king.⁷²

The press campaign launched against the prime minister used his success as a businessman to portray him as a greedy war profiteer, claiming he was involved in contraband trade. According to Romanones' critics, the interest he held in the Spanish mining industry was not compatible with his duties as prime minister and represented a threat to the country's neutrality.⁷³ In an interview with *La Nación*, an unnamed diplomat of the Central Powers also claimed Romanones was involved in contraband trade.⁷⁴ The diplomat, as it transpired, was not the German ambassador but the Austrian ambassador at Madrid, Prince Fürstenberg.⁷⁵ *La Nación* also printed further articles defaming the prime minister. In a particularly strongly worded article from May 1917 titled 'The true enemy', the publication called for a destruction of 'all the germs of influence of the Count Romanones in Spanish politics' and stated, 'The whole nation knows this man [Romanones] is her enemy therefore they keep attacking his intrigues, his declarations and his obvious intentions.'⁷⁶ Romanones later described the right-wing press campaign directed against him as something no other politician had suffered before: 'Germany not only torpedoed our merchant navy but also torpedoed me with great eagerness', the Count recounted.⁷⁷

Further attempts were made to prove Spanish steamers carried deliveries for the Allies from mines of which Romanones was a shareholder.⁷⁸ Romanones tried to curb the campaign by enforcing censorship and prohibiting the publication of some

⁷¹P.A., R11950, Spanische Staatsmänner 1913–17, Ratibor to Äuswärtige Amt 4.11.1916.

⁷²Ibid., Lancken to Äuswärtige Amt 9.10.1916.

⁷³Albes, *Worte wie Waffen*, pp 283–4.

⁷⁴N.A., FO371/3030, Foreign Office, Spain & Portugal (War) 1917, Translation of article in *El Ejercito Español* [date of article not clear] sent from Hardinge to Balfour 24.1.1917.

⁷⁵Ibid., Hardinge to Balfour 14.1.1917.

⁷⁶*La Nación*, 10 May 1917.

⁷⁷Romanones, *Notas de una vida*, pp 393–4.

⁷⁸B.A., R901/71832, Politische, wirtschaftliche und militärische Lage in Spanien 1917, Undated letter from August Hofer, not clear who addressed to.

newspaper editions.⁷⁹ Though effective, the *Auswärtige Amt* expressed concern over Ratibor's methods and urged him to keep up the appearance of a civil relationship with the prime minister, who had complained about his constant interference in Spanish politics.⁸⁰ Count Romanones' position was becoming increasingly precarious and eventually he was forced to resign in April 1917. The controversy over the handling of the sinking of the *San Fulgencio* revealed the reluctance amongst Spanish politicians, Conservatives and Liberals alike, to abandon the idea of neutrality.⁸¹

German involvement in the downfall of Count Romanones was not the only interference in Spanish politics the German diplomats engaged in. The British Foreign Office suspected German participation in the dismissal of Eduardo Dato, who served as prime minister between June and October 1917, and also conceded that possibly one or two members of the subsequent cabinet, assembled in November 1917 and led by Garcia Prieto, had been bought over by Germany. The British expected large-scale election bribery on Germany's part to guarantee the presence of *Germanófilos* in the Cortes.⁸² In a letter to the *Auswärtige Amt* Ratibor confirmed British suspicions, stating it would be difficult to estimate the amount necessary before candidates had been nominated and asking for permission to spend up to 5 million pesetas.⁸³ The pro-allied Spanish press also reported about how German money was used to influence election results in Spain, much to the dismay of ambassador Ratibor.⁸⁴

In their effort to influence the general elections at the beginning of 1918, German diplomats also received help from unsuspected collaborators. Just like Liberal

⁷⁹Albes, *Worte wie Waffen*, p. 284.

⁸⁰Ibid., p. 285.

⁸¹Ibid., p. 305. Also see chapter one.

⁸²N.A., CAB/24/34, Image ref. 0007, Cabinet Papers, Intelligence Bureau, Department of Information 1917, Weekly report on Spain XIV 29.11.1917. Also see NA, CAB/24/35, Image ref. 0073, Cabinet Papers, Intelligence Bureau, Department of Information 1917, Weekly report on Spain XV 13.12.1917.

⁸³P.A., R12017, Spanien 61 secr. – Die Beziehungen zwischen Spanien und Deutschland 1917–18, Ratibor to *Auswärtige Amt* 7.12.1917.

⁸⁴P.A., R12004, Spanien 61 – Die politischen Beziehungen zwischen Spanien und Deutschland Dez. 1917 – Jan. 1918, Ratibor to *Auswärtige Amt*, 4.1.1918.

and Conservative Spanish politicians worked with the German administration, Alejandro Lerroux, leader of the Radical Republicans, also offered his services to the German embassy in January 1918. His intention was to carry out an election campaign based on championing the idea of neutrality and the need for peace in the world.⁸⁵ At the beginning of the First World War Lerroux had been one of the most ardent supporters of intervention but had changed his attitude throughout the conflict presumably to gain wider support amongst the Spanish working class movement which was largely in favour of neutrality.⁸⁶ A self-proclaimed advanced Republican and Socialist as well as a revolutionary and reformist, Lerroux's objectives remained vague, therefore enabling him to avoid any real political commitments.⁸⁷ As prime minister during the Second Republic his politics were decidedly more moderate than his radical political beginnings.

Fitting in with the popular theme of Germany as a defender of Spanish neutrality, often employed in German propaganda, the *Auswärtige Amt* agreed to work with Lerroux.⁸⁸ German diplomatic documents from July 1918 confirm payments were made to the leader of the Radical Republicans.⁸⁹ While in the summer of 1915 the embassy was plotting against Lerroux and trying to cause a rift in his party, as was seen above, they now readily accepted his help. This constitutes yet another example of German opportunism, using opposing political forces to their advantage regardless of the consequences for the stability of Spanish domestic affairs.

⁸⁵P.A., R12017, Spanien 61 secr. – Die Beziehungen zwischen Spanien und Deutschland 1917–18, Ratibor to Äuswärtige Amt 8.1.1918.

⁸⁶See chapter one.

⁸⁷José Alvarez Junco, *The emergence of mass politics in Spain: populist demagoguery and republican culture, 1890–1910* (Brighton, 2002), p. 170.

⁸⁸P.A., R12017, Spanien 61 secr. – Die Beziehungen zwischen Spanien und Deutschland 1917–18, Bussche to embassy Madrid, 10.1.1918.

⁸⁹Ibid., Report Berlin 7.7.1918.

The incident surrounding the removal of the Ferrer statue in Brussels, documented by some historians⁹⁰, showed how German diplomats tried their utmost to keep Spain's *Germanófilos* in their favour. Erected in the wake of the Tragic Week in 1909 to remember Francisco Ferrer, the statue had always been a source of controversy in Spain.⁹¹ In 1914 the German embassy at Madrid was approached by different political groups and individuals suggesting the removal or destruction of the statue. One of them were the Carlists⁹² who, according to German military attaché Kalle, were an important power player in Spanish politics due to their influence on Church and army. He therefore recommended complying with their wishes.⁹³ The suggestion to dispose of the monument also came from a leading political figure with far greater influence than the Carlists, Alfonso XIII himself. In a meeting with Kalle Alfonso mentioned the great impact it would make in Spain if the statue was to be removed or damaged.⁹⁴ In addition the *Auswärtige Amt* received a letter from a Spanish priest asking for the Ferrer statue to be destroyed and confirming that the true Catholics of Spain were pro-German.⁹⁵ After deliberating how best to dispose of the monument, von der Lancken suggested damaging it with a chemical solution, forcing its subsequent complete removal in order to preserve public order. His plan was put into action in the night from 22 to 23 January 1915 and the Ferrer statue disappeared from Brussels cityscape.⁹⁶

Another breach of Spanish neutrality, also instigated by the Spanish king, was the landing of a German U-boat at the Spanish port of Cartagena in June 1916. In February 1916 Alfonso had expressed to Kalle the idea of sending a German delegation to Spain by submarine. This plan, the Spanish monarch hoped, would deliver a powerful

⁹⁰Albes, *Worte wie Waffen*, pp 157–62. Also see Carden, *German policy toward neutral Spain*, pp 75-7.

⁹¹Albes, *Worte wie Waffen*, p. 157. Also see chapter one.

⁹²P.A., R11800, Prozess gegen den Anarchisten Ferrer und seine Erschiessung 1909–19, Ratibor to Äuswärtige Amt 18.11.1914.

⁹³Ibid., Kalle to Äuswärtige Amt 17.11.1914.

⁹⁴Ibid., Ratibor to Äuswärtige Amt 23.9.1914.

⁹⁵Ibid., Letter Toro 2.10.1914.

⁹⁶Albes, *Worte wie Waffen*, p. 159.

blow to interventionists in general and Romanones in particular.⁹⁷ When the U-35 reached Cartagena on 21 June 1916, it carried a letter from Wilhelm II to Alfonso reiterating vague promises that the Spanish king would play an important role in peace negotiations and offering to settle the transfer of ten German ships interned in Spanish ports, an offer that had been made in acknowledgement of the economic hardship endured by Spain as a result of the war.⁹⁸ Wilhelm also asked the Spanish sovereign to mediate between the belligerents and to encourage the Entente to accept the German conditions of peace. Alfonso in turn wrote to US ambassador Willard suggesting that he could represent the Central Powers in peace negotiations while the US could represent the Allies.⁹⁹

The official reason stated for the visit of the submarine was to show appreciation for the generous welcome that had been extended by Spain to German refugees from Cameroon.¹⁰⁰ The incident, however, led to loud protests from the Allies. For Prime Minister Romanones it only meant a further increase in tension between Spain and the Allies. He later claimed to have ignored the contents of the Kaiser's letter delivered by the U-boat to the Spanish king.¹⁰¹ After the landing at Cartagena, Alfonso asked the German government to refrain from sending further submarines to Spain.¹⁰²

The U-35 affair, as was hoped by the Spanish monarch, put an end to Count Romanone's plans of moving closer into the Allied camp. With Portugal joining the Entente's war effort only a few months prior to the incident, in March 1916, the friendly dealings between Alfonso and the Kaiser could have been interpreted as a sign that Spain had no intention of following Portugal's path into the war. Even more worryingly for the Allies, Spain's behaviour might have been viewed as an aggressive move

⁹⁷Carden, *German policy toward neutral Spain*, pp 111–2.

⁹⁸Ibid., p. 120.

⁹⁹Ibid., pp 121–2.

¹⁰⁰Albes, *Worte wie Waffen*, p. 235.

¹⁰¹Romanones, *Notas de una vida*, pp 392–3.

¹⁰²Carden, *German policy toward neutral Spain*, pp 123–4.

towards its Iberian neighbour. As mentioned above, Germany frequently offered Spain a free hand in Portugal in return for a pro-German neutrality. If Spain would have acted on that offer, Portugal's contribution to the Allied war effort would have been seriously undermined. By sending a U-boat to Spain only shortly after declaring war on Portugal over the seizure of German ships in Portuguese ports,¹⁰³ Germany was following an aggressive strategy possibly aimed at trying to assert her power in the battle of the Atlantic by demonstrating to the Allies that Spain was benevolent to Germany. Even a strictly neutral Spain benefited the German war effort since it provided a buffer zone in a territory otherwise dominated by the Allies. The U-35 incident, like the campaign against Count Romanones outlined earlier in the chapter, marked a more aggressive behaviour of German activity in Spain from 1916 onwards.

The role of the Spanish king during the war

Both Alfonso's eagerness to have the Ferrer statue removed and the U-35 incident encouraged the German diplomats in their belief the King was a *Germanófilo*. Ratibor confirmed to the *Auswärtige Amt* in October 1914 that the Spanish royal family was siding with Germany and trying their utmost to increase sympathy for the Central Powers amongst the Spanish people. The royal court was also aware that an alliance with France would aggravate the army and the Carlists, possibly leading to revolutionary uprisings threatening the stability of Spain's monarchy.¹⁰⁴ Before the outbreak of the war Alfonso spoke freely about his antipathy for France in an audience with his military attaché at Berlin, Major Valdivia. Valdivia was able to report to Kalle that the king had no intention of supporting France in the case of a European war. In

¹⁰³Filipe Ribeiro de Meneses, *Portugal 1914-1926. From the First World War to Military Dictatorship* (Bristol, 2004), pp 20-1.

¹⁰⁴P.A., R11998, Spanien 61 – Die politischen Beziehungen zwischen Spanien und Deutschland 1911–16, Ratibor to Äuswärtige Amt 15.10.1914.

matters of foreign affairs, however, he was forced to bow to the demands of Spain's neighbour. The German military attaché already detected the difficulties that might arise from this dependency on France and questioned whether Spain would be able to resist being drawn into binding military pacts allowing transport of divisions and supporting the Entente in the Mediterranean.¹⁰⁵

Shortly after the outbreak of the war in a meeting with Kalle, Alfonso expressed his admiration for German mobilisation and left no doubt, according to the German military attaché, that he was a supporter of the German cause. In his audience Kalle was also given the impression that the king was not opposed to the idea of serious damage being inflicted on Britain and strongly believed in a German victory.¹⁰⁶ German diplomats first began to exert pressure on the Spanish monarch in October 1914 after a swift victory had escaped the German army and Portugal was turning against Germany. State secretary von Jagow instructed ambassador Ratibor to try and sway Alfonso and the Spanish government to side against Portugal. In turn the *Auswärtige Amt* offered Spain a free hand in Portugal and the return of Gibraltar. This offer was rejected out of fear of an occupation of the Balears and the Canary Islands as well as Spain's mainland ports if Spain should act against Portugal.¹⁰⁷ Whatever Alfonso's personal convictions were, he was not willing to risk Spain being dragged into the war, however tempting the territorial offers were.

Throughout the war Alfonso maintained a close friendship with the German military attaché and it was mostly Kalle that represented the German diplomatic corps at court. While it would have been common for the two to discuss military matters, the king also consulted Kalle on diplomatic issues, preferring his council to that of

¹⁰⁵P.A., R11833, Militärangelegenheiten Spaniens 1913–24, Kalle to royal ministry of war 17.6.1914.

¹⁰⁶P.A., R11998, Spanien 61 – Die politischen Beziehungen zwischen Spanien und Deutschland 1911–16, Ratibor to Bethmann Hollweg 23.9.1914.

¹⁰⁷Rüchardt, *Deutsch–Spanische Beziehungen*, pp. 165–6.

Ratibor.¹⁰⁸ Alfonso's education, which closely resembled that of an infantry cadet, had been mainly conducted by military men. It was therefore hardly surprising that the man who viewed himself as first soldier of the nation with a keen interest in military affairs¹⁰⁹ cultivated close friendships with military personnel such as Kalle. Even after the end of the war the Spanish monarch showed an interest in the former German military attaché. During a dinner at the royal court in 1920 Alfonso was having a conversation in German with the acting German ambassador Bassewitz. Amongst discussing the political situation in Germany, the King also asked about the current position of Major Kalle.¹¹⁰

During the war Alfonso frequently confided in the German military attaché. The King confessed his admiration for Germany and the Kaiser but also admitted, contrary to earlier declarations, to having a lot of sympathy for France and the French people. England, on the other hand, he hated whole heartedly. He made it clear to Kalle that he would never be able to side with England and France since those two nations were responsible for everything bad that had happened to Spain in the previous 150 years.¹¹¹ At the end of 1914 Alfonso was convinced a victory of the Allies would ensure a further decline of Spain. He was hoping a victorious Germany would also have advantages for Spain such as the recognition of her rights in Morocco, regaining Gibraltar, a free hand in Portugal and closer ties with the German Kaiser Reich.¹¹²

Responding to German complaints that the Spanish government was supporting the Allies by allowing exports of weapons as well as of horses and mules, Alfonso

¹⁰⁸B.A.M., RM5/2491, Admiralstab der Marine, Spanien und die Kriegführung der deutschen U-Boote 1916–18, Telegram from Madrid to Admiralstab der Marine 15.8.1916.

¹⁰⁹Teresa Gonzalez-Aja, 'Sport, nationalism and militarism – Alfonso XIII: sportman, soldier, king' in *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, xxviii, no. 14 (2011), pp 1987–2030.

¹¹⁰P.A., R11984, Spanien No. 59, Bd. 4, Das diplomatische Korps in Madrid 1913–20, Bassewitz to Auswärtige Amt, 21.1.1920.

¹¹¹B.A.M., RM5/2408, Admiralstab der Marine, Schrift-pp. Verkehr mit Vertretern der Marine, ab Sept. 1916 dem Marineattaché, und anderen Personen in Madrid Bd. 1 1914–15, Kalle to Auswärtige Amt, royal ministry of war, head of admiralty 1.1.1915.

¹¹²Ibid.

pointed out to Kalle under how much pressure Spain was put by Britain in particular, often leaving the government no other choice but to cooperate in order to avoid a complete collapse of the country. He nevertheless assured Kalle that he would try to curb favours to the Allies as much as possible.¹¹³ Although many sources confirm Alfonso's close ties with Britain and France,¹¹⁴ in keeping with traditional Spanish foreign policy, his continued contact with representatives of the Central Powers during the war could also be an indication of his hopes to fulfil territorial desires which had been blocked by the Allies. Alfonso's wish was to elevate Spain back into a position of power amongst the European nations, and at the beginning of the war he hoped that a German victory would help to achieve that.¹¹⁵

Throughout the war the king's true sympathies remained ambiguous. Both belligerents, constantly vying for his favour, frequently claimed to have him on their side but what can be derived from his contradictory statements and assurances to the Allies and Central Powers is that Alfonso's kept his politics flexible, reacting to internal demands and external pressures in accordance with the needs of the hour. British ambassador Hardinge stated in his memoirs that the king always remained strictly impartial in the European war but Hardinge also believed Alfonso's sympathies were with the Allies.¹¹⁶

Equally, French diplomats attested to Alfonso having been a strict observer of neutrality at the outbreak of the war. The French ambassador claimed, though, that the king had confirmed to him that his sympathies were with France.¹¹⁷ Count Romanones felt a change in the king's attitude after the first battle of the Marne, after which he observed a softening in Alfonso's pro-German tendencies and a commitment to put his

¹¹³Ibid.

¹¹⁴Javier Tusell & Genoveva G. Queipo de Llano, *Alfonso XIII. El rey polémico* (Madrid, 2001), p. 284.

¹¹⁵P.A., R11998, Spanien 61 – Die politischen Beziehungen zwischen Spanien und Deutschland 1911–16, Ratibor to Äuswärtige Amt 15.1.1915.

¹¹⁶Arthur Hardinge, *A diplomatist in Europe* (London, 1927), p. 262.

¹¹⁷Tusell & Queipo de Llano, *Alfonso XIII*, p. 285.

love for Spain above anything else. From then on, Romanones argued, the Spanish monarch could not be accused of being either pro-German or pro-Allied in his politics.¹¹⁸ Alcalá-Zamora, on the other hand, argued that the king was undoubtedly in favour of intervention while the Austrian queen mother did not share this attitude but had little influence on her son in this matter. The Queen, who was English, naturally avoided the limelight in that difficult time for her.¹¹⁹

The king's predicament during the war was similar to that of many amongst the European aristocracy. National allegiances now took precedence over familial ties and relations. Alfonso's wife, Queen Victoria Eugenia, had two brothers and an uncle fighting in the war while the brother of the queen mother, Maria Christina, was the head of the Austro-Hungarian army.¹²⁰ Due to Alfonso's family connections to both belligerents, the Spanish king was almost obliged to maintain good relations with both sides¹²¹ without antagonising either of them and, most importantly, without being accused of breaking Spain's neutrality. His commitment was first and foremost to Spain as he tried to shield his country from the horrors of the war.¹²² Therefore his considerations for territorial offers by Germany can be viewed as an attempt to use the conflict amongst the greater powers to gain something for Spain rather than forging a closer alliance with the Central Powers. As already discussed in Chapter 1, the king often took the initiative in negotiations with foreign diplomats, sometimes without consulting his government. However, he generally fell in line with the political direction of his government and therefore his actions during the First World War should not be viewed as an attempt to undermine Spain's position of neutrality.

A positive aspect of the king's attempts to navigate himself into a favourable position to take on a leading role in peace negotiations, was the humanitarian work

¹¹⁸Romanones, *Notas de una vida*, p. 384.

¹¹⁹Alcalá-Zamora, *Memorias*, p. 64.

¹²⁰Julian Cortes-Cavanillas, *Alfonso XIII y la guerra del 14* (Madrid, 1976), p. 12.

¹²¹*Ibid.*, p. 13.

¹²²*Ibid.*, pp 49-50.

carried out by the monarch, helping POW's and their families. Financed and initiated by Alfonso himself, an office in his Madrid palace, established in August 1915, dealt with inquiries relating to the treatment, whereabouts and repatriation of prisoners of war on both sides of the conflict. Forty employees, led by the king's secretary, processed up to 20,000 letters a month. Alfonso would even respond to some inquiries personally¹²³ and was also called upon by Allied diplomats to prevent the execution of German death penalties.¹²⁴ British ambassador Hardinge recalled how the king, as well as his representative in Brussels – the Marquis de Villalobar – repeatedly appealed to the German government for leniency in carrying out sentences. For example in the case of British nurse Edith Cavell, who was accused of aiding enemy troops and of having violated the neutrality of the Red Cross, Villalobar and his American colleague in Brussels petitioned the German government, though to no avail.¹²⁵ In some cases, however, King Alfonso managed to convert death penalties into life sentences by appealing to the German emperor as well as the pope. The death sentence of two French women, who were accused of a similar offence to that of Cavell, was commuted into penal servitude for life due to Alfonso's intervention.¹²⁶

To prevent Allied hospital ships from being attacked, the king arranged for Spanish officers to be placed on board of these ships so that they could certify they were not ships of war in disguise when challenged by German submarines or other enemy vessels. Sir Arthur Hardinge stated that 'It would indeed be difficult to exaggerate the beneficent effect of the Spanish Sovereign's humanitarian activities in diminishing the destructive effects of the war, or the number of lives which they saved.'¹²⁷ Although the king's office offered support to prisoners of both belligerents, it was mainly the Allies

¹²³Tusell & Queipo de Llano, *Alfonso XIII*, p. 301.

¹²⁴Zeiseler, *Spanien im Kalkül der britischen Kriegspolitik*, p. 93.

¹²⁵Hardinge, *A diplomatist in Europe*, p. 262.

¹²⁶*Ibid.*, p. 263.

