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At what cost?: Spanish neutrality in the First World War

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Spanish Neutrality in the First World War

by

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For with God, nothing shall be impossible. Luke 1:37

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ABSTRACT

While historians have gone to great efforts in studying the belligerent powers during the First World War, very little attention has been paid to such neutral powers as Spain. Several European nations declared neutrality in 1914, but many strayed from this course in favor of active belligerence. Spain, however, remained neutral for the war's duration; thus, this thesis examines and explores the nature of Spanish neutrality during the First World War.

Spain's decision to adhere to a neutral policy required serious consideration as it had to weigh the consequences and advantages of intervention; however, military and economic weakness, as well as diplomatic isolation pushed Spain towards neutrality. Some hoped by abstaining from involvement, their country would emerge at the war's end as the arbiter of peace, enabling Spain to regain prestige and reestablish itself as a major continental power. However, neutrality proved to be a difficult undertaking because Spain could not escape the hardships and effects of a continental war. As domestic crises enveloped the country, a divided public aligned itself into Francophiles and Germanophiles. Escalating domestic issues became exacerbated by diplomatic conflicts resulting from the German submarine warfare campaign, which challenged Spain's neutrality policy.

Thus, Spain found itself in a precarious position during the war. While recognizing the necessity to maintain neutrality, it suffered serious consequences for its decision. It did not emerge from the war as an arbiter of peace, but suffered diplomatic humiliation over its failure to overcome the German submarine threat. The government's focus on foreign policy led its leaders to ignore the growing domestic discontent, which further destabilized an already unsteady government. As a result, governments rose and fell as all proved incapable of resolving Spain's ever-increasing problems.

The case of Spain in the First World War demonstrates that neutrality is not necessarily the safe course that many believe, as no country can fully escape the effects of war. As a neutral, Spain faced incredible difficulties. The government's neutrality policy kept Spain out of the war, but the regime faced the significant consequences of this decision including its ultimate demise.

Introduction

Neutrality is not impartiality.[1]

What is neutrality? For some, it is a sign of cowardice, a perceived unwillingness for a nation to take a stand against right and wrong. For others, neutrality represents the ability of a nation to transcend the historic barbarities of war in favor of a more enlightened, civilized method of diplomacy. However, regardless of an individual's personal views on the policy of neutrality, it is a significant decision made by a nation to abstain from conflict. *Merriam-Webster* defines neutral as "not favoring either side in a quarrel, contest, or war."[2] Thus, neutrality is not a simple decision to avoid involvement; rather, it is a calculated choice made by a government to remain uninvolved militarily, as well as avoid any semblance of favoritism to either party. In spite of this, as writer Hermógenes Cenamor related, "Neutrality is not impartiality." He further explained that a neutral nation:

> is able to be divided in its opinions of the war, according to the passions and interests of the political parties. It is inevitable that a neutral state and the nation it represents have an opinion about the war and the result of neutrality is always benevolence or hostility to one of the belligerents.[3]

Neutrality can create the same divisions as war. As a nation embarks on a neutral policy, it is virtually impossible to eliminate or disregard the passions that emerge on both sides.

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[1] Hermógenes Cenamor, *Los intereses materiales de España en la guerra europea* (Madrid: Librería de la Vuida de Pueyo, 1916), 163.
[2] *The Merriam-Webster Dictionary,* s.v. "neutral."
[3] Cenamor, *Los intereses materiales de España,* 163-164.

While these preferences do exist, the purpose of the government is ultimately to set personal views aside in order to follow the best course of action for the country. Therefore, while the declaration of war is a monumental decision, the choice to remain neutral brings with it significant diplomatic and domestic consequences as was the case with Spain during World War I.

The First World War wreaked havoc throughout the world as fighting exploded on three continents and the great powers converged in a conflict that would leave millions dead and wounded, four empires destroyed, and the world attempting to cope with the horrors of 1914-1918. The impact of the war upon the belligerents is apparent. Britain and France faced complete devastation at the war's end as they wrestled with countless losses and economic ruin. Yet, they were the victors. Russia dissolved into revolution in 1917 and the defeated powers — Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Turkey — saw their previous influence dissipate. Even the smaller powers such as Italy, Romania, and Bulgaria faced tremendous hardships as a result of the war.

However, while one expects adversity in war, the First World War left no nation untouched, and even the neutral powers did not escape unscathed, particularly Spain. The case of Spain in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries shows the ultimate demise of one of Europe's greatest empires. While Spain had dominated the continent in earlier centuries, its great empire fell far behind as the world expanded through industrialization and further imperial conquest. The sluggish pace of its industrial progress left Spain economically backward, and the country suffered a devastating blow to its position with the loss of its overseas colonies after the 1898 Spanish-American War. Still reeling from these circumstances at the outbreak of the war, Spain was in a fragile position. In fact,

Turkey, which faced similar circumstances, was often called the "Sick Man of Europe." One Spanish journalist recognized the dangerous parallel and questioned whether Spain was not the "Turkey of the West."[4]

When war erupted in 1914, the Spanish government analyzed the possible consequences of intervention. Recognizing the seemingly insurmountable obstacles, Spain's leaders realized the country was in no position to become involved in a European conflict and believed that their lack of participation in the war could ultimately yield a positive outcome for the struggling nation. As a result, the government immediately declared the country's absolute neutrality, throwing Spain into a four-year diplomatic roller coaster. Unlike its neutral counterparts such as Italy, Romania and Bulgaria, it avoided active belligerence in the conflict and maintained its neutrality policy for the war's duration.

Despite its neutrality, Spain hardly eluded the consequences of war. While the government prevented Spain from entering the war, it could not prevent the war from entering Spain as the nation faced the same economic hardships of the belligerents. While it did experience some economic growth by taking advantage of the great powers' inability to export, food shortages and a lack of basic necessities created turmoil and discontent throughout the country. Already economically deficient at the war's outbreak, the difficulties introduced by such a widespread conflict furthered the deteriorating conditions within Spain.

[4] Luis Araquistain in *España,* 2 November 1916, in M. Carmen García-Nieto and Esperanza Yllán Calderón, *Crisis social y dictadura, 1914-1930,* vol. 4 of *Historia de España 1808-1978* (Barcelona: Editorial Crítica, 1989), 51-52.

Exacerbating these economic hardships was Germany's unrestricted submarine warfare campaign that ravaged Spanish shipping producing a dangerous diplomatic situation that nearly drew the nation into war. As the war progressed, Spanish society divided itself into two factions — *francófilos* and *germanófilos.* The destruction caused at the hands of German submarines furthered this divide as the nation struggled with the prospect of entering the war. With the Germanophiles staunchly supporting strict neutrality and the Francophiles demanding at least benevolent neutrality favoring the Entente, the Spanish government was in an impossible situation.

As the submarine campaign affected Spain's economy and international standing, the government wrestled with how to handle its ever-increasing problems. For four years, the Restoration monarchy, already rooted in instability, struggled to maintain the hegemonic control it held over the country, and the consequences of war only intensified their seeming demise. Governments rose and fell as none proved capable of addressing the serious crises emerging in Spain. However, despite the rising costs, both domestic and diplomatic, the leaders of Spain maintained the policy of neutrality until the war's end in 1918.

Although this course of action was not without its consequences, Spain's leaders had little choice, given Spain's inherent instability. Despite the constant pressures to abandon the neutrality policy, doing so could have proved even more devastating as both the Central Powers and the Entente posed formidable threats should Spain have chosen to become involved in the conflict. Author on European neutrality, Efraim Karsh related, "Not only is neutrality not 'blessed' with the traits associated with it – but the successful

pursuit of this policy requires the most finely tuned foreign policy instruments."[5] Thus, while the policies and actions of Spain's leaders in 1914-1918 have been rightfully scrutinized and criticized, one cannot ignore the diplomatic endurance required to maintain this course in the face of such extreme hardship. The results of this policy can hardly be described as successful and the conduct of Spain's leaders often appeared more cowardly than diplomatically sound. However, as King Alfonso XIII of Spain explained in 1917, "Each of us in his own sphere must do his duty for the well-being and honor of Spain."[6]

[5] Efraim Karsh, *Neutrality and the Small States* (London: Routledge, 1988), 32.
[6] King Alfonso XIII in Sir Charles Petrie, *King Alfonso XIII and His Age* (London: Chapman & Hall Ltd., 1963), 127.

