



Romero Salvado, F. J. (2017). The Organic Crisis of the Liberal State in Spain: Between the Catalan Quagmire and the Red Spectre (November 1918-April 1919). *The Historical Journal*. DOI: 10.107/s0018246x16000480

Peer reviewed version

Link to published version (if available):
[10.107/s0018246x16000480](https://doi.org/10.107/s0018246x16000480)

[Link to publication record in Explore Bristol Research](#)
PDF-document

This is the author accepted manuscript (AAM). The final published version (version of record) is available online via Cambridge University Press at <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/historical-journal/listing?q=The+Organic+Crisis+of+the+Liberal+State+in+Spain&searchWithinIds=15E98E1D30D09470213F11031D82A83C>. Please refer to any applicable terms of use of the publisher.

University of Bristol - Explore Bristol Research

General rights

This document is made available in accordance with publisher policies. Please cite only the published version using the reference above. Full terms of use are available:
<http://www.bristol.ac.uk/pure/about/ebr-terms.html>

**THE ORGANIC CRISIS OF THE LIBERAL STATE IN SPAIN:
BETWEEN THE CATALAN QUAGMIRE AND THE RED
SPECTRE, 1918-19***

FRANCISCO J. ROMERO SALVADÓ

(University of Bristol)

Abstract

Drawing upon a vast array of primary sources, this article focuses on a key period of modern Spanish history: November 1918-April 1919. In the aftermath of WW1 and spurred on by the Allied victory, demands by Catalonia's political elites for greater autonomy seized the country's agenda. However, the political tussle between the centre and the Catalan elites ended a few months later with their mutual defeat. The upsurge of labour agitation and the hopes of the proletariat generated by the Bolshevik Revolution combined with bourgeois fear resulted in the question of national identity being superseded by bitter class conflict. This article conveys the thesis that these crucial months crystalized the organic crisis of the ruling liberal regime. Indeed, the outcome of these events proved its fragile foundations, dashed hopes for a reformist and negotiated solution and constituted a dress rehearsal for the military coup of 1923, a clear example of the reactionary backlash which swept across Europe in the interwar years.

Keywords

Lliga Regionalista de Catalunya, Francesc Cambó, Autonomy, Count Romanones, Confederación Nacional del Trabajo, Sindicato Único, Canadiense, Confederación Patronal Española

I. The Crisis of the Traditional Liberal State

This article seeks to further the debate on the decay (but also resilience) of the Restoration Monarchy in Spain (1874-1923). A related objective is to enlighten the wider European framework of this crucial moment. Despite its peculiarities, the Spanish example was a regional version of the crisis of traditional regimes that engulfed Europe in the aftermath of the Great War, a watershed period when, in the face of unprecedented social protest, incumbent governing elites saw their hegemony challenged in the dawning era of mass politics.

By the turn of the century, in most European countries, behind the façade of parliamentary forms of government, crowned sovereigns, far from being mere figureheads, conserved vital prerogatives. They were backed by royalist armies and bureaucracies. Save for Great Britain, the primary sector still generated the largest proportion of the gross national product. A variety of mechanisms (narrow franchises, clientelism, disproportionate electoral weight given to rural areas, etc.) favoured the manufacture of docile majorities.¹ In Southern Europe, Italy's *trasformismo* or Portugal's *rotativismo* represented the local variety of oligarchic liberalism. In Spain, constitutional trappings concealed the monopoly of power held by a governing elite. Two dynastic parties – Conservatives and Liberals - succeeded systematically in office in a practice known as the *turno pacífico* (peaceful rotation) through a combination of widespread apathy and ballot-rigging organized by the local *caciques* (bigwigs) who in return ran their localities as private fiefdoms.²

Traditionally, the loss of the overseas empire (Cuba, the Philippines, Puerto Rico, etc.) in a war against the United States in 1898 was seen as a fatal blow to the hegemony of the regime.³ However, the avalanche of publications during its centenary challenged that thesis. For instance, José Álvarez Junco suggested that 'the so-called disaster was an exaggerated perception of events, experienced as a collective disgrace of apocalyptic proportions'.⁴ Sebastian Balfour noted how in a largely unmodernised society with poor

communications and high rates of illiteracy, the traditional networks of social control continued to function.⁵

It was the Great War that proved to be a watershed. Although spared from the human ordeal due to her neutrality, Spain experienced unprecedented levels of socio-economic upheaval and its governing classes were challenged with demands for genuine political reform and the fast-advancing threat of revolution. In 1917, the country went through a revolutionary cycle which included the revolt of military officers in June, an assembly of dissident parliamentarians in July and a revolutionary strike headed by the socialists in August which was crushed by the army. The simultaneous fragmentation of the two dynastic parties and the end of the *turno pacífico* led some scholars to suggest that the regime emerged from that challenge alive but in a state of coma.⁶ However, nothing was predetermined. It lasted for nearly six more years and proved remarkably adept at clinging onto power.

Some authors have viewed the military quagmire in which Spain found itself in Morocco, particularly after the disastrous retreat at Annual in the summer of 1921, as the event that brought about the final demise of the regime.⁷ Notwithstanding the importance of the Moroccan question, this article argues that the cause of the collapse of the constitutional order was the social warfare which materialized in earnest in the first months of 1919. In fact, Spain faced the same challenges as other countries where similar regimes also finally succumbed.⁸

Contemplating the embattled Restoration Monarchy, British Intelligence wondered whether a leopard could ever change its spots: the potentiality within the monarchist elites to undertake thorough internal reform to strengthen its foundations.⁹ Raymond Carr suggested that when the regime was overthrown in 1923, General Miguel Primo de Rivera claimed to be finishing off 'a diseased body' when in fact he strangled a 'new birth', one evolving towards democracy.¹⁰ Such a statement produced a wide-ranging debate that overlaps with the crucial

question of the troubled transition from elite to mass politics and Europe's crisis of modernity.¹¹ In recent years, some scholars have stressed the need to re-evaluate the liberal regime, avoiding Manichean notions of it being merely a corrupt system only responsive to the interests of a narrow oligarchy. They stressed the ruling order's quasi-democratic connotations by arguing that it possessed a degree of representation, defended civil liberties and proved able to absorb persons and groups outside the system.¹²

Largely overlooked by scholarship¹³, an analysis of the period from November 1918 to April 1919 offers an important contribution to the debate. Rather than the aforementioned revolutionary convulsions of 1917, this was the moment when the organic crisis of the Liberal state crystallized. It was not only challenged from below but also rejected by sectors of the dominant economic classes (particularly in Catalonia).¹⁴ By analysing in depth these months, this article confirms the scepticism that the regime could respond successfully (not from unwillingness but rather inability) to the situation brought about by the Great War. In November 1918, a vast campaign in favour of Catalan autonomy began. Overshadowed three months later by the eruption of massive class conflict, the government showed enough flexibility to address both challenges. However, perceiving liberal politics as bankrupt to solve the crucial issues of national unity and public order, the powerful garrison in Barcelona stepped in. The 'praetorian solution' imposed during the 'hot spring of 1919' constituted a dress rehearsal for the coup staged four years later. It was also an example of the violent reaction experienced by Europe in the interwar years.

II. The Lliga's Offensive

The crisis which reached its peak in the spring of 1919 began with an offensive led by the *Lliga Regionalista de Catalunya* (Lliga). The hegemonic voice of Catalanism,¹⁵ the Lliga formed part of the nation-wide movement of regeneration which sprang up after 1898.¹⁶ Revisionist scholars such as Charles Ehlich have argued against its being the political

instrument of the Catalan industrial bourgeoisie. Indeed, the Catalan economic elites did not confine themselves to one party. However, their influence in the Lliga cannot be underestimated: it counted the largest number of industrialists and businessmen amongst its leadership and its propaganda was significantly biased towards the 'creators of wealth'.¹⁷

From its inception in 1901, the Lliga, a nationalist and social-conservative force with strong Catholic roots and reformist ideals, presented endemic contradictions. Its stress was on liberation from centralist oppression as part of the 19th century struggle of small nations in Europe (Poland, Hungary, Finland, etc.). However, its leaders also had an imperialist goal. Given the perceived disregard for industrial interests and pandering to the southern landed estates by the authorities, they defended an '*Espanya Catalana*': Spain could only regain its past greatness as a nation-state of 'nations' led by an economically advanced Catalonia and its modernizing elites.¹⁸ It was thus imperative to destroy the grip held by the *turno pacífico*. This feeling was exposed by its leader Francesc Cambó:

We represent a unique case in Spanish and even European politics: we spend our time fighting governments. Yet I must tell you sincerely that we are a group of men of government, who have been born to govern, who are prepared to govern, who have shown skills to govern, and nevertheless we seem doomed to remain in opposition.¹⁹

As a 'party of order', the Lliga viscerally preferred a gradualist strategy. Being a mass force born on the back of a protest movement facilitated alliances with other parties with which to lead carefully-choreographed pressure campaigns upon the regime. However, its instinctive conservatism always ultimately prevailed. This was confirmed in the spring of 1919: it abandoned, for the sake of social order, its pro-autonomy campaign and backed the army, the obvious embodiment of Spain's 'sacred' unity, against their common enemy, the labour movement.