¹²⁷*Ibid.*, p. 263.

which benefited from Alfonso's humanitarian organisation with the majority of requests coming from French and Belgian prisoners.¹²⁸

Besides the king, Spanish diplomats often represented Allied interest in the support of prisoners of war. Polo de Bernabé, Spanish ambassador at Berlin, served as representative for most Allied powers in Germany and oversaw prison camp inspections, supervision of purchase and distribution of supplies and the allocation of financial assistance to prisoners.¹²⁹ Already by the end of 1914 Polo had been entrusted with looking after French, Belgian and Russian interests in Germany receiving funds from the Russian and French government for the relief of their prisoners. Before entering the war, the United States often organised relief work in conjunction with other neutral powers such as Spain.¹³⁰

In Belgium it was the Marquis de Villalobar who was active in organising help for Allied prisoners. A plaque erected at the house in Brussels in which he had resided between 1913 and 1919 commemorates the work he did on behalf of the Belgian people. The inscription reads: 'The Marquis de Villalobar, Spanish Ambassador, lived in this building from 1913 to 1919. During the Great War he made this the centre of the kind deeds of S.M. the king Alphonse XIII and of his own work on behalf of the Belgian population. Gratitude from the Belgian-Spanish Association.'¹³¹ Under the auspices of Villalobar and his American colleague, Joseph Brand Whitlock, the relief effort for the Belgian civilian population was organised, ensuring the distribution of

¹²⁸Tusell & Queipo de Llano, *Alfonso XIII*, p. 301.

¹²⁹Kenneth Steuer, *Pursuit of an "unparalleled opportunity": the American YMCA and prisoner-of-war diplomacy among the Central Power nations during World War I, 1914-1923* (New York, 2009), available at Gutenberg-e, (<http://www.gutenberg-e.org/steuer/archive/detail/C12.p06B.LuisPolodeBernabe.jpg.html>) (1 June 2013).

¹³⁰Memorandum by Chandler P. Anderson, 1.12.1914, pp 1001-2. United States Department of State. Papers relating to the foreign relations of the United States, 1915. Supplement, *The World War* (1915), available at University of Wisconsin Digital Collections, (<http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS>) (1 June 2013).

¹³¹Plaque Marquis de Villalobar, available at Brussels Remembers, Memorials of Brussels, (<http://www.brusselsremembers.com/memorials/marquis-de-villalobar>) (15 June 2013).

food.¹³² In view of the relief work undertaken by Spanish diplomats, Polo's and Villalobar's collaboration with the German administration becomes all the more puzzling. The realities of war and the suffering endured by POW's and civilians must have affirmed their belief that Spain should stay out of the conflict, yet they did not to blame Germany and the Central Powers for that suffering.

Alfonso maintained good relations with diplomats of both warring parties,¹³³ consulting with them frequently for updates on the progress of the war. Although he sought Ratibor's opinion on the formation of a cabinet under Romanones at the end of 1915, Alfonso ignored the German ambassador's doubts and the cabinet was formed regardless.¹³⁴ Despite Alfonso's assurance that Ratibor could rely on him completely,¹³⁵ German diplomats started to question the king's influence on Spanish politics and his willingness to counter the liberal pro-Allied policies of the Count Romanones.¹³⁶ For now, though, Ratibor decided not to bring up previous offers of Gibraltar, Tangier and Portugal to encourage the king to take a more pro-German stance.¹³⁷ Although the Spanish sovereign tried to restrict the economic concessions that Spain had to make to the Allies, he was unable to let all German activity go unnoticed. Due to pressure from France, Alfonso was forced to take measures against German activity in Morocco and could not prevent the expulsion of German agent Coppel from Melilla in September 1916.¹³⁸ German agents had been stirring up revolts in the French colony. The Spanish king, keen to extend his North African empire, had been in close contact with the German embassy, who kept him informed about the progress of their agents.¹³⁹

¹³²Lancken Wakenitz, *Meine dreissig Dienstjahre*, p. 194.

¹³³P.A., R11937, Spanien 55 Nr. 1 – Das spanische Königshaus 1913–17, Report Krohn 14.10.1916.

¹³⁴P.A., R11950, Spanische Staatsmänner 1913–17, Ratibor to Äuswärtige Amt 9.12.1915.

¹³⁵Ibid., Ratibor to Äuswärtige Amt 16.1.1916.

¹³⁶P.A., R11937, Spanien 55 Nr. 1 – Das spanische Königshaus 1913–17, Report Krohn 14.10.1916.

¹³⁷P.A., R11950, Spanische Staatsmänner 1913–17, Ratibor to Äuswärtige Amt 16.1.1916.

¹³⁸P.A., R12013, Spanien 61 secr. – Die Beziehungen zwischen Spanien und Deutschland 1916, Kalle to Auswärtige Amt, 17.9.1916.

¹³⁹See chapter five.

In October 1917 Kalle had heard from an informer who was in close contact with the Spanish prime minister that the Allies had proof the king was allowing a secret news exchange between Madrid and Berlin behind the back of Romanones. As a result of that trade negotiations for coal deliveries to Spain had been abandoned and, according to Kalle, Spain was threatened with being sealed off economically.¹⁴⁰ While Alfonso did not always keep his prime minister informed about his communication with the German diplomats in Spain, it was also the case that Kalle suspected that the king was not being informed properly by his government.¹⁴¹ This was not, however the case, as correspondence of the Spanish Ministry of State confirms that the monarch was always well and timely informed by the various Spanish diplomatic outposts.¹⁴²

British diplomats, on the other hand, expressed concern over Kalle's influence on the king and blamed the German military attaché's propaganda campaign for the king's belief in a German victory.¹⁴³ In order to counter that propaganda the Foreign Office suggested requesting audiences for allied military attachés.¹⁴⁴ British diplomats were also worried about how events in Russia and Greece would affect the behaviour of the Spanish monarch, especially since German propaganda honed in on the aristocracy's suspicion of Allied democracy.¹⁴⁵

As the war continued it became increasingly difficult for the German diplomats to ascertain where Alfonso's true allegiances lay. Some historians assessed the king began to take a pro-Allied stance as the war progressed.¹⁴⁶ The economic pressure exerted by the Allies was certainly a reason why Alfonso often had to bow to

¹⁴⁰B.A.M., RM5/2417, Telegramme an den Militärattaché in Madrid Mai – Dez. 1917, Kalle to OHL, 5.10.1917.

¹⁴¹B.A.M., RM5/906, Bericht des Militärattachés in Madrid betr. Audienz beim König von Spanien (U-Bootkrieg), copy Great Headquarters, Head of Admiralty, 19.4.1917.

¹⁴²Tusell & Queipo de Llano, *Alfonso XIII*, p. 285.

¹⁴³N.A., FO371/2758, Foreign Office, Spain & Portugal (War) 1916, Hardinge to Grey 17.3.1916. See also N.A., FO371/3033, Foreign Office, Spain & Portugal (War) 1917, Hardinge to Lord Robert Cecil 7.5.1917.

¹⁴⁴N.A., FO371/3033, Foreign Office, Spain & Portugal (War) 1917, Major Grant to Hardinge 7.5.1917.

¹⁴⁵N.A., CAB/24/31, Image ref. 0040, Cabinet Papers, Intelligence Bureau, Department of Information 1917, Weekly report on Spain XIII, 7.11.1917.

¹⁴⁶Carden, *German policy toward neutral Spain*, pp 129-30.

British and French demands which subsequently could be interpreted as a move closer to the Allied camp. With Portugal entering the war in March 1916, shortly followed by Rumania in August 1916, the king must have not only been aware of the decreasing likelihood of a German victory but was also faced with the reality of his country being surrounded by Allied states. An aggressive pro-German policy would have been economic and political suicide for Spain which would not have had the military power to defend its borders and would have been unable to survive without Allied trade.

By the end of 1917 German diplomats were openly concerned about what they saw as a change in the Spanish sovereign's behaviour against Germany. Doubts were raised when, during the ruling crisis in November 1917, Alfonso attempted to replace Dato with Sánchez de Toca, who was viewed as anti-German as well as pro-interventionist by Ratibor.¹⁴⁷ Only a month later though, Alcalá-Zamora confirmed to a German informer that the king was looking at Germany more favourably again and believed in a victory of the Central Powers.¹⁴⁸ Alfonso's changing view on the war, as put forward by Alcalá-Zamora, could well have been influenced by Russia's withdrawal from the conflict after the revolution of October and November 1917. With the help of Villalobar, German diplomats tried to establish the reasons for the king's change in attitude. The *Auswärtige Amt* warned however, to proceed with caution, since it was not clear whether Alfonso's bad mood was caused by having found out about the German embassy's relations with the military juntas.¹⁴⁹

An incident which also negatively impacted on relations between Germany and the Spanish king was the escape of a German U-boat from internment at La Coruña in October 1917. The captain of the UB-49 had given his word not to flee as a result of

¹⁴⁷P.A., R12003, Spanien 61 – Die politischen Beziehungen zwischen Spanien und Deutschland September – November 1917, Ratibor to Auswärtige Amt, 1.11.1917.

¹⁴⁸P.A., R12004, Spanien 61 – Die politischen Beziehungen zwischen Spanien und Deutschland Dez. 1917 – Jan. 1918, Ratibor to Auswärtige Amt, 31.12.1917.

¹⁴⁹P.A., R11938, Spanien 55 Nr. 1 – Das spanische Königshaus 1917–20, copy to A.S. 4232, signed Langwerth [undated].

which the security arrangements surrounding the submarine had been neglected. After its escape the Spanish government protested vehemently and demanded that UB-49 be sent back to La Coruña. Eventually Germany agreed to send a similar submarine to be interned in Spain in place of the UB-49.¹⁵⁰ Alfonso, apparently, seemed to have been particularly upset about the German U-boat commander breaking his word of honour. After the incident he mentioned being unable to wear the German admiral's uniform again.¹⁵¹

Alfonso was also displeased about the behaviour of his military attaché at Berlin, Major Valdivia, who he accused of behaving more like a German agent than a Spanish military attaché when the latter defended the German position. This also sparked the concern of the OHL and Ludendorff reported to Great Headquarters that it would be regrettable if Valdivia, whose relationship with Alfonso had been used to the advantage of Germany, would fall out of favour with the king.¹⁵² The Spanish monarch further voiced concern over the reliability of the Marquis of Villalobar. According to the King, news of the 'Berlin missions' of the Spanish representative in Belgium reached Paris and London before Madrid. Alfonso also alleged that information from Berlin relayed to him by Villalobar was incomplete.¹⁵³ The King's changing attitude towards some of Germany's most valuable Spanish collaborators must have been a cause of concern for Berlin.

Despite his efforts on behalf of Allied POWs, the Spanish monarch was not favoured by Britain to lead a peace conference.¹⁵⁴ While not entertaining all of Alfonso's ambitions, British diplomats still needed to maintain good relations with the king. Spanish-British relations during the war, however, were marked by mistrust. As

¹⁵⁰Rüchardt, *Deutsch-Spanische Beziehungen*, p. 212.

¹⁵¹P.A., R12004, Spanien 61 – Die politischen Beziehungen zwischen Spanien und Deutschland Dez. 1917 – Jan. 1918, Ratibor to Auswärtige Amt, 7.1.1918.

¹⁵²Ibid., Great Headquarters, signed Lersner, 11.1.1918.

¹⁵³P.A., R11979, Spanien No. 58, Bd. 7, Die diplomatische Vertretung Spaniens im Auslande 1913–18, Ratibor to Auswärtige Amt, 16.1.1917.

¹⁵⁴Zeiseler, *Spanien im Kalkül der britischen Kriegspolitik*, pp 126–8.

Dirk Zeiseler assessed, a negative image of Spain persisted within British government circles and equally even amongst pro-Allied Spaniards historically grown prejudices against Great Britain prevailed.¹⁵⁵ Although not thought of as an equal partner by the British Empire,¹⁵⁶ Spain's potential value as an ally in the war was assessed positively by the Foreign Office.

Spain joining the Entente would have enabled the Spanish government to take measures against trading with the enemy, therefore opening up Spanish markets to British and allied trade. The disappearance of German businesses in Spain would have been profitable for Britain. Another advantage to the Foreign Office was the positive effect that Spain's belligerence might have had on Catholic opinion throughout Europe and America – although it was doubtful whether that would have been of any practical value. Possible demands for colonies, in particular Tangier, Gibraltar and a free hand in Portugal, were seen as a considerable disadvantage of Spain joining the Allies. The Foreign Office assessed 'Spain is quite incapable of developing Tangier efficiently'¹⁵⁷ and although a cession of Gibraltar would have been beneficial to British-Spanish relations, it was a highly unpopular issue in Britain. Allowing Spain a free hand in Portugal would have been a gross breach of faith to Britain's oldest ally. Therefore, the Foreign Office considered a neutral Spain as most advantageous to Britain and was confident that if the Allies won the war, Spain's material interests would forge lasting ties between both countries.¹⁵⁸

To counter German influence in Spain and curb Germanophile tendencies, the British government exercised economic pressure, threatening Madrid at times with coal

¹⁵⁵Ibid., p. 255. Also see NA, CAB/24/24 21.8.1917, Image ref. 0013, Cabinet Papers, Intelligence Bureau, Department of Information 1917, Weekly report on Spain IX. Spain described as a very backward and uneducated country with a population totally ignorant of politics.

¹⁵⁶Zeiseler, *Spanien im Kalkül der britischen Kriegspolitik*, p. 255.

¹⁵⁷N.A., CAB/24/7, Image ref. 0098, Cabinet Papers, War Cabinet, Foreign Office memorandum, undated.

¹⁵⁸Ibid.

embargos.¹⁵⁹ This method was also employed in relations with other neutrals such as the Netherlands and Sweden.¹⁶⁰ The Spanish government, on the other hand, used Britain's dependency on iron ore as a lever in negotiations. By early 1917 it declared that any ships coming from Britain were only allowed to transport iron ore if their load already consisted of one third of coal. Equally, any ships leaving Spanish iron ore ports had to reserve at least 33% of their loading space for Andalusian oranges.¹⁶¹ To formalise trade arrangements between both countries and to secure Spain's coal supply, the Cortina agreement was signed on 19 April 1917. The British agreement was followed by contracts with the United States and France. In March 1918 the US government consented to cotton and oil exports in return for Spanish fruits and ore. The same month the Spanish-French agreement outlined unlimited exports of copper, zinc, lead, ore and wool to France, while the French government promised to import Spanish citrus fruits and wine and also permitted the transit of some goods from Germany and Switzerland.¹⁶² This undoubtedly brought Spain closer to the Allied camp, although with the country still maintaining its neutrality.

Although aware of the Allies' economic dominance in Spain, Germany also assessed Spain's potential as a partner and sought opportunities to forge closer ties between the two countries. When at the beginning of 1915 revolts broke out in Spanish Morocco, ambassador Ratibor, acting on behalf of the *Auswärtige Amt*, tried to negotiate a peace between local chiefs and the Spanish colonial authorities. Berlin also offered to give Spain a free hand in Tangier as well as granting them Portugal and Gibraltar.¹⁶³ In return, Germany expected an equal share in economic profits gained in Tangier and stipulated that only German companies be employed in the extension of the

¹⁵⁹Zeiseler, *Spanien im Kalkül der britischen Kriegspolitik*, p. 258.

¹⁶⁰Eric W. Osborne, *Britain's economic blockade of Germany, 1914–1919* (London, 2004), p. 138.

¹⁶¹Zeiseler, *Spanien im Kalkül der britischen Kriegspolitik*, p. 258.

¹⁶²Gelos de Vaz Ferreira, *Die Neutralitätspolitik Spaniens während des Ersten Weltkrieges*, p. 95.

¹⁶³P.A., R11998, Spanien 61 – Die politischen Beziehungen zwischen Spanien und Deutschland 1911–16, Ratibor to *Auswärtige Amt* 3.4.1915.

port.¹⁶⁴ Naturally, German territorial offers to Spain were far more generous than those of the Allies since Germany was negotiating with land it did not yet possess. Spain, though very aware of the theoretical nature of German offers, was still lured by the prospect of expanding its colonial empire and German military documents hint at a collaboration between both countries in Morocco during the war.¹⁶⁵

Spain's rich mineral reserves, mainly taken advantage of by the British throughout the war, also made her an appealing ally to Germany. German mining companies hired engineers to acquire additional depots to existing German mines in Spain. They also sought to disrupt ore deliveries to Britain and France and boycott any business undertaken by the Entente in Spain.¹⁶⁶ Through official diplomatic channels the *Auswärtige Amt* attempted to find ways of stopping trade between the Allies and Spain by appealing to the Spanish government to enforce strict neutrality and not aid the war effort of one of the belligerents.¹⁶⁷ Spanish-German trade during the war, however, remained limited and was greatly hindered by Allied blockades. Another, far greater, obstacle impacting on Spanish-German relations was the German U-boat campaign.

The effects of unrestricted submarine warfare on Spanish-German relations

The use of unrestricted submarine warfare in general became a contested issue between the *Auswärtige Amt*, the navy and the army command. The Kaiser as well as Chancellor Bethmann Hollweg feared it would severely damage diplomatic relations with neutral states.¹⁶⁸ Their fears were confirmed when, after the policy was first

¹⁶⁴Ibid.

¹⁶⁵P.A., R12013, Spanien 61 secr. – Die Beziehungen zwischen Spanien und Deutschland 1916, Kalle to Auswärtige Amt 17.9.1916.

¹⁶⁶B.A.M., RM5/1751, Admiralstab der Marine, F.T. – Verkehr mit Spanien Bd. 1 1915–17, Erzstudien Gesellschaft Dortmund to Kriegszentrale des Admiralstabes 17.1.1917. Also see chapter five.

¹⁶⁷P.A., R12004, Spanien 61 – Die politischen Beziehungen zwischen Spanien und Deutschland Dez. 1917 – Jan. 1918, Welczek to Windel, 15.1.1918.

¹⁶⁸Matthew Stibbe, *Germany, 1914–1933: politics, society and culture* (Harlow, 2010), pp 21–2.

introduced in early 1915, the most important neutral, the United States, protested vehemently, leading to the suspension of the blockade in September 1915.¹⁶⁹ Although a defection of the United States into the Allied camp was temporarily avoided, military demands would eventually outweigh diplomacy. Encouraged by the outcome of the Battle of Jutland in May 1916, the navy successfully argued their case for a reinstatement of unrestricted submarine warfare. With the losses endured by the German army in the great battles of attrition of 1916, the u-boat was now generally viewed as the decisive secret weapon in the European conflict.¹⁷⁰

Faced with large scale suffering of the German civilian population and a general weariness towards the war, Chancellor Bethmann Hollweg started his peace initiative at the end of 1916. His note to the American government in September 1916 to negotiate peace, however, was left unanswered. As could be seen during the U-35 incident [see above], Germany also used its diplomatic relations with neutral Spain in the hope that the Spanish government might be able to mediate terms of peace favourable to the German position. This, however, was to no avail. Though the German chancellor announced his peace offer in December 1916, before Woodrow Wilson's peace initiative, it was rejected by Allied governments. The Entente Powers would not submit to any peace negotiations with anyone whom they saw as the aggressor in the conflict.¹⁷¹

With his peace initiative a failure, Bethmann was now unable to halt the submarine offensive. Despite his insistence that it was his decision to initiate the campaign, he had to concede that the opinion of field marshal Hindenburg held a greater weight in the matter. The Reichstag declared that the chancellor's decision regarding the policy of unrestricted submarine warfare had to be informed by the assessment of the

¹⁶⁹Roger Chickering, *Imperial Germany and the Great War, 1914–1918* (Cambridge, 2004), p. 90.

¹⁷⁰*Ibid.*, pp 90–1.

¹⁷¹Robert Asprey, *The German High Command at war. Hindenburg and Ludendorff and the First World War* (London, 1994), pp 287-9.

supreme command and would have the full support of the Reichstag. This further highlights how political decisions were left to the military while the government had to submit to the demands of Hindenburg and Ludendorff in their desire to fight a total war.¹⁷² The U-boat offensive recommenced in spring 1916, being quickly followed by another suspension which was finally lifted in February 1917. Bethmann had to concede that 'if the military authorities consider the U-boat war essential, I am not in a position to contradict them.'¹⁷³

German military tactics not only led to the entry of the United States into the war but also seriously impacted on Spain. While in the first two years of the war only eight Spanish ships had been sunk, the number rose to 31 by April 1917.¹⁷⁴ Although the Spanish note following the sinking of the *Giralda* at the beginning of 1918 was less harsh than expected, it was made clear that repeated incidents would not be tolerated and force even germanophile ministers to demand more decisive actions from their government.¹⁷⁵ The *Auswärtige Amt* agreed to issue transport permissions to Spanish vessels carrying vital goods for Spain, while German submarines were ordered to honour strictly Spanish territorial waters and compensation would be paid for unjustly sinkings.¹⁷⁶ Ships navigating in the restricted zone or transporting contraband to the enemy, however, would not be spared. More importantly, the *Auswärtige Amt* left it to the navy to decide to what extent Spain could be accommodated.¹⁷⁷ General Ludendorff vetoed any concessions being made to Spain, arguing they would complicate the execution of U-boat warfare and encourage other neutrals to make unrealistic demands.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷²Ibid., pp 290-1.

¹⁷³Ibid., p. 293, quoting from Bethmann Hollweg's *Reflections*.

¹⁷⁴Romero Salvadó, *Spain 1914 – 1918*, p. 72.

¹⁷⁵P.A., R12005, Spanien 61 – Die politischen Beziehungen zwischen Spanien und Deutschland Februar – April 1918, Ratibor to Äuswärtige Amt 8.2.1918.

¹⁷⁶B.A.M., RM5/3152, Admiralstab der Marine, Spanien Bd. 2 1918, Note Berlin 14.8.1918.

¹⁷⁷Ibid.

¹⁷⁸Rüchardt, *Deutsch–Spanische Beziehungen*, pp 216–7.