Chapter One

The Roots of Instability

The tragedy of Spanish public life is the absolute absence of passion, the indifference, the shrinking of shoulders with an uncivil "what is it to me."[1]

Spain's government during the First World War had its roots in instability, which would only be exacerbated in the crises that developed from the war. Antonio Cánovas de Castillo was the architect of the Restoration Monarchy with Alfonso XII (1875-1885) and established its constitution in 1876. He argued that, "This is the only way to form the mold a dynasty needs in order to have a solid monarchical institution."[2] He determined that a stable Spanish government must consist of a two-party system in which a Liberal and Conservative party alternated in power. Along with Liberal leader Práxedes Mateo Sagasta, Castillo crafted the *turno pacífico* (the peaceful rotation).[3]

The Restoration's early years were marked by repressive measures intended to regain control lost following years of revolts and revolutions. They limited voting rights to only landowners and *capacidades*, those with high levels of education or academic titles.[4] However, to maintain the political order, the government realized the need to convey authenticity in the voting system. Thus, towards the end of the nineteenth century, the government instituted more liberal reforms such as relaxed censorship laws and male suffrage in 1890. These changes created the false appearance of Spain as one of the more

[1] Luis Araquistain, *Entre la guerra y la revolucion* (Madrid: 1917), 144.
[2] M. Carmen García-Nieto and Esperanza Yllán Calderón, *Teoría y práctica del parlamentarismo, 1874-1914*, vol. 3 of *Historia de España 1808-1978* (Barcelona: Editorial Crítica, 1989), 16.
[3] Raymond Carr, ed., *Spain: A History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 223.
[4] García-Nieto and Calderón, *Teoría y práctica del parlamentarismo*, 17.

democratic European nations. But these devices only served to conceal the monopoly of power enjoyed by the governing elite. In fact, this "Restoration" was founded through the manipulation of the very democratic ideals they had purportedly established. In reality, the government functioned only through the rigging of elections known as *caciquismo.*[5]

The *caciquismo* achieved the desired election results by manipulating the *Ministerio de la Gobernación* (Ministry of the Interior), which ensured the *turno* continued unabated. The heart of the *caciquismo* were the *caciques,* landowners, officials, moneylenders, lawyers, priests or other people of local authority, who formed the backbone of the Spanish political structure.[6] They possessed unlimited powers in their respective areas and established a clientelist network that guaranteed the necessary results to maintain the *turno.* Valentí Almirall, a Catalan political activist spoke out against this system in his book, *Espagne telle qu'elle est* (*Spain Such as It Is).* "If we wanted to list all the forms of fraud used in Spain to overturn universal male suffrage or limit it to the whims of the government, we would never finish." He expanded upon this by saying, "I have seen many times that my father, in spite of having died years ago, has gone to place his ballot in the box under the watchful eye of a city official or a policeman dressed in a borrowed suit."[7] Yet despite this corruption, the Restoration continued to function because of the apathy of the people. Almirall proved to be the exception as the majority of Spaniards allowed themselves to be controlled and manipulated by the *caciques.*

This *caciquismo* political structure dominated Spain until the latter part of the war

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[5] José Alvarez Junco and Adrian Shubert, eds., *Spanish History Since 1808* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 91.
[6] Francisco J. Romero Salvadó, *Spain 1914-1918: Between War and Revolution* (London: Routledge, 1999), 2.
[7] Valentí Almirall, *Espagne telle que'elle est* (Paris: Albert Savine, 1887), 141-52 as quoted in Jon Cowans, ed., *Modern Spain: A Documentary History* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 71-73.

and played a key role in the maintenance of the Restoration regime. It was, however, judged by other countries as a major hindrance to Spain's future. In an article written during the war, American political scientist Charles H. Cunningham stated:

> Although the cost of necessities of life has reached almost unsupportable proportions and the coasts of Spain are blockaded by the German submarines… these facts have had little effect in giving to the average Spaniard any definite point of view or attitude toward the great struggle. He thinks little about the actualities of the situation, but leaves the entire solution of the matter to the 'government,' in which, evidently, he has no part.[8]

These thoughts were echoed by a Spanish journalist who wrote to a French colleague, "Believe me, political apathy continues to dominate Spain…. Even in raising the famous spectre of war, the professionals will not succeed in awakening political life in Spain."[9]

Relying upon this apathy, the Restoration functioned fairly smoothly for twenty-five years, until a crisis emerged that raised doubts about its government's effectiveness. In 1897, Castillo died and the Spanish-American War immediately followed in 1898 resulting in the disastrous loss of its remaining American and Asian colonies, including Cuba, the Philippines, Puerto Rico and Guam. *El Desastre* came as a shock to the Spanish, whose national culture maintained the illusion that the world still considered Spain at least a middle-ranking world power. However, this significant imperial defeat occurred at a peak in Europe's "New Imperialism" when a nation's status as a world power depended largely upon colonial possessions. Thus, Spaniards faced the realization

[8] Charles H. Cunningham, "Spain and the War," *The American Political Science Review* 11, no. 3 (August 1917): 422.
[9] Gerald Meaker, "A Civil War of Words: The Ideological Impact of the First World War on Spain, 1914-1918," in *Neutral Europe between War and Revolution, 1917-23*, ed. Hans A. Schmitt (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1988), 7.

that according to some nations Spain was, as Lord Salisbury called it, a "dying nation."[10] Conservative leader, Francisco Silvela echoed Lord Salisbury's words in an article entitled, "Sin Pulso" (Without a Pulse) in which he wrote of the end of Spain's "destiny as a European people."[11] As Salisbury and Silvela's words echoed through the Spanish press and the illusion of world status shattered, segments of the Spanish population began to question their political system, as well as their nationhood. One weekly magazine wrote, "Today the question for us, not the main but the only and exclusive question, is one of life or death; one of whether we continue to exist as a nation or not."[12]

Following *El Desastre,* an outcry arose from the cultural elites of Spain —writers, poets, philosophers —who became known as the Generation of '98. They attacked the ruling regime and denounced the Restoration as the primary cause of Spain's problems, lashing out against the *caciquismo*, industrial and economic backwardness, clericalism and the decline of their society.[13] Many Spaniards blamed the government for involving the nation in what they perceived to be a "terrible and perhaps unequal struggle."[14] Silvela recognized the changing perceptions toward the government leaders and admitted that they had failed the population. He expressed:

> The failure of the governing classes has been tremendous and a consequence of it is all that so-called regionalism, which is merely the weakness of the cerebral centre,… and the collapse of the

[10] Rosario de la Torre del Río, "La prensa madrileña y el discurso de Lord Salisbury sobre 'las naciones moribundas' (Londres, Albert Hall, 4 mayo 1898)," *Cuadernos de Historia Moderna y Contemporánea,* no. 6 (1985): 163-180.
[11] *El Tiempo,* 16 August 1898, as quoted in Francisco Silvela, *Artículos, Discursos, Conferencias y Cartas* vol. 2 (Madrid: Mateu Artes Gráficas, 1922-1923), 493-498.
[12] "Sed fuertes," *La Ilustración Española y Americana,* 8 February 1899, as quoted in Sebastian Balfour, *The End of the Spanish Empire, 1898-1923* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 50.
[13] Salvadó, *Twentieth-Century Spain*, 21.
[14] *La Epoca*, 10 May 1898, as quoted in Torre del Río, "La prensa madrileña," 174.

> respect of the people towards their governing classes.[15]

Although the 1898 disaster caused some Spaniards to lose faith in the Restoration, the regime remained intact primarily due to the lack of a viable alternative. Class and regional divisions deepened when Spain lost its colonies, which had been the only major factor unifying the country. This division produced an identity crisis that destroyed the complacent nationalism encouraged by the government during the war with the United States.[16] Without any consensus as to how to change the government, the *turno* remained, for the most part, intact.

The status quo, however, did not remain completely unchanged. The 1898 defeat and the resulting uncertainty led to the establishment of new political parties outside the *turno's* Conservative and Liberal factions. Of primary importance was the establishment of the *Lliga Regionalista* in 1901, the party of the Catalan industrial bourgeoisie. Led by Francisco Cambó, the *Lliga* was a socially conservative group that sought a decentralized political system with Catalan political intervention, which they hoped would win Catalonian autonomy while benefiting Spain as a whole.[17]

The rise of the Catalan movement was accompanied by the rise of a Left-wing Republican party, the Radicals. Alejandro Lerroux, a young journalist, led the Radicals against the repressive Restoration regime:

> This whole gigantic project is opposed by tradition, routine, entrenched privileges, conservative interests, caciquismo, clericalism, entailed estates, centralism, and the stupid collection of parties and programs made up by empty heads in the machines that fabricate religious dogma and

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[15] Francisco Silvela as quoted in Balfour, *The End of the Spanish Empire*, 61.
[16] Helen Graham and Jo Labanyi, eds., *Spanish Cultural Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 28-29.
[17] Charles E. Enrlich, "The Lliga Regionalista and the Catalan Industrial Bourgeoisie," *Journal of Contemporary History* 33, no. 3 (July 1998): 400-401 and Salvadó, *Twentieth-Century Spain*, 22.