The Lliga rapidly made an impact in the political arena. After destroying the monarchist grip on local politics in Barcelona the very year of its foundation in 1901, it fought for control of city hall power with diverse republican parties, particularly Alejandro Lerroux's Radical Party whose success was based on the electoral support from broad sectors of the working classes. After the violent anti-clerical riots and subsequent repression in the summer of 1909 (Tragic Week), the divorce between Lerroux and the proletariat cleared the field of meaningful competitors.²⁰ In April 1914, the concession by Royal Decree of the *Mancomunitat*, created by the merger of the four Catalan *Diputacions* (provincial councils) which re-established Catalonia's territorial unity and offered considerable administrative resources, facilitated the Lliga's pursuit of its domestic agenda. Under Enric Prat de la Riba and after his death in 1917 by Josep Puig i Cadafalch, the *Mancomunitat* developed a set of distinctively Catalan institutions: *Biblioteca de Catalunya* (Library of Catalonia), *L'Escola Industrial* (Industrial School), *L'Escola Superior de Belles Arts* (Higher School of Fine Arts), *L'Escola de l'Administració Local* (School of Local Administration), etc.²¹

The Great War catapulted the Lliga to the centre of national politics. Spain's neutrality gave her economy an unexpected boost as the drastic reduction of competition in the domestic market and thriving external demand produced an unprecedented boom. With its textile mills and metallurgical factories working around the clock, Barcelona confirmed its powerhouse status within a largely agrarian country.²² Spurred on by the growing weight of the Catalan economy, the Lliga felt strong enough to pursue its grand design to claim a stake in state power.

Monarchist infighting favoured the Lliga's ambitions. When the Liberal Party's flamboyant rising star, Santiago Alba at the Home Office, masterminded a comprehensive coalition in Catalonia (including professed enemies of the monarchy such as Lerroux's republicans) for the April 1916 elections, Prat de la Riba saw it as the confirmation of the

traditional Liberal hatred of Catalanism.²³ Emboldened by the triumphal campaign, conducted under the slogan *Per Catalunya i l'Espanya Gran* (For Catalonia and a Greater Spain), in which the Lliga emerged as the largest Catalan force,²⁴ its parliamentary minority tabled, for the first time, the question of Catalan self-government. Although rejected in the chamber, the then Prime Minister, Count Romanones, recognized the existence of a 'Catalan question'.²⁵ Soon thereafter, the Catalanists went on to inflict a massive defeat on Alba and, in the process, destroyed his hopes of leading his party. Having moved to the Treasury, Alba's introduction of a vast plan of national reconstruction, to be paid for by a windfall tax on war profits earned by industry and trade but ignoring those made by agriculture, transformed the Lliga into the champions of industrial interests and leaders of a national campaign that wrecked his plans and further divided the Liberal Party.²⁶

In 1917, the Lliga took advantage of the political vacuum that followed the successful military refusal to disband the *Juntas Militares de Defensa* (military trade unions created in 1916 to defend the corps' collective interests) and the subsequent downfall of the Liberal government then led by the Marquis of Alhucemas, and the hasty return of the Conservatives under Eduardo Dato.²⁷ The Catalanists emerged then as the soul of the Restoration's most important reformist attempt: the summoning in Barcelona, on 19 July, of an assembly of dissident parliamentarians to initiate the process of constitutional reform.²⁸ On 26 October, the army, after having crushed a workers' general strike in August, asked the monarch to entrust power to a government more representative of the national will while guaranteeing the dissolution of any parliament that challenged the throne.²⁹ After eight days of bargaining, the Lliga's sudden about-turn (acceptance of portfolios in a cabinet in Madrid that effectively meant the end of the *turno pacífico*) was felt as a betrayal by its former assembly partners. Rather than storming the dynastic citadel, it settled for joining it.³⁰

On 3 November 1917, a monarchist coalition including two Catalanist ministers - Joan Ventosa (Finance) and Felipe Rodés (Education) – was established. In early February 1918, an enthusiastic Cambó argued that the *Lliga*'s duty was to rule in Spain with Catalonia taking the role of Prussia in the Iberian kingdoms.³¹ In March 1918, his stellar moment arrived when amidst a massive civil servants' strike, the king heeded his advice to appoint a national government.³² Under the Restoration's most influential statesman, Antonio Maura, it gathered the leaders of the faction-riddled dynastic parties and two members of the *Lliga*: Francesc Cambó and Joan Ventosa as ministers of Development and Supply respectively. It fulfilled the party's objective to be at the centre of state power.³³ It was, therefore, a bitter blow to see the implosion of the cabinet due to dynastic squabbling, moreover, initiated by an old foe, Santiago Alba, who then obtained the Finance Ministry in the subsequent governmental coalition of different factions within the Liberal Party led by Alhucemas.³⁴

The armistice in Europe coincided with the fall of Spain's national government. After their disappointing brief spell in office, the Catalanists concluded that if thwarted in their efforts to work for a greater Spain, they should strive for an autonomous Catalonia. Accused of empty results for all its recent collaborationism, the *Lliga* could be overtaken by more radical nationalists. The objective was to channel the agitation away from subversive paths by raising the rhetoric in order to obtain substantial concessions while avoiding a frontal collision with the state.

The U.S. President Wilson's call for the self-determination of small nations appeared to provide a golden opportunity to the Catalan leaders.³⁵ Furthermore, the *Lliga* had cemented close relations with key politicians such as Antonio Maura and Count Romanones during their collaboration in office. From Catalan-speaking Mallorca, Maura favoured administrative decentralization and enjoyed the friendship of many Catalanist leaders.³⁶ With the Liberal Party broken into rival factions, Romanones viewed Cambó as an ally against rivals such as

Alba and Alhucemas.³⁷ The Lliga could apparently also rely on the sympathy of a grateful monarch. The Catalanists had kept channels open with the throne during the turbulent days of 1917.³⁸ One year later, King Alfonso XIII, worried by the situation in Europe, promised Cambó his support for autonomy as a bulwark against revolution in Catalonia.³⁹ However, as in 1917, fear of labour agitation prevailed over reformist ideals.

On 16 November, the campaign masterminded by the Lliga properly kicked off with a well-choreographed display. Defying the heavy rain, a large demonstration went to *Plaça de Sant Jaume*, the site of the *Mancomunitat*, to petition that body to lead the struggle for autonomy. Previously, questionnaires sent to all Catalan town councils by the *Mancomunitat* had returned 98 per cent of responses in favour of home rule.⁴⁰ Left-wing parties rapidly jumped on the bandwagon. Even the hitherto rabid anti-Catalanist Lerroux, agreed to work for a republic that would grant autonomy to Catalonia.⁴¹ On 20 November, in a packed chamber, Cambó formally petitioned for self-government. He concluded that Catalan nationalism was a biological fact that summed up the will of the Catalan people.⁴² Nine days later, a *Mancomunitat* representation, headed by Puig i Cadafalch asked Prime Minister Alhucemas the concession of a statute of autonomy.⁴³ On 3 December, the Lliga obtained its first victory: Romanones, foreign minister in the government, opposed to Alhucemas's inflexible stance, was entrusted by the king to form a government restricted to his faction.