On the ground, German diplomats continued their campaign to uphold Spanish neutrality, successfully rallying anti-interventionist opinion. The Spanish government, however, became increasingly exasperated by Germany's lack of response to their complaints regarding the sinking of Spanish vessels, a condition Maura called unacceptable.¹⁷⁹ By August 1918 Spain's favourable position towards Germany was waning¹⁸⁰ and the Spanish government issued an ultimatum threatening to seize German ships lying in Spanish ports as compensation for sunk Spanish tonnage.¹⁸¹ Germany agreed to pay reparations for Spanish vessels sunk. The same concessions were made to Holland, while Norway also made similar demands.¹⁸²

Despite their relentless propaganda and constant wooing of Spanish politicians, German diplomats could not halt the damaging effect unrestricted submarine warfare had on Spanish-German relations. By August 1918 Germany had received over forty official complaints from the Spanish government lamenting the loss of their ships.¹⁸³ Steamers like the *San Fulgencio* for example, carrying coal from England,¹⁸⁴ had been a frequent casualty of German naval warfare tactics, proving that the vague guidelines protecting neutrals rights were even less effective when it came to the war at sea. As was seen in Chapter 1, Count Romanones was prepared to take further measures after the sinking of the *San Fulgencio* in April 1917. However, under pressure from the king and his own party, Romanones was forced to resign as prime minister and Spanish neutrality was maintained.

Keeping up trade during wartime was vital for Spain which was, as outlined above, particularly reliant on English coal deliveries. It was therefore not surprising that

¹⁷⁹B.A.M., RM5/3152, Admiralstab der Marine, Spanien Bd. 2 1918, Kalle to OHL 20.8.1918.

¹⁸⁰Ibid., Telegram Admiralstab der Marine 23.8.1918.

¹⁸¹Romero Salvadó, *Spain 1914 – 1918*, p. 171.

¹⁸²B.A.M., RM5/3152, Admiralstab der Marine, Spanien Bd. 2 1918, Chef Admiralstab der Marine Berlin 16.9.1918.

¹⁸³Ibid., Kalle to OHL 20.8.1918.

¹⁸⁴P.A., R11937, Spanien 55 Nr. 1 – Das spanische Königshaus 1913–17, Ratibor to Äuswärtige Amt 11.4.1917.

the Spanish king, whose main interest was the protection of the Spanish people, voiced his concern over the German U-boat campaign.¹⁸⁵ Joaquín Sánchez de Toca, a Conservative who had been speaker of the upper house and minister several times, while approving of unrestricted submarine warfare as a legitimate weapon against belligerents, called German attacks on the Spanish merchant navy attacks on Spain's sovereignty which could not be tolerated.¹⁸⁶ Alfonso was also irritated by Berlin's delay in responding to complaints regarding the sinking of Spanish ships.¹⁸⁷ He relayed to Kalle that he was under the impression that the German government was deliberately holding up investigations into attacks on neutral vessels and demanded immediate concessions such as the safe return for Spanish steamers in English ports, guaranteeing Spanish trade with North and South America, continued trade between Great Britain and Spain excluding contraband and war material and an assurance that Spanish ships would not be attacked. If those demands would not be met, Alfonso was unsure of how long he would be able to resist pressure from the Entente and continue to uphold neutrality.¹⁸⁸

The Foreign Office also observed a change in attitude amongst Spanish military circles which had been hitherto friendly towards the war effort of Germany and the Central Powers. Ambassador Hardinge passed on to his superiors an article from *El Ejército Español* from January 1917 which severely criticised the German U-boat campaign as well as the attacks in the Spanish press against Count Romanones. The article took particular offence in German interference in Spanish domestic affairs and clearly outlined the devastating effects unrestricted submarine warfare was having on the Spanish economy. While not turning against the German nation as such, it was made clear that the tactics employed in the German war effort could not be accepted by Spain:

¹⁸⁵Ibid.

¹⁸⁶N.A., FO371/3033, Foreign Office, Spain & Portugal (War) 1917, Hardinge to Balfour 11.1.1917.

¹⁸⁷P.A., R12016, Spanien 61 secr. – Die Beziehungen zwischen Spanien und Deutschland 1917, Kalle to Äuswärtige Amt 16.4.1917.

¹⁸⁸Ibid. Also see B.A.M., RM5/2772, Admiralstab der Marine, Spanien 1918–19, Report Kalle to OHL 12.2.1918.

‘We like the Germany of method, of organisation, of order, we like heroic Germany which has handed over her entire youth for her aggrandisement, we like the disciplined patriotic Germany which undergoes every kind of privation and want for her national ideal, we like the Germany of science, of industry and of world-civilisation; but we cannot applaud, justify or in any manner excuse the torpedoing of Spanish ships, nor pretend that in order to please her we will close our frontiers to die of hunger.’¹⁸⁹

In their tactics the German admiralty tried to consider Spain’s economic and political interests since the country constituted to them the most important of all neutrals, now that the United States had entered the war.¹⁹⁰ The *Auswärtige Amt* was still faced with a dilemma. The policy of unrestricted submarine warfare, a crucial if not the most important part of the German campaign, made it impossible to protect Spanish vessels, which in turn pushed Spain further into the Allied camp. Aware of this predicament, Kalle urged the German military command to protect shipments between Spain and North and South America and assure the Spanish government that everything would be done to guarantee the safety of their ships.¹⁹¹ Otherwise, he feared, a complete rupture in relations with Spain would be the inevitable result.¹⁹²

As the war dragged on and a German victory was becoming increasingly less likely, anti-German propaganda in Spain began to feature more prominently.¹⁹³ Ratibor tried to fend off attacks against the Kaiser and the army by complaining to the Spanish government and demanding action to be taken.¹⁹⁴ However, those were not the only attacks the ambassador had to deal with as voices of concern over Ratibor’s methods were growing louder in the *Auswärtige Amt*. Following complaints from the Spanish government about the embassy’s interference in internal affairs, Ratibor’s attitude and

¹⁸⁹N.A., FO371/3030, Foreign Office, Spain & Portugal (War) 1917, Hardinge to Balfour, 24.1.1917.

¹⁹⁰B.A.M., RM5/906, Bericht des Militärattachés in Madrid betr. Audienz beim König von Spanien (U-Bootkrieg), Head of Admiralty, October 1917.

¹⁹¹B.A.M., RM5/3152, Admiralstab der Marine, Spanien Bd. 2 1918, Kalle to Chef des Generalstabes des Feldheeres 23.8.1918.

¹⁹²B.A.M., RM5/2772, Admiralstab der Marine, Spanien 1918–19, Kalle to OHL 24.2.1918.

¹⁹³P.A., R12000, Spanien 61 – Die politischen Beziehungen zwischen Spanien und Deutschland August – November 1916, Ratibor to Äuswärtige Amt 2.8.1916.

¹⁹⁴Ibid., Ratibor to Äuswärtige Amt 6.8.1916.

that of some of his staff was described as unbearable and intolerable.¹⁹⁵ Major Valdivia stated that the ambassador had pursued a position of ‘whoever is not for me, is against me’ from the outset of the war and made a grave mistake by cooperating with the Carlists. He also criticised the German press propaganda campaign for being unsubtle and overtly pro-German¹⁹⁶ and claimed nothing had been done to win over neutral Spaniards.¹⁹⁷

Ratibor’s position was further compromised when in a series of articles *El Sol* disclosed the dealings of the German embassy with an Anarchist called Manuel Pascual, who allegedly was paid to carry out anti-interventionist propaganda. The allegations went so far as to connect the German embassy with plans to assassinate Count Romanones.¹⁹⁸ As proof *El Sol* printed a letter from the German embassy addressed to Pascual ordering him to print a flyer. Ratibor denied those accusations and argued the campaign was instigated by French intelligence services.¹⁹⁹

Although the Spanish government, on demand of the German embassy, seized some of the publications reporting on the scandal, the news caused a sensation and posed a serious threat to Ratibor’s position in Spain. According to British reports, *El Sol* had received help from the secret service department of the French embassy, which had uncovered the German plots.²⁰⁰ French intelligence had secured Pascual for their services and subsequently mounted an attack against the personnel of the German embassy. British ambassador Hardinge remarked that a skilful blow had been dealt at

¹⁹⁵P.A., R12001, Spanien 61 – Die politischen Beziehungen zwischen Spanien und Deutschland Dezember 1916 – Juni 1917, signed Zimmermann Berlin 16.1.1917.

¹⁹⁶Ibid., Report Welzeck about meeting with Spanish military attaché Ruiz de Valdivia 19.4.1917.

¹⁹⁷P.A., R123014, Pressepropaganda und allgemeine Angelegenheiten Spanien 1917–34, Report Spanish military attaché Ruiz de Valdivia February 1918, signed Welzeck.

¹⁹⁸*El Sol*, 7 Mar. 1918.

¹⁹⁹P.A., R12005, Spanien 61 – Die politischen Beziehungen zwischen Spanien und Deutschland Februar – April 1918, Ratibor to Äuswärtige Amt 27.2.1918.

²⁰⁰N.A., FO371/3373, Foreign Office, Spain & Portugal (War) 1918, Spain, Military, Decypher Hardinge, 6.3.1918.

the 'Prussian Hydra'.²⁰¹ In other words, Ratibor was not entirely wrong in his assumption the campaign had been part of Allied propaganda against Germany.

The German ambassador, however, had to admit that Pascual had made contact with the embassy in October 1916 and was used on two or three occasions for propaganda purposes. What Ratibor described as propaganda purposes, *El Sol* alleged to have been the stirring up of revolutionary strikes and connected the activities of the German embassy with unrest in the summer of 1917.²⁰² Ratibor maintained the embassy immediately cut off any contact with Pascual when it transpired that he was a radical anarchist suggesting the assassination of Romanones and destruction of newspaper offices. After the end of this collaboration, Pascual started a press campaign against the embassy with what Ratibor called invented stories.²⁰³ In a meeting with embassy secretary von Stohrer, Count Romanones assured the German diplomat that he did not give any weight to the accusations and saw them merely as a passionate outburst by Germany's enemies.²⁰⁴ Ratibor, on the other hand, was convinced the Count was behind the campaign.²⁰⁵ Through Villalobar in Belgium complaints were made protesting against the attacks on the ambassador and German embassy staff. Villalobar also pointed out that Ratibor had brought this on himself by relentlessly campaigning against Romanones.²⁰⁶ The documents do not reveal whether there was an actual German plot to kill Count Romanones but undoubtedly everything was done by German diplomats to remove him from office. Romanones himself felt he was the only one in Spain opposing Germany and that therefore, the Germans wanted his political death if not even his

²⁰¹NA, FO371/3373, Foreign Office, Spain & Portugal (War) 1918, Hardinge to Balfour, 5.3.1918.

²⁰²Ibid.

²⁰³P.A., R12005, Spanien 61 – Die politischen Beziehungen zwischen Spanien und Deutschland Februar – April 1918, Ratibor to Äuswärtige Amt 6.3.1918.

²⁰⁴Ibid., Ratibor to Äuswärtige Amt 15.3.1918. Also see P.A., R11951, Spanische Staatsmänner 1917–19, Report Welzceck Berlin 20.3.1918.

²⁰⁵P.A., R12005, Spanien 61 – Die politischen Beziehungen zwischen Spanien und Deutschland Februar – April 1918, Ratibor to Äuswärtige Amt 15.3.1918. Also see P.A., R11951, Spanische Staatsmänner 1917–19, Ratibor to Äuswärtige Amt 5.6.1918.

²⁰⁶P.A., R12005, Spanien 61 – Die politischen Beziehungen zwischen Spanien und Deutschland Februar – April 1918, Lancken to Äuswärtige Amt 1.3.1918.

personal one as well.²⁰⁷ Beside damaging the reputation of the German embassy and compromising the position of the German diplomatic corps in Spain, the Pascual case was not further pursued by the Spanish authorities.²⁰⁸

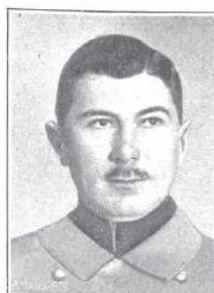
²⁰⁷Romanones, *Notas de una vida*, p. 394.

²⁰⁸Romero Salvadó, *Spain 1914 – 1918*, p. 168.

UNA INFORMACIÓN SENSACIONAL



EL PRINCIPE DE RATIBOR
Embajador de Alemania



VON STÖHRER
Primer secretario de la Embajada
alemana



D. FRANCISCO GRIMM
Segundo secretario de la Embajada
alemana



MANUEL PASCUAL
Autor de las acusaciones contenidas en la información de "El Sol"



D. MANUEL AZNAR
Redactor de "El Sol", que ha llevado a cabo la información

UNA carta publicada en nuestro colega *El Sol* y una serie de noticias y comentarios que acompañaba a su información, prestan notoria actualidad a las personas cuyos retratos aparecen en la presente página. Ni el delicadísimo asunto que *El Sol* ha planteado desde sus briosas columnas, ni lo muy conocidas que son las figuras que en aquél intervienen, excusan a esta Revista de cumplir con el público el deber de la información gráfica que aquí aparece. Tampoco, y por los propios deberes, puede prescindir de publicar, al lado de personalidades de tan relevantes méritos y prestigio en la diplomacia y en el periodismo, la figura del anarquista Miguel Pascual, que ha dado lugar a la información de *El Sol* a que aludimos y que ha valido a este colega el bautismo de sangre de las denuncias del fiscal, y motivó, de paso, otras denuncias contra varios periódicos que se hicieron eco de lo publicado, entre ellos *El Parlamentario* y *La Epoca*.



VON KALLE
Agregado militar de la Embajada alemana

Mundo Gráfico, 13 Mar. 1918. Reporting on the 'Sensational News' as revealed in *El Sol*. The main protagonists in the affair are introduced.

Undeterred by this, the ambassador continued his attempts to counter allied propaganda by complaining to the Spanish government about Entente activity and asking for the neutrality law to be effected.²⁰⁹ In his correspondence with the Spanish government, Ratibor brought their attention to planned anti-German public protests²¹⁰ or newspaper articles which supposedly agitated against Germany, arguing that these incidents posed a threat to Spanish neutrality.²¹¹ The Spanish authorities assured Ratibor that everything would be done to ensure public order²¹² and explained that the publication of anti-German articles was a regrettable mistake.²¹³ Kalle viewed the increased press attacks on the German embassy as an attempt by the Allies to force the recall of Ratibor and severely hinder German diplomatic activity on the peninsula.²¹⁴ He also expressed concern over the lack of activity on part of the Spanish government which allowed the anti-German campaign to continue.²¹⁵ In light of Allied successes on the Western front, pro-German sentiment in Spain had subsided considerably by August 1918 and Francophile politicians like Romanones were gaining the upper hand²¹⁶ while the Germanófilos became less vocal in their opposition.²¹⁷

Following the First World War, in December 1918, Count Romanones was back in power as prime minister after the collapse of the Maura government. On 14 November 1918 ambassador Ratibor was informed by the Ministry of State that with the abdication of the Kaiser and subsequent political changes in Germany the Spanish government considered Ratibor's mission to be finished since the regime he had

²⁰⁹A.M.A.E., H1347, Alemania Notas verbales 1917–30. Ratibor complaining about anti-German propaganda in the Spanish press instigated by the Allies, asking for Spanish law to maintain neutrality to be effected, Spanish authorities responsive to Ratibor's demands, letters dated between August – November of 1918. Also see chapter two.

²¹⁰Ibid., Dato to Ratibor 12.9.1918.; Ratibor to García-Prieto 2.11.1918.

²¹¹Ibid., Dato to ministry of government 30.9.1918.

²¹²Ibid., Dato to ministry of government 12.9.1918.

²¹³Ibid., Dato to ministry of government 30.9.1918.

²¹⁴B.A.M., RM5/2772, Admiralstab der Marine, Spanien 1918–19, Kalle to Generalstab 30.1.1918.

²¹⁵Ibid., Kalle to Generalstab 18.2.1918.

²¹⁶B.A.M., RM5/3152, Admiralstab der Marine, Spanien Bd. 2 1918, Telegram Kalle 16.8.1918.

²¹⁷Ibid., Telegram Kalle 17.8.1918.

represented no longer existed.²¹⁸ In the press the disgraced German diplomatic corps was now referred to as ‘undesirables’ and due to their intrigues and interferences in Spanish politics Ratibor and his men were deemed *personae non gratae*.²¹⁹

Despite his work in aid of POWs as head of a central bureau for prisoners, the Spanish government became dissatisfied with Polo de Bernabé’s services towards the end of the war. In a telegram to Madrid, seemingly intercepted by the Germans, Polo reported of a campaign waged against him. He also pointed out that a similar campaign had been staged the previous summer, accusing the Spanish ambassador of refusing to pass on official notes to the German government, accusations which Polo denied.²²⁰ It is possible that Polo’s behaviour towards the German administration seemed too friendly for some. In July 1917, for example, he held a reception at the Spanish embassy for a German captain and captain lieutenant who returned the flag of a Spanish steamer that had been sunk off the coast of England. After the official reception Polo invited both captains for breakfast and assured them of his pro-German leanings.²²¹ In view of the detrimental effect unrestricted submarine warfare was having on Spain, this could have been viewed as unfitting behaviour for the representative of a neutral nation. Some papers wrote that Polo had caused Spain enormous damage by refusing to pass on complaints about the sinking of Spanish ships.²²² In August 1918 the Dato government accepted Polo’s resignation. The prime minister pointed out that he and his cabinet believed Polo had misunderstood the meaning of official government notes and therefore had failed in supporting the government adequately.²²³ Polo insisted he had done nothing wrong and felt hurt by the accusations against him and the way his

²¹⁸A.M.A.E., H2291, Política exterior Alemania 1917–19, undated note Ministry of State.

²¹⁹Ibid., Extract from *The New York Herald*, 9.12.1918.

²²⁰P.A., R20655, Funksprüche Spanien 1917, telegram Berlin to Madrid, subsecretario, 23.4.17.

²²¹B.A.M., RM5/906, Bericht des Militärattachés in Madrid betr. Audienz beim König von Spanien (U-Bootkrieg), Head of Admiralty, 3.7.1917.

²²²A.M.A.E., H2291 Política exterior Alemania 1917–19, El Figaro [?], 5.12.1918.

²²³P.A., R20659, Funksprüche Spanien 1918, San Sebastian to Berlin, Dato to Polo, 23.8.1918.

government handled his dismissal after having served over forty years in the Spanish diplomatic corps.²²⁴

In December 1918 Ratibor and the entire embassy staff received a request from Romanones to leave Spain. At the same time the Spanish prime minister expressed the wish to maintain good relations with Germany.²²⁵ On 22 December 1918 the business of the German embassy at Madrid was transferred to Count Bassewitz.²²⁶ While Romanones must have been revelling in the fact that he was finally able to send his adversary home, he did not use Ratibor's departure as an opportunity for a personal vendetta and remained civil in his correspondence with him. In a letter dated 27 December 1918 he confirmed to Ratibor that his daughters as well as his wife could stay in Spain as long as they wished without fearing expulsion by the Spanish government.²²⁷ The ambassador himself was asked to leave Spain until 17 January 1919 while his staff had to leave by 29 December 1918. On their departure the German diplomats were only allowed limited luggage and they were also not permitted to take documents of any kind with them.²²⁸ Ratibor, though, did not relent; stubborn as ever, he left Spain saying he had saved Spanish neutrality by fighting Allied influence and had managed to temporarily remove Spain's most important statesman from power. Romanones, he argued, owed his return to power only to a victory of the Entente and not his own doing.²²⁹ In an interview with a Swiss newspaper Ratibor said he was sad at having to leave Spain but felt no bitterness. He felt he had done everything possible to keep up warm relations between Germany and Spain even throughout the war. The fact that several hundred people gathered at his departure from Spain was proof for Ratibor that he had succeeded in his mission. He strenuously denied any accusations made in

²²⁴P.A., R20651, Funksprüche Spanien 1918, radio note Berlin to Madrid, 29.8.1918.

²²⁵P.A., R11951, Spanische Staatsmänner 1917–19, Ratibor to Äuswärtige Amt 14.12.1918; Bassewitz to Äuswärtige Amt 31.12.1918.

²²⁶P.A., Botschaft Madrid, Karton 362, Official transfer of business German embassy Madrid, 22.12.1918.

²²⁷A.M.A.E., H2291, Política exterior Alemania 1917–19, Romanones to Ratibor 27.12.1918.

²²⁸P.A., Botschaft Madrid, Karton 364, v. Stohrer to Direktor [unclear who is addressed] 24.12.1918.

²²⁹P.A., R11951, Spanische Staatsmänner 1917–19, Ratibor to Äuswärtige Amt 14.12.1918.

the Allied press against him regarding inciting strikes and causing revolutionary upheaval. Ratibor also declined to comment on the reasons for his dismissal.²³⁰

Conclusion

Spain during the First World War constituted a great paradox. The support for liberal and democratic ideas propagated by Britain and France was championed by revolutionary factions within Spain whose actions severely hampered vital trade with the Allies. Therefore, it was more beneficial for the Entente's war effort to ensure the maintenance of a conservative Spanish government which would suppress those revolutionary elements. However, the Allies also needed to ensure that the pro-German parts of Spanish society did not gain the upper hand but failed to offer sufficient concessions which would have enabled Spain to break off relations with Germany. Germany, on the other hand, supported left-wing workers organisations, Republicans and Anarchists in the hope of causing great instability in Spanish domestic affairs, which in turn would negatively impact on trade with the Allies. Interference in Spain's politics was pursued by German diplomats only with the short-term war effort in mind and without considering the long-term consequences this would have on an already highly fractious country.

Since the intrigues of the embassy throughout the war were often only thinly disguised, many Spaniards were relieved to see the German diplomats finally expelled from Spain. The liberal paper *España* showed their delight by delivering a clear message to ambassador Ratibor – ‘el coloso germanico’ – ‘Auf Nimmerwiedersehen! Hasta nunca!’²³¹ (May we never see you again.). *El Sol* called the embassy's meddling

²³⁰A.M.A.E, H2291 Politica exterior Alemania 1917–19, Extract from Nueva Gaceta de Zurich, 17.1.1919.

²³¹*España*, 14 Nov. 1918.

in Spanish affairs intolerable and saw Romanones' actions to dismiss the German diplomatic corps as justified.²³² With the fall of Ratibor it was hoped that the Spanish politicians, journalists and newspaper editors who had supported him and benefited from their links with the German and the Austrian embassy would also be exposed.²³³ According to *El Parlamentario*, the war had only highlighted the divisions within Spanish society and the existence of Spanish germanophilism confirmed the image of Spain as a country of paradoxes and absurdisms.²³⁴ At the end of the First World War the activities of the German embassy at Madrid were further exposed, revealing a network of espionage and support for anti-dynastic agitation.²³⁵ In their attempts to promote their friends into power and dispose of their enemies, Ratibor and his men employed methods which not only breached Spanish neutrality but also caused further disintegration in Spanish domestic affairs by supporting groups within Spanish society that were opposed to each other. While Ratibor and his diplomats had to maintain an at least outward appearance of keeping up with their diplomatic duties, it was left to the German military and naval attachés to galvanise destructive forces that would threaten Spain's stability.