> political despotism.[18]

Lerroux urged violence at every opportunity, and his desire to overthrow the rich gained him much support from the lower-middle classes, especially in the cities. This increasing support culminated in the Radicals' defeat of the *Lliga* in the elections of 1903.[19]

The Radicals were by no means the only political group expanding at the turn of the century. The Spanish labor movement assumed a more organized form, developing into two opposing regional blocs. Castilla, Asturias and the Basque Country had Socialist tendencies, while Cataluña, Valencia, Aragón and Andalucía leaned towards Anarcho-Syndicalism. The growth of Socialism in Spain was much slower than its Anarcho-Syndicalist counterparts. The Spanish Socialist Party (PSOE) was established in 1879 followed by the trade union, *La Unión General de Trabajadores* (UGT), in 1888. The PSOE, under the leadership of Pablo Iglesias adopted the rhetoric of revolution and the rise of the proletariat, blaming the humiliating 1898 defeat on the bourgeoisie political leaders who:

> did not take into account the immense economic power of that nation; they did not realize that wealth is today what gives a nation strength and energy, and they now confront, and make us confront, all the consequences of such tremendous stupidity.[20]

While proclaiming themselves as revolutionaries, in practice, they actually focused more on the daily struggles of the worker. This contradiction between their ideology and their daily actions produced an inability to realize or address the major issues, such as retarded

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[18] Alejandro Lerroux, *De la lucha: Páginas de Alejandro Lerroux* (Barcelona: F. Granada, 1909), 119-20 as quoted in Cowans, *Modern Spain*, 103-104.
[19] Gerald Brenan, *The Spanish Labyrinth: An Account of the Social and Political Background of the Civil War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1943), 30.
[20] Pablo Iglesia, "Our Bourgeoisie," *El Socialista*, 17 August 1898, as quoted in Cowans, *Modern Spain*, 97-98.

agricultural development and regional diversity.[21]

As the PSOE-UGT struggled to establish itself, the Anarcho-Syndicalists gained surprising support from a wide range of groups, from peasants to Catalan workers. Its foundation rested upon a distrust of the state and a call to action to remedy the problems plaguing Spain. In 1911, the Anarchists organized a new trade union, the *Conferderación Nacional del Trabajo* (CNT), with the Anarcho-Syndicalists representing the group's most authentic revolutionaries.[22] However, the union of these two groups was by no means the preferred method of revolutionary development. Rather, governmental repression forced the Anarchists and Syndicalists to unite into one union guaranteeing the movement would be plagued by internal divisions.[23]

These rising new parties brought fresh perspectives into Spanish politics and the government's ultimate inability to integrate these groups into the existing order would be a significant destabilizing force within the *turno*.[24] These groups successfully managed to politically awaken and enlighten portions of the Spanish population. However, these were not the only forces undermining the Spanish government.

The deaths of Castillo in 1897 and Sagasta in 1903 left a huge void in the *turno*, which forced the Conservative and Liberal parties to re-examine their leadership techniques to counter the rising threat of the new parties. Although each instituted reforms, their politics were no longer compatible and the compromise that maintained the

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[21] P. Heywood, *Marxism and the Failure of Organized Socialism in Spain, 1879-1936* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 2-3 and F. Pérez Ledesma, *El pensamiento socialista español a comienzos de siglo* (Madrid: Centro, 1974), pp. 27-34 as found in Salvadó, *Twentieth-Century Spain*, 25.
[22] Gerald Meaker, "Anarchists versus Syndicalists: Conflicts within the Conferderación Nacional del Trabajo, 1917-1923," in *Politics and Society in Twentieth-Century Spain*, ed. Stanley G. Payne (New York: Franklin Watts, 1976), 34.
[23] Raymond Carr, *Spain, 1808-1939,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966), 446.
[24] García-Nieto and Calderón, *Teoría y práctica del parlamentarismo,* 29.

turno since 1876 was no longer possible.

Intensifying this situation was King Alfonso's involvement in Spanish politics by dissolving and reorganizing the government at will. The ascension of Alfonso XIII to the throne in 1902 ushered in a monarchy that intervened directly in politics. Even Winston Churchill recognized this unique characteristic in this king. "But I shall not shrink from pronouncing now that Alfonso XIII was a cool, determined politician who used continuously and in full the whole influence of his kingly office to control the policies and fortunes of his country."[25]

In 1903, Antonio Maura became the leader of the Conservative party and served as Premier from 1903-1904 and during his 'long government' of 1907-1909. A former Liberal who abandoned Sagasta's party because of internal conflicts, Maura's main goal was to eliminate the *caciquismo*, which he considered the major impediment to maintaining the regime. He believed that the existence of the *caciquismo,* which prevented the people from political involvement, would lead to revolution from below. Therefore, he hoped to create a revolution from above to prevent the latter.[26] He announced his intentions earlier in a speech to Congress in July 1899 that, "It is a conviction of all of us that Spain has to go through a revolution; if we do not make it here, it will be made in the streets."[27] However, Maura encountered stiff opposition from both internal and external forces.

At the same time, the Liberal party had also attempted to revise the faltering

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[25] Winston S. Churchill, *Great Contemporaries*, (London: Thornton Butterworth Ltd., 1937; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973), 216.
[26] Junco and Shubert, *Spanish History Since 1808*, 102.
[27] *Revista Nacional,* nos. 7 and 8, 9 July 1899, 129 as quoted in Balfour, *The End of the Spanish Empire*, 188.

system, but both parties suffered enormously from internal conflicts, as well as their determined opposition to each other. As conflicts deepened, the government's inability to address the rising strength of the workers' movement culminated in a crisis during the 'Tragic Week' in the summer of 1909.[28]

Morocco remained the last imperial Spanish holding, which it vowed to defend at all cost. After the 1898 Spanish-American War, it could not afford the devastating blow to its international prestige and national pride that the loss of its portion of Morocco would cause. Prior to war with the United States, Spain still maintained a significant imperial presence in the Caribbean and Pacific with control of Cuba, the Philippines, Puerto Rico and Guam. However, Spain's crushing defeat forced the country to relinquish these colonies to the United States. This loss meant that Spain's last noteworthy territory was Morocco, which could not be surrendered.

In addition, losing its hold in Morocco would potentially affect Spain's national security. Liberal leader Montero Ríos clearly related these fears when he asked:

> Does the Government of His Majesty bear in mind that if the North West of Morocco comes under the domination…of a military or civil Protectorate of France, Spain would be reduced to seeing herself besieged perpetually in the North and South by the same power?[29]

Due to its close geographical proximity, Spain emphasized its obvious interest in Moroccan affairs and viewed any British or French infringement on these affairs as a threat. Thus, France's increasing presence in the Morocco ushered in the possibility of French encirclement that could ultimately push Spain out of its last imperial holding

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[28] García-Nieto and Calderón, *Teoría y práctica del parlamentarismo,* 41.
[29] Montero Ríos quoted in Maura Gamazo, *La Cuestíon de Marruecos desde el punta de vista España* (Madrid 1905), 33-34 as found in James A. Chandler, "Spain and Her Moroccan Protectorate 1898-1927," *Journal of Contemporary History* 10, n. 2 (April 1975): 302.

furthering the nation's insistence on maintaining its portion.

Following a summer 1909 uprising in the Moroccan Protectorate, army reservists were called up in Madrid and Barcelona. On 26 July, bloody riots ensued among the urban workers launching the *Semana Tragica* (Tragic Week). Although more an attack against the general workers' conditions, "conscription for service in a colonial war was nevertheless a grievance sufficient to act as a catalyst to violence."[30]

Severe repression followed the crisis as Maura dealt harshly with those responsible for the protest. Although supported by a majority in the Cortes, Alfonso XIII chose to dismiss Maura because he felt the politician's unpopularity could potentially undermine the monarchy. As the government fell, the *turno* faced a serious threat. Maura was the first and last politician to have a genuine mass following, and his dismissal resulted in some young Conservatives following Maura in creating a separate *Maurista* movement causing the first serious split in one of the two dynastic parties.

Thus, as the tides of war began to embroil the continent, the Spanish government entered into a period of chaos. From the ascension of Alfonso XIII in 1902 until Primo de Rivera's *coup d'etat* in 1923, there were thirty-three Spanish governments. As war erupted in 1914, the Restoration government, already unstable and facing a wide array of new domestic threats, recognized that if it had any hope of preventing its further demise, its only option with regard to the developing international conflict was the path of neutrality.

[30] Chandler, "Spain and Her Moroccan Protectorate," 305.

Chapter Two

"Observer Neutralidad Más Absoluta"

"Spain remains and will remain neutral because this is her firm will."[1]

No one realized the devastation that would result from the hostilities that commenced in the summer of 1914. As Europe quickly divided into opposing blocs, the Spanish government firmly believed it should not involve itself in a general European war, regardless of the prevailing 'short war illusion.' Thus, when hostilities broke out, Conservative Prime Minister Eduardo Dato officially declared his country's neutrality on 30 July.

> With great misfortune, war was declared between Germany, on the one side, and Russia, France and the United Kingdom, while a state of war also exists between Austria-Hungary and Belgium. The government of your majesty believes it should order the strictest neutrality (*más estricta neutralidad)* of Spanish subjects.[2]

In a telegram to the Spanish Ambassador in Belgium on 4 August 1914, Foreign Minister, Marqués de Lema, reinforced Spain's intention to "observer neutralidad más absoluta."[3] Thus, the Spanish government did not hesitate in declaring its policy relative to the growing conflict and would maintain this assurance for the next four years.