Romanones was willing to tackle the question through negotiation. In his notes, he mentions the example of the British Home Rule Bill for Ireland of 1914.⁴⁴ However, he was confronted by hostile campaigns such as that led by the *Círculo de la Unión Mercantil e Industrial de Madrid* (close to Alba) demanding a boycott of Catalan products. Across the country, economic bodies and provincial councils denounced the tariff barriers that secured Catalan control over Spanish markets. Also, academic authorities organized an avalanche of acts stressing the sacrosanct unity of Spain.⁴⁵ The Lliga also faced an uphill battle in

parliament. Cambó described separatism as a folly and used his own example in government as proof of noble intentions. However, a Liberal notable, Niceto Alcalá Zamora,⁴⁶ hit at Cambó's contradictory ambition: being both Simón Bolívar in Catalonia and Bismarck in Spain. A lethal blow came unexpectedly from Maura: his calls for compromise, when combined with allusions to the invulnerability of the motherland, triggered patriotic outcries. The Catalanists withdrew from parliament the following morning.⁴⁷

Back in Barcelona, Cambó raised the stakes when he declared on 16 December 1918: 'What shall we choose? A Monarchy? A Republic? No, Catalonia!'⁴⁸ It was a masterstroke to put pressure upon government and throne.⁴⁹ Romanones, showing his goodwill rapidly accepted Cambó's advice of establishing, by royal decree, an extra-parliamentary commission (composed of 33 leading politicians from all parties, including a generous Catalan contingent) to produce a draft for Catalan self-government.⁵⁰ However, the refusal by the left-wing parties to take their seats produced a difficult dilemma. Staying out denied the Lliga a voice in the proceedings but participation would split the pro-autonomy coalition. After agonising hesitations, solidarity with its partners prevailed.⁵¹ A bewildered Romanones asked Cambó what he was then supposed to do.⁵²

More worrying for the government was the attitude of the army. As street clashes mounted in Barcelona between autonomists and centralists, Civil Governor Carlos González Rothwos was instructed to avoid any type of provocation. But, incensed by what they perceived as separatist insults to the dignity of the motherland, officers joined the newly-emerged Patriotic League and, often in civilian dress, took part in violent brawls. On 16 January 1919, overwhelmed by the apocalyptic messages of Barcelona's captain general, Joaquín Milans del Bosch, the government suspended constitutional guarantees. One month later, Milans played a leading role in the merger of Catalan monarchists into the *Unión Monárquica Nacional* (UMN) led by the industrialist Alfonso Sala to attract a sizeable

conservative constituency weary of the political radicalization brought about by the autonomist campaign.⁵³

In January, two completed autonomy drafts differed greatly but a compromise was not impossible. The one endorsed by the extra-parliamentary commission agreed to the equal official status of Castilian and Catalan in education and the establishment of an elected body. However, heavyweights such as Alba and Alcalá Zamora ensured the elimination of all references to sovereignty and emphasized the idea of municipal autonomy with power resting in a government-appointed figure. The Catalan statute (approved in a plebiscite by 1,046 out of 1,072 Catalan municipal councils) sought under the Lliga's leadership to avoid a total rupture and so rejected the federal character wanted by the republicans. It accepted a Madrid-appointed Governor-General but stressed its sovereignty to deal with internal matters and the existence of an executive responsible to a Catalan legislative.⁵⁴

When parliament reconvened in late January, Cambó recognized the error of not participating in the extra-parliamentary commission but warned of the perils of ignoring Catalonia's will.⁵⁵ At this stage, the Lliga's plans included a popular referendum in Catalonia, which if obstructed would lead Catalan parliamentarians to renounce their seats and municipal councils to resign as a sign of civil disobedience.⁵⁶ The idea was to force a friendly government and monarch to concede autonomy by royal decree. As Moreno Luzón notes, that strategy rested on an apparent contradiction: claiming to head a democratic movement yet settling the question by the direct intervention of the monarchy.⁵⁷ However, the autonomy question suddenly vanished from the spotlight.

III. The Voice of the Disenfranchised

The Lliga's claim to speak for Catalonia was hollow. Its pretended project of social cohesiveness only represented the interests of the *gent de bé* (the good citizens from the middle/upper class strata). It, certainly, did not speak for the proletariat.⁵⁸

Barcelona encapsulated the tensions of economic modernization. It possessed a powerful bourgeoisie, a radicalized workers' movement and a restless local garrison: all sharing a mistrust of a distant central administration. The Great War's socio-economic dislocation set the powder-keg alight.

No other Spanish city experienced during the war such a disparity between bourgeois opulence and proletarian gloom. Industrial barons and businessmen enjoyed a golden era. Simultaneously, the rising prices of staple goods and rents plunged workers into desperate conditions. The boom also accelerated the process by which class divisions became inscribed in urban space.⁵⁹ The *Eixample*, a quarter celebrated for its dazzling architecture and fashionable shops, experienced construction fever as *la gent de bé* set up their offices and build spacious houses which enjoyed all the modern amenities. It was a brutal contrast to the squalor of the *Ciutat Vella* (old town) and the peripheral municipalities (*Les Corts de Sarrià, Sants, Gràcia*, etc.), which additionally experienced an avalanche of poor Spanish peasants lured by the industrial expansion. Barcelona's population grew from 587,000 to 710,000 between 1910 and 1920.⁶⁰ Landlords maximized profits out of the lack of habitable space with sky-rocketing rents which increased 255.6 per cent between 1913 and 1921. Derelict old buildings were subdivided to accommodate several families. Tenants were also crammed in *barracas* (shanty buildings) made of cardboard and scrap metal. Sometimes, beds were available on hourly rates in real doss houses.⁶¹

Barcelona was ahead of other capitals in terms of strike action. Its peak was reached in 1919-20 when the inflationary trend coincided with the contraction of markets.⁶² Dismal working conditions and depressed earnings provided a crucial impetus to the process of class identity. However, unlike most European countries, it was not Marxism but the anarcho-syndicalist *Confederación Nacional del Trabajo* (CNT) that channelled labour agitation. Less homogeneous than its rival the socialist *Unión General de Trabajadores* (UGT), the CNT

was a broad church in which different currents converged. They all shared disdain for bureaucracy and parliamentary politics, placed emphasis on the socio-economic struggle and aimed to create an aggressive movement which, unlike the UGT, would not shrink from using the general strike to achieve specific industrial demands and carry out the social revolution. The CNT's attempt to convert alienation into action seemed more appropriate, in the conflictive Catalan milieu, than the UGT's gradualist strategy. Firm-believers in the self-expression of the masses, anarcho-syndicalist grass-roots popularity multiplied as its district committees tapped into the largely spontaneous consumption protests and rent strikes.⁶³ Unlike the socialists who distinguished between the revolutionary and the 'criminal', the CNT emphasized the inalienable right of the needy to secure their existence by whatever means they saw fit and was open to all the 'have nots' to articulate their grievances and combat the 'haves' (employers, landlords, police, shopkeepers, etc.) and.⁶⁴

During the Great War, the so-called action groups re-emerged to co-ordinate the pickets and fight police and strike-breaking labour. Some offered violent but quick solutions to pending social conflicts. Winning concessions from hitherto stubborn employers through terrorism encouraged some unions to pay special dues for services rendered.⁶⁵ Still, fundamental to the expansion of the CNT in Catalonia was the rise of a team of labour activists led by the charismatic Salvador Seguí. Their efforts to build a powerful movement culminated with the establishment of the *Sindicatos Únicos* during a regional congress (28 June-1 July 1918). These were modern industrial unions which grouped the entire workforce into 13 sectors and thus ended the craft divisions that hitherto had limited proletarian solidarity. They were decentralised and elected their own representatives to the local federations which, in turn, appointed regional committees which were loosely associated into a national confederation.⁶⁶ Union activists collaborated with a number of libertarian veterans who arrived in Barcelona during the war years and whose propaganda activities secured their

rapid rise to the CNT's national committees and editorship of major publications: For instance, the Andalusian Francisco Jordán and the Aragonese Manuel Buenacasa (general secretaries, August 1916-February 1917 and August 1918-January 1919, respectively); the Leonese Angel Pestaña (editor of the CNT's mouthpiece *Solidaridad Obrera* in 1917); and Paulino Díez, born in Burgos (secretary of the local federation of unions of Barcelona in January 1919).⁶⁷

The CNT capitalized upon the euphoria triggered by the November Revolution. The fall of tsarist Russia, followed by the Bolshevik take-over struck as much terror into the hearts of the dominant classes as it raised expectations amongst the workers. However, the socialists, traumatized by their ill-fated insurrectionary experience of 1917, were weary to embark upon any new revolutionary adventure. By contrast, anarcho-syndicalist quarters greeted the news with unrestrained enthusiasm. *Solidaridad Obrera* claimed it was showing the path to follow.⁶⁸ Obviously, their anti-statism was a world apart from the authoritarian tenets of Leninism. Yet, blinded by optimism and ideological ignorance, Bolshevism appeared to them as a new faith which vindicated their own vision of revolutionary spontaneity (workers' control and land redistribution).⁶⁹ Two of its leading activists stressed this mythical approach: Manuel Buenacasa claimed that the Bolshevik was for them a demi-God and Ángel Pestaña noted how Russia was the new holy land.⁷⁰

Throughout 1918, the Bolshevik example combined with dwindling workers' living standards resulted in growing industrial strife while the southern countryside experienced mass revolt. By early 1919, the government was overwhelmed by the Catalan employers' constant demands for punitive measures against the unions and the deterioration of public order due to the question of Catalan home rule. Caught between its desire to find a compromise with an autonomist movement that contained powerful economic interests and the need to appease the local garrison, it chose to suspend constitutional guarantees, on 16

January 1919, and direct the repressive backlash against the CNT, although it had not participated in the autonomist disturbances and even declared its neutrality in what it considered a mere bourgeois affair.⁷¹ The workers' press and centres were shut down and some of its leaders interned in the warship *Pelayo*. The CNT's response swept the autonomy dispute from the agenda.