²³² AMAE, H2291 Política exterior Alemania 1917–19, *El Sol* article from 18.12.1918.

²³³ *España*, 14 Nov. 1918.

²³⁴ AMAE, H2291 Política exterior Alemania 1917–19, *El Parlamentario* article from 27.11.1918.

²³⁵ *The New York Times*, 9 Dec. 1918.

Chapter 5

German military intelligence and espionage activity in Spain

Maintaining Spain's neutrality and curbing Allied influence was not the main concern for German diplomats and propagandists only; it was also the principal preoccupation of the German military personnel stationed in the country. Military attaché Arnold Kalle and naval attaché Hans von Krohn had the task of supporting German military strategy in the Mediterranean by watching ship movements and devising ways to refuel and restock submarines safely. As a neutral country, Spain also offered an ideal outpost for espionage. The attachés were entrusted with the unofficial task of building up a network which would enable them to observe enemy activity closely. Kalle and Krohn's services were also required to counter and prevent Allied activity on the Iberian Peninsula. Due to the restrictions imposed by the Allied blockade, Spain's main trading partners during the war were France and Britain. German covert activities attempted to hinder that trade greatly in order to undermine the Allied war effort. In doing so, the commercial interests of Spanish firms and individuals who were profiting from trade with the Allies also suffered. To carry out their task effectively the attachés not only had to violate Spanish neutrality, an illegal activity frequently engaged in by both belligerent camps, they also galvanised opposing forces within Spain, accelerating a process of social upheaval which had begun at the end of the nineteenth century.

At the beginning of this chapter a brief examination of the service attachés' official role before the war is given in order to enable a better understanding of the conflict that arose between Germany's civilian leadership and the military High Command, as already outlined in the previous chapter, and also to highlight how the

role of military and naval attachés changed throughout the war. This is particularly important in view of service attachés deployed in a neutral country. As the example of Spain shows, the role of the attachés changed from an advisory position to that of an active agent of war willing to target civilians on neutral territory in order to further the German war effort. The secret work of the attachés in Spain had the potential to undermine severely official diplomatic relations between Germany and Spain and, if uncovered, could have led to a complete break down of the relationship between both countries.

Given the secretive nature of covert activity, not all German operations in Spain during the First World War were fully documented. In addition to that some files were destroyed immediately after the war in order to not expose German agents and other archival material did not survive the Second World War. However, for this investigation the German intelligence network in Spain during the First World War has been largely reconstructed thanks to extensive research in the German diplomatic and military archives. The work was further complemented by an examination of British Foreign Office correspondence as well as a survey of Spanish, British and American newspapers. Together with existing works, which point out individual German agents and some of their espionage activity in Spain during the war, this chapter will outline in detail how the German intelligence network was set up, how it operated and who were its main agents involved in covert activity.

The organisational chart and the map¹ provided in the chapter give a clear overview of the hierarchical structure of the German naval intelligence service in Spain. Individual German agents, as identified in the works of Spanish historians on the First World War,² can now be assigned a definite role in the network which also enables us to

¹See below, pp 208-9.

²Romero Salvadó, *Spain 1914 – 1918*, pp 166-9. See also M. D. Elizalde Pérez Grueso, ‘Los servicios de inteligencia británicos en España durante la Primera Guerra Mundial’ in *Revista de Historia Militar*, xlix

understand the lines of communication between the naval attaché and his various agents. As pointed out by biographers of Wilhelm Canaris, Hitler's head of military intelligence, Canaris was responsible for setting up an intelligence network in Spain during the First World War. However, none of these works outline this network in any great detail. In this chapter the reports produced by Canaris during the war are used to show the various subsections of the German intelligence service in Spain as well as the different information outposts set up by Canaris and his agents.

The activity of German agents was mainly aimed at damaging the Allied war effort by disrupting trade between the Allies and Spain and also by sabotaging and destroying Allied property. The chapter will outline the extent of this activity and also explain how German agents were able to exploit the growing dissatisfaction amongst Spanish workers to their own advantage. The discontent of the Spanish working class, which did not profit from Spain's wartime boom, an aspect of the impact of the First World War on Spain that will be briefly discussed in this chapter, allowed German agents to foment strikes and cause civil unrest which in turn hindered trade with the Entente. While only a short-term, opportunistic measure of Germany's wartime effort, agitation of oppositional movements would cause further instability in Spain.

A similarly destabilising effect could be observed with German activity in French Morocco which sought to oust French control in the region by supporting local tribes in their fight against colonial rule. This activity was largely organised by the German service attachés and their agents in Spain and will therefore be included in this part of the investigation. German activity in North Africa was sometimes carried out with the help of Spanish collaborators who hoped to extend their part of the colonial empire and minimise French influence in the area. However, encouraging Moroccan

(2005), pp 237–258. F. García Sanz, 'Información, espionaje y contraespionaje en España durante la Primera Guerra Mundial' in *Revista de Historia Militar*, xlix (2005), pp 147–178. E. González Calleja, 'Nidos de espías': los servicios de información franceses en España durante la Primera Guerra Mundial' in *Revista de Historia Militar*, xlix (2005), pp 179–226.

tribes to revolt against their colonisers was a dangerous tactic for Spain since it certainly did not benefit stability in Spanish Morocco and did nothing to strengthen Spanish rule.

Given Germany's heightened activity in Spain, the Entente also thought it necessary to organise a counter-espionage effort on the Iberian Peninsula. How British and French services operated and attempted to curb German operations will be outlined in this chapter. Towards the end of the war German covert activity was suffering some set-backs due to the exposure of a number of their Spanish collaborators in the Spanish press as well as revelations which seriously compromised naval attaché von Krohn. The chapter will conclude with a look at those scandals exposing German espionage activity in Spain, and also explain how the Spanish government attempted to combat this kind of activity by the belligerents at the very end of the First World War.

Similarly to the German propaganda effort, which in the aftermath of the German defeat was deemed a failure, the German information and intelligence service during the war was also seen as far inferior to that of the Allies.³ Referring to neutral territories, Walter Nicolai, head of German military intelligence during the First World War, even claimed that no German information services existed in those countries and all intelligence activity had to be carefully executed from Germany. Nicolai also noted that German residents in neutral countries could not be relied upon since, although they were willing to help, their activity was lacking sufficient guidance and was therefore in vain.⁴ As the previous chapters have demonstrated, and as will be further highlighted in this chapter, this assessment could not be further from the truth. German covert activity in Spain during the First World War was flourishing due to the efforts of German military personnel as well as German diplomats, private residents and Spanish collaborators. The military information service during the war, as Nicolai later recalled

³Walter Nicolai, *Geheime Mächte. Internationale Spionage und ihre Bekämpfung im Weltkrieg und heute* (Leipzig, 1923), p. 7. Nicolai referring to the words of Clausewitz here.

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 73.

it, was not merely a tool for strategic and tactical decisions but an instrument serving the entire war effort – warfare and politics became one. Military news services thereby worked hand in hand with their respective governments.⁵ On the level of diplomatic missions, this meant that the areas of responsibility of the ambassador and the service attachés often crossed which could have provided a source of conflict.⁶

The German secret service during the First World War was *Abteilung IIIb*, a department of the General staff of the army headed by the aforementioned Nicolai. The navy maintained a separate information service, *Nachrichtendienst N*, led by Captain Walter Isendahl. *Abteilung IIIb* gathered secret intelligence from neutral and enemy countries and carried out counter-intelligence operations. In addition the department was responsible for press and censorship matters. Officially, military and naval attachés were not entrusted with espionage activity but had a purely advisory function. Military attachés were established in the 1850s in order to keep the general staff updated on technical developments of foreign powers. In addition to them, naval attachés also became widely deployed at diplomatic posts during the latter part of the nineteenth century due to rising interest in naval matters.⁷

David Stevenson, in the recent *Cambridge History of the First World War*, notes that so far reports produced by military and naval attachés of the belligerent countries have been largely neglected by historians despite being a rich source of information.⁸ The official and public tasks of the attaché were often of a representative or ceremonial nature. Their role as ‘diplomat-soldiers’ also prohibited them from fighting at the front,

⁵Ibid., p. 70.

⁶Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck, *Die Weltkriegsspionage* (Basel, 1931), p. 104.

⁷David Stevenson, ‘Diplomats’, in Winter, Jay (ed.), *The Cambridge History of the First World War, Vol. II, The State* (Cambridge, 2014), pp 66-90.

⁸Ibid. [Matthew Seligmann, *Spies in uniform. British military and naval intelligence at the eve of the First World War* (Oxford, 2006) makes for a notable exception]

which could explain the oversight by historians.⁹ As advisors to the ambassador, the attachés were part of the diplomatic staff of an embassy and as such they answered to the ambassador and were officially required to send their reports through diplomatic channels via the embassy. However, they also maintained a direct link with the army command and admiralty from which they also took orders.¹⁰ This two-fold role, diplomat and officer, made communications difficult and could cause confusion in the chain of command.¹¹ As will become apparent in this chapter, with the growing strength of the German military, the role of the service attachés was to change greatly throughout the First World War.

The German intelligence network in Spain – Organisation, personnel and sabotage activity

While Major Arnold Kalle had been officially entrusted with the position of military attaché since April 1913, Lieutenant Commander Hans von Krohn was initially deployed to Madrid in September 1914 to oversee the activity of the secret navy information service in Spain and to ensure the supply of German war ships with goods and news regarding the enemy and its whereabouts.¹² Only in September 1916 did the Spanish government give its consent to the creation of the position of naval attaché at the German embassy, a position which Krohn took on. As Carolina García Sanz pointed out, the idea of a short war played a crucial part in the mobilisation effort, which would

⁹See Markus Pöhlmann, 'German intelligence at war, 1914 – 1918' in *Journal of Intelligence History*, v, no. 2 (2005), pp 25-54. He states that the attachés never seem to have reported anything of strategic importance.

¹⁰Seligmann, *Spies in uniform*, pp 30-1.

¹¹*Ibid.*, p. 38.

¹²Heinz Höhne, *Canaris: Patriot im Zwielicht* (München, 1976).

explain Krohn's delayed appointment. France, for example, decided initially not to send a naval attaché to Madrid.¹³

The division of responsibilities between the two German attachés was not always clear.¹⁴ Kalle's close friendship with King Alfonso XIII certainly gave him additional importance and therefore more room to manoeuvre. Despite the importance of naval warfare for Germany, Krohn was relegated to a secondary position and, as Heinz Höhne assessed, was not forceful enough to stand up to Kalle, who was seen as the head of German espionage activity in Spain.¹⁵ He frequently complained about Kalle failing to inform him about missions and poaching his agents without his consent.¹⁶ Krohn also criticised Kalle for discussing naval matters, such as the sinking of Spanish ships by German submarines, with the Spanish king.¹⁷

To not compromise Kalle's and Krohn's position as official members of the German diplomatic corps, it was necessary to employ additional support for organising German espionage and counter-espionage activity in Spain. Somebody was needed that worked completely in the background, coordinating the various activities carried out by Germany's agents. In October 1915 the head of the admiralty requested that Captain Lieutenant Wilhelm Canaris, then a u-boat commander, be put in charge of establishing an information service at the Swiss border for gathering news in Italy and France. There

¹³Carolina García Sanz, *La primera guerra mundial en el estrecho de Gibraltar: Economía, política y relaciones internacionales* (Madrid, 2011), p. 227.

¹⁴B.A.M., RM5/2409, Admiralstab der Marine, Schrift–pp. Verkehr mit Vertretern der Marine, ab Sept. 1916 dem Marineattaché, und anderen Personen in Madrid Bd. 2 Juni – Nov. 1915 [between May and August 1915 various correspondence on argument between Krohn and Kalle regarding Ratibor passing on information about secret naval activities to Kalle].

¹⁵Höhne, *Canaris*, p. 46.

¹⁶B.A.M., RM5/2410, Admiralstab der Marine, Schrift–pp. Verkehr mit Vertretern der Marine, ab Sept. 1916 dem Marineattaché, und anderen Personen in Madrid Bd. 3 Nov. 1915 – Jan. 1916, Krohn to P.H. [?] Madrid, 13.12.1915.

¹⁷B.A.M., RM5/2414, Admiralstab der Marine, Schrift–pp. Verkehr mit Vertretern der Marine, ab Sept. 1916 dem Marineattaché, und anderen Personen in Madrid Bd. 7 Okt. 1916 – März 1917, Admiralty, Code bureau via Auswärtige Amt from Madrid, 18.1.1917.

was also the possibility of gathering intelligence on the war in the Mediterranean via Spain and allowing agents to act on Spanish soil.¹⁸

With the outbreak of the First World War Canaris found himself serving as an officer on the SMS *Dresden* which, unable to return home due to the war, was trapped in the Amazon Delta. British cruisers quickly detected the presence of the German ship. The *Dresden*, in order to avoid being attacked by the enemy, tried to steer into neutral waters asking for the help of the Chilean government. Despite being interned in neutral waters, British cruisers attacked the German ship and argued the internment was a breach of neutrality on behalf of Chile.¹⁹ The *Dresden* was sunk, its crew was forced to surrender and subsequently interned on the island of Quiriquina situated north of Coronel Bay. While most of the crew stayed on the island for the duration of the war,²⁰ Canaris fled from Quiriquina on 5 August 1915. Notes filed by Admiralty staff in October 1915 give an idea what his escape entailed and how he managed to reach home. After leaving the island he travelled, disguised as a peasant, to Osorno in southern Chile. He then crossed the Andes on horseback in order to reach the city of Neuquen in the west of Argentina from where he travelled to Buenos Aires by train.²¹ His linguistic abilities – he spoke fluent English and Spanish²² – undoubtedly aided him greatly on his journey and were also of advantage for his future intelligence work. On his arrival in the Argentinian capital on 21 August 1915 he reported to the German attaché and then, with the help of a false Chilean passport, boarded a Dutch steamer with destination Amsterdam. Canaris finally arrived in Germany on 30 September 1915.²³

¹⁸B.A.M., RM2/1143, Einrichtung Nachrichtenstelle des Admiralstabs in Spanien, Note Head of Admiralty, Oct. 1915.

¹⁹Michael Mueller, *Canaris: the life and death of Hitler's spymaster* (London, 2007), pp 16–7.

²⁰*Ibid.*, pp 18–9.

²¹*Ibid.*, p. 20.

²²B.A.M., RM2/1143, Einrichtung Nachrichtenstelle des Admiralstabs in Spanien, Note Head of Admiralty, Oct. 1915.

²³Mueller, *Canaris*, p. 20.

Not long after he had returned home, Canaris was sent to Spain, where he spent ten months (January to October 1916)²⁴ building up an extensive intelligence network. Although the request to bring him to Spain was initially refused,²⁵ he eventually arrived in Madrid on 4 January 1916 together with Albert Hornemann, who was going to assist him. From then on their respective codenames were Carl and Horst.²⁶ Canaris's task was to establish a supply system for submarines operating in the western Mediterranean and improve the information service gathering details about ship movements.²⁷ By the end of the nineteenth century German naval intelligence had begun to set up a network of so called *Etappenstationen*. These were posts, run by German naval officers, which recruited foreign shipping agents, ship chandlers and coal suppliers in order to guarantee the availability of vital supplies for German war ships in the event of war. Information from pro-German agents was gathered and it was ensured communication links were kept open. Canaris had been part of organising such espionage posts in Brazil and Argentina in 1908.²⁸

With his previous intelligence experience and the skill and resilience he had displayed during his spectacular escape from Chile, Canaris appeared to be the ideal candidate for the job in Spain. The network which he organised together with Albert Hornemann was made up of an information service (*Ausfragedienst*), an agent service (*Agentendienst*) and a service for political news (*Politische Nachrichten*).²⁹ Canaris operated mainly from the home of von Krohn and frequently changed his address in Madrid to avoid being discovered. Since the British and French had already broken the

²⁴B.A.M., PERS6/105, Personalakte Wilhelm Canaris

²⁵B.A.M., RM2/1143, Einrichtung Nachrichtenstelle des Admiralstabs in Spanien, Note Head of Admiralty, Oct. 1915.

²⁶B.A.M., RM5/2410, Admiralstab der Marine, Schrift–pp. Verkehr mit Vertretern der Marine, ab Sept. 1916 dem Marineattaché, und anderen Personen in Madrid Bd. 3 Nov. 1915 – Jan. 1916, Telegram Admiralty from Madrid via Auswärtige Amt, 4.1.1916.

²⁷Höhne, *Canaris*, p. 46.

²⁸Mueller, *Canaris*, p. 10.

²⁹B.A.M., RM5/2413, Admiralstab der Marine, Schrift–pp. Verkehr mit Vertretern der Marine, ab Sept. 1916 dem Marineattaché, und anderen Personen in Madrid Bd. 6 Juli – Nov. 1916, Bericht des Kapitänleutnants Canaris über Gründung einer Nachrichtenzentrale in Spanien, 15.10.1916.

German codes, enemy agents were close on Canaris' heels.³⁰ However, official German correspondence reveals very little about Canaris and his name rarely features in the communication between the embassy at Madrid and headquarters in Berlin, unlike that of his collaborator Hornemann, who is frequently mentioned.

In order to gather news on ship movements, information services were established in all major Spanish ports and coastal towns. In other neutral countries, like the Netherlands for example, Germany established similar intelligence networks focussing on recruiting informants within the shipping and trade industries. Similarly to Spain, Dutch ports became important centres for German covert activity.³¹

By October 1916 Canaris was able to report that German information centres had been set up in Barcelona, Valencia, Alicante, Cartagena, La Linea, Cadiz, Jerez de la Frontera, Huelva, Seville, Vigo, Villagarcia, La Coruña, Gijon, Santander and Bilbao. Barcelona had the highest amount of traffic amongst the Spanish ports and was therefore deemed the most suitable location for information gathering.³² Nine agents, two of whom were Spanish ships' officers and one was a female cabaret dancer, were working for the German administration in the Catalan capital. In general the information service posts were run by German navy personnel in co-operation with Spanish captains and dock workers. In Seville, a Dutch captain called Hammerstein was in charge of intelligence gathering for Germany. Agents were also recruited for the German information service to work on neutral or allied vessels. A Spanish ship's officer who was stationed on an English steamer operating between Gibraltar and Tangier regularly

³⁰ Mueller, *Canaris*, p. 21.

³¹ Wim Klinkert, *Defending Neutrality. The Netherlands prepares for war, 1900 – 1925* (Leiden, 2013), p. 192.

³² B.A.M., RM5/2413, Admiralstab der Marine, Schrift–pp. Verkehr mit Vertretern der Marine, ab Sept. 1916 dem Marineattaché, und anderen Personen in Madrid Bd. 6 Juli – Nov. 1916, Bericht des Kapitänleutnants Canaris über Gründung einer Nachrichtenzentrale in Spanien, 15.10.1916. Also see map p. 209.

passed on any important news to the German information service office at La Linea.³³ Canaris and his men also successfully managed to employ a large majority of captains on neutral vessels frequenting the ports at Barcelona, Santander, Bilbao, Huelva, Seville and Cadiz. They were paid according to the value of the delivered information.³⁴

While agents working for the information service were mainly concerned with collecting intelligence in Spain, those employed for the agent service also operated outside the Iberian Peninsula. In order to find collaborators, the German intelligence officers utilised established political and commercial links. In Madrid Eduardo de Riquer, an employee in the Spanish Ministry of State (which became the Ministry for Foreign Affairs in 1938), was hired to obtain news from various Spanish ministries and to recruit further agents. In Barcelona five Spanish merchants were also in charge of finding agents. The dancer, who was already working for the German information service, was also approached for further services since she occasionally travelled to England. In southern Spain Albert Hornemann made contact with Spanish fruit, oil and wine merchants who were exporting to Britain. Through Riquer two additional employees in the Ministry of State were hired for the German intelligence services. They were responsible for passing on all information coming from the British and French diplomatic representations in Spain.³⁵

All news of a political nature was forwarded to the embassy at Madrid, which was also responsible for paying agents in Spanish ministries. The political news service of the German intelligence operation was largely supplied with information coming from Hornemann and Reserve Lieutenant Commander Friedrich Rüggeberg, both located in Barcelona. For the surveillance of persons of interest to the German administration, two Spanish secret police officers, who also reported on any allied

³³B.A.M., RM5/2413, Admiralstab der Marine, Schrift–pp. Verkehr mit Vertretern der Marine, ab Sept. 1916 dem Marineattaché, und anderen Personen in Madrid Bd. 6 Juli – Nov. 1916, Bericht des Kapitänleutnants Canaris über Gründung einer Nachrichtenzentrale in Spanien, 15.10.1916.