Several factors contributed to the Spanish government's policy of neutrality, extending from its lack of military power to its ultimate goal to regain lost prestige by

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[1] Count Conde de Romanones in Salvadó, *Spain 1914-1918,* 62.
[2] *Diario Universal,* 7 August 1914, as quoted in Fernando Diaz-Plaja, *La Historia de España en sus documentos: del Desastre de 1898 al Principe Juan Carlos* (Barcelona: Graficas Guadam S.A., 1971), 39.
[3] Marqués de Lema quoted in Nuño Aguirre de Cárcer, ed., *La Neutralidad de España durante la Primera Guerra Mundial (1914-1918)* (Madrid: Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores, 1995), 1.

serving as the arbiter of peace at the war's end. However, as adamant as Spain's politicians were regarding neutrality, it was by no means an easy decision. It involved serious contemplation as they recognized the potential consequences. Thus, the Spanish government carefully weighed its options and determined neutrality was the best, and only, course of action for the struggling nation. It would adhere to the decision despite numerous diplomatic and domestic threats and challenges. Prime Minister Dato outlined the reasoning for this course of action in a letter to his former chief Maura dated 25 August 1914:

> We would depart from neutrality only if we were directly threatened by foreign aggression or by an ultimatum…. Germany and Austria are delighted with our attitude as they believe us compromised with the Entente. France and Britain cannot criticize us as our pacts with them are limited to Morocco…. I do not fear that the Allies would push us to take sides with or against them…. They must know that we lack material resources and adequate preparation for a modern war…. Would not we render a better service to both sides by sticking to our neutrality so that one day we could raise a white flag and organize a peace conference in our country which could put an end to the current conflict? We have moral authority for that and who knows if we shall be required to do so.[4]

After the Dato-led government made the decision to remain neutral in the growing conflict, many held Dato's optimistic views regarding the benefits this policy could bring Spain. They looked forward to reaping the rewards of avoiding war and hoped to advance Spain's position. As Dato conveyed, there were numerous reasons for Spain to pursue this policy.

One of the primary reasons, as mentioned, was its drastically inferior military

[4] Eduardo Dato quoted in Sebastian Balfour and Paul Preston, eds., *Spain and the Great Powers in the Twentieth Century* (London: Routledge, 1999), 32.

capability. The Spanish-American War decimated the military. Naval operations in the Philippines and Cuba destroyed the Spanish squadrons in both areas. In addition, in the 1890s, commencing with the initial uprisings in Cuba and culminating in the 1898 defeat, the Spanish army suffered nearly 200,000 casualties, not in battle, but as a result of its inadequate medical corps.[5] By 1910, its army had only 80,000 soldiers and 25,000 officers, or a ratio of one officer for every five soldiers.[6] Not only was the army small, but the disproportionately large number of officers prohibited any major reform of the armed forces. Furthermore, the government devoted approximately forty percent of its budget to defense, with an astounding seventy percent of the defense budget appropriated for officers' salaries.[7] While the officer corps naturally defied any attempts to change this established system, the political leaders also chose not to make any significant changes because the army symbolized stability for its government.[8] Thus, modernization of the armed forces proved virtually impossible.

In addition to these structural and financial problems within the army, there was dissension within the army that stemmed from colonial conflict in Morocco and the issue of combat merits. On the eve of the First World War, Spain was in the midst of the Moroccan War (1909-1927) hoping to maintain the country's last imperial holding, but occupying over half of the country's inadequately trained troops in the process.[9] In addition, the conflict created discord between *peninsulares* (those who served in Spain)

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[5] Salvadó, *Spain 1914-1918*, 56.
[6] José E. Alvarez, "From Empire to Republic: The Spanish Army, 1898-1931," in *A Military History of Modern Spain: From the Napoleonic Era to the International War on Terror,* eds. Wayne H. Bowen and José E. Alvarez (Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 2007), 37-38.
[7] Salvadó, *Spain 1914-1918*, 55.
[8] Alvarez, "From Empire to Republic"," 38.
[9] Of 140,000 forces listed in the army at the war's outbreak, 76,000 were stationed in Morocco. Javier Ponce, "World War I: Unarmed Neutrality," in *A Military History of Modern Spain,* eds. Bowen and Alvarez, 54.

and *Africanistas* (those who served in Morocco), as the army reintroduced *méritos de guerra* (war/combat merits) in 1910 after they were abolished following abuse during the 1898 war.[10] These merits obviously benefited the *Africanistas* considering they faced actual combat in Morocco. This further divided the officer corps as a debate ensued between seniority versus battlefield promotions. Already a problem at the outbreak of the war, it would reach a critical point in 1917. With its military divided and no financial means to increase either land or sea forces, Spain could not provide even minimal military assistance to the belligerents.

Closely related to the army's difficulties was Spain's general economic weakness in 1914. The origin could be traced back to the policies instituted by the Restoration government at the end of the nineteenth century that ultimately isolated Spain from the international economy and impeded its own economic expansion. Prior to 1868, the country had utilized a bimetallic standard with an overvaluation of silver.[11] In 1883, Spain suspended the convertibility of gold and refused to adhere to the gold standard used by the majority of European nations. Spain's failure isolated it from the international economy and resulted in a greater fluctuation of the exchange rate for its peseta. This led to the slow, continuous drop in its value between 1890 and 1896 with no sign of change until 1900.[12] Another factor in Spain's economic weakness resulted from their severe dependence upon tariffs. As the rest of Europe established a world market for grain, made possible by transportation advances from the Industrial Revolution, Spain reverted to a

[10] Alvarez, "From Empire to Republic"," 38.
[11] Agustín Llona Rodríguez, "Terms-of-Trade Variability and Adherence to the Gold Standard: The Cases of Portugal and Spain," in *Monetary Standards and Exchange Rates,* eds. Maria Cristina Marcuzzo, Lawrence H. Officer and Annalisa Rosselli (London: Routledge, 1997), 275.
[12] Pablo Martín-Aceña, "Spain During the Classical Gold Standard Years, 1880-1914," in *Monetary Regimes in Transition,* eds. Michael D. Bordo and Forrest Capie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 135 and 142-143.

protectionist stance to counter the threat of foreign wheat and other goods. However, Spain's archaic agricultural system and the flood of Soviet and U.S. grain into the world market devastated the Spanish economy.

The instability of the Spanish economy and its isolation from the world economy created significant problems, including "one of the lowest rates of industrialization in Western Europe."[13] Spain did not enter the second stage of industrialization until the 1920s, and it has been argued that "the case of Spain is less that of a latecomer than that of an attempt, largely thwarted, to join the ranks of the first comers."[14] In 1910, two-thirds of the population still worked in agriculture, which accounted for approximately one-third of the gross domestic product. Agricultural backwardness and inadequate farming practices produced an unstable economy that fluctuated between prosperity and crisis, greatly retarding Spain's industrial growth. Urban centers were generally small, as only ten percent of the population lived in cities with a population over 100,000. Illiteracy rates were extremely high with thirty-seven percent of men and fifty-eight percent of women falling into that category. Although Spain finally saw improved growth and slow structural changes in its economy after 1910, they had made little impact by the outbreak of the war.[15]

In addition to military and economic weakness, a two-fold reason for Spain's declaration of neutrality was that the European dispute did not affect Spanish interests and that it was too isolated politically and diplomatically. Jerónimo Bécker's 1924 study

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[13] Martín-Aceña, "Spain During the Classical Gold Standard Years," 160.
[14] Jordi Nadal, "The Failure of the Industrial Revolution in Spain, 1830-1914," in *The Emergence of Industrial Societies, Part Two,* vol. 4 of *The Fontana Economic History of Europe,* ed. Carlo M. Cipolla (Sussex: Harvester Press, 1976), 617.
[15] James Simpson, "Economic Development in Spain, 1850-1936," *The Economic History Review* 50, no. 2 (May 1997): 349 and Nicolás Sánchez-Albornoz, ed., *The Economic Modernization of Spain, 1830-1930* (New York: New York University Press, 1987), 43.

of foreign policy begins "The dawning of the nineteenth century was a sad day for Spain."[16] The loss of its long-standing imperial empire and growing political instability, social conflict and economic backwardness placed Spain in a tenuous situation, and its foreign policy reflected this weakness.

Upon ascending the throne in 1902, Alfonso XIII was determined to play a key role in Spain's foreign policy. His first political move was the selection of his bride. The Triple Alliance (Germany, Austria-Hungary and Italy) and the Triple Entente (Britain, France and Russia) believed that his choice would largely determine his diplomatic policy relative to these alliances. Because his mother, Queen Maria Cristina was a Habsburg, many thought he would align himself with the Triple Alliance. Yet, Alfonso chose Victoria Eugenie of Battenburg, a granddaughter of Queen Victoria, bringing himself and Spain closer to the Triple Entente in a move that was seen by many as a mark of Spain's rupture with Germany and Alfonso's Austro-Hungarian ancestry. Alfonso firmly believed that Spain's 1898 defeat resulted from the lack of a permanent alliance, and this move represented the king's initial attempt to establish what he deemed was Spain's most desperate need —allies.[17]

As the Great Powers had aligned themselves into opposing blocs, Spain realized it must avoid complete diplomatic isolation. For Alfonso, the choice was obvious. Since Britain and France surrounded Spain, his foreign policy would be one dictated by geography. For London and Paris, on the other hand, Spain posed a potential threat to

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[16] Jerónimo Becker, *Historia de las relaciones exteriores de España durante el siglo xix* (Madrid: Establecimiento Tipográfico de Jaime Ratés, 1924), 5.
[17] Gerie B. Bledsoe, "Spanish Foreign Policy, 1898-1936," in *Spain in the Twentieth-Century World: Essays on Spanish Diplomacy, 1898-1978,* ed. James W. Cortada (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1980), 7.

their fundamental interests. Britain's main concern involved protecting its lifeline through the Mediterranean and the Suez Canal to India, while France focused on defending its southern border in the event of war with Germany. Both nations, united in their opposition to expanding German influence, believed Spain could serve as a buffer, and therefore favored rapproachment with Spain. However, rapproachment did not come easily, as tensions arose when Spain and France clashed over conflicting interests in North Africa.