In February 1919, a conflict broke out in Barcelona's Traction, Light and Power Company, an Anglo-Canadian hydro-electrical concern and main supplier of the city (known as *La Canadiense*). The company's intransigence towards its staff's union membership became a protracted struggle of 44 days between the employers, backed by the civilian and military authorities and the British embassy, and the workers.⁷²

On 2 February, eight employees were sacked for trying to establish a union. Three days later, their section colleagues staged a go-slow, demanding the right of union affiliation and calling on the president of the *Mancomunitat*, Civil Governor Carlos González Rothwos and the mayor of Barcelona, Antonio Martínez Domingo, to mediate. Their demands included no management reprisals, the return of the evicted workers and wage increases. Despite initial promises made by the civil governor, the police moved to evict those involved in the 'go-slow'. In turn, the English manager Fraser Lawton sacked all striking workers. His stance was backed by Rothwos⁷³ and General Milans. Simultaneously, the British embassy was urging the government to take stern measures against the 'troublemakers'. The workers replied by taking their plea to the CNT's *Único* of Gas, Water and Electricity.

The dispute welded the population into an unprecedented display of working-class solidarity: some 185,000 pesetas were collected for imprisoned comrades, 31,000 for the *Canadiense* workers, 131,000 for other strikers and 81,000 for propaganda.⁷⁴ A strike committee including members of different sectors, headed by the president of the building workers, Simó Piera, led the struggle. Aiming at hitting the company where it hurt most, its

revenue, it ordered an end to reading meters and sending out bills. On 12 February, the only collector prepared to perform his duties (a certain Joaquín Baró) was shot dead. The *Mancomunitat* president met the members of the strike committee but Puig i Cadafalch only managed to offend them when he sought to divert the movement into support for Catalan autonomy, especially since they were aware how the Lliga was lobbying in Madrid for harsh measures against the unions. On 17 February, as Lawton refused to meet with a workers' delegation because it contained a member of the CNT who was not employed by the company, some 20,000 textile workers stopped work. On 21 February, the strike committee extended the conflict to other electricity companies and the tram service. With Barcelona plunged into darkness, Romanones announced the take-over of the company with the prior permission of the British embassy. The military corps of engineers managed to re-establish electric services. But, by the end of the month, gas and water workers joined the strike. Over 70 per cent of industry was paralysed.

In early March, the government heeded General Milans's appeal to militarize public services. Drafting all workers of military age (men aged 21-31) meant that they could be court-martialled if they ignored orders to return to work (3,000 were eventually arrested). In an outstanding display of power, the *Único* of Graphic Arts introduced 'red censorship', that is the prevention of any publication hostile to the workers' position (including military decrees). On 12 March, under pressure from the captain general, the government agreed to declare martial law. Yet, to Milans's chagrin (who threatened to resign), the government had already opted for conciliation. The southern countryside was in revolt, food riots affected several cities and the UGT, after weeks of hesitations, threatened a nationwide strike of solidarity.⁷⁵ It appointed as civil governor Carlos Montañés, a former engineer at the *Canadiense* liked by the workers, and a new head of police, Gerardo Doval. Additionally, the

Cabinet Secretary, José Morote, arrived in Barcelona with special powers. On 17 March, both sides accepted a compromise.

Ironically, the labour leaders ran into difficulties selling the settlement to the rank-and-file. On 19 March, a crowd of some 20,000 euphoric workers gathered at *Las Arenas* bull-ring. The members of the strike committee were booed while trying to explain the deal reached with the authorities. Speaking last, Seguí managed to sway the masses. Faced with complaints that some militants were still imprisoned, he offered the crowd the choice of behaving with serenity and waiting for three days to see if the authorities fulfilled their promises or marching towards the dreaded castle of Monjuïch where their comrades were jailed.⁷⁶ Seguí's Pyrrhic victory not only revealed a deep chasm between the pragmatic leadership and the extremists but also by offering a deadline he had provided its enemies with a golden opportunity to strike back.

As in the issue of autonomy, the government ultimately opted for conciliation. The company agreed to accept the re-hiring of its discharged employees (without penalties of any kind), to raise salaries and to reimburse a fortnight's pay in February and a full month's wages for the days of March lost during the dispute. In turn, the government promised an amnesty for all those imprisoned and introduced far-reaching social measures such as an eight-hour working day in the construction sector (with legislation promised to extend it to all industry), the first government in Europe to do so.⁷⁷

IV. Reaction on the March

The Bolsheviks argued that the fulfilment by the Russian workers of their 'historical mission' was intended to trigger off a world-wide revolution.⁷⁸ From autumn 1918, events seemed to confirm their claims. Soldiers and workers' revolts brought to an abrupt end the German and Austrian Empires. A myriad of revolutionary committees sprang up to fill the power vacuum in central Europe. The Bolsheviks founded in March 1919 the Third International (Comintern)

to co-ordinate the diverse revolutionary efforts. Yet, a bizarre outcome of the November Revolution was that it initiated an era of virtually uninterrupted working class defeats. Bolshevik bluster added to widespread labour agitation caused panic amongst broad social sectors. Fearing that the natural order was imperilled, bourgeois militias sprang up and emergency legislation to eradicate the spectre of communism was introduced.⁷⁹ Instead of an age of international revolution, the events of the spring of 1919 in Barcelona formed part of the first wave of anti-liberal reaction that marked the interwar period.

By early 1919, constant reports of upheaval across the continent combined with the upsurge of industrial and rural strife at home set alarm bells ringing amongst the Spanish ruling classes. In a mood verging on paranoia, Moscow's hand was perceived behind every social dispute. The Catholic mouthpiece, *El Debate*, warned that there were 100,000 Soviet agents in Barcelona. Even the normally sober *El Sol* claimed that Lenin had landed in the Catalan capital to lead a revolution! Joaquín Nadal, a Catalan monarchist, wrote that the hysteria was such that it appeared as if the Russians had already seized the district of Sants in Barcelona.⁸⁰ Within these parameters, the outcome of the *Canadiense* proved a watershed. The government's conciliatory formula appalled both the Catalan *gent de bé* and the local garrison. Catalan right-wing newspapers argued that the government had deserted the citizens of order. Some in Madrid suggested, for the first time, that only a dictatorship could save the country.⁸¹

The Catalan bourgeoisie perceived its world being turned upside down. It was not the violence of the strike, nor any revolutionary demands (the workers had settled for the improvement of working conditions and wages) which frightened them but the unprecedented labour organization that they equated to Bolshevism.⁸² The *Fomento del Trabajo Nacional* (FTN), the Catalan employers' leading association, called the events, 'a macabre film': after

troublemakers left the city without water, light and transport, the government rewarded those criminals with an eight-hour working day.⁸³

Feeling abandoned by the state, Catalan industrialists agreed to put aside divisive issues and defend their corporate interests. They created their own organ of combat: the *Confederación Patronal Española* (CPE). Established at a congress in Madrid in September 1914, the CPE was led by hard-liners, often from the construction sector. Its most powerful branch, the Barcelona Federation (re-structured in March 1919) was established, in its own words, to battle that ‘insatiable beast fed on collective misery’, the *Sindicato Único*.⁸⁴ Structured like its class enemies with local federations integrated into regional bodies, its members were encouraged to take insurance policies against violent death and ‘unfair’ strikes, compile blacklists and raise special funds to finance non-unionised labour and lockouts.⁸⁵ Magda Sellés believed that a certain rivalry over strategy and hegemony remained between the Catalan grand bourgeoisie’s traditional body (FTN) and the CPE. However, ample evidence reveals that they shared the same objectives: to fight the perceived revolutionary threat and the *sindicalización forzosa* (compulsory unionization) of both workers and employers into corporative unions so as to make the CNT redundant. They complemented each other. The FTN’s industrial aristocracy continued to act as a formidable pressure group while the dirty business of facing the CNT head-on was left to the CPE.⁸⁶