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵Ibid.

counter-espionage activity, were hired. Four agents recruited by Canaris from Spain operated in England and three female agents (a pilot and two anarchists) were active in France. A further agent was hired in Lisbon.³⁶ In Madrid, Antonio Arregui was in charge of an office, provided to him by the director of the German potash syndicate, which processed all intelligence from the information and the agent service and then passed it on to Krohn.³⁷

Albert Hornemann was responsible for the recruitment of agents in Barcelona where he enjoyed a good reputation amongst non-German economic circles. Due to the city's extensive trade links with Great Britain, German intelligence officers focussed their efforts onto finding collaborators in Barcelona. Hornemann communicated all information, with the help of German banks in Barcelona and Madrid, to Arregui, who subsequently forwarded it to the naval attaché. Attempts were made to send Spanish agents to England, which proved difficult since not many possessed the necessary language skills and had legitimate reasons to travel to Britain. While exact details of agent activity were not revealed, Canaris mentioned in his report from October 1916 a destruction service (*Zerstörungsdienst*) operating in Barcelona, Huelva, Cartagena, Santander and Bilbao which had delivered its first results in mid-August in Barcelona.³⁸ One could speculate that the sabotage activity outlined below in the chapter could have been organised with the help of this destruction service. For his services in Spain Canaris received glowing praise from his superiors and in October 1916 he was awarded the Iron Cross First Class.³⁹

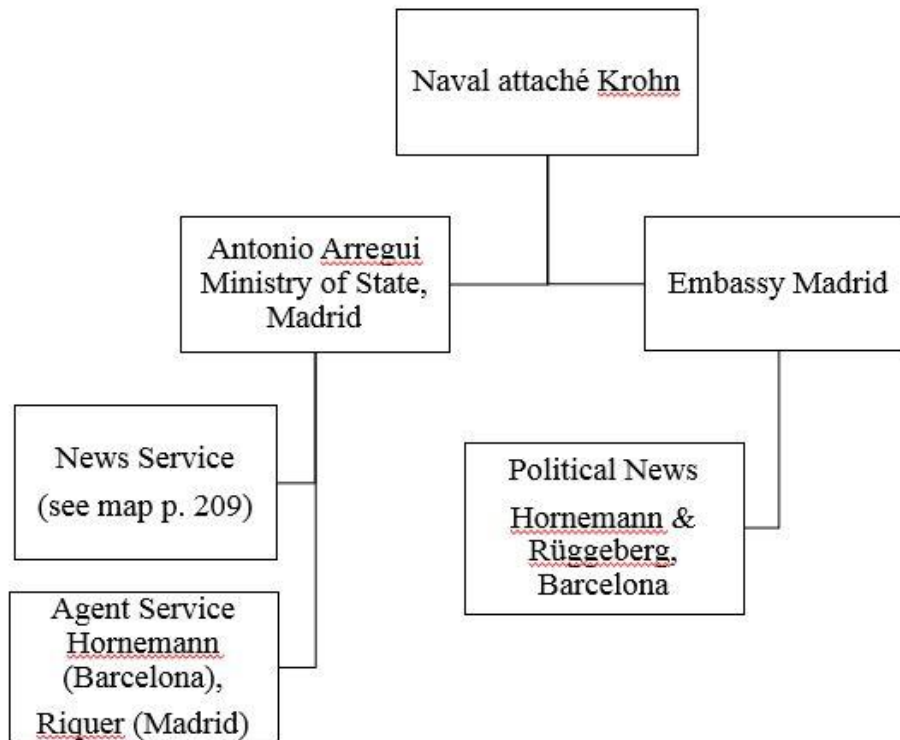
³⁶B.A.M., RM5/2413, Admiralstab der Marine, Schrift-pp. Verkehr mit Vertretern der Marine, ab Sept. 1916 dem Marineattaché, und anderen Personen in Madrid Bd. 6 Juli – Nov. 1916, Bericht des Kapitänleutnants Canaris über Gründung einer Nachrichtenzentrale in Spanien, 15.10.1916.

³⁷See chart p. 208 for an overview of the organisation of German naval intelligence in Spain.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Mueller, *Canaris*, p. 25.

Organisation of German naval intelligence in Spain



News service outposts of German naval intelligence set up in Spain by October 1916



As outlined above, Barcelona became an important centre for German covert activity in Spain. In addition to the city's extensive trade links with Britain, the Catalan capital was also a stronghold of the CNT which German agents managed to infiltrate successfully.⁸⁴² While Catalan industrialists were reaping high profits thanks to Spain's neutrality, workers' living conditions were worsening during the First World War. German covert activity sought to use that potential for civil unrest and conflict by mobilising workers to strike action which would disrupt trade between Spain and the Allies.

The economic boom Spain experienced during the First World War was a result of increased demand from the belligerents and the opening up of markets hitherto supplied by the Allies or the Central Powers. Aided by the country's position of neutrality, Spanish business was able to flourish, giving the national economy an impulse to modernise and to become competitive in a world market.⁸⁴³ Due to the Allied blockade, Spain's main trading partners were Britain and France, which, as was noted in Chapter 4, led to an economic co-dependency and Spain moving closer towards the Entente. Wartime demand from the Allies for raw materials and consumer goods meant Spanish business reaped profits unimaginable during peace times.⁸⁴⁴ The Catalan textile industry, which had suffered great losses after the Spanish-American War of 1898, was now one of the main benefactors of the wartime boom, facilitating the increased demand in uniforms and other products made from cotton. Equally the Spanish chemical and shipping industry, as well as the banking sector, were able to expand during the war.⁸⁴⁵ Spanish mining companies trebled their profits between 1913 and 1918.⁸⁴⁶ Profits also allowed reducing the large part of foreign capital in the railway and mining sector. The

⁸⁴²Romero Salvadó, *Spain 1914 – 1918*, pp 166-9.

⁶⁶⁵Zeiseler, *Spanien im Kalkül der britischen Kriegspolitik*, p. 235.

⁸⁴⁴*Ibid.*, p. 235.

⁸⁴⁵José Luis García Delgado, *La modernización económica en la España de Alfonso XIII* (Madrid, 2002), pp 114–6.

⁸⁴⁶Zeiseler, *Spanien im Kalkül der britischen Kriegspolitik*, p. 238.

surplus created during the war not only enabled Spain to pay off its high foreign debt, but also made it possible to accumulate financial reserves. Within four years Spain had transformed from a highly indebted country to a creditor for a belligerent.⁸⁴⁷

However, as Dirk Zeiseler pointed out, this economic development was unnatural and only the result of the artificial protectionist system brought on by the war demand of the Entente. Profits were largely based on an increase in price while production output remained at pre-war level. The Spanish iron and steel industry, for example, showed only a minimal rise in production between 1914 and 1918 but was able to record a five times higher profit.⁸⁴⁸ As export grew in value but not in quantity, imports were drastically reduced, resulting in a disproportionate trade balance. The so called boom was accompanied by an inflation in prices and a sharp decline in imports. While import of raw materials and foodstuffs dropped significantly between 1916 and 1917, exports to the Allies remained at the same level throughout the war.⁸⁴⁹ Another reason for Spain's wartime inflation were artificially created shortages whereby producers or middle men hoarded produce in order to increase their profits.

The inflation Spain experienced during the war, however, was lower than in other neutral countries. Nonetheless, its impact was severe, especially by 1918, when prices had risen by 61.8% while wages had only increased by 25.6%.⁸⁵⁰ Therefore the large majority of Spaniards did not feel the benefits of the economic boom but had to endure rising prices and shortages of food and fuel.⁸⁵¹ The agrarian sector experienced difficulties in finding markets for its products. In particular the citrus-fruit-growing regions of Spain were unable to sell their produce, one of the country's leading exports before the war, since it was considered a luxury item and not essential for the war

⁸⁴⁷Ibid., pp 237–9.

⁸⁴⁸Ibid., p. 241.

⁸⁴⁹Ibid., pp 236–7.

⁸⁵⁰Luis Arranz & Mercedes Cabrera & Fernando del Rey, 'The assault on liberalism, 1914-23' in José Alvarez Junco & Adrian Shubert (eds), *Spanish history since 1808* (London, 2000), pp 191-206.

⁸⁵¹Gerald Meaker, *The revolutionary left in Spain 1914–1923* (Stanford, 1974), p. 33.

economy.⁸⁵² Equally wood imports declined, leading to increased construction costs. The Spanish railways were not able to keep up with the rising demand due to the high costs and lack of coal.⁸⁵³ Overall the war mainly benefited the urban-industrial zones. The imbalance in the distribution of profit between rural and urban zones led to a population flow to the cities which were struggling to absorb all the rural migrants. Other alternatives for rural workers were to seek employment across the border in France.⁸⁵⁴

A reaction to the economic crisis was a significant growth in membership of the UGT and the CNT. The UGT gained 97,000 members during the war counting, 211,000 members in 1920. Its Anarcho-Syndicalist rival, the CNT, made even more impressive advances, gaining 685,000 members and rising to a total of 700,000 members in 1919.⁸⁵⁵ This political mobilisation produced by wartime inflation was also fuelled by the spread of the negative image of the greedy wartime profiteer, fostering the idea that wartime profits only benefited a few. Combined with an economic crisis it produced a wave of public protest and civil unrest.⁸⁵⁶

Madrid did little in way of alleviating the hardship endured by large parts of the Spanish population and did not introduce any export restraints and regulations until early 1918, allowing speculators for most part of the war to export anything without consideration for the needs of the Spanish people. Equally no tax on wartime profits was introduced.⁸⁵⁷ In 1916 finance minister Santiago Alba had to abandon plans to implement such a tax and bowed to pressures from Spanish industry and business. Therefore profits were not invested sufficiently to carry out a reform of the Spanish

⁸⁵²Gelos de Vaz Ferreira, *Die Neutralitätspolitik Spaniens während des Ersten Weltkrieges*, p. 91.

⁸⁵³Arranz & Cabrera & del Rey, 'The assault on liberalism, 1914-23' in *Spanish history since 1808*, pp 191-206.

⁸⁵⁴Meaker, *The revolutionary left in Spain*, pp 31-6.

⁸⁵⁵Arranz & Cabrera & del Rey, 'The assault on liberalism, 1914-23' in *Spanish history since 1808*, pp 191-206.

⁸⁵⁶*Ibid.*

⁸⁵⁷Meaker, *The revolutionary left in Spain*, p. 33.

economy. Many government officials also held personal business interests as board members or share holders in co-operations, so that the intertwined relations between politics and economy did not allow for long-term and lasting reforms financed through war profits.⁸⁵⁸

The dissatisfaction amongst those Spaniards not profiting from the war was opportunistically used by Germany to disrupt Allied trade with Spain in the hope of inflicting serious damage on Britain and France. This formed the core of German intelligence activity in Spain. In addition, Germany also benefited from the pro-neutrality position of Spanish business and industry which pressurised Spanish governments not to abandon neutrality. Due to the blockade and geographical distance, Germany was unable to build up closer economic links with Spain which could have rivalled Spanish-British trade and undermined Britain's dominant position on the Iberian Peninsula.

The option left to the German administration was therefore to disrupt trade between Spain and Britain in order to disrupt, as much as possible, the Allied war effort. As discussed in Chapter 4, Britain's arms industry heavily depended on Spanish iron ore deliveries. Thus it was in Germany's interest to delay exports to Britain. German intelligence sought to cause unrest in those mines delivering to Great Britain by stirring up strikes amongst workers already dissatisfied with their working conditions and facing a worsening of their living circumstances due to the war-related inflation. In June 1915 the instigation of strikes in the pyrite mines of the Rio Tinto company in the Huelva district was suggested to the Zfa. Despite a flourishing trade with the Allies, miners were only receiving a meagre pay and several conflicts between owners and workers had already occurred.⁸⁵⁹ Since propaganda alone was insufficient to damage the

⁸⁵⁸Zeiseler, *Spanien im Kalkül der britischen Kriegspolitik*, pp 242–3.

⁸⁵⁹P.A., R21239, Weltkrieg Nr. 11q Geheim Bd. 1 – Unternehmungen und Aufwiegelungen gegen unsere Feinde in Spanien, Prof. Stein to Zentralstelle für Auslandsdienst, 3.6.1915.

Allied war effort from Spain, direct action was sought by supporting those groups in Spanish society that did not profit from the war. Agitation of strikes and causing unrest amongst Spanish workers was a means frequently employed by the German embassy at Madrid.

By December 1914 the embassy at Madrid was reporting back to Berlin with great concern about weapons deliveries from Spain to Britain. Spanish ships leaving Seville were loaded with weapons declared for Morocco, then re-loaded en route and sent to Britain instead. It was assumed by the German military that the Spanish government complied with British demands out of fear.⁸⁶⁰ It is more likely though that the profit from arms sales provided a welcome boost to the Spanish economy.

Reports of the Spanish munitions factory 'Palencia de las armas', delivering weapons to Britain from Bilbao,⁸⁶¹ further alarmed the *Auswärtige Amt* and the High Command. German residents in San Sebastian and Bilbao had been informed that the Spanish arms company, in which the British Vickers group held 80% of shares, was shipping weapons marked as machine parts to Britain.⁸⁶² According to information passed on by informants, the German consul at Bilbao was able to verify that seventeen field artillery guns, four heavy artillery guns, thirty machine guns and thousands of bullets were part of the shipment.⁸⁶³ Despite a complaint to the customs and harbour office, the load was allowed to leave Bilbao. The company stated it was only fulfilling agreements for deliveries which had been ordered prior to the war. Vickers on the other hand declared it would be unable to supply artillery ordered for new Spanish ships if their own deliveries failed to materialise.⁸⁶⁴

⁸⁶⁰B.A., R901/86971, Lieferung von Waffen und Kriegsmaterial seitens der Neutralen I. Weltkrieg – Spanien, Head of Admiralty to State Secretary Auswärtige Amt, 4.12.1914.

⁸⁶¹Ibid., Austrian embassy Tschirschky to Auswärtige Amt, 6.12.1914.

⁸⁶²Ibid., *B.Z. am Mittag* to Major Deutelmöser, Press department General Staff, 10.12.1914.

⁸⁶³B.A., R901/86971, Lieferung von Waffen und Kriegsmaterial seitens der Neutralen I. Weltkrieg – Spanien, *B.Z. am Mittag* to Major Deutelmöser, Press department General Staff, 10.12.1914.

⁸⁶⁴Ibid., Head of Admiralty to Auswärtige Amt, Copy of report of the navy officers posted to imperial embassy at Madrid, 23.1.1915.

As already outlined, the Spanish shipping industry, especially those companies situated in Bilbao and San Sebastian, made large profits during the war,⁸⁶⁵ which could explain why German complaints fell on deaf ears. Since the Hague Conference clearly declared it legal for private companies to sell weapons and munitions to a belligerent, the German government did not have many options other than protest. Berlin therefore depended on the good will of the Spanish government to stop such deliveries. Given the increase in prosperity Spanish business and industry was gaining from Allied trade, it was doubtful any government would curb that trade, especially since Germany and the Central Powers were unable to make any alternative offers. German residents in Spain, alarmed by the increased trade with Britain and France, expressed doubts whether the Spanish government would be able to resist Allied pressure and hinted at the need for military intervention. The Germans suspected that the newly established post steamer between Bilbao and Falmouth, which had been subsidised by Britain, would likely be used for more than just passenger and post traffic. A suggestion was made to the General Staff to give the steamer a warning sign it would not forget in a hurry in case a German U-boat came across it in the Channel.⁸⁶⁶

Besides weapons, Spain was also supplying men, horses and mules to the Allies, in particular to France. As Krohn was able to report in January 1915, France was trying to attract Spanish workers across the border for employment as metal workers, chauffeurs or in agriculture. Workers, especially in rural Spain, were greatly affected by the uneven distribution of wartime profits, as outlined above. At the beginning of the twentieth century wages in Spain were amongst the lowest in Europe. The living expenses of a working class family in Madrid were 23% higher than in Paris while their

⁸⁶⁵Zeiseler, *Spanien im Kalkül der britischen Kriegspolitik*, p. 239.

⁸⁶⁶B.A., R901/86971, Lieferung von Waffen und Kriegsmaterial seitens der Neutralen I. Weltkrieg – Spanien, *B.Z. am Mittag* to Major Deutelmoser, Press department General Staff, 10.12.1914.

average income was 68.33% lower.⁸⁶⁷ Therefore it probably did not take much of an effort by the French government to encourage Spaniards to leave for France. Moreover, since various Spanish governments failed to halt social instability during the war, immigration of an impoverished working class also meant less potential for unrest. Gerald Meaker has pointed out that migration to the New World lessened the pressure on the threatened stability of the restoration system in pre-war times.⁸⁶⁸ Since the war put an end to that migration, successive Spanish governments, which were either unable or unwilling to improve declining living conditions, must have welcomed any opportunity to minimise potential threats to the system.

The transfer of horses and mules to France was flourishing as well, despite an official export ban by the government.⁸⁶⁹ Prime Minister Dato declared that the prohibition of exporting animals and foodstuffs was subject to national economic considerations but in actuality the cross-border smuggling was accepted by officials.⁸⁷⁰ In matters of arms deliveries to the belligerents, Dato concurred with the position of the United States in that the supply of war material by private companies did not constitute a violation of neutral duties.⁸⁷¹ Ratibor feared the prime minister's comments would result in an increase in weapons exports to the Allies, especially in view of several newly built and planned weapons and munitions factories.⁸⁷² He suggested attempting to sway the Spanish government by stressing that hindering private weapon deliveries would be completely within the rights of the government and be a sign of true

⁸⁶⁷Meaker, *The revolutionary left in Spain*, p. 4.

⁸⁶⁸*Ibid.*, p. 34.

⁸⁶⁹B.A., R901/86971, Lieferung von Waffen und Kriegsmaterial seitens der Neutralen I. Weltkrieg – Spanien, Head of Admiralty to Auswärtige Amt, Copy of report of the navy officers posted to imperial embassy at Madrid, 23.1.1915.

⁸⁷⁰Gelos de Vaz Ferreira, *Die Neutralitätspolitik Spaniens während des Ersten Weltkrieges*, pp 92–3.

⁸⁷¹B.A., R901/86971, Lieferung von Waffen und Kriegsmaterial seitens der Neutralen I. Weltkrieg – Spanien, Austrian-Hungarian embassy note Berlin, 18.7.1915.

⁸⁷²*Ibid.*, Ratibor to Auswärtige Amt, 16.7.1915.

neutrality.⁸⁷³ Dato declined to comment on Germany's views on true neutrality and Ratibor doubted the prime minister would take any action in the matter. The ambassador conceded that the matter of stopping weapons deliveries from Spain to the Allies would have to be taken care of by Germany.⁸⁷⁴ Spain's position of neutrality largely facilitated the economic boom the country experienced during the First World War, therefore Ratibor was correct in his assumption that trade with the Allies would not diminish.

To sabotage the munitions and weapons factories delivering to the Allies, the German War Ministry agreed with Ratibor to place agents in those factories and also have men reporting from shipping ports. Kalle had identified the most important factories, which were 'Unión Española Fabricas de Superfosfato' in Seville and Valencia producing sulphuric acids, as well as a hand grenade factory in Mondragon.⁸⁷⁵ If necessary, the destruction of the factories had also to be considered.⁸⁷⁶ This of course represented a complete violation of neutral rights and, similarly to the tactics of unrestricted submarine warfare targeting Spanish vessels, could have led to a deterioration in Spanish-German relations if the embassy was implicated in any sabotage plots. After consulting with the High Command, Kalle was advised to refrain from any attacks on Spanish factories and instead target transports coming from Spain on French soil.⁸⁷⁷

While attacks on Spanish property in Spain were momentarily deemed too risky, Spanish ships used for trade with Britain were not only casualties of unrestricted submarine warfare but also direct targets of German sabotage acts. The Foreign Office was alarmed when it received a report from the chief officer of the SS *Queensland*

⁸⁷³B.A., R901/86971, Lieferung von Waffen und Kriegsmaterial seitens der Neutralen I. Weltkrieg – Spanien, Embassy Madrid to Auswärtige Amt, 2.8.1915.

⁸⁷⁴Ibid., Embassy Madrid to Auswärtige Amt, 9.8.1915.

⁸⁷⁵P.A., R21240, Weltkrieg Nr. 11q Geheim Bd. 2 – Unternehmungen und Aufwiegelungen gegen unsere Feinde in Spanien, Military attaché via Ratibor to Auswärtige Amt, 27.11.1915.

⁸⁷⁶Ibid., Ratibor to Auswärtige Amt, 22.9.1915; War ministry to Auswärtige Amt, 19.10.1915.

⁸⁷⁷Ibid., Military attaché via Ratibor to Auswärtige Amt, 21.11.1915; Department Politics Berlin (General staff of the army) to Auswärtige Amt, 23.11.1915; Department Politics Berlin (General staff of the army) to Auswärtige Amt for forwarding to military attaché, 6.12.1915.

informing it of a possible attack on the ship while en route to Britain from Bilbao.⁸⁷⁸ Trade between Spain and the Central Powers had decreased considerably by the beginning of 1916 and the Foreign Office suspected German agents would try to disrupt trade between Britain and Spain.⁸⁷⁹ A report from naval attaché von Krohn from August 1916 confirmed British suspicions. The destruction of Belgian steamer *Emanuel Nobel* was initiated from Barcelona and carried out through middlemen who placed a bomb on the ship.⁸⁸⁰ Further attempts to destroy British ships or ships destined for Britain were made in December 1916, when explosives were found on the SS *Juan* arriving from Bilbao.⁸⁸¹ In January 1917 the British consulate at Bilbao reported a bomb that was found on a wagon of iron about to be loaded onto the SS *Juliston*.⁸⁸² Two bombs were discovered on the Norwegian steamer SS *Gyldempris* which had loaded a cargo of iron ore in Cartagena with destination Barrow in Furness.⁸⁸³

Covert activity organised by the German military attaché in Madrid also extended into Portugal, where the German administration sought to disrupt the Allied war effort. As outlined in Chapter 4, in October 1914 German diplomats put pressure on King Alfonso XIII to openly side against Portugal's pro-Allied stance in return offering a free hand in Portugal and Gibraltar. Since the king declined to take any such action, however, other means had to be found to destabilise Portuguese affairs. Unlike in Spain, the German administration could not rely on pro-German attitudes amongst the Portuguese government or elite. After Portugal entered the war at the beginning of 1916,

⁸⁷⁸N.A., FO371/2472, Foreign Office, Spain & Portugal (War) 1915, Collector of customs Sunderland [unclear to whom, probably FO or embassy] 4.8.1915.

⁸⁷⁹N.A., FO371/2759, Foreign Office, Spain & Portugal (War) 1916, Dockyard Gibraltar Lieut. Col. Thoroton to Hardinge, 26.12.1915.

⁸⁸⁰B.A.M., RM5/2413, Admiralstab der Marine, Schrift–pp. Verkehr mit Vertretern der Marine, ab Sept. 1916 dem Marineattaché, und anderen Personen in Madrid Bd. 6 Juli – Nov. 1916, Report B.E. Barcelona about destruction of Belgian steamer 'Emanuel Nobel' dated 21.8.1916 signed by Rüggeberg sent via Krohn to Admiralty, 23.8.1916.

⁸⁸¹N.A., FO371/3032, Foreign Office, Spain & Portugal (War) 1917, British Consulate Bilbao to embassy Madrid, 25.12.1916.

⁸⁸²N.A., FO371/3035, Foreign Office, Spain & Portugal (War) 1917, Decypher, Madden, Bilbao, 25.1.1917.

⁸⁸³Ibid., Enclosure in Consul Villiers despatch No. 186 to FO, 21.7.1917.