By 1900, North Africa had become the key focus in Spain and France's imperialistic ambitions. After its colonial losses in 1898, maintaining its position in North Africa became an obsession for Spain. It considered Morocco as its last opportunity to retain a sizable colony and restore some of its lost prestige. Contention over the territory intensified when Britain and France concluded the Anglo-French Entente in 1904, solidifying France's position in North Africa. The Entente relegated the two powers to their respective spheres of influence with France relinquishing its position in the Middle East to Britain in exchange for a primary role in Morocco. This bound France to negotiate with Spain regarding conditions in Morocco. Britain and France had ignored Spain in the treaty negotiations and these North African provisions were not acceptable to Alfonso.[18]

Although Spain's role in North Africa was minimal, both Britain and France, because of their own colonial ambitions, believed it was in their best interests to keep Spain weak. Their agreement to limit Spanish influence in North Africa particularly outraged Alfonso who immediately turned to Germany for support. Germany initially expressed interest in forging a relationship with Spain, but it quickly reconsidered for fear

[18] Bledsoe, "Spanish Foreign Policy," 8-10.

of alienating the British who opposed full French control of Morocco. London would seek German assistance, if necessary, to prevent it. Germany's rebuff forced Alfonso to renegotiate with Britain and France, resulting in Spain receiving a significantly decreased share of Morocco and Alfonso's first, but not last, major setback in foreign affairs.

Morocco would again take center stage in European politics in 1905 and 1911. Following consummation of the Anglo-French Entente, Germany decided to test the alliance and Europe by instigating the 1905-1906 Moroccan Crisis. Kaiser Wilhelm II visited Tangier in March 1905 and announced that he favored Moroccan independence. The Germans demanded an international conference, which assembled at Algeciras, but delegates from the convening nations voted to support French claims in Morocco. Germany again threatened French claims in the region during the 1911 Agadir Crisis when a German gunboat arrived in Agadir to protect German interests. It culminated with a German offer to abstain from further conflict in Morocco if it could obtain the French Congo. The Great Powers again rebuffed the Germans offering some small concessions in Africa and the crisis ultimately subsided. Although still maintaining a key interest in Moroccan affairs, Spain played a secondary role in the negotiations. It struggled to maintain the last remnant of its colonial holdings, but the 1911 Agadir Crisis only furthered its humiliation by reducing Spain's Moroccan territory to 18,300 square miles compared to France's 460,000.[19] Thus, at the outbreak of the First World War, Spain was surrounded by Britain and France, both determined to keep it weak, while the threat of a growing Germany loomed in the distance, making neutrality the only diplomatic option.

An additional argument for Spain's neutrality during the war was the potential to

[19] Bledsoe, "Spanish Foreign Policy," 9-11.

regain lost prestige. As mentioned, the 1898 disaster and subsequent failures in foreign affairs left Spain struggling to re-establish itself as a dominant continental power. Alfonso and the Spanish government hoped that by remaining impartial, they could assume a leading role in peace negotiations following the First World War, thereby gaining diplomatically what they could not achieve on the battlefield. They could only accomplish this by maintaining contact with the contending alliances. Ambassadors to the belligerent powers received clear instructions that Spain must "maintain the most amicable relations with the different states directly involved in the conflict."[20]

During summer 1914, most Spaniards appeared to support the decision of neutrality, initially welcoming it as the only course of action for the country. However, dissenting voices soon emerged. The Carlists, a dominant right-wing party, were quick to announce their pro-German sentiments, while the Republican Radicals, led by Alejandro Lerroux, expressed their support for intervention on behalf of the Entente. However, one individual especially stunned the nation with his unorthodox perspective on Spain's position at the outbreak of war. Count Conde de Romanones, leader of the Liberal party, voiced his feelings against neutrality in an article published in his newspaper, *El Diario Universal*, entitled "Neutralidades que matan" ('Fatal neutralities'). The article outlined the disadvantages of a neutral policy. Romanones stated:

> 'Neutrality,' literally means to not be with one or the other. In reality, is Spain really not with one or the other? Is it able to allow itself to be with one or the other? ... Spain recently signed a treaty with France with respect to Morocco; Spain shares the Pyrenees front with France; all the sea-lanes are controlled by England. In economic affairs, France maintains the primary role in our

[20] Ministerio de Estado a Representantes, *A los señores Representantes de los países beligerantes, en esta corte,* as quoted in Cárcer, *La neutralidad de España,* 2.

> imports and exports, followed closely by England. Spain's economic and geographic destiny then lies within the orbit of the Entente… Thus, Spain is not able to be neutral because reaching this decisive moment forces us not to be… Neutrality unsupported by the neutral's own force is at the mercy of the first strong state which finds it necessary to violate it… If Germany wins, will she thank us for our neutrality? No, she will try to rule the Mediterranean. She will not take French continental territory… We shall lose our hopes of expansion in Morocco. We shall lose our independence… Nor will German expansion in the economic and industrial domain compensate us for the ruin of the countries with whom our interests in those respects have been up to now identified. On the other hand, if the Allies triumph they will owe us no debt of gratitude and will remodel the map of Europe as they think fit… The die is cast and there is no remedy but to gamble. Neutrality is not a remedy, but to the contrary, there are fatal neutralities![21]

The article had an incredible impact on the Spanish population and government as this dynastic party leader openly criticized government policy. Romanones did not necessarily advocate Spain's entry into the war, but favored benevolent neutrality toward the Entente. However, the majority of the population disagreed, and this backlash was enough to force Romanones to deny responsibility for the article on 4 September 1914. He quickly supported strict neutrality, but the article instilled doubts as to his true feelings regarding this policy. Authorship would be debated, but Romanones's influence was not questioned, and he stated in his memoirs "The article was exclusively mine in form and inspiration."[22]

As autumn approached, the prevailing 'short war illusion' proved false, leading some neutral powers to choose sides. Italy had previously been a member of the Triple Alliance with Germany and Austria-Hungary, but chose neutrality at the war's outbreak.

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[21] *El Diario Universal*, 19 August 1914, as quoted in Fernando Diaz-Plaja, *La historia de España en sus documentos: el siglo XX* (Madrid: Instituto de Estudios Politicos, 1960), 319-321.
[22] Conde de Romanones, *Notas de una vida, 1912-1931* (Madrid: Marcial Pones, 1999), 379.

It ultimately abandoned this policy by joining the Entente in 1915 with Romania following in 1916. Bulgaria, on the other hand, chose the Central Powers in 1915. Spain continued to stress absolute neutrality, but could not escape the effects of the war. Don Francisco de Reynoso, Spanish Ambassador to Switzerland during the war years commented that:

> looking back on them (the war years) now they seem equally incredible, so fantastic and horrible were the things they brought in their wake, - even to the inhabitants of the neutral countries. For through the screen of well-guarded frontiers there seeped all the backwash of war.[23]

Economic hardships and shortages plagued the continent, and while the Spanish population, which experienced high rates of illiteracy, remained indifferent to the ideological and political issues that emerged, they were not immune to the economic consequences of war. Many social, cultural and political groups recognized the ideological differences of democracy versus autocracy between the belligerents and began to question the neutrality policy. Thus, neutrality ushered in the expression of the varied ideological views of the social classes and political parties in Spain.[24] Slowly, the population aligned itself in two camps, creating a 'civil war of words,' dividing almost equally into *francófilos* and *germanófilos.* This division extended beyond a mere debate between two opposing viewpoints; rather it created an intense division that disrupted families, so much so that even cinemas refused to present war news to prevent fights.[25] More importantly, it was an ominous sign of what the future had in store for Spain twenty years later. A French journalist visiting Madrid in 1917 was quite prescient in this regard:

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[23] Don Francisco de Reynoso, *Reminiscences of a Spanish Diplomat* (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1933), 215.
[24] García-Nieto and Calderón, *Crisis social y dictadura, 1914-1930*, vol. 4 of *Historia de España, 1808-1978* (Barcelona: Editorial Crítica, 1988), 13.
[25] Salvadó, *Spain 1914-1918*, 9.

> The fact is that two families of very old passions have been awakened and set in motion by this new conflict. And such is the somber fervor that they breathe that if they had troops behind them, I ask myself if that *civil war* of which everyone speaks so much might not become one day a reality for Spain [emphasis mine].[26]

While important to examine supporters of the two camps, it is extremely difficult to establish arbitrary designations for Germanophiles compared to Francophiles. In general, however, the clergy, army, aristocracy, landowning elites, upper bourgeoisie, court, Carlists and *Mauristas* favored the Central Powers. They wanted to maintain the existing order and uphold Catholic and traditional values such as monarchism, discipline, authority and a hierarchical social order. Germanophiles viewed an Allied victory as a potential extension of democratic ideas, and hence a threat to the status quo and their hegemonic control of the population. The Francophiles, on the other hand, consisted of Regionalists, Republicans, Socialists, professional middle classes and intellectuals, who advocated domestic reform. They sought to eradicate the current system's corruption and introduce democracy, and viewed the war as a struggle of democracy against autocracy. In other words, the question of choosing sides transcended the question of Britain and France versus Germany, and became an ideological struggle of the old order versus a new order, rigidity versus change.