The Catalan employers sought guidance in the local garrison. Having witnessed Madrid’s feeble response to social unrest and attacks on the unity of the motherland, the officers were ready to step in. Aware that the fragile social truce rested on the sensitive question of the jailed militants, the army’s refusal to comply, in open defiance to the government’s instructions, re-ignited the conflict.⁸⁷ *El Sol* noted how a power operating in the shadows left civil authority in the gutter.⁸⁸

On 24 March, the CNT declared a general strike.⁸⁹ The workers responded with the discipline of the earlier dispute. Barcelona was again brought to a standstill. This time, however, employers and garrison, working in tandem, were prepared. Without consulting Madrid, General Milans re-imposed martial law. A bewildered government had to follow suit and suspend constitutional guarantees across the country. Manuel Bravo Portillo, a former police chief, disgraced due to his pro-German spy activities, recruited a gang amongst ex-policemen and underworld thugs to act as the employers' private force, engaging in a dirty war with the CNT which included arrests, beatings and, occasionally, the murder of labour leaders.⁹⁰ Portillo also helped re-organize the *Somatén*. A medieval body that had metamorphosed into a rural force to suppress banditry, the *Somatén* was an early example of the counter-revolutionary militias that emerged then in Europe. Unlike the leading role of revolutionary elites in Italian fascism, the *Somatén* was the armed instrument of Barcelona's bourgeoisie. Tellingly, political rivals such as Cambó and Alfonso Sala, the leader of the recently created monarchist UMN, were amongst its initial 8,000 members. Its ranks ranged from humble shop-keepers to wealthy industrialists, united by their determination to fight the red threat, but the leadership was in the hand of aristocrats (Marquis of Comillas, Count Godó and Marquis of Camps) and rich industrialists (such as the leading member of the *Lliga*, Josep Bertrán i Musitu) under the ultimate command of the captain general.⁹¹ Financed with army funds, the *Somatén* produced the so-called *Fichero Lasarte*, named after its keeper (the retired captain of the Civil Guard, Julio Lasarte): a card-index of labour activists to facilitate their round-up and even assassination.⁹²

On 25 March, the *Somatén* was deployed, for the first time, to break the strike in Barcelona. It established a *cordon sanitaire* around working-class quarters and collaborated with troops in arresting trade unionists and forcing shops to remain open. The example of the *Somatén* of Barcelona was swiftly emulated in other Spanish cities.⁹³ Economically

exhausted after the *Canadiense*, labour resistance began to wane. On 7 April, the CNT agreed the return to work. This took slightly longer in some industrial sectors due to the CPE's harsh notes which were published in the military's official bulletins.⁹⁴ However, the anarcho-sindicalist movement was still enjoying a golden period. The prestige gained during the *Canadiense*, the widespread social distress and the revolutionary optimism caused by the Russian events provided a receptive audience. In December 1919, during its second national congress held at the *Teatro de la Comedia* in Madrid, it claimed 700,000 members, three times that of the UGT; ample proof of its hegemony not only in Catalonia but also its dominant position in Valencia, Aragón and Andalucía. In an euphoric atmosphere, the CNT adopted the structure of the *Sindicato Único* on a national basis and even voted to join the recently created Comintern.⁹⁵

The reactionary counteroffensive initiated in the spring of 1919 not only sought to tame the labour movement but also to subvert the constitutional order. Cambó correctly noted that the climate of Barcelona paved the road to the military dictatorship. Yet, he apportioned blame entirely upon the unions' disturbances and overlooked the part played by himself, his party, the employers and, the army in the regime's demise.⁹⁶ During the general strike, the government persevered in finding a conciliatory formula. It accelerated legislation for a compulsory scheme of workers' pensions and promised the introduction of the eight-hour working day to all industrial sectors from 1 October. However, all attempts to channel the conflict into a satisfactory compromise were violently brushed aside.⁹⁷ The army thwarted the requests by Civil Governor Montañés to release some textile union leaders arrested by Portillo so as to engage in dialogue. Also General Milans vetoed the efforts of the chief of police, Gerardo Doval, to dismantle Portillo's force. The captain general drafted a harsh note of resignation (the second in one month) but stressed that its acceptance would run against the wishes of a united garrison. The moment of truth arrived on 14 April: Doval and

Montañés were ‘invited’ by the military to catch the train to Madrid. That night Romanones resigned. It was in all but name a coup; a dress rehearsal for events four years later.⁹⁸

In the spring of 1919, the perceived revolutionary threat in Spain gave way to an early example in Europe of the gradual displacement of authority from the state to *ad-hoc* paramilitary forces. Under the pretext of embodying the defence of social order, an alliance between industrialists and the army was concluded. It not only operated independently of the government but also began to behave as a veritable ‘anti-state’, thus sealing the organic crisis of the Liberal order. The Lliga, fearful of losing its conservative support, put its autonomist demands on the back-burner and lent its support to the praetorian-led counteroffensive. Cambó even claimed that Catalonia’s survival was at stake.⁹⁹ Ironically, Catalonia was then to enjoy a sort of autonomy: employers and military authorities pursued a road of massive social repression independent of, when not openly against, central governments. The ferocity of the reaction was such that Antonio Gramsci discerned there the precursor of Italian Fascism.¹⁰⁰

Dr. Francisco J. Romero Salvadó

Reader in Modern Spanish History

HIPLA

School of Modern Languages

University of Bristol

17 Woodland Road

Bristol BS8 1TE

f.romerosalvado@bristol.ac.uk

* I am grateful to a British Academy Grant which permitted the necessary archival work in Spain. I am indebted to the kindness of the staff at the Hemeroteca Municipal de Madrid, Fundación Antonio Maura, Real Academia de la Historia, Archivo General del Palacio Real

and Archivo Histórico Nacional. I would also like to thank Angel Smith, Pablo La Porte, Javier Moreno Luzón and Marc Comadran for their suggestions to this draft.

¹ Arno Mayer, *The persistence of the old regime. Europe to the Great War* (London, 1981), pp. 21-5.

² The *turno pacífico* was formalized at the deathbed of King Alfonso XII in 1885 (Pact of El Pardo). For an impressive study of clientelism across Spain see José Varela Ortega, ed., *El poder de la influencia. Geografía del caciquismo en España, 1875-1923* (Madrid, 2001).

³ Manuel Tuñón de Lara, *España. La quiebra del 98* (Madrid, 1986), pp. 25-6.

⁴ José Álvarez Junco, 'La nación en duda', in Juan Pan-Montojo, ed., *Más se perdió en Cuba. España, 1898 y la crisis de fin de siglo* (Madrid, 1998), p. 411.

⁵ Sebastian Balfour, *The End of the Spanish Empire, 1898-1923* (Oxford, 1997), p. 51.

⁶ The pioneer study is José Antonio Lacomba, *La crisis española de 1917* (Málaga, 1970). The regime in coma is in Francisco J. Romero Salvadó, *Foundations of civil war. Social conflict, revolution and reaction in Spain, 1916-1923* (London, 2008), p. 294. For an updated analysis see Ángeles Barrio Alonso, *La modernización de España, 1917-1939* (Madrid, 2004). Also see the article in *El País*, 31 May 2014, by Javier Moreno Luzón, 'Neutralidad convulsa'.

⁷ Conclusions reached, for instance, in: Ángel Comalada, *España: el ocaso de un parlamento, 1921-1923* (Madrid, 1985); Sebastian Balfour, *Deadly embrace. Morocco and the road to the Spanish Civil War* (Oxford, 2002); and Carolyn P. Boyd, *Praetorian politics in liberal Spain* (Chapel Hill, NC., 1979).

⁸ Javier Moreno Luzón, 'The government, parties and the king, 1913-1923', in Francisco J. Romero Salvadó and Angel Smith, eds., *The agony of Spanish liberalism. From revolution to dictatorship, 1913-1923* (Basingstoke, 2010), p. 33.

⁹ Confidential report, 21 August 1917, London, The National Archives, *Foreign Office Papers* (FO) 371/3,034. See also María Jesús González Hernández, 'Las manchas del

leopardo: la difícil reforma desde el sistema y las estrategias de la socialización

conservadora', in Manuel Suárez Cortina, ed., *La Restauración, entre el liberalismo y la democracia* (Madrid, 1997), pp. 157-97.

¹⁰ Raymond Carr, *Spain, 1808-1975* (Oxford, 1982), p. 523.