German policy was to cause as much unrest as possible in order to hinder Portuguese troops from leaving for the front. This was achieved by supporting groups, such as the monarchists, who sought to overthrow the Republic.⁸⁸⁴ Similar to covert activity in Spain, Kalle organised the destruction of Portuguese factories which produced weapons and war materiel.⁸⁸⁵

Krohn also attempted to find other, less dangerous, means of stopping Spanish exports from reaching the Allies. He endeavoured to identify which Spanish shipping companies would consider not carrying contraband for the Entente. As it transpired, none of the companies were interested in missing out on a considerable profit and accepted the risk of losing their shipment, which in any case were insured by the shipper, who in most cases was British. Therefore Krohn had to revert back to propaganda which focussed on the high amount of tonnage going to the Allies while Spaniards had to suffer food shortages. A series of articles published in *La Acción* and other newspapers also named all ships not running for their own country.⁸⁸⁶ Since the observation of trade was a vital part of German intelligence activity, agents worked hard on influencing and establishing contacts with Spanish seamen, captains and port authorities.⁸⁸⁷

The above mentioned plan by the embassy to stir up strikes in the Rio Tinto mines also took on the scope of a sabotage plot. Ratibor had found a suitable middleman to carry out the necessary work and estimated the costs to be around 700 to

⁸⁸⁴P.A., R9524, Portugal 29, Allgemeine Angelegenheiten Portugals 1915-20, Lersner, Großes Hauptquartier to Legationssekretär, Auswärtiges Amt, 2.4.1918.

⁸⁸⁵P.A., R21290, Weltkrieg, Wk Nr. II V Geheim, Unternehmungen and Aufwiegelungen gegen unsere Feinde in Portugal, Ratibor to Auswärtige Amt, 21.9.1916.

⁸⁸⁶B.A.M., RM5/2413, Admiralstab der Marine, Schrift–pp. Verkehr mit Vertretern der Marine, ab Sept. 1916 dem Marineattaché, und anderen Personen in Madrid Bd. 6 Juli – Nov. 1916, Krohn to Head of Admiralty, 23.8.1916.

⁸⁸⁷B.A.M., RM5/2415, Admiralstab der Marine, Schrift–pp. Verkehr mit Vertretern der Marine, ab Sept. 1916 dem Marineattaché, und anderen Personen in Madrid Bd. 8 Feb. – Juli 1917, Naval attaché Madrid to Head of Admiralty, 10.6.1917.

800,000 pesetas per month to be guaranteed for at least three months.⁸⁸⁸ According to the ambassador, the time was right in July 1915 to implement the plan since production output of the mine had increased and the overall mood amongst the workers was worsening.⁸⁸⁹ The German Ministry of War, however, thought it would be more effective to destroy the railways transporting material from the mines since these stocked enough material which could be sent out in case of a disruption in production. An explosion of a railway tunnel was suggested while simultaneously a strike should be instigated which could then be blamed for the destruction of the railway.⁸⁹⁰

This aggressive plan highlights the High Command's drive for total war and preparedness to target civilians of a non-belligerent country all for the sake of causing injury to the Allies. As the submarine campaign claimed the lives of Spanish merchants, Spanish workers were also seen as targets equal to soldiers in the field.⁸⁹¹ According to Alan Kramer, the enemy was not just the enemy army but was represented by its nation and culture, a view which subsequently led to a radicalisation of warfare giving way to a systematic and total exploitation of enemy civilians and resources of conquered and occupied territory.⁸⁹² The divide between combatants and non-combatants gradually disappeared and atrocities against civilians, although they had also been committed in earlier wars such as the American Civil War and the Franco-Prussian War, reached an until then unprecedented extent in the First World War.⁸⁹³

Atrocity stories, which sprang up during the German invasion of Belgium, became a prominent feature of the war, repeatedly highlighted by Allied propaganda.

⁸⁸⁸P.A., R21239, Weltkrieg Nr. 11q Geheim Bd. 1 – Unternehmungen und Aufwiegelungen gegen unsere Feinde in Spanien, Ratibor to Auswärtige Amt, 20.6.1915.

⁸⁸⁹Ibid., Ratibor to Auswärtige Amt, 4.7.1915.

⁸⁹⁰Ibid., War ministry to embassy Madrid, 20.7.1915.

⁸⁹¹Holger Herwig, 'Total rhetoric, limited war: Germany's u-boat campaign, 1917–18' in R. Chickering & S. Förster (eds), *Great War, total war: combat and mobilization on the Western Front, 1914–18* (Cambridge, 2000), p. 206.

⁸⁹²Kramer, *Dynamic of destruction*, p. 31, p. 68.

⁸⁹³Ian Kershaw, 'War and political violence in twentieth-century Europe' in *Contemporary European History*, xiv, no. 1 (Feb. 2005), pp 107-23.

While neutral Belgium held a strategic importance in Germany's initial war plans, even more distant neutrals such as Spain found themselves targets of Germany's 'war of annihilation'. This military destructiveness, which also spread into non-belligerent territory affecting the lives of civilians, originated from strategic, political and economic considerations.⁸⁹⁴ Spain, as an important supplier for the Allied war industries, was therefore seen as a fair target for German military planners. In their pursuit to damage the war effort of the Entente, the campaigns carried out by the German diplomatic corps in Spain, whether they were propaganda or covert activities, showed no regard for the rights of a neutral country. As Eric Hobsbawm noted, the First World War was a war waged for unlimited ends with the sole aim of a total victory.⁸⁹⁵ The example of Spain highlights how this type of total warfare left no room for neutrality.

Although the plan to destroy the railway tunnel had been set in motion, the German embassy was unable to carry it out since details of the sabotage plot were leaked to the British embassy.⁸⁹⁶ Ratibor suspected that labour leader Palacio, who was involved in the negotiations regarding the Rio Tinto plot, had passed on some information.⁸⁹⁷ The War Ministry also thought it possible that German telegrams had been decoded or Allied espionage had managed to uncover the plot.⁸⁹⁸ Nevertheless, German agents managed to infiltrate other workers' organisations such as the Unión de Obreros Constructores Mecánicos, with the aim of enforcing strict neutrality. Their efforts proved successful when the union agreed to take industrial action if Spanish neutrality came under threat.⁸⁹⁹

⁸⁹⁴Kramer, *Dynamic of destruction*, p. 41.

⁸⁹⁵Hobsbawm, *The age of extremes*, pp 29-30.

⁸⁹⁶N.A., FO371/2468, Foreign Office, Spain & Portugal (War) 1915, Hardinge to Grey, 25.9.1915.

⁸⁹⁷P.A., R21240, Weltkrieg Nr. 11q Geheim Bd. 2 – Unternehmungen und Aufwiegungen gegen unsere Feinde in Spanien, Ratibor to Auswärtige Amt, 29.1.1916.

⁸⁹⁸Ibid., War ministry to Auswärtige Amt, 20.1.1916.

⁸⁹⁹P.A., Botschaft Madrid, Karton 103, Carlowitz to Ratibor, 21.2.1917.

As could be seen in Chapter 4, while the *Auswärtige Amt* viewed Ratibor's covert activities with concern, those concerns were often overruled by the High Command. The German ambassador to Spain, however, did not share the fears of his colleagues in Berlin. On the contrary, he seemed to have always been in support of more drastic measures and therefore approved of Krohn's and Kalle's activities. The *Auswärtige Amt*, though, became increasingly worried about the service attachés' changing role during wartime which saw them collaborate much closer with their army and navy superiors while bypassing the *Auswärtige Amt* altogether. General Ludendorff even attempted to release some military attachés from their subordination to a diplomatic mission and suggested instead placing them directly under the command of the OHL for the duration of the war. Specifically he was referring to the attachés stationed in Constantinople, Vienna and Sofia, who now served as a link between the head of the General Staff, the War Ministry and the general staffs of the other Central Power allies. Ludendorff assured the *Auswärtige Amt* that the military attachés at these posts would keep in close contact with the heads of their respective diplomatic missions.⁹⁰⁰ The *Auswärtige Amt*, however, rejected the idea, fearing that attachés operating separately to the embassy might lead to uncoordinated activity which could result in political problems.⁹⁰¹

It was not only the activity of military and naval attachés stationed in the allied states of the Central Powers that were cause of concern for the *Auswärtige Amt* but also the activity of service attachés in neutral countries, as a circular from the chancellor in March 1917 to the missions in Bern, Den Haag, Copenhagen, Oslo, Madrid and Stockholm shows. Chancellor Bethmann Hollweg stressed that, although he welcomed

⁹⁰⁰Chef des Generalstabs des Feldheeres an Staatssekretär des Auswärtigen Amts vom 13.11.1916 betr. Militaerattachés as reproduced in Klaus-Volker Giessler, *Die Institution des Marineattachés im Kaiserreich* (Boppard am Rhein, 1976), pp 294-5.

⁹⁰¹Staatssekretär des AA an Chef des Generalstabs des Feldheeres vom 26.11.1916 bet. Militaerattachés [reply to Ludendorffs request by Zimmermann] as reproduced in Giessler, *Die Institution des Marineattachés im Kaiserreich*, pp 294-5.

attachés reporting on political and economic matters in addition to military concerns, the attachés were required to report any non-military matters directly to the head of the diplomatic mission and not send reports directly to their superiors in the army or navy. This, as the chancellor pointed out, was necessary to keep him and the *Auswärtige Amt* informed on political developments.⁹⁰² The circular can be interpreted as an attempt to curb the influence of the ‘silent dictatorship’ of the OHL.⁹⁰³ During wartime the attachés clearly felt a stronger allegiance to their military superiors rather than to the *Auswärtige Amt*, although they were meant to serve both as outlined at the beginning of the chapter. This resulted in an advantageous position for the OHL and led to further interference of the military in political and economic matters while the German government was steadily losing influence.

In Spain, ambassador Ratibor, although not always aware of every detail of Kalle’s and Krohn’s activity, had no problem with the mixing of military and political interests and supported his attachés in their pursuit of pro-German and pro-neutrality elements of Spanish society. One of those groups was the military juntas which collaborated with the German administration. As outlined in Chapter 1, the army had become a defender of the monarchy and was in charge of restoring public order in times of civil unrest. Tapping into strong pro-German sentiments amongst the majority of officers, German diplomats sought to foster anti-Allied feeling and maintain pressure on the king and government not to join the Entente. While on the one hand German agents agitated workers into strikes, on the other hand they assured the juntas of their support for maintaining order in Spain⁹⁰⁴, blaming civil unrest on English and French liberal ideas. By playing opposing groups in Spanish society against each other, instability was

⁹⁰²Zirkularerlaß des Reichskanzlers vom 12.3.1917 an die Missionen in Bern, Den Haag, Kopenhagen, Kristiania, Madrid und Stockholm betr. politische Berichterstattung der Militaer- u. Marineattachés as reproduced in Giessler, *Die Institution des Marineattachés im Kaiserreich*, p. 263.

⁹⁰³See chapter four.

⁹⁰⁴B.A.M., RM5/2417, Telegramme an den Militärattaché in Madrid Mai – Dez. 1917, Military attaché Madrid to OHL, 27.10.1917.

further increased, not only making Spain unreliable as a potential partner in war for the Allies but also jeopardising trade with France and Britain. The German diplomats on the ground in Spain, as well as the *Auswärtige Amt* in Berlin, did not intentionally follow this strategy but rather opportunistically sought out collaborations only with the German war effort in mind. Though aware of the immediate consequences of their interference, German diplomats showed no consideration for the long-term effects this might have on Spain. Similar tactics were also employed by Germany in other countries with the aim of promoting the collapse of enemy home fronts through subversion and sabotage. A jihad was incited against imperial rule in Britain's Muslim territories, subsidiaries given to Russian revolutionaries and colonial revolt encouraged against the French in Morocco.⁹⁰⁵

While the Juntas were trying to secure military and financial help from Germany in case of Spain joining the war on the side of the Central Powers, Berlin only offered cautiously to consider supporting the *junteros*.⁹⁰⁶ In their collaboration with the Spanish army unions, German diplomats had to tread carefully, ensuring King Alfonso especially did not learn about the connection.⁹⁰⁷ Contacts with the juntas were held through a middleman who was not a member of the embassy.⁹⁰⁸ Despite the king's friendly relationship with military attaché Kalle, it was feared any outside interference with the army, one of the country's most important power brokers, could be seen as a

⁹⁰⁵Stanley Payne, *Civil war in Europe, 1905–1949* (Cambridge, 2011), pp 18–9.

⁹⁰⁶B.A.M., RM5/2417, Telegramme an den Militärattaché in Madrid Mai – Dez. 1917, Military attaché Madrid to OHL, 27.10.1917.

⁹⁰⁷B.A.M., RM5/1752, Admiralstab der Marine, F.T. – Verkehr mit Spanien Bd. 2 Apr. – Dez. 1917, Telegram No. 1302 embassy Madrid in response to telegram no. 192 of the 8th of this month transmitted via navy. P.A., R12017, Spanien 61 secr. – Die Beziehungen zwischen Spanien und Deutschland 1917–18, Embassy Madrid to Auswärtige Amt, 29.11.1917. P.A., R11938, Spanien 55 Nr. 1 – Das spanische Königshaus 1917–20, Copy to A.S. 4232 signed Langwerth [undated]. P.A., R12017, Spanien 61 secr. – Die Beziehungen zwischen Spanien und Deutschland 1917–18, Kühlmann to Admiralty War ministry Berlin, 6.12.1917; Grosses Hauptquartier Secretary to Auswärtige Amt, 1.12.1917.

⁹⁰⁸P.A., R12017, Spanien 61 secr. – Die Beziehungen zwischen Spanien und Deutschland 1917–18, Embassy Madrid to Auswärtige Amt, 29.11.1917.

gross breach of trust and lead to Alfonso turning to the Allies. With the culmination of public unrest in the summer of 1917 the Spanish monarchy was further under threat.

As was shown in Chapter 4, German diplomats in Spain often indulged Alfonso's imperial ambitions in order to keep the king on Germany's side. While unable to offer the Spanish monarch any actual territory, by extending covert activity into Morocco and undermining French rule in the area, Germany was able to give Alfonso some hope that his plans for extending the empire might come true eventually. Spanish colonial ambitions in Morocco had been frustrated by French dominance in the area, therefore making Spain more susceptible to German plans in North Africa. Those plans included using Spanish Morocco as a base for preparing attacks on French territory.⁹⁰⁹

German interest in the region dated back to the beginning of the twentieth century and first manifested itself in the two Morocco crises of 1907 and 1911.⁹¹⁰ It is difficult to reconstruct the complete picture of German covert activity in North Africa during the First World War since all the relevant files produced by the embassy in Madrid were destroyed immediately after the war.⁹¹¹ A close examination of German diplomatic and military files, however, does reveal that the German military personnel at Madrid was heavily involved in such activity. The files further disclose that the Spanish king was complicit in German covert operations carried out in North Africa during the war. Ratibor confirmed to the *Auswärtige Amt* that Alfonso was informed about 'Aktion Marokko' [Operation Morocco] and approved of it.⁹¹²

Operations in North Africa seemed to have been initiated by the German military attaché as early as autumn 1915. German agents in Morocco were responsible for watching any activity in the strait of Gibraltar reporting back to the naval and

⁹⁰⁹C.R. Pennell, *Morocco since 1830. A history* (New York, 2000), p. 181.

⁹¹⁰See chapter one.

⁹¹¹Rüchardt, *Deutsch-Spanische Beziehungen*, pp 239-40.

⁹¹²P.A., R11937, Spanien 55 Nr. 1 – Das spanische Königshaus 1913–17, Military attaché embassy Madrid to Auswärtige Amt, 16.1.1916.

military attachés via an outpost in Algeciras.⁹¹³ The southern Spanish town, with its close proximity to Gibraltar and North Africa, was an important centre for German agent activity. In the recruitment of agents the military and naval attachés were sometimes able to call on their political contacts. Such was the case when Carlist leader Vazquez de Mella recommended Gabriel Vichy Torres to Krohn. Torres had been responsible for hiring guards for the Carlist party and also had organised transports and hide outs in Portugal. Now he was employed by the German naval attaché as an agent for covert missions in Algeciras.⁹¹⁴

German agents operated from Larache and Melilla while the beaches in the far south of Spanish Morocco were used as landing sites for arms.⁹¹⁵ Archaeologist and art historian Ernst Kühnel, stationed in Larache, worked together with the German and Austro-Hungarian consulates at Larache and Melilla in organising propaganda. Until 1917 he was also responsible for covert activity such as the fomenting of rebellions and the destruction of railways in French Morocco and Algeria.⁹¹⁶ In Eastern Morocco, agents Hauck and Koppel⁹¹⁷ were entrusted with an intelligence mission whose exact details remain unknown. What the files reveal, however, is that they were arrested in Melilla in January 1916 and threatened with expulsion. German diplomats sought the help of King Alfonso who assured them that an order would be given to let the captured German agents go free.⁹¹⁸ A few months later, following pressure from the Entente, it

⁹¹³B.A.M., RM5/1693, Schriftwechsel in Sachen Fa. Tarnow (Nachrichtendienst Spanien), Krohn to Head of Admiralty, Zurich, 11.5.1918.

⁹¹⁴B.A.M., RM5/2408 Admiralstab der Marine, Schrift–pp. Verkehr mit Vertretern der Marine, ab Sept. 1916 dem Marineattaché, und anderen Personen in Madrid Bd. 1 1914–15, Krohn to Admiralstab der Marine 8.12.1914.

⁹¹⁵Pennell, *Morocco since 1830*, p. 181.

⁹¹⁶Hew Strachan, *The First World War, Vol. I, To Arms* (New York, 2001), p. 756.

⁹¹⁷The name Koppel was an alias for Georg Gorlach. See Rüchardt, *Deutsch-Spanische Beziehungen*, p. 177.

⁹¹⁸P.A., R11937, Spanien 55 Nr. 1 – Das spanische Königshaus 1913–17, Military attaché embassy Madrid to Auswärtige Amt, 16.1.1916.

seemed unlikely that Alfonso would be able to keep his promise.⁹¹⁹ The punishment for the German agents could have been severe. Generally activities of German citizens in many British and French colonies were restricted from 1914/1915 onwards.⁹²⁰ At the beginning of August 1914 German businessman Carl Ficke, together with three colleagues, had been executed in Morocco.⁹²¹ Koppel, though, together with six other Germans, was eventually expelled from Morocco and brought to Spain at the end of 1916 or the beginning of 1917.⁹²²

In response to Allied notes directed to the Spanish government regarding German conduct in French territories in Africa and submarine warfare, Romanones wrote a report to the king on 1 September 1916 detailing German activity in Spain. In his report the Count detailed arms and munitions deliveries made to the German embassy in Madrid, which he claimed could only have been intended for Morocco. Based in the Spanish zone of Morocco German agents, according to Romanones, had initiated their illegal activities from the beginning of the war causing great harm not only to France but also to Spain. Such activities included inciting a rebellion against French rule and facilitating rebels with arms and munitions.⁹²³ Romanones was correct in his assessment: rebel leaders Raisuli and Abd-el Malek did indeed receive financial support and supplies from German agents.⁹²⁴ Raisuli, who tried to play off the Spanish, Germans and French against each other, received a total of one million pesetas from Germany. Abd el Malek was also supported by Germany, receiving substantial funds that had reached 600,000 pesetas per month by March 1918.⁹²⁵ German agent Hermann

⁹¹⁹P.A., R12013, Spanien 61 secr. – Die Beziehungen zwischen Spanien und Deutschland 1916, Military attaché embassy Madrid to Auswärtige Amt, 17.9.1916.

⁹²⁰Strachan, *The First World War, Vol. I*, p. 769.

⁹²¹Ibid. Strachan does not explain why they were executed.

⁹²²Rüchardt, *Deutsch-Spanische Beziehungen*, p. 177.

⁹²³Romanones, *Notas de una vida*, pp 400–1.

⁹²⁴Romero Salvadó, *Spain 1914 – 1918*, p. 166.

⁹²⁵Strachan, *The First World War, Vol. I*, p. 768.

Bartels acted as an intermediary between the German administration and the rebel leader with the aim of organising an uprising against the French in Morocco.⁹²⁶

While the Spanish were prepared to overlook German propaganda efforts in Morocco and also turned a blind eye on the financial support of tribal leaders, weapon deliveries were a different matter. German guns supplied to Moroccan rebels, while intended to fight the French, could have been used against the Spanish as well and therefore posed a potential threat to the Spanish Protectorate.⁹²⁷ To stop weapon supplies to the Rif, Spain enforced stricter customs regulations⁹²⁸ and a planned shipment of 5,000 rifles and 500,000 rounds was successfully blocked.⁹²⁹ In January 1916, the port authorities at Malaga discovered a shipment of weapons from Germany possibly destined for Morocco.⁹³⁰ To support Spanish port authorities and border patrols, a small French surveillance service was also operating in Morocco with the task of intercepting and uncovering German arms deliveries and financial transactions.⁹³¹ However, German arms still reached the area but German agents were unable to control their distribution since they often went to those tribes closest to the coast.⁹³² For example, a shipment of 3,000 rifles and two million rounds reached tribes in July 1916.⁹³³

By September 1918 French forces had fought down Abd el Malek's rebellion and the rebel leader was forced to retreat into Spanish Morocco by November 1918.⁹³⁴ Hew Strachan assessed that Germany's activities in the French colony did not present a coherent effort that could have seriously undermined French control over the region. On the contrary, Strachan argues that the French, despite not making any territorial

⁹²⁶González Calleja, 'Nidos de espías' in *Revista de Historia Militar*, pp 179–226.

⁹²⁷Strachan, *The First World War, Vol. I*, p. 756.

⁹²⁸*Ibid.*, p. 768.

⁹²⁹*Ibid.*, p. 756.

⁹³⁰González Calleja, 'Nidos de espías' in *Revista de Historia Militar*, pp 179–226.

⁹³¹*Ibid.*

⁹³²Strachan, *The First World War, Vol. I*, p. 768.

⁹³³*Ibid.*

⁹³⁴*Ibid.*

advances, were able to strengthen their rule in Morocco.⁹³⁵ While German activity in North Africa did not produce the desired effect of ousting the French colonisers from the region, it certainly forced the Allies to further divert their war effort and also contributed to encourage the on-going struggle of the rebels against colonial rule. This would have a disastrous effect particularly on Spanish authority in their parts of Morocco, despite German assertions of support for Spain's colonial enterprise. Germany opportunistically manipulated Spanish interests to its favour without considering the long-term ramifications.