Very few people supported becoming militarily involved in the conflict, which meant the question was not so much whether Spain should remain neutral, but rather what shape that neutrality should assume. Those favoring the Central Powers emphasized absolute neutrality because they realized that Spanish intervention on behalf of the Central Powers would be military suicide given Spain's geographic location. The

[26] Jean Breton as quoted in Meaker, "A Civil War of Words," 1.

Francophiles, on the other hand, represented a variety of opinions. The majority favored benevolent neutrality toward the Allies because of Spain's economic and military position, while a few called for a diplomatic rupture from Germany. One Francophile, Hermógenes Cenamor called the policy "shameful, depressive, anti-patriotic and inhuman."[27] In the early stages of the debate, the "old-order" Germanophiles had one distinct advantage. They could advocate the official policy of the Spanish government, disguising pro-German feelings as patriotism and opposition to foreign interference in Spanish affairs. The Francophiles' position, to the contrary, could be viewed as borderline treason.

As society split into segments, dynastic politicians struggled to maintain the appearance of absolute neutrality, but it quickly became evident where their sympathies truly lay. While Romanones and many Liberals clearly favored the Western powers, some Liberal party members opposed Romanones and supported his rival, the Marquis of Alhucemas, and were thus labeled Germanophiles. Within the Conservative party, many such as José Sánchez Guerra, Minister of the Interior, and General Ramón Echague, Minister of War, were considered supporters of the Central Powers, while Dato and Marquis de Lema, his Foreign Minister, were believed to favor the Allies. Despite personal divisions, with the exception of Romanones, the dynastic politicians disguised their positions by appearing unified relative to neutrality.[28]

King Alfonso XIII was perhaps the most important figure in the neutrality debate. The war divided his court with the Queen Mother, the Austrian Archduchess María Cristina on the one side, who harbored pro-German sentiments, against the king's wife,

[27] Cenamor, *Los intereses materiales de España*, 169.
[28] Salvadó, *Spain 1914-1918*, 10.

Victoria Eugenia, who staunchly defended her British homeland. The Entente assumed Alfonso supported their cause, but although Alfonso displayed pro-Allied tendencies, overshadowing them was his strong desire to consolidate his power at home and for Spain to play a leading role in post-war Europe. From the beginning of his reign, Alfonso determined to rejuvenate his country as evidenced in a diary entry dated immediately after he assumed the throne:

> I can be a King who will be filled with the glory of having regenerated his country, whose name will pass on in history as an imperishable memento of his reign… I hope at the same time to revive my country and make her, if not powerful, at least sought for as an ally.[29]

Yet, as ardently as Alfonso believed that Spain should remain neutral, he proved more than willing to solicit offers from both sides to gain significant advantages.

When the Spanish government emphatically declared its neutrality in the summer of 1914, officials could not anticipate the domestic and diplomatic turmoil that erupted over the next four years. The leaders recognized that militarily, economically, and diplomatically, Spain was completely unprepared to enter a large-scale conflict. Thus, they clearly established their neutrality policy. Even so, the hostilities still had a dramatic effect on most segments of society, which the government proved unprepared to handle. Thus, King Alfonso and his government's course of action would be harshly tested. Nevertheless, they adhered to their policy regardless of the consequences.

[29] Alfonso XIII as quoted in Ron M. Carden, *German Policy Toward Neutral Spain in World War I, 1914-1918* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1987), 15.

Chapter Three

The War Enters Spain

The subversive power of the war, which is sinking emperors, throwing out kings, making all the old hierarchies tremble, is now reaching us.[1]

As Europe settled into a state of war, Spain settled into an uneasy state of neutrality. The government resolved to keep Spain from entering the war, yet this became increasingly difficult due to the pressure to choose a side in the conflict. This pressure launched Spain into a four-year diplomatic struggle, in their effort to maintain relations with the belligerent powers. While neutrality kept Spain out of the war, it could not escape the economic consequences of a general European conflict. Domestic crises and poor diplomatic maneuvering created a tenuous situation for Spain and brought it to the brink of war.

Germany had a significant diplomatic advantage compared to the Entente in its relationship with Spain, especially during the war's early years. A major factor at the onset of the conflict was Germany's influential presence in the Spanish press, perhaps its most effective and sophisticated propaganda effort. The mastermind, Ambassador Prince Max von Ratibor, convinced the German Foreign Office to bribe numerous Spanish periodicals to present a pro-German viewpoint. In a report issued on 12 October 1914, Ratibor argued that the Foreign Office must fund propaganda efforts in Spain, citing a report by "a good source" that the French invested 600,000 francs to influence Spanish

[1] Paradox, 'Fe,' *La Campana de Gracia*, 16 June 1917, as quoted in Balfour, *The End of the Spanish Empire*, 213.

opinion, and lamenting that the Germans had already lost several important newspapers, such as *El Liberal, La Correspondencia de España, La Imparcial,* and the *Herald de Madrid.*[2] In response, the Foreign Office agreed to fund portions of the Spanish press, a move welcomed by Ratibor who commented, "I believe that they [papers and newspaper workers] will work now for our side with doubled enthusiasm. And also they will persuade others to become Germanophiles."[3] He inundated the Spanish press with pro-German sentiments, in ways unmatched by the Entente, which proved tremendously successfully in convincing the population to remain neutral. This German influence grew so strong it even led several Spaniards to establish periodicals to oppose the Germanophile media and convey pro-Allied perspectives. This included *España*, one of several journals founded by politician Luis Araquistain with the belief that it was absolutely necessary to counter the German propaganda threat.[4]

Germany also had greater advantages in its diplomatic negotiations than the Entente to convince Spain to maintain absolute neutrality, the most helpful course of action for Berlin. Since Germany realized an alliance with Spain was impossible because of geographic and economic barriers, it could be very generous with territorial promises as lands appealing to Spain did not belong to the Central Powers. The Allies, on the contrary, found themselves facing a significant predicament. They could either deny territorial concessions to Madrid and further German propaganda that Britain and France were Spain's enemies attempting to keep her weak, or they could offer valuable territory

[2] Ron M. Carden, *German Policy Toward Neutral Spain in World War I, 1914-1918* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1987), 67-68.
[3] Ratibor to Foreign Office, 20 February 1915, as quoted in Carden, *German Policy Toward Neutral Spain,* 78.
[4] Ángeles Barrio, introduction to *La Revista "España" y la crisis del Estado liberal,* by Luis Araquistain (Santander: Servicio de Publicaciones Universidad de Cantabria, 2001), 32-33.

in exchange for what they recognized would be insignificant support.

As King Alfonso XIII persisted in his foreign policy goals, diplomatic blackmail marked his early efforts, whereby he manipulated offers from the European powers to try to achieve the best results for Spain. Germany offered several tempting territories to Spain, ranging from Gibraltar and Tangier to control of Portugal and French Morocco. Alfonso responded by approaching the Entente to solicit a counteroffer. While the Allies remained open to negotiations, they did not intend to promise concessions without the guarantee of a significant return. A conversation between Alfonso and a French official states:

> His Majesty expressed friendly sentiments but said that he was in a difficult position between the Germans, who were supported by the Spanish Right and who offered him Gibraltar, Morocco and a free hand in Portugal, and the Allies who seemed not to feel gratitude for the services which he had rendered them. The King refrained from stating what he expected from the Allies, but Monsieur Cooreman derived the impression he had Tangier in mind. His Majesty did not apparently mention the nature of the services to which he made allusion…[5]

The British realized the benefits of having Spain join the Entente, but they also strongly supported Spain's neutrality as the preferable option because they recognized Spain's limited military capabilities. If Spain joined the Allies, Britain determined its best course of action, assuming France agreed, would be to offer Tangier in exchange for its active involvement.

All this changed when Italy joined the Entente in May 1915. While Spain was the largest neutral on the continent, Italy's strategic location made it a far more desirable ally. Geographically, the Entente's close proximity to Spain meant it could be easily coerced

[5] Francisco J. Romero Salvadó, "Spain and the First World War: Neutrality and Crisis" (Ph.D. diss., University of London, 1994), 46.

economically. Italy, on the other hand, was much closer to the Central Powers geographically, potentially making its influence much more decisive. With Italy on its side, the Entente no longer needed to pursue an alliance with Spain, which would have required the sacrifice of territory more valuable than the minimal assistance that Spain would have provided.[6]

While King Alfonso unsuccessfully pursued his foreign policy goals, Prime Minister Eduardo Dato and the Spanish government determined their official policy —to maintain neutrality. However, this policy would be harshly tested, as it placed the government in an extremely precarious position. The country began to crumble as drastic social, demographic and economic changes altered the domestic landscape. These harsh realities would be exacerbated by a severe diplomatic crisis that pushed neutrality to a breaking point.

Initially, the war presented Spain with tremendous economic opportunities as most of Europe shifted to a war economy. Spain, capitalizing on its neutral status, began to fill the gaps, not only supplying both sides, but also enjoying new trade outlets, thanks to the belligerents' inability to export. As a result, initially, Spanish industry and commerce grew dramatically. The textile, leather goods, mining, iron, shipping and chemical industries flourished as the warring powers' demand rose exponentially. Between 1913 and 1918, electrical capacity almost doubled, positively affecting the technological base of Spanish industry.[7] The significant drop in imports and astounding increase in exports produced an economic boom. In 1914, the balance of trade was minus

[6] Rubén Domínguez Méndez, "La gran guerra y la neutralidad Española: entre la tradición historiográfica y las nuevas líneas de investigación," *Spagna Contemporanea*, no. 34, 2008, 35.
[7] Balfour, *The End of the Spanish Empire*, 211.