¹¹ The contributors to a recent study on the downfall of the liberal regime agreed to disagree on Carr's dictum: Francisco J. Romero Salvadó and Angel Smith, 'The agony of Spanish liberalism and the origins of dictatorship', in Romero Salvadó and Smith, eds., *The agony*, p. 10.

¹² For instance, Javier Moreno Luzón, 'Los políticos liberales y la crisis del liberalismo español (1917-1923)', pp. 359-98, and Mercedes Cabrera and Fernando del Rey, 'De la Oligarquía y el caciquismo a la política de intereses. Por una relectura de la Restauración', pp. 289-325, both in Manuel Suárez Cortina, ed., *Las máscaras de la libertad. El liberalismo español, 1808-1950* (Madrid, 2003); Manuel Suárez Cortina, 'La Restauración y el fin del imperio colonial. Un balance biográfico', in Suárez Cortina, ed., *La Restauración*, pp. 31-107.

¹³ An exception is the incisive article by Javier Moreno Luzón, 'De agravios, pactos y símbolos. El nacionalismo español ante la autonomía de Cataluña', *Ayer*, 63 (2006), pp. 119-51. However, Moreno Luzón focuses mostly on the development of Spanish nationalism as a reaction to the upsurge of Catalan demands for autonomy. There are other works that examine the events under study in this article (but they are discussed briefly as part of the analysis of the military coup of 1923) such as Angel Smith, 'The Catalan counter-revolutionary coalition and the Primo de Rivera coup, 1917-23', *European History Quarterly*, 37 (2007), pp. 294-307, and Fernando del Rey, 'El capitalismo catalán y Primo de Rivera: en torno a un golpe de estado', *Hispania*, XLVIII (1988), pp. 294-307. The emphasis in the thought-provoking works by Soledad Bengoechea is placed on the second half of 1919:

‘1919: la Barcelona colpista; l’aliança de patrons i militars contra el sistema liberal’, *Afers*, 23/24 (1996), and *El locaut de Barcelona* (Barcelona, 1998).

¹⁴ Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith, eds., *Selection from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci* (London, 1986), p. 210.

¹⁵ It defended the promotion of the distinctive national identity of Catalonia - its language, traditions and culture - (and Catalan speaking territories such as Valencia and the Balearic Islands), vis-à-vis the threat presented by Spanish uniformity. Before taking a political direction with the emergence of the Lliga in 1901, it gained momentum throughout the 19th century during the so-called *Reinaxença* (Rebirth). The publication of *L’Oda a la Pàtria* (Ode to the Motherland) by Bonaventura Carles Aribau in 1833 is considered its starting point.

¹⁶ This crucial link between colonial defeat and the Lliga’s birth is stressed in Angel Smith, *The origins of Catalan nationalism, 1770-1898* (Basingstoke, 2014), p. 222.

¹⁷ During its first elections, the Lliga’s four candidates in Barcelona were the presidents of the most important Catalan industrial and landowning organizations. According to Francesc Cambó, the Lliga embodied an electoral aristocracy: *Memorias* (Barcelona, 1987), p. 74. Ehrlich’s conclusions are in ‘The Lliga Regionalista and the Catalan industrial bourgeoisie’, *Journal of Contemporary History*, 33 (1998) and ‘Per Catalunya i l’Espanya gran: Catalan regionalism on the offensive, 1911-1919’, *European History Quarterly*, 28 (1998). For traditional views see Borja de Riquer, *Lliga Regionalista: La burgesia catalana i el nacionalisme, 1898-1904* (Barcelona, 1977), pp. 191-206; Joseph Harrison, ‘The Catalan industrial elite’, in Paul Preston and Frances Lannon, eds., *Elites and Power in 20th Century Spain* (Oxford, 1990), pp. 53-8; and Antoni Jutglar, *Historia crítica de la burgesía en Cataluña* (Barcelona, 1984), pp. 390-3. For a recent sharp analysis see Angel Smith, ‘The Lliga Regionalista, the Catalan right and the making of the Primo de Rivera dictatorship’, in Romero Salvadó and Smith, eds., *The agony*, pp. 146-8.

¹⁸ On the Lliga's imperialist ambitions see Enric Ucelay-Da Cal, *El imperialismo catalán* (Barcelona, 2003) and his briefest work 'Per un Catalanisme imperial', *L'Avenç*, 27 (2003), pp. 14-19. See also Eduardo González Calleja, 'El catalanismo en la hora del imperialismo', *Studia Histórica*, 23 (2005), pp. 297-312, and Smith, 'The Lliga', p. 147.

¹⁹ Francesc Cambó, 'El problema catalá', 7 June 1916, *Discursos parlamentaris, 1907-1935* (Barcelona, 1991), p. 321.

²⁰ Let down by the Radical leaders' hollow response during the Tragic Week, large sectors of the proletariat moved towards the apolitical struggle preached by anarcho-syndicalism. See Angel Smith, *Anarchism, revolution and reaction. Catalan labour and the crisis of the Spanish state, 1898-1923* (Oxford, 2007), p. 215.

²¹ Jordi Casassas, 'Batallas y ambigüedades del catalanismo', in Alejandro Sánchez, ed., *Barcelona, 1888-1929* (Madrid, 1994), pp. 137-8.

²² Carme Massana, *Industria, ciutat i propietat* (Barcelona, 1985), pp. 14-16. Over 70 per cent of the Catalan capital's population was engaged in industrial activities while 57 per cent in Spain still depended on the primary sector. By 1920, Barcelona represented 75 per cent of Spain's textile sector, 33 per cent of its chemistry and 25 per cent of its metallurgy.

²³ Mail between Lerroux and Alba, Dec. 1915, Biblioteca de la Real Academia de la Historia (BRAH), *Santiago Alba's Papers* (ASA), 9/8081, 8/105/4, For the Catalanist reaction see *La Veü de Catalunya* (Veü), 4 Apr. 1916; and notes, Apr. 1916, Arxiu Nacional de Catalunya (ANC), *Prat de la Riba's Papers* (AEPR).

²⁴ Veü, 10 Apr. 1916: 'the triumph of Catalonia'.

²⁵ Francisco J. Romero Salvadó, *Between War and Revolution. Spain 1914-18* (London, 1999) pp. 46-7.

²⁶ A detailed study of Alba's plans is in Mercedes Cabrera, Francisco Comín and José Luis García Delgado, *Santiago Alba. Un programa de reforma económica en la España del*

primer tercio del siglo XX (Madrid, 1989). According to Cambó (*Memorias*, pp. 223-4, 240), Alba's defeat was necessary to prevent him from rising to the top of his party and a warning to those keen on fighting Catalanism. Cambó added that Romanones, fearful of the threat to his leadership by his own minister, had to make strenuous efforts not to applaud his performances. See also, Cambó to Prat, 9 July 1916, AEPR, private correspondence. For the disarray of the Liberal Party see, 13-14 and 19 Dec. 1916, BRAH, *Natalio Rivas's Papers*, 11/8903.

²⁷ Benito Márquez and José-María Capó, *Las juntas militares de defensa* (La Habana, 1923), pp. 23-40; Boyd, *Praetorian*, pp. 51-65.

²⁸ Lacomba, *La crisis*, pp. 165-212.

²⁹ For an analysis of the events see Francisco J. Romero Salvadó, 'Spain's Revolutionary Crisis of 1917', in Romero Salvadó and Smith, eds., *The agony*, pp. 76-81.

³⁰ For the Lliga's betrayal see Manuel Cordero, *Los socialistas y la revolución* (Madrid, 1932), p. 30. His biographer Jesús Pabón, *Cambó, 1876-1947* (Barcelona, 1999), p. 470, staunchly defends Cambó: 'Unlike his left-wing partners in the Assembly, revolution was never an objective, but to uproot the dynastic monopoly of office'.

³¹ *El Liberal*, 2 Feb. 1918.

³² This advice was made in a speech at the *Palacio de la Música*: *Veu*, 17 Mar. 1918. With Romanones's complicity, the monarch summoned the dynastic leaders, the night of 21 Mar. 1918. Once there, he appealed to them to bury their differences. Otherwise he threatened to abdicate. Romanones, *Notas de una vida, 1912-1931* (Madrid, 1999), pp. 421-2.

³³ Cambó to Durán, 23 Mar. 1918, ANC, *Lluís Durán i Ventosa's Papers* (ADV), private correspondence.

³⁴ Cambó, *Memorias*, pp. 281-2; mail between Alba and Maura, October 1918, ASA, 9/8081, 8/108/4.