The Allied information services in Spain

Similar to their propaganda effort, Germany also had a head start when it came to intelligence activity in Spain. With increased sabotage activity and rising social unrest fomented by the German embassy, the Allies had to counter German activities in order to ensure stability and secure trade vital for their war economy. By 1915 the French had begun to establish an intelligence service in Spain in order to combat enemy activity. Prior to that Spain had held little strategic importance for France but the realisation that the war was going to be longer than initially anticipated made an organised counter-espionage effort in Spain necessary. Shortly after intelligence operations were established by the French in December 1915, the Italians quickly followed suit.⁹³⁶ All French activity was coordinated by Lieutenant Neufville at the embassy in Madrid. Since February 1915 Joseph Crozier, an official of the French secret service *Deuxième Bureau*, operated in Spain.⁹³⁷ By the end of 1915 the French counter-espionage service on the Iberian Peninsula was beginning to take shape with Coronel T.

⁹³⁵Ibid, p. 769.

⁹³⁶García Sanz, *La primera guerra mundial en el estrecho de Gibraltar*, pp 264–5.

⁹³⁷González Calleja, 'Nidos de espías' in *Revista de Historia Militar*, pp 179–226.

T. Denvignes, who in September 1916 was officially appointed as military attaché, at the head of the service. In addition to that, Lieutenant Roucy was appointed naval attaché in November 1915.⁹³⁸

French intelligence efforts focussed on border control with information services established in Barcelona, San Sebastian and Bilbao. Additional observation posts existed in Zaragoza, Pamplona and Salamanca. The post in Salamanca, which had a link to Lisbon, allowed the French to control the Spanish-Portuguese border as well. From Seville and Malaga French agents observed German activity in Morocco and kept an eye on contraband and arms trade. Similar to the German intelligence service, the French also monitored ship movements and maritime traffic in general while also surveying enemy ships and their crews interned at Spanish ports. Agents were hired and deployed on Spanish ships in order to gather information and post as well as telegraphic communication was intercepted to help uncover German plots.⁹³⁹

In gathering intelligence the French military and naval attachés were sometimes facilitated by Count Romanones, who passed on information to the French services. Occasionally information could be gleaned from official audiences with King Alfonso XIII – usually on the general development of the war and the politics of the Central Powers.⁹⁴⁰ Another way of obtaining information on German activity in Spain was by observing the transactions of German companies and banks in the country. By following receipts and bills, it was hoped that possible payments for propaganda services or even contraband deliveries could be identified. The French used this information to develop an official and confidential black list of companies and businessmen which was kept up until the spring of 1919.⁹⁴¹ By mid-1918 French intelligence activity focused on the strategic areas of Catalonia and the Balears with a post in Barcelona, in the North on

⁹³⁸Ibid.

⁹³⁹Ibid.

⁹⁴⁰Ibid.

⁹⁴¹Ibid.

San Sebastian, the centre with Madrid, in the South on Granada, Sevilla, Salamanca and Valencia. Military attaché Denvignes was replaced by Coronel J. Tisseyre in February 1918 and naval attaché Roucy was succeeded by Captain Bergasse du Petit Thouars in July 1917.⁹⁴²

The British intelligence effort in Spain had its centre at the embassy in Madrid and although ambassador Hardinge was not officially part of the British secret service mission, he was kept informed on all activity. This activity was coordinated by the embassy secretary, Sir Percy Lorraine, who worked for the intelligence division of the Admiralty's war staff and had been in Madrid since 1916.⁹⁴³ Josceline C.H. Grant, military attaché from 1916 to 1919, was in charge of military intelligence. Grant also assumed the position of naval attaché until Captain John Harvey, who had been serving in Gibraltar, was appointed at the beginning of 1918. Harvey arrived in Madrid in March 1918. Prior to his appointment, Coronel Charles Thoroton operated as a British agent in Gibraltar and was in charge of creating a navy information and espionage network.⁹⁴⁴

From the beginning of the war Britain had preferred to use economic pressure against Spain, by withholding vital coal exports, for example,⁹⁴⁵ which explains the delay with which they initiated their secret service mission on the peninsula. Spain's economic dependency on Britain ensured to a great degree that Spanish governments would comply with British demands. With on-going unrestricted submarine warfare and rampant German activity in Spain, however, it became necessary for the British to take further action. British intelligence sought to establish regular contacts in Spain's political world and other influential sectors of the country. It was also concentrated on

⁹⁴²Ibid.

⁹⁴³Pérez Grueso, 'Los servicios de inteligencia británicos en España durante la Primera Guerra Mundial' in *Revista de Historia Militar*, pp 237–258.

⁹⁴⁴Ibid.

⁹⁴⁵See chapter four.

keeping up commercial relations between both countries in order to guarantee a supply of products necessary for the Allied war effort. Commercial propaganda became the focus of the British attachés, who tried to create a climate favourable to the conclusion of commercial treaties. A commercial propaganda office was established in the first half of 1918 under the supervision of embassy secretary Lorraine.⁹⁴⁶ Besides these efforts, British intelligence also engaged in counter-espionage against German activity and tried to prohibit any possible support of Spain for the Central Powers.

Since it was known to the Foreign Office that the German embassy was involved in strike agitation amongst Spanish workers, any unrest, especially in the mining industry, was viewed with suspicion by the British intelligence services, whose agents tried to identify the main agitators and expose them. Repressing social unrest in particular in the mining industry was therefore an important aid to British intelligence which benefited from the temporary suspension of constitutional guarantees in 1917.⁹⁴⁷

As outlined in Chapter 4, Britain's considerations regarding Spain's value as an ally led to the conclusion that the territorial offers that would have to be made in order for Spain to abandon neutrality were far too great and outweighed what Spain could offer. Nevertheless, the British made an effort to convince Spain to break off relations with Germany.⁹⁴⁸ This would have allowed the Allies to fully expose the German network and ensure a stabilisation of commercial relations beneficial to the Allied war effort. Spanish governments, though, were unable to deviate from the course of neutrality which was favoured by the majority of Spanish society and, most importantly, by powerful sectors of Spanish politics.

⁹⁴⁶Pérez Grueso, 'Los servicios de inteligencia británicos en España durante la Primera Guerra Mundial' in *Revista de Historia Militar*, pp 237–258.

⁹⁴⁷García Sanz, *La primera guerra mundial en el estrecho de Gibraltar*, pp 282–3. Also see chapter one.

⁹⁴⁸Pérez Grueso, 'Los servicios de inteligencia británicos en España durante la Primera Guerra Mundial' in *Revista de Historia Militar*, pp 237–258.

There was no coherent collaboration amongst the Allies in their intelligence activities in Spain, especially in the first years of the war. British and French services competed rather than collaborated. Thoroton, the British agent in Gibraltar, for example, did not deem it necessary to exchange information with his French and Italian colleagues since he thought they had little to offer in return.⁹⁴⁹ British intelligence agents in general were distrustful of their French colleagues and only reluctantly and less often collaborated with the Italians, while they only had contempt for the Portuguese. However, they enjoyed very good relations with their American counterparts.⁹⁵⁰ Only towards the end of 1918 did the various Allied intelligence officials in Spain begin to have regular joint meetings.⁹⁵¹

Espionage scandals at the end of the war

Allied and German intelligence activity in Spain clearly demonstrate how the country became a hotbed for spies during the First World War. One of the more illustrious spy stories from the period involves German military attaché Kalle. In December 1916 the military attaché was contacted by a Dutch woman who requested a meeting with him. This woman turned out to be no other than the infamous Mata Hari – Margaretha Zelle who, after being detained by the British in Falmouth on suspicion of being a German spy, had arrived in Madrid with the hope of extracting some information out of Kalle that she could sell to the French.⁹⁵² Although she successfully seduced Kalle, the information he gave her regarding a submarine landing on the coast of Morocco and his admission that the Germans had broken the French codes were

⁹⁴⁹García Sanz, *La primera guerra mundial en el estrecho de Gibraltar*, pp 270–2.

⁹⁵⁰Pérez Grueso, ‘Los servicios de inteligencia británicos en España durante la Primera Guerra Mundial’ in *Revista de Historia Militar*, pp 237–258.

⁹⁵¹Ibid.

⁹⁵²Julie Wheelwright, *The fatal lover: Mata Hari and the myth of women in espionage* (London, 1992), pp 61-2.

false. The German military attaché wanted to see how much information would get back to the French but left Zelle in the belief she was now a double agent working for him and paid her 3,500 pesetas.⁹⁵³

In Madrid Zelle was staying at the Hotel Ritz where another French agent, Marthé Richard, stayed as well. In contrast to Zelle's espionage activity, Richard's work was highly valued by the French secret service. Georges Ladoux, head of French counter espionage, had only initiated a collaboration with Zelle in order to expose her as a German agent.⁹⁵⁴ Mata Hari's liason with Kalle would be her downfall. In full knowledge that the French would intercept his messages, Kalle sent radiograms to Berlin compromising Zelle as the German agent known as H-21. Despite not having concrete evidence that Zelle was indeed the spy operating under the code name H-21 and being aware that the German messages were false, Ladoux, desperate to arrest a German spy, sacrificed Zelle.⁹⁵⁵ Mata Hari was condemned to death by firing squad.

While Kalle successfully dealt with Allied counter-espionage without compromising the German diplomatic mission in Spain, his colleague von Krohn was less fortunate. In October 1917 the embassy received news from Berlin that the Spanish government had requested the naval attaché's recall with immediate effect. No explanation was given.⁹⁵⁶ Over the next few months, however, it emerged that Krohn's dismissal was due to an affair he had with a French woman, an affair which, according to ambassador Ratibor, had caused much annoyance in the German community in Spain. Ratibor felt that the naval attaché had completely fallen under the influence of that woman who he considered to be of the *demi-monde*. Krohn's dependence on this woman was explained by Ratibor as a mental illness and he recommended the naval

⁹⁵³Ibid., pp 62-3.

⁹⁵⁴Ibid., pp 65-7.

⁹⁵⁵Toni Bentley, *Sisters of Salome* (New Haven, 2002), pp 87-9.

⁹⁵⁶B.A.M., RM5/1752, Admiralstab der Marine, F.T. – Verkehr mit Spanien Bd. 2 Apr. – Dez. 1917, Berlin to embassy Madrid, 15.10.1917.

attaché's referral to a sanatorium.⁹⁵⁷ Prior to the incident Krohn had indeed requested leave due to nervousness stating the need to relax.⁹⁵⁸ This picture of Krohn's personality stands in stark contrast to that his enemies had of him. Allied agents described the German naval attaché as a mysterious man of action, without scruples and prepared to do anything – a 'crazy sadist'.⁹⁵⁹ The revelations around Krohn's liason, however, let him appear in a very different light.

The problem caused by Krohn's affair was not so much a moral one (he was separated from his wife as can be seen in his correspondence arguing about alimony payments⁹⁶⁰), but a political one since the woman he was having the affair with turned out to be a French agent who started blackmailing the German embassy after Krohn ended the relationship. She threatened to have Krohn's letters to her published and to disclose any information passed on to her by the German naval attaché.⁹⁶¹ Although it appears no vital information was leaked, in the wake of the scandal even the Spanish king demanded Krohn's dismissal. The French double agent who threatened to compromise the German naval attaché was the above mentioned colleague of Mata Hari, Marthé Richard.⁹⁶²

Krohn had already come under fire during events leading to the escape of the German submarine UB-49 which was interned in Spanish waters.⁹⁶³ Although the German naval attaché had advised the captain of the UB-49 against an escape from La Coruña, Krohn received the blame for the incident and Madrid now demanded his

⁹⁵⁷P.A., R12004, Spanien 61 – Die politischen Beziehungen zwischen Spanien und Deutschland Dez. 1917 – Jan. 1918, Ratibor to Auswärtige Amt, 11.12.1917.

⁹⁵⁸B.A.M., RM5/2414, Admiralstab der Marine, Schrift–pp. Verkehr mit Vertretern der Marine, ab Sept. 1916 dem Marineattaché, und anderen Personen in Madrid Bd. 7 Okt. 1916 – März 1917, Admiralty via Auswärtige Amt, 19.11.1916.

⁹⁵⁹Fernando García Sanz, *España en la Gran Guerra: Espías, diplomáticos y traficantes* (Barcelona, 2014), pp 100-1.

⁹⁶⁰B.A.M., RM5/2413, Admiralstab der Marine, Schrift–pp. Verkehr mit Vertretern der Marine, ab Sept. 1916 dem Marineattaché, und anderen Personen in Madrid Bd. 6 Juli – Nov. 1916, Krohn to Justizrat Schwickerath, 22.9.1916.

⁹⁶¹B.A.M., RM5/906, Bericht des Militärattachés in Madrid betr. Audienz beim König von Spanien (U-Bootkrieg), Secret report, Berlin, 16.12.1917.

⁹⁶²Wheelwright, *The fatal lover*, p. 52.

⁹⁶³See chapter four.

recall. His affair with a French agent allowed the German embassy to dismiss him without having to give in to requests from the Spanish government which, as Ratibor feared, might have set a precedent and led to recalling other members of the embassy.⁹⁶⁴ Krohn's dismissal at the end of 1917 came in the wake of the Zimmermann Telegram scandal which not only had exposed German covert activity against the Allies but also led to the United States joining the war, an outcome that had to be avoided in the case of Spain. Krohn himself blamed his departure from Spain on intrigues by the English ambassador Hardinge. And although the German naval attaché post at Madrid was a position under considerable attack from the Allies, due to Spain's geostrategic importance, which allowed observation and disruption of transatlantic trade, it is more likely that Krohn had fallen out of favour with the embassy staff due to his behaviour.⁹⁶⁵

In February 1918 Krohn left Spain with the French government granting him safe conduct, and was replaced by Lieutenant Steffan.⁹⁶⁶ The news of Krohn's dismissal even reached other neutral countries. As the German naval attaché in Oslo passed on from Norway, newspapers there reported on the scandal as well as the suspected links between the German embassy at Madrid and anarchist elements in Spain.⁹⁶⁷ Krohn's successor Steffan was not officially appointed as naval attaché⁹⁶⁸ but, undeterred by the scandal around Krohn's dismissal, he continued his predecessor's espionage and counter-espionage work. In addition to putting in place a sabotage service in the United States and Cuba to disrupt trade between the Entente and the US, he also organised the destruction of food exports in the US destined for Britain. In Spain he continued to foment unrest amongst Spanish dock workers to disrupt trade and delay transports to

⁹⁶⁴Rüchardt, *Deutsch-Spanische Beziehungen*, pp 212-3.

⁹⁶⁵Giessler, *Die Institution des Marineattachés im Kaiserreich*, pp 203-4.

⁹⁶⁶N.A., FO371/3373, Foreign Office, Spain & Portugal (War) 1918, Hardinge to Balfour, 17.2.1918.

⁹⁶⁷B.A.M., RM5/2772 Marine Attache aus Kristiania an Chef des Admiralstabs der Marine und an den Staatssekretär des Reichsmarineamtes 22.2.1918

⁹⁶⁸Giessler, *Die Institution des Marineattachés im Kaiserreich*, pp 203-4.

Britain. Steffan also tried to establish commercial relations between Germany and Spain by negotiating Spanish wolfram exports to Germany.⁹⁶⁹

After the scandal surrounding Krohn's dismissal and the collaboration between the German embassy and anarchist Pascual, which had been uncovered by *El Sol*,⁹⁷⁰ another scandal regarding German covert activity hit Spain in the summer of 1918. In June 1918 Barcelona's chief of police, Manuel Bravo Portillo, was implicated in the passing of information about ship movements to German agents, which subsequently led to the torpedoing of steamers. It was revealed that Portillo had worked for the German administration since 1915 and that, besides delivering information on ship movements, he was also involved in organising disruptions in factories that supplied the Allied market.⁹⁷¹ According to the newspaper *La Publicidad* Bravo Portillo was working for the German agent Baron von Rolland for a monthly salary of 2,000 pesetas.⁹⁷²

Furthermore, it soon transpired that Bravo Portillo had been behind the killing of José Barret in January 1918. Barret was a leading employer in the Catalan metallurgy industry. His murder led to the arrests of several syndicalists and constitutional guarantees were suspended in Barcelona for over two months.⁹⁷³ Although a suspect was found in former policeman Guillermo Belles, he was released after Portillo intervened personally in the case. After Portillo was exposed as a German agent, it also became evident that Belles too had cooperated with the Germans. He had infiltrated Anarchist groups and ordered the killing of Barret. German agents had been quite successful in infiltrating the CNT while the more pro-Allied UGT remained immune to

⁹⁶⁹Ibid., pp 206-7.

⁹⁷⁰See chapter four.

⁹⁷¹Romero Salvadó, *Spain 1914 – 1918*, pp 166-9.

⁹⁷²González Calleja, 'Nidos de espías' in *Revista de Historia Militar*, pp 179–226.

⁹⁷³Romero Salvadó, *Spain 1914 – 1918*, pp 166-9.

such advances. Despite Portillo's and Belles' arrests, the case was dismissed and Portillo escaped unscathed thanks to his connections in Spanish society.⁹⁷⁴

With the introduction of the neutrality bill in July 1918⁹⁷⁵ the Spanish government did, however, react to the series of scandals exposing the far-reaching interference of the belligerents, Germany in particular, in Spanish affairs. In addition to curbing the press war between the *Germanófilos* and *Francófilos* the bill also enabled the government to impose prison sentences and fines ranging from 500 to 20,000 pesetas for anybody facilitating a foreign power or its agents with information that could threaten Spain's neutrality and could harm another foreign power.⁹⁷⁶ The Foreign Office assessed that the bill would have a more serious impact on Germany especially because of its anti-espionage clause.⁹⁷⁷ However, Germany also benefited from an enforcement of strict neutrality which now almost guaranteed that Spain would not join the war under any circumstances. The British were also concerned that a gagging of the press would prohibit further revelations about German espionage activity in Spain. Without being able to expose or defame a foreign power, which the bill now forbade, revelations such as the Pascual and the Bravo Portillo case would not be possible.⁹⁷⁸

At the end of the war, in December 1918, the Spanish government, led by Count Romanones, established a special police unit, the *Escuadra Volante Secreta*. The unit consisted of fifty men who collaborated with the Allies as well as observing and controlling the movement of foreigners in Spain, reserving the right to detain suspects. The beginnings of this intelligence service highlight the lessons Spain had learned from

⁹⁷⁴Romero Salvadó, *Spain 1914 – 1918*, pp 166-9.

⁹⁷⁵See chapter two.

⁹⁷⁶N.A., FO371/3375, Foreign Office, Spain & Portugal (War) 1918, Translation of bill to preserve neutrality, undated

⁹⁷⁷*Ibid.*

⁹⁷⁸*Ibid.*

the First World War, during which it was left exposed to belligerent activity due to the lack of a national information or counter-espionage service.⁹⁷⁹

Social unrest in Spain culminated in the summer of 1917 and continued until the end of the war and thereafter. After the defeat of the Central Powers, the German diplomatic corps in Spain could only try to use their connections in Spanish society to promote a favourable peace for Germany. Krohn, until his dismissal, was able to stay in close contact with the Spanish national workers union. When the union received a confidential request to participate in a peace congress of all European workers to take place in Russia, it contacted the German naval attaché to see whether he would be interested sending a participant or if he had any instructions for them.⁹⁸⁰

Those contacts also benefited Germany during peace negotiations at the end of the war. In an attempt to influence the outcome at Versailles, the post-war German government tried to stress the differences between the new and the old German state while at the same time producing numerous publications on the origins of the war in the hope of more lenient peace terms.⁹⁸¹ The Potsdam Reichsarchiv began to assemble documents based on information from the diaries and memoirs of key military and political figures. Those contributors, however, were primarily interested in showing Germany's innocence in the events leading to the outbreak of war.⁹⁸² Similarly the work of the Special Bureau led by legation secretary Bernhard von Bülow, which in 1920 became the War Guilt Section of the *Auswärtige Amt*, tried to refute sole German

⁹⁷⁹Fernando García Sanz, 'Hacia una "cultura de los servicios de inteligencia" in *Arbor*, clxxx, no. 709 (Jan., 2005), pp 1-21.

⁹⁸⁰B.A.M., RM5/2415, Admiralstab der Marine, Schrift-pp. Verkehr mit Vertretern der Marine, ab Sept. 1916 dem Marineattaché, und anderen Personen in Madrid Bd. 8 Feb. – Juli 1917, Naval attaché Madrid to Head of Admiralty, 10.6.1917.

⁹⁸¹Annika Mombauer (ed.), *The origins of the First World War. Diplomatic and military documents* (Manchester, 2013), pp 7-8.

⁹⁸²Eadem, *Helmuth von Moltke and the origins of the First World War* (Cambridge, 2001), pp 10-1.

responsibility for the war and prove that the Allies had long wished for a war against Germany.⁹⁸³

In Spain this official German post-war effort was supported by the diplomats at Madrid who carried out their work for the new socialist government with the same zeal as they had done for the old German empire. This remarkable continuity could be explained by a strong sense of patriotism and loyalty to nation and state felt by many German diplomats.⁹⁸⁴ Through union leaders and the press Krohn's successor, Steffan, spread propaganda calling on Spanish workers to support the newly formed Weimar Republic and advocate for favourable peace conditions for Germany.⁹⁸⁵ News that France and Britain would press for harsher armistice conditions not only prompted German peace propaganda in Spain into action but also saw efforts to influence French socialists through their Spanish comrades and support them financially from time to time.⁹⁸⁶ For the international socialist congress in Bern held in January 1919 the German embassy successfully recruited three Spanish socialists, Angulo, Ovejero and Azorin, to do its bidding. Their aim was to persuade Spanish socialist leader Besteiro, who was seen as an idealist and possibly under the influence of the French government. For their work they received a payment of 50,000 pesetas and a further 50,000 pesetas if they succeeded. Angulo, who appears to have been the main contact, suggested to claim that money and instructions came from German socialists and not the embassy at Madrid.⁹⁸⁷

⁹⁸³Holger Herwig, 'Clio deceived: Patriotic self-censorship in Germany after the Great War' in *International Security*, xii, no. 2 (Fall, 1987), pp 5-44.

⁹⁸⁴Michael Jonas, "Can one go along with this?" German diplomats and the changes of 1918-19 and 1933-4' in *Journal of Contemporary History*, xlvii, no. 2, pp 240-69.

⁹⁸⁵B.A.M., RM5/1691, Marineattaché Madrid, Spanien Bd. 1 1918-19, Unsigned telegram Admiralty from Madrid, 22.11.1918.

⁹⁸⁶Ibid., Unsigned telegram Admiralty from Madrid, 12.12.1918.