154 million pesetas, but by 1915 it had expanded to plus 275 million pesetas. Spanish gold reserves doubled between 1914 and 1916 from 543 million to one billion thirty-two million pesetas in July 1916.[8] This tremendous growth stimulated the Spanish banking industry, expanding it from fifty banks nationally at the beginning of the war to eighty by the end, while the number of accounts quadrupled during the same period.[9]

However, this seemingly amazing economic transformation almost destroyed Spain. The inability to import basic commodities coupled with unregulated exports and the overabundance of currency produced rampant inflation, while skyrocketing prices increased the divisions between the rich and poor. The inflation rate increased from 106.9 in September 1914 to 123.6 by March 1917, then to 145.4 in March 1918.[10] Spain's inadequate infrastructure almost collapsed under the pressure, and while the northern and eastern industrial areas thrived, other regions faced devastating unemployment and shortages. The war also cut Spanish migration to North America by seventy-five percent, which previously served as an important safety valve for rural Spain.[11] This created an overpopulation of rural areas, forcing many peasants to migrate to major cities such as Barcelona and Bilbao. These economic changes brought about by neutrality primarily benefited the bourgeoisie and the land-owning elite who experienced a tremendous accumulation of wealth. However, while one portion of the population enjoyed a period of extreme wealth, the war also brought deteriorating living conditions and shortages of basic commodities for the majority, creating an even greater divide among Spain's social

[8] Carden, *German Policy Toward Neutral Spain*, 100.
[9] Balfour, *The End of the Spanish Empire*, 211.
[10] Meaker, "Anarchists versus Syndicalists," 35.
[11] Ibid.

classes.[12]

Eduardo Dato's government refused to deal with the international and domestic crises created by the war and kept the Cortes, the Spanish legislature, closed. Meanwhile, Spain desperately required extreme economic reform to facilitate the growing demand and production. Although it experienced an economic boom immediately following the outbreak of the war, Spain's slow rate of industrialization rendered it unable to sustain production to meet demand. Even the British recognized the hardships in Spain as the Ambassador Sir Arthur Hardinge sent reports on the drastically deteriorating situation, including difficulties importing wheat and coal, the worsening condition of the Spanish railways, and the increasing problems with overall transportation resulting from German attacks on marine transport and the ensuing overburdened land transport system.[13] However, even with rampant inflation, the government appeared to be unconcerned about the economic problems as many of its leaders were among the few that benefited from the war's economic upheaval. After the initial economic boom and industrial expansion, Spain's sluggish industrialization and inadequate infrastructure prevented further growth, leaving much of the population struggling to survive, while the governing elite enjoyed unprecedented wealth. "The agricultural oligarchy remained uninterested in the structural reform of the country; it, too, benefited from an increase in exports, but it did not wish to see its power diminished by the growing urban classes."[14]

The failure to resolve these economic difficulties resulted in the *crisis de*

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[12] García-Nieto and Calderón, *Crisis social y dictadura*, 11.
[13] Kenneth Bourne and D. Cameron Watts, eds. *British Documents on Foreign Affairs: Reports and Papers from the Foreign Office Confidential Print*. Part II, From the First to the Second World War. Vol. 3, *The Allied and Neutral Powers: Diplomacy and War Aims, III: January 1917-July 1918*. The First World War, 1914-1918, ser. ed. David Stevenson. (University Publications of America, 1989), 302-303.
[14] Enrlich, "The Lliga Regionalista," 403.

subsistencias, as the population protested their deteriorating conditions. An *Instituto de Reformas Sociales* report elaborated on the problems faced in Barcelona, including transportation difficulties on both land and sea and the subsequent hindrance in the import of basic necessities, as well as shortages of construction and industrial materials, which primarily affected the middle and working classes.[15] The first indications of discontent appeared in 1914 when many citizens attacked those suspected of abetting the growing crisis. An article in the newspaper *El Consejo* denounced the rising cost of bread in Madrid, arguing that the local bakers were taking advantage of the difficult circumstances to fully control and manipulate the price. The article then criticized the government officials that allowed such policies. "We cannot understand how they defend the interests of an entity that aspires to monopolize the production of bread in Madrid in order to impose a price that their egos dictate."[16] The public outcry soon expanded to food riots and assaults on shops. The government's failure to address the increasing domestic concerns plaguing the country resulted in Dato's fall from power in December 1915. He was replaced by Count Conde de Romanones, leader of the dynastic Liberal party, during whose administration, the neutrality policies and Liberal Monarchy would be harshly tested.

Despite previous concerns regarding his position on neutrality, the Spanish population initially welcomed the Romanones administration because it promised to address the *crisis de subsistencias* by stimulating the economy to combat shortages,

[15] "Situación social en la provincial de Barcelona en 1915," Informe del Instituto de Reformas Sociales as quoted in Antonio Fernández García et al., *Documentos de historia contemporánea de España* (Madrid: Editorial Actas, 1996), 388-389.
[16] "Problems de la gran guerra, la cuestión del pan en Madrid," *El Consejo,* 23 October 1914, as quoted in García et al., *Documentos de Historia Contemporánea de España,* 387-388.

inflation and unemployment. It also focused on agricultural improvements, public credit and transport, national defense, the judicial and educational systems and reducing expenses in Morocco. However, such lofty and unachievable goals only served to demonstrate that the dynastic parties could not adapt to a rapidly changing Spain. As the country experienced the rise of mass politics, the *turno* suffered a decline in popular support. While the government attempted unsuccessfully to address the domestic problems, an international crisis with Germany emerged, almost destroying the neutrality policy. As the government ignored the devastating domestic problems to focus on the neutrality issue, it pushed Spain into a chaotic situation, which the leadership proved completely unprepared to handle.

As mentioned, following his *Neutralidades que matan* article, Romanones found it extremely difficult to deny his pro-Allied tendencies. Although still adamantly stressing his adherence to the neutrality policy, he secretly determined to establish better relations with Britain and France, which he believed provided the only means to strengthen its unstable economy and rebuild Spain's lost empire, with a focus on Northern Africa.[17] However, with the tenuous and ever-deepening hostility between Francophiles and Germanophiles, Romanones recognized that he could not take the drastic step of cutting off diplomatic relations with Germany. Thus, he could offer the Entente very little in terms of support, and much to his dismay, Britain and France did not respond to his approaches. In fact, they remained unconvinced that a pro-Allied prime minister could yield a more positive outcome. After Dato's fall, Ambassador Hardinge declared:

> I am not at all sure that a more openly friendly government may be an embarrassment both for

[17] Salvadó, *Spain 1914-1918,* 60.

> Spain and ourselves. Mr. Dato held the balance well, officially and privately he was most friendly. Romanones may press for a price and try to raise the questions of Tangier.[18]

Romanones did not realize that his diplomatic advances would not only fail to entice the Entente, but would trigger a harsh Central Powers attack against his leadership. As a result, Spain came dangerously close to abandoning the policy it had so adamantly defended.

[18] Sir Arthur Hardinge as quoted in Salvadó, *Spain 1914-1918*, 64.

Chapter Four

Neutrality's Ultimate Test

Silence at present is a crime; for if we wait until the moment of victory to show our sympathy for the victor it is probable we shall be too late.[1]

The circumstances that almost brought Spain into the war involved the sinking of Spanish merchant ships by German submarines. Starting as a minor diplomatic matter, the situation developed into a major crisis that brought Madrid's relations with Germany to a breaking point. As the war progressed, Spain desperately attempted to grapple with the severe economic crisis plaguing the country, and exports were crucial in the attempt to keep the Spanish economy afloat. As mentioned, many new outlets emerged for Spanish exports, and as a neutral, it demanded undisturbed access to the world's shipping lanes to maintain its trade.[2] However, Germany's submarine warfare campaign sank numerous Spanish vessels at a great loss to the economy.[3] The new Premier, Conde de Romanones, already nurturing a Francophile perspective, utilized this opportunity to commence a slow shift to a policy favoring the Entente.

In February 1915, Germany launched a submarine campaign against merchant shipping to reduce Allied supplies, particularly to Britain, to a level that would force London out of the war. Over a period of seven months, German submarines sank 787,120

[1] Count Romanones as quoted in "Spanish Ex-Premier Declares for Allies," *New York Times*, 20 April 1915.
[2] Eduardo Dato, "Real decreto de 23 de Noviembre de 1914."
[3] During the course of the war, the Germans sank sixty-six Spanish vessels with almost 800,000 tons lost. *Algunos datos sobre la guerra submarina* (Madrid, 1918) 45-47.

tons of merchant shipping.[4] The Germans suspended the program, however, because the tonnage sunk was not worth the detrimental impact the campaign had upon the neutral powers, most particularly the United States. Unfortunately for Spain, the halting of the campaign was short lived. In the fall of 1916, Germany launched a restricted submarine campaign, followed by the resumption of unrestricted submarine warfare on a much larger scale in February 1917. With far more U-boats now in service, between September 1916 and January 1917, the tonnage sunk was almost double that during the campaign's initial seven months in 1915.[5] The campaign's success then increased during the following months. The Germans possessed 105 U-boats, of which approximately one-third could be at sea at one time (one third received repairs, while the remaining third was in transit). The total merchant marine tonnage sunk skyrocketed to 520,410 tons in February 1917, 564,500 in March, and 860,330 in April.[6] As the tonnage lost rates escalated, so did the risk of alienating neutral powers. However, the Germans felt they had to assume the risk in an effort to knock Britain out of the war before the United States could ship millions of troops to Europe. The submarine campaign ultimately resulted in the United States abandoning its neutrality on 6 April 1917, while creating a serious crisis for Spain.