³⁵ Ventosa to Durán, 27 Oct. 1918, ADV, private correspondence.

³⁶ Correspondence Cambó-Maura (1909-1921), Institut Francesc Cambó (IFC).

³⁷ Javier Moreno Luzón, *Romanones* (Madrid, 1998), pp. 354-5.

³⁸ Both the monarch and Cambó were worried that political reform could turn into a revolutionary situation. As Lacomba noted (*La crisis*, p. 201): ‘the Regionalists wanted a constituent assembly to change the country peacefully, not a storming of the Bastille’. For secret contacts with the king see Joaquín Nadal, *Memòries* (Barcelona, 1965), pp. 269-70; and Ossorio to Maura, 13 July 1917, Fundación Antonio Maura, *Antonio Maura’s Papers* (AAM), 362/2.

³⁹ Cambó, *Memorias*, pp. 288-9.

⁴⁰ Veu, 17 Nov. 1918.

⁴¹ José Antonio González Casanova, *Federalismo y autonomía. Cataluña y el estado español, 1868-1938* (Barcelona, 1979), p. 211.

⁴² Cambó, ‘El dret de Catalunya a l’autonomia’, 20 Nov. 1918, *Discursos*, p. 582.

⁴³ Veu, 29 Nov. 1918.

⁴⁴ Notes, Dec. 1918, BRAH, *Count Romanones’s Papers* (ACR), 10/6. Cambó (*Memorias*, pp. 295-7) recognizes Romanones’s goodwill. See also Moreno Luzón, *Romanones*, p. 363.

⁴⁵ Moreno Luzón, ‘De agravios’, pp. 128-138.

⁴⁶ Ironically, he would sign the Catalan statute of autonomy as president of the Second Republic in 1932.

⁴⁷ Cambó, *Memorias*, pp. 292-3.

⁴⁸ IFC, 1/22 (26).

⁴⁹ Cambó, *Memorias*, p. 294. Cambó to King, 12 Dec. 1918, Archivo General del Palacio Real, *Alfonso XIII’s Papers* (AGPR), 15,601/5.

⁵⁰ 27 Dec. 1918, ACR, 19/20.

⁵¹ Borja de Riquer, 'Francesc Cambó: un regeneracionista desbordado por la política de masas', *Ayer*, 28 (1997), p. 107.

⁵² Cambó, *Memorias*, p. 298.

⁵³ Exchanges between Rothwos and interior minister, Dec. 1918-Jan. 1919, ACR, 12/31; Rothwos's dispatches, Dec. 1918-Jan. 1919, ACR 28/74 (3); Milans to war minister, Dec. 1918-Jan. 1919, ACR 20/5; Milans to Dato, 30 Jan. 1919, BRAH, *Eduardo Dato's Papers* (AED), correspondence to military officers. The garrison's anger is in officers' exchanges with Julio Amado, the editor of *La Correspondencia Militar*, Jan. 1919, ACR, 20/18; Gustavo Peyrá (leading Catalan Maurista) to Maura, 27 Jan. 1919, AAM, 82/29; and *La Correspondencia Militar*, 26-8 Jan. 1919. For the UMN see Josep Puy, 'La Unión Monárquica Nacional frente al catalanismo de la Lliga, 1918-1923', *Estudios de Historia Social*, 28-9 (1984), pp. 468-70; Milans to Maura, 15 Jan. 1919, AAM, 67/43.

⁵⁴ Both draft statutes are in *El Sol*, 14 and 23 Jan. 1919. González Casanova (*Federalismo*, pp. 228-34) notes that the key difference was of a juridical nature: a sovereign state without a federal constitution could not accept the existence of another *de facto* state within. See also Albert Balcells, *Catalan nationalism* (Basingstoke, 1996), p. 77; Isidre Molas, 'El projecte d'estatut d'autonomia de Catalunya del 1919', *Recerques* 14 (1983), p. 71.

⁵⁵ 7 Feb. 1919, IFC, 3/II/14/22.

⁵⁶ Pabón, *Cambó*, pp. 630-1.

⁵⁷ Moreno Luzón, 'De agravios', p. 127.

⁵⁸ As González Casanova (*Federalismo*, p. 179) notes: 'the Lliga identified with an ideal of Catalonia as synonymous with social order and economic progress. Labour conflicts were often dismissed as inspired by agitators from "outside" or caused by mere migrant rabble'.

⁵⁹ Chris Ealham, *Class, Culture and Conflict in Barcelona, 1898-1937* (London, 2005), p. 8.

⁶⁰ Anna Cabré and Isabel Pujades, 'La població de Barcelona i del seu entorn al segle XX', *L'Avenç*, 88 (1985), pp. 33-4.

⁶¹ Mercedes Tatjer Mir, 'Els barris obrers del centre històric de Barcelona', in José Luis Oyón, ed., *Vida obrera en la Barcelona de las entreguerras* (Barcelona, 1996), pp. 43-4; Ealham, *Class*, pp. 6-9.

⁶² José Luis Martín Ramos, 'Anàlisi del moviment vaguístic a Barcelona, 1914-1923', *Recerques*, 20 (1988), pp. 94-7.

⁶³ Led by women, the longest food riot took place in Barcelona during the bitter winter of 1918. See Tema Kaplan, *Red City, Blue Period* (Berkeley, CA., 1992), pp. 118-24. *Solidaridad Obrera*, 28-30 Aug. 1918, covered the vicious industrial dispute in Badalona (Barcelona's industrial belt). The employers' attempt to break a strike by bringing non-unionized labour left 30 wounded and 6 dead.

⁶⁴ Chris Ealham, 'Class and the City: Spatial Memories of Pleasure and Danger in Barcelona, 1914-23', *Oral History*, 29 (2001), pp. 40-2.

⁶⁵ The re-emergence of the anarchist action groups and their pursuit of a terrorist agenda was recognized by the CNT leader Ángel Pestaña, *Lo que aprendí en la vida* (2 vols., Murcia, 1971), II, pp. 64-5. See also, Eduardo González Calleja, *El Máuser y el sufragio: orden público, subversión y violencia política en la crisis de la Restauración, 1917-1931* (Madrid, 1999), pp. 116-19; María Amalia Pradas, *Anarquisme i les lluites socials a Barcelona 1918-1923* (Barcelona, 2003), pp. 39-41; and Gerald Meaker, *The Revolutionary Left in Spain, 1914-1923* (Stanford, Cal., 1974), pp. 173-7. The upsurge of social violence was entangled with the murky spy world that flourished then in Barcelona. German intelligence sought to hinder industrial production for the Allies by any means: Aug. 1918-Mar. 1919, *Archivo del Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores*, H2789; dispatches by British ambassador, 5, 7 and 14 Mar.

1918, FO 371/3,373/44,846, 46,712 and 54,288; Report by the British Consul at Barcelona, 5 July 1918, FO 371/3,375/11,8036.

⁶⁶ Confederación Regional del Trabajo, *Memoria del Congreso celebrado en Barcelona los días 28, 29, 30 de Junio y el 1 de Julio de 1918* (Barcelona, 1918), pp. 17-20. The *Sindicato Único* of woodworkers was the first that officially registered its statutes, Dec. 1917, *Archivo del Gobierno Civil de Barcelona* (AGCB), *Asociaciones*.

⁶⁷ Pere Gabriel: 'Red Barcelona in the Europe of War and Revolution', in Angel Smith, ed., *Red Barcelona: social mobilization and labour conflict in the twentieth century* (London, 2002), pp. 51-3.

⁶⁸ *Solidaridad Obrera*, 11 Nov. 1917.

⁶⁹ Chris Ealham, 'An Impossible Unity: Revolution, Reform and Counter Revolution. The Spanish Left, 1917-1923', in Romero Salvadó and Smith, eds., *The agony*, p. 100; Juan Avilés Farré, *La fe que vino de Rusia: la revolución bolchevique y los españoles, 1917-1931* (Madrid, 1999), pp. 99-100

⁷⁰ Manuel Buenacasa, *El movimiento obrero español, 1886-1926* (Madrid, 1977), p. 50.

Ángel Pestaña, *Consideraciones y juicios acerca de la III Internacional* (Madrid, 1970), p. 12.

⁷¹ Instructions from Madrid to civil governor, 16-20 Jan. 1919, ACR, 12/31; and Jan. 1919, Archivo Histórico Nacional, *Serie A Gobernación* (AHN), 42A/3. For the CNT's neutrality in the autonomist issue see 'Ni con unos ni otros' (With Neither of them) in *Solidaridad Obrera*, 16 Dec. 1918.