⁹⁸⁷Ibid., Admiralty, Activity report of naval attaché Madrid, 23.1.1919.

After the dismissal of the entire German embassy staff at the end of 1918, beginning of 1919,⁹⁸⁸ Hauptmann von Koos and information officer Nahrstedt officially took over army and navy matters in Spain in January 1919.⁹⁸⁹ Although the peace treaties after the First World War did not explicitly forbid the Central Powers to deploy military and naval attachés to their diplomatic missions, Germany did not appoint service attachés again until December 1932.⁹⁹⁰ Article 179 of the Versailles Treaty stated that it was forbidden to undertake any military, naval or aerial missions in foreign countries or send missions to other countries. Also, members of the Reich were to be prohibited from leaving German territory in order to help or facilitate the training or instruction of an army, navy and air force.⁹⁹¹

Although at the end of the war the Spanish government finally took action against espionage activity, this came too late to repair the damage that had been done. In January 1919 *El Sol*, referring to the intrigues of the German diplomatic corps in Spain, stated:

If the whole of their [German diplomats] remaining lives were devoted to penitence, these gentlemen could never undo the enormous harm they have inflicted on Spain. The Prince [Ratibor] leaves us involved in a hundred problems which could be settled at this moment if the German embassy had not implanted a terrible corruption in our country. Let us hope that his departure will signify a radical change in German diplomatic methods in Spain.⁹⁹²

While the official embassy staff including the service attachés got away lightly and were able to return to Germany unpunished for their deeds, Germany's unofficial agents did not get away that easily. Against Kalle's agent Captain Rüggeberg, who had controlled large parts of the German espionage network from Barcelona, an arrest warrant was issued at the end of 1919. Baron von Rolland [or Rollan], who allegedly

⁹⁸⁸See chapter four.

⁹⁸⁹Giessler, *Die Institution des Marineattachés im Kaiserreich*, p. 205.

⁹⁹⁰Alfred Vagts, *The military attaché* (Princeton, 1967), pp 55-6.

⁹⁹¹Manfred Kehrig, *Die Wiedereinrichtung des deutschen militärischen Attachédienstes nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg (1919-1933)* (Boppard am Rhein, 1966), p. 10.

⁹⁹²As quoted in *The Times*, 13 Jan. 1919.

had been involved with Bravo Portillo, was also arrested in December 1919.⁹⁹³ After news surfaced he was actually a Greek of the name Errazti, the German administration distanced itself from Rolland and left him to his own fate.⁹⁹⁴

On his return to Germany former military attaché Kalle became active in Weimar politics. In 1919 he joined the newly formed DVP (German people's party) and in August 1923 he was made chief press officer in the government of Gustav Stresemann.⁹⁹⁵ Kalle's political career in Germany after the war was not hindered by the revelations about his activity in Spain. Hinting at the effects of German intelligence operations in Spain, *The Times* in an article entitled 'The Master German mind in Spain, Kalle's web of Spies' wrote in January 1919: '... Kalle leaves behind him a complete system of underground working against the Allies, which, especially in the form of Bolshevist organisations, is today causing even the Spanish government the greatest anxiety.'⁹⁹⁶

Conclusion

The espionage network Germany built up in Spain during the First World War demonstrates the extent to which the German administration was able to permeate Spanish society. While the full scope of German covert activity will never be revealed and many German agents will remain unknown, we now have a much clearer picture of

⁹⁹³P.A., R12018, Spanien 61 secr. – Die Beziehungen zwischen Spanien und Deutschland 1919–20, Bassewitz at embassy Madrid to Auswärtige Amt, 15.12.1919.

⁹⁹⁴Ibid. Bassewitz at embassy Madrid to Auswärtige Amt, 6.1.1920. Also see A.M.A.E., H1338, Correspondencia Embajadas y Legaciones Alemania 1917–1918, Embassy Berlin to Ministry of State, 30.9.1918. Don Bernardo Rolland is described as secretary of the German embassy, working for the embassy for 5 ½ years. He was awarded the Cross (Third Class) of the Prussian Order of the Red Eagle. In González Calleja, 'Nidos de espías' in *Revista de Historia Militar*, pp 179–226, Rolland is described as German agent in Barcelona responsible for the economic information service. German diplomatic files otherwise reveal little about Rolland. Hornemann and Rüggeberg were the main agents of Kalle and Krohn, who also had a multitude of other unofficial agents working for them.

⁹⁹⁵Vagts, *The military attaché*, p. 162.

⁹⁹⁶*The Times*, 13 Jan. 1919.

the organisational structure of the German network and are also able to identify its key players. One of them, Wilhelm Canaris, who became the head of *Abwehr* – the Nazi's military intelligence service, certainly benefited from his Spanish contacts build up during the First World War when Hitler decided to aid General Franco during the Spanish Civil War.

Sabotage activity against Allied property in Spain shows how the war extended into neutral territory stressing its total aspect. The German service attachés, who before the war served in an advisory position to the embassy, were now transformed into active agents of war, further highlighting the growing strength of the German military during the First World War. The activity the attachés in Spain engaged in had the main aim to hinder the Allied war effort by sabotaging trade between Spain, France and Britain. This was done by promoting social unrest through the infiltration of workers organisations. Despite an economic boom created by the war, living conditions of the working classes worsened while successive governments failed to implement lasting reforms to stabilise social conditions. German diplomats and military personnel in Spain tapped into that discontent by fomenting strikes and spreading propaganda amongst Spanish workers which highlighted increased trade with the Allies while Spaniards had to suffer food shortages. On the other hand Germany also supported the conservative and monarchic elements in Spanish society as represented by the Spanish king and the military juntas for example. Thus German interference agitated opposing forces within Spain leading to instability which ultimately made the country a less reliable partner for the Allies, therefore ensuring Spanish neutrality and hindering the war effort of the Entente.

Since appeals to the Spanish government to enforce strict neutrality and curb trade with the Entente fell on deaf ears, German diplomats and military personnel thought it necessary to resort to covert activity. Germany was unable to offer alternative trade links due to the blockade and her geographical situation. The enormous profits

reaped by Spanish business and industry during the war were also too great of a lure to reduce trade with France and Britain, despite the risks posed by the German submarine campaign. As shareholders or board members of large co-operations many Spanish government officials also profited personally from the war time boom making restrictions on trade unlikely. When attempts were made to impose any government control over exports or introduce a tax on wartime profits, they were quickly shot down by business and industry which proved too strong of a lobby for the government to resist. While Germany pursued a ruthless strategy in Spain boycotting the trade of the Entente by violating the rights of a neutral country, accelerating the disintegration of social order and risking the lives of civilians, the Allies maintained their pressure on Spain to deliver exports vital for the war effort and benefited from the repression of social unrest. The internal and external pressures Spain was experiencing during the First World War clearly highlight that neutrality did not shield the country from the effects of war.

Conclusion

The end of the First World War also spelled the end for the German autocratic monarchy. Under threat from labour protests and an ever growing socialist and communist movement, the Kaiser abdicated and a Republic was declared. In Spain workers in the cities and the countryside continued their protests. Instead of socialism, it was anarcho-syndicalism that the majority of the Spanish working classes turned to. However, much like in the failed uprising of the summer of 1917, the various protesting groups failed to stage a coherent effort to topple the regime. By 1919 Spain's dynastic parties were completely divided in competing sections, making it yet again difficult to form any stable government. To protect their interest, the bourgeoisie turned to the army for support which brutally suppressed any civilian protest. Shortly after the assassination of Prime Minister Eduardo Dato at the hands of anarchists in March 1921, Spanish troops suffered a devastating defeat at Annual in Morocco¹, resulting in a national crisis.

Germany and Spain resumed their official diplomatic relations after Spain's recognition of the Weimar Republic. In January 1920 the German Ambassador von Hoesch took up his business in Madrid, while Spain sent its first post-war ambassador to Berlin in October 1920.² By 1921 the active wartime propagandist August Hofer was still managing his printing business in Barcelona and also publishing a small newspaper.³ The Barcelona-based German club *Germania*, which had been a focal point for Hofer and his German compatriots during the First World War, celebrated its 50th

¹Rudibert Kunz & Rolf-Dieter Müller, *Giftgas gegen Abd el Krim. Deutschland, Spanien und der Gaskrieg in Spanisch-Marokko, 1922-1927* (Freiburg, 1990), p. 55. Official estimates between 13,000 to 35,000 casualties.

²Rüchardt, *Deutsch-Spanische Beziehungen*, p. 252.

³P.A., R123008, Die Presse in Spanien (außer in Madrid) 1918-39, Consulat Barcelona [Hassel?] to Auswärtige Amt, 17.3.1921.

anniversary in November 1921.⁴ However, the German communities in Madrid and Barcelona did not present a united front after the war but were divided by political differences. In order to achieve a coordinated effort similar to that of the war years, the German consul at Barcelona tried to establish societies for the promotion of German culture abroad.⁵

During the inter-war years German diplomats also tried to keep German topics present in the Spanish press. This was undoubtedly part of the German propaganda effort to refute the war guilt clause of the Versailles treaty. When articles by British Prime Minister David Lloyd George and his French counterpart, Raymond Poincaré, appeared in the Barcelona newspaper *Vanguardia* in 1925, attempts were made to convince German politicians to do the same.⁶ In the inter-war period Germany and Spain also formed new economic relations, particularly in Spain's Moroccan protectorate. Spain needed to improve its military power in order to gain control over the region and Germany was to facilitate the production and delivery of munition, weapons and transport vehicles to Morocco. The defeat at Annual in 1921 made it more urgent for Spain to break down the rebellion in the Rif and German chemical weapons technology was viewed as a possible solution. Ironically Germany, which had incited rebellion amongst the tribes in North Africa throughout the First World War, was now called upon to deal with those uprisings. Secret negotiations between Spain and Germany began in 1922 discussing the construction of a chemical weapons factory in Spain with the help of German expertise, personnel and technical equipment.⁷ This was of course in violation of the terms of the Versailles Treaty which, however, did not deter Germany. In addition to facilitating Spain's weapons production, further attempts were

⁴P.A., R60214, Förderung des Deutschtums in Spanien, Consulat Barcelona, Hassel to Auswärtige Amt, 3.11.1921.

⁵P.A., R60214, Förderung des Deutschtums in Spanien, Copy of report, Barcelona, 21.8.1922,

⁶B.A.M., N253/173, Nachlass Alfred Tirpitz, Politische propaganda in Spanien 1925, Hassel to Tirpitz, 17.7.1925.

⁷Kunz & Müller, *Giftgas gegen Abd el Krim*, p. 68.

made by Germany to breach the conditions of Versailles by building submarines for Germany in Spain.⁸

Despite this activity, the close economic and military contacts between both countries in the 1920s ceased to exist with the establishment of the Second Republic in 1931.⁹ It was the advent of civil war in Spain in 1936 that saw a renewed intensification of Spanish-German relations. When Adolf Hitler decided to come to the aid of General Franco in 1936, links between the two countries had already been firmly established and Germany was able to call on an extensive network in Spain built up during the First World War. When the Führer answered Franco's call for assistance, he also appointed a new German ambassador to Spain. Eberhard von Stohrer, embassy secretary at Madrid from 1913 to 1918, took up his new post in 1936.¹⁰

Given the extensive connections that existed between Spain and Germany during the First World War, as highlighted in this study, Spain's close ties to Nazi Germany now do not appear that surprising anymore. As this examination of the relationship between a neutral country and one of the main belligerent powers during the First World War has demonstrated, the total war waged by the belligerents did not leave the neutral nations unaffected. The violation of Belgian neutrality marked the outbreak of the war and the example of Spain shows how even more distant neutrals became the target of the belligerent's war plans.

The key objectives addressed in this study were to outline the official and unofficial links that existed between Spain and Germany during the First World War and establish how these links were set up and maintained throughout the conflict. The main protagonists on both sides were identified and their activity was reconstructed. In addition, the reasoning behind German strategy in Spain was examined and the

⁸Ibid., pp 101-2.

⁹Christian Leitz, *Economic relations between Nazi Germany and Franco's Spain, 1936-1945* (Oxford, 1996), p. 13.

¹⁰See chapter four.

motivation of Spanish collaborators was explored. This examination then allowed for an analysis of the effects German activity had especially in regard to Spain's domestic situation.

The establishment and the maintenance of the official and unofficial links between Spain and Germany during the war, facilitated by a thorough investigation of German diplomatic files as well as military records and Foreign Office documentation, shows that the impetus for most German activity in Spain initially came from the diplomats in the country and was then subsequently sanctioned by Berlin. As the examination of the private propaganda effort has shown, the German community in Spain played an important role in establishing unofficial links between both countries, allowing for an even greater permeation of German influence on the Iberian Peninsula. This form of self-mobilisation, as evidenced in the German community in Spain, also demonstrates the willingness of German nationals abroad to participate in their country's war effort. Therefore, it can be argued that German wartime mobilisation was not restricted to the country's national boundaries but instead the patriotic call of duty also reached those living in neutral territories at the outbreak of war.

The maintenance of the German network in Spain was facilitated by personal friendships and business relations which had already been established prior to the war and, as was sometimes the case in the Spanish publishing industry, was also aided by financial contributions. Germany's support of pro-neutrality factions amongst Spanish political parties as well as oppositional movements also enabled many different types of collaboration. By portraying Germany as a defender of Spanish neutrality and accusing the Allies of pressuring Spain into the war, those Spaniards favouring non-intervention were pushed further away from the Entente. The economic pressure exerted by Britain and France on Spain also allowed German propaganda to exploit existing resentment

amongst Spaniards against those countries and motivated some to collaborate with the German administration in the hope that this was in Spain's best interest.

The key protagonists in Spanish-German relations during the First World War were identified by investigating German, Spanish and British diplomatic files as well as Spanish, British and American newspaper reports. As is evident from the examination, the main figure on the German side was Ambassador Ratibor. However, the embassy staff, as well as the network of German businessmen and residents in Spain, were of no lesser importance. Of equal significance to the ambassador were the German service attachés, Kalle and Krohn, who built up a large intelligence network and engaged in covert activity playing off opposing groups in Spanish society, contributing to the destabilisation of Spain's domestic affairs. The attachés' 'web of spies' relied on a number of middlemen, for the first time comprehensively identified in this study, the most important one being Wilhelm Canaris. He put in place a network of agents, not only responsible for gathering information on enemy activity in Spain and North Africa, but also engaged in the destruction of Allied property and active sabotage of the Allied war effort. This network was also reactivated in the inter-war period. Canaris visited the Canary Islands in 1927 with view to establish a Lufthansa base. The German supply service (*Etappendienst*) was reorganised in 1933 and became a branch of the Nazis military intelligence service, *Abwehr*.¹¹

A number of Spanish journalists from various publications, as well as writers and intellectuals, willingly collaborated with the German embassy in their propaganda effort. Some of them, like Enrique Dominguez Rodiño, who had reported for *Vanguardia* from Germany during the war, continued their work with the German

¹¹Robert Whealey, 'Hitler and the Spanish Civil War' in Conrad Kent & Thomas Wolber & Cameron Hewitt (eds), *The lion and the eagle. Interdisciplinary essays on German-Spanish relations over the centuries* (New York, 2000), pp 313-324.

embassy after 1918.¹² Collaborators Vincente Gay and Juan Pujol saw their careers on the rise when they were promoted to important press propaganda positions under the Franco regime.¹³ Gay was appointed head of the Press and Propaganda Ministry in 1937.¹⁴

Liberal and conservative Spanish politicians alike also chose to collaborate with the German administration. The Spanish ambassador in Belgium, the Marquis de Villalobar, was a key figure for Germany in obtaining information about Spanish public opinion as well as political developments in Spain. He was also used in attempts to influence the Spanish king, Alfonso XIII. Alfonso himself was always in close contact with the German diplomatic corps through his friendship with military attaché Kalle. The Spanish ambassador at Berlin, Polo de Bernabé, as well as his military attaché, Major Valdivia, were also important contacts for the German administration.

Thanks to Spain's position of neutrality, those official diplomatic contacts could be maintained openly without causing suspicion. However, Spanish diplomats and politicians had to carefully avoid showing any overt sympathies to either warring side. Spain's effort on behalf of POW's, as carried out by King Alfonso XIII and the Spanish ambassador in Belgium, further highlights the important role of neutrals during wartime. Spanish diplomats provided important links of communication between the belligerents. However, this did not stop them from pursuing their own goals, as can be seen in the examples of Spanish-German collaborations between diplomats and politicians during the war.

In their support for Germany many of the Spanish collaborators were motivated by the belief that a German victory would give Spain an advantageous position in the

¹²P.A., R123011, Spanien 2, Bd. 3, Die Presse in Madrid, 1919-20, Bassewitz to Auswärtiges Amt, 27.9.1919.

¹³Albes, *Worte wie Waffen*, p. 401.

¹⁴P.A., R123008, Die Presse in Spanien (außer in Madrid) 1918-39, Faupel Embassy Salamanca to Auswärtiges Amt, 22.1.1937.

post-war world order. This belief was fuelled by a resentment against Allied economic dominance in Spain as well as the country's subordinate position in the distribution of colonial territories. German diplomats and propagandists took advantage of this discontent and tried to win over Spaniards by making territorial promises or, in the case of Alfonso XIII, offering an important role in peace negotiations after the war. Some Spanish politicians worked with the German embassy in order to further their own agenda, namely ensuring a strict continuation of neutrality. Additional pressure to not deviate from a neutral course was put on Spain's wartime governments by Spanish businesses and industries which profited from the war. The successful German infiltration of Spanish workers' organisations was also owed to their pro-neutrality stance. Pro-German Spanish intellectuals and writers, spurred on by events of the war, continued the debates on a regeneration of Spain which had begun at the end of the nineteenth century. Many of those writers were ardent Spanish nationalists and the First World War proved to be a catalyst for them in developing their own ideas for reforming Spain.

Germany manipulated various groups within Spanish society which were either already benevolent towards Germany or supporters of a strict neutrality. The overall aim of the German effort in Spain was to ensure that the country would maintain an absolute outward neutrality and not join the Entente. There were no considerations made for Spain to join the war effort of the Central Powers. However, German diplomats and propagandists worked hard on keeping Spanish public opinion favourable to the German cause. German activity in Spain during the war was evidently opportunistic and, while everything was done to keep Spain neutral, it tried to disrupt and sabotage the Allied war effort as much as possible.

Germany's strategy of playing off opposing groups within Spanish society caused further political instability in the country. On the one hand, Germany pledged its

support to the conservative elements of the Spanish ruling elite, and on the other hand, German agents agitated workers into strike action, undermining the status quo of the elite. This had the effect that Spain became a less reliable ally for the Entente. Political instability and ongoing civil unrest also impacted on Spain's production output and its ability to continue trade with the Allies which in turn hindered the Allied war effort. Widespread German activity on the Iberian Peninsula and in North Africa forced the Entente to organise a counter-offensive, therefore diverting important resources and manpower away from the war fronts into neutral territory. While Germany had started its aggressive campaign in Spain right from the outset of the war, the Allies were slow to follow and only reacted when German activity was proving to be effective.

While those Spaniards ideologically closer to the Allies were also often in opposition to the ruling regime and in favour of drastic political changes, the Allies, because of their economic dependence on Spain for their war effort, could not mobilise these sections of Spanish society but instead benefited from their repression and as little social upheaval as possible. Concessions that would have to be made to convince Spain to actively join the war effort of the Entente were deemed too great, especially by Britain which was reluctant to cede any territory to Spain in return for weak military support.

Germany's ability to actively interfere in Spanish internal affairs and its ongoing covert operations throughout the war also highlight the weakness of the various Spanish wartime governments which were unable to deal with these intrusions. This further undermined the regime's authority and accelerated the process of political disintegration. The legacy of the Great War in Spain becomes particularly evident in the political instability it left behind due to the constant pressure from both belligerents. This is especially important with view to Spain's tumultuous situation post-1918 and the eventual emergence of civil war and military dictatorship in the 1930s. As other

historians have argued, the origins of that strife can be found in the country's experience of the First World War.¹⁵ The inclusion of neutral countries into the study of World War I, as can be seen in recent publications, not only stresses the global aspect of the war, allowing for comparative studies between the different neutral countries, but also enables historians to analyse how neutrals experienced the effects of war compared to the belligerents.

A look at Spain's situation during the First World War permits a better understanding of the importance of neutral states for the war aims of the belligerents. It also clearly demonstrates how a neutral country suffered the economic effects of war by experiencing inflation and subsequent political instability. While Spain was spared the fate of the belligerent countries which experienced a devastating loss of the lives of millions of men, the German submarine campaign did also target Spanish merchant ships, resulting in casualties. As this investigation has demonstrated, despite Spain not actively taking part in the conflict, the country nevertheless witnessed a form of cultural and intellectual mobilisation, as highlighted in the fierce public debates carried on in Spain throughout the war. In addition, the analysis of the relations between a belligerent and a neutral country also enable a better understanding of the belligerents war aims and strategic plans.

In the case of Spanish-German relations, the links established between both countries during the First World War can be used to further examine the relationship between Spain and Germany during the Spanish Civil War and the Second World War. A particular intriguing aspect, touched upon in this study and worth further investigation, are the links between Spain and the Weimar Republic during the interwar years. This is especially interesting with view of Germany's attempts to undermine the terms of the Versailles Treaty and given the country's links with Spanish anarchist and workers

¹⁵See for example Romero Salvadó, *The foundations of civil war*.

organisation during the First World War. German economic activity in Spanish Morocco in the 1920s and Germany's role as supplier of the Spanish army could provide some hints as to whether some of these links persisted until the time of General Franco's coup d'état. The role of the Spanish Catholic Church during the First World War offers further possibilities of research and could be examined in view of the papal peace effort during the conflict. While the efforts of the German community in Spain have been extensively highlighted in this investigation, the role and activity of the Spanish community in Germany during the First World War and in the interwar period would provide an additional facet to the inter-cultural relations between both countries.

Although a long neglected aspect in the field of First World War studies, the issue of neutrality has received more attention from historians in recent years. The centenary of the Great War has also generated some interest in Spain and has drawn the attention to the country's experience of World War I. As many of the recent publications show, and as has been argued in this investigation, neutrality did not shield Spain from the effects of war. Germany's aggressive behaviour from the outset of the war not only disregarded Belgian neutrality but also showed little respect for Spanish neutrality, highlighting its weakness as a political and diplomatic tool during a time of total war.

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