⁷² For the *Canadiense* see conversations between authorities in Madrid and Captain General Milans, Feb.-Mar. 1919, ACR, 20/5; between Madrid and Rothwos, Feb.-Mar. 1919, ACR, 20/6; *Canadiense's* manager asks for martial law, 10 Mar. 1919, ACR, 20/18; Milans to the war minister, 19 Mar. 1919, ACR, 96/6; Rothwos's dispatches and British embassy's

pressure for harsh measures, Feb.-Mar. 1919, AHN 57/10; dispatches from the British ambassador, 21-22 Feb. and 18 Mar. 1919, FO 371/4,120/29,898, 29,928 and 35,476, National press sources consulted include: *El Imparcial*, *El Liberal*, *El Sol*, *El Debate* and *El Diario Universal*; Catalan publications include: *El Correo Catalán*, *La Publicidad* and *Veü*. See also Albert Balcells, *El Sindicalisme a Barcelona, 1916-1923* (Barcelona, 1965), pp. 67-76; Joaquim Ferrer, *Simó Piera* (Barcelona, 1975), pp. 78-96; Francisco Madrid, *Ocho meses y un día en el Gobierno Civil de Barcelona* (Barcelona, 1932), pp. 13-24.

⁷³ Rothwos had been appointed civil governor of Barcelona in March 1918. During his previous tenure of that post (Apr. 1903-June 1905), he already made clear his strong anti-union feelings (AAM, 46/31).

⁷⁴ A fantastic amount given the fact that the annual income for a working class household was below 1,000 pesetas.

⁷⁵ Mar. 1919, Fundación Pablo Iglesias, *Amaro del Rosal's Papers. Minutes of the UGT's Executive in 1919*.

⁷⁶ Ferrer, *Simó*, pp. 90-3.

⁷⁷ *El Sol*, 19 Mar. 1919.

⁷⁸ Robert Service, *Comrades. Communism: A World History* (Basingstoke, 2007), p. 61.

⁷⁹ Eduardo González Calleja and Fernando del Rey Reguillo, *La defensa armada contra la revolución* (Madrid, 1995), pp. 17-22.

⁸⁰ Nadal, *Memòries*, p. 294. *El Debate*, 17 Jan., 2 Feb. and 1 Mar. 1919; *El Sol*, 16 January 1919. Examples of alarmist reports: 11 Jan. 1919, ACR, 96/38; Jan-Mar. 1919, ACR, 10/14; Jan-Apr. 1919, AGPR, 15,601/6 and 15,666/10; and Jan.-Mar. 1919, AHN, 17A/1.

⁸¹ For Catalan editorials see, *El Correo Catalán*, 23 Feb. 1919; and *Veü*, 11 and 13 Mar. 1919. Calls for a dictatorship are in *El Debate*, 12 and 19 Mar. 1919; *La Acción*, 8 Mar. 1919; and *La Correspondencia Militar*, 10 and 17 Mar. 1919.

⁸² Violence was confined to the killing of the collector Baró, the shooting of a textile foreman following an earlier vendetta and one bomb in the central *Calle de Córcega* on 10 March. Catalan employers' mail to king, Mar.-Apr. 1919, AGPR, 15,601/6; and to Maura, 29 Apr. 1919, AAM, 221/4.

⁸³ Archivo del Fomento del Trabajo Nacional (AFTN), *Memoria de la junta directiva, 1919-1920* (Barcelona, 1920), pp. 18-21.

⁸⁴ AFTN, *Federación Patronal de Cataluña (Patronal)*, pp. 4-5. Statutes of the Barcelona employers' federation, 12 Mar. 1919, AGCB, *Asociaciones*, 366/9,722.

⁸⁵ AFTN, *Patronal*, pp. 6-7. Soledad Bengoechea, *Organització patronal i conflictivitat social a Catalunya* (Barcelona, 1994), pp. 154-65, 192-5; Magda Sellés, *El Foment del Treball Nacional, 1914-1923* (Barcelona, 2000), pp. 285-9.

⁸⁶ Sellés, *El Foment*, pp. 273, 279-80, 312-13. For collaboration between the FTN and the CPE see AFTN, *Memoria*, pp. 28-31, 44-5, and, 1 Apr. 1919, *Actas*, Vol. 13, pp. 278-80. See also Bengoechea, *Organització*, pp. 98, 238, 243.

⁸⁷ Romanones, *Notas*, p. 434.

⁸⁸ *El Sol*, 25 Mar. 1919.

⁸⁹ Ramón Pla y Armengol, *Impresiones de la Huelga General de Barcelona del 24 marzo-7 abril 1919* (Barcelona, 1930), pp. 13-96; Fernando Soldevilla, *El año político 1919* (Madrid, 1920), pp. 96-105, 108-12.

⁹⁰ Portillo's spy activities are in ACR, 16/25; and report by the British Consul at Barcelona, 5 July 1918, FO 371-3,375/118,036. For his gang see Manuel Burgos y Mazo, *El verano de 1919 en Gobernación* (Cuenca, 1921, pp. 460-2; González Calleja, *El Mauser*, p. 146; Pradas, *L'anarquisme*, pp. 44-7.

⁹¹ González Calleja and Rey, *La defensa*, pp. 74-96.

⁹² Pere Foix, *Los archivos del terrorismo blanco* (Madrid, 1978), pp. 49-53, 57-9.

⁹³ For the *Somatén* during the strike see its mouthpiece *Paz y Tregua*, 3-4, Mar.-Apr. 1919.

The establishment of the *Somatén* in various cities is in AHN, 59A/9.

⁹⁴ AHN, 57A/4, military bulletins (2-10 April 1919); 1 Apr. 1919, AFTN, *Actas*, Vol. 13, pp. 268-71.

⁹⁵ There were 450 delegates representing 699,369 members and 56,642 from non-affiliated unions. CNT, *Memoria del Congreso celebrado en el Teatro de la Comedia de Madrid, los días 10 al 18 de Diciembre de 1919* (Toulouse, 1948).

⁹⁶ Pabón, *Cambó*, p. 921. Cambó lobbied for the appointment of General Severiano Martínez Anido as civil governor of Barcelona one year later through Piedad Iturbe, a very close friend of then then Prime Minister Dato. Anido presided over a period of veritable manhunt of labour activists. Piedad Iturbe, *Erase una vez* (Madrid, 1954), pp. 263-4.

⁹⁷ Employers' hostility to the 'partiality' of the government is in AFTN, *Memoria*, pp. 22-4, 34-6.

⁹⁸ Milans's own exculpatory version is in, 18 Apr. 1919, AAM, 263/16. *La Correspondencia Militar*, 17 Apr. 1919, called the accusation that the army had expelled the civil governor of Barcelona slanderous. Yet, evidence to the contrary was overwhelming: Interview with former chief of police of Barcelona Doval in *El Sol*, 1 Aug. 1919; Romanones, *Notas*, pp. 436-45; Count Figols to Maura, 15 Apr. 1919, AAM, 219/16; British ambassador's confidential dispatches, 15-16 Apr. 1919, FO 371/4,120/62,519 and 62,523. See also various documents in AED, 83: Milans's first letter of resignation due to discrepancies with the government's conciliatory line, 19 Mar. 1919; declaration of martial law, 25 Mar. 1919; Milans's demands for the removal of Montañés and Doval, undated; Montañés's opposition to Milans's repressive approach, 8 Apr. 1919; Milan's support for Portillo and second resignation, 9 Apr. 1919; the 'visit' of some officers before the departure of the civil governor, undated. Equally, crucial documentary evidence can be found in ACR: transcripts

of telephonic conferences between Milans and the war minister, 8-9 and 14 Apr. 1919, 20/5; letter from the CPE's Secretary, José Pallejá, to Milans backing Portillo, Apr. 1919, 96/38; and Doval's incompatibility with Portillo's dirty work, 8 Apr. 1919, 96/60. Most scholars agree on the army's subversive role: Ángeles Barrio Alonso, 'La oportunidad perdida: 1919, mito y realidad del poder sindical', *Ayer* 63/3 (2006), pp. 174-7; Boyd, *Praetorian*, pp. 26-9; Balcells, *El sindicalisme*, pp. 84-8; and Bengoechea, *Organització*, pp. 203-5.

⁹⁹ Cambó, *Memorias*, p. 305.

¹⁰⁰ Antonio Gramsci, 'On Fascism, 1921', in David Beetham, *Marxists in the Face of Fascism* (Manchester, 1983), pp. 82-3.