The first stage of the crisis occurred in 1916. The German submarine campaign of February 1915 had a tremendous impact on Spain as it drastically hindered its trade and exacerbated the severe shortages already being experienced in the country. Both King Alfonso and the new Prime Minister, Count Conde de Romanones, protested what they

[4] Lawrence Sondhaus, *Navies of Europe, 1815-2002* (London: Longman, 2002), 162.
[5] Ibid., 175.
[6] Ibid., 177.

perceived to be an obvious violation of Spain's neutral rights. During the first week of April 1916, tensions deepened even further when the Germans sank the French channel steamer, *Essex*, killing the great Spanish composer Enrique Granados and his wife. Over the next several days the German sank two Spanish vessels, the *Vigo* and *Santanderino,* triggering public outrage. A *New York Times* article quoted a response from Amadeo Hurtado, an authority on international law, who stated, "Spain should take the initiative to bring about joint action of all neutral countries, in order to put a stop to the illegal system which has such disastrous consequences for all neutrals."[7] Prior to these attacks, King Alfonso appeared to switch his position in favor of the Central Powers and absolute neutrality. However, he became extremely unnerved by the attacks and loss of life, while Romanones expressed outrage, even petitioning the United States to form a joint protest.[8] The Central Powers, realizing that with a pro-Allied Spanish Prime Minister they must stay in Alfonso's good graces to ensure Spain's neutrality, issued a formal apology on 14 May 1916.

However, Germany's attitude towards Spain changed following a June 1916 event. The German submarine U-35, presumably responsible for several successful attacks on Allied vessels, arrived in Cartagena producing a flurry of protest from London and Paris. The newspaper *El Imparcial* reported that the submarine delivered a note of gratitude from Kaiser Wilhelm to King Alfonso because of the favorable treatment of German officers who had surrendered to Spanish officials in Guinea after the Cameroons in Africa surrendered to the Entente. There were, however, deep suspicions relative to the true purpose of the visit. Many believed it was a sign of new peace initiatives between

[7] "Demands That Spain Act," *New York Times,* 15 April 1916.
[8] Carden, *German Policy Toward Neutral Spain,* 117.

King Alfonso and Kaiser Wilhelm.[9] The stern protests and Entente activity placed pressure on German-Spanish relations, and those professing pro-Allied tendencies worried about the image being portrayed. Fernando León y Castillo, Spanish Ambassador to Paris, wrote Prime Minister Romanones, "'What a pity!' The French just want proof of our friendship, and this is the spectacle we are providing."[10] However, a speech by Antonio Maura, the former Conservative party leader whose followers included some of the most vocal Germanophiles, further strained German-Spanish relations. In a 10 September 1916 speech, Maura supported Romanones' stance observing:

> Spain must either take her proper place among the nations or submit to be evicted, degraded, and trampled under foot… Spain would be foolish to refuse intimate association with these western nations, because she naturally belongs to the same group, and because it is much easier to harmonize the interests of Spain with those of England and France than to defend them against France and England in alliance with any other nation."[11]

The outcry to the U-35 incident led Germany to believe that Spanish opinion had shifted toward the Allied side, and by December 1916, Berlin fully recognized that Romanones was the main enemy within Spain. The Central Powers declared they were ready to pursue peace terms with the Entente in early December. However, this peace would be based on their terms and they even threatened to resume hostilities if the Entente rejected the proposition. The Entente, however, refused to accept the Central Power's overtures on the basis that the war had been forced upon them, and they would not cater to those who had initiated such a dreadful ordeal. This exchange was followed by a note from United States President Woodrow Wilson to all the belligerents and

[9] Carden, *German Policy Toward Neutral Spain,* 123.
[10] Fernando León y Castillo as quoted in Salvadó, *Spain 1914-1918,* 70.
[11] "Will Spain be Forced In?," *New York Times,* 8 October 1916.

neutrals with the goal of finding some agreement to end the war. Wilson presented Spain the opportunity to volunteer its services as an arbiter of peace, the main goal of King Alfonso and the government leaders. The Entente powers resented Wilson's note believing that peace on Germany's terms would mean all its sacrifices had been in vain. They clearly indicated that they would not be amenable to such approaches, thus, Romanones recognized the detrimental impact Spain's endorsement of this initiative could have on its relations with the Allied powers. As a result, Romanones declined the President's offer and instead protested the sinking of neutral vessels as a direct violation of the London Declaration of 1909, which outlined the rights of neutrals. He also stated that Spain:

> has always maintained the inadmissibility of the destruction of naval prizes as carried out by the German submarines. The Spanish Government has adopted on this subject a more insistent attitude than any other neutral, not excluding the United States; and further, it does not admit the interpretation given by the Central Empires to international law in the destruction of ships; it has always made representations and protests against such an interpretation.[12]

At this point, Germany clearly recognized the threat posed by the Romanones administration, leading to a dramatic change in Berlin's attitude toward Spain and a plan to destabilize Madrid's unfriendly government and manipulate the somewhat hostile public opinion. The last months of 1916 witnessed extreme contradictions in Germany's actions in Spain. While continuing to appeal to Alfonso to maintain Spain's neutrality, Berlin also inaugurated a harsh propaganda campaign to sway public opinion and topple the hostile administration. Their attacks were not limited to propaganda, as submarine

[12] Count Conde de Romanones as quoted in Luis A. Bolin, "Spain and the War," *Edinburgh Review* (July 1917): 144.

attacks and incidents of sabotage and espionage drastically increased after September 1916. During the first two war years, German submarines sank only eight Spanish ships; during just one week in September 1916, they sank three, and the attacks steadily worsened after December 1916.

On 31 January 1917, Germany announced the renewal of its unrestricted submarine warfare, which clearly delineated the Mediterranean Sea and waters surrounding Britain and France as restricted zones. Although the potential impact on Spain was obvious, the declaration did not illicit a strong Spanish protest. Foreign Minister Amalio Gimeno expressed dismay over the situation in a letter to German Ambassador Max von Ratibor, but never threatened to interrupt diplomatic relations with Germany over the campaign's consequences for Spain. Instead, it decried the policy as unnecessary and harmful to Spain, whose neutral rights should be respected and honored. The letter asked the German government to understand the economic impact this would have upon Spain and the enormous hardhip it would impose upon its population.[13]

The Germans proved unsympathetic to the Foreign Minister's pleas. The campaign continued and by April 1917, thirty-three Spanish ships with 80,000 tons would be sunk. This placed the Spanish government in a precarious diplomatic position. Would they continue to allow themselves to be bullied by the Central Powers, or would they sever diplomatic relations with Germany? This predicament accelerated the gulf between Francophiles and Germanophiles, as those favoring Germany staunchly supported the maintenance of strict neutrality, while those benevolent to the Entente believed Spain could not afford acceptance of such German attacks. Francophile Luis

[13] Foreign Minister Amalio Gimeno to German Ambassador Max von Ratibor, 6 February 1917, in *Algunos datos sobre la guerra submarina,* 10-11.

Araquistain declared, “The neutrality of Spain depends on German submarines and if Germany does not rectify the maritime war, they choose our belligerence,” and furthermore that it would be a “defensive war, a war to protect our coasts, our waters, and our commerce.”[14] On the other hand, the pro-German press inundated Spain with propaganda emphasizing what they perceived to be German hospitality. An article in the newspaper *ABC* related:

> Since the beginning of the war, the king, the government, and all of Spain have eloquently demonstrated our understanding of our neutrality with hospitality and generosity. The subjects of Germany… have met our viewpoints with only consideration and respect.[15]

As 1917 progressed, the crisis worsened. The Central Powers drastically increased their propaganda campaign against Romanones, while he became even more determined to sever diplomatic relations with Germany and move towards the Entente. Acknowledging the deep division in Spanish public opinion, Romanones resolved to await the right psychological moment to sever ties with Germany. Following Germany’s announcement of the resumption of unrestricted submarine warfare, Romanones on 1 February announced to parliament:

> The decision for the Central Powers to use all possible means to stop all maritime traffic with France, Britain, Italy and the Eastern Mediterranean entails grave consequences for Spain. This government is resolved that the life of this country must not be disrupted. This government is therefore determined to take such steps as may be appropriate in these circumstances.[16]

Romanones’ moment of truth came on 9 April 1917. Without prior warning, a German submarine torpedoed the *San Fulgencio* en route to Spain with desperately

[14] Araquistain, *Entre la guerra y la revolucion*, 23-24.
[15] *ABC*, 9 February 1917, in *Algunos datos sobre la guerra submarina*, 35.
[16] Count Romanones as quoted in Salvadó, *Spain 1914-1918*, 77.

needed British coal. This provided the last straw for Romanones and the perfect opportunity to justify terminating diplomatic relations with Germany. In a letter to Spanish Ambassador to France, Fernando León y Castillo he related, "The crucial moment has arrived, the sinking of the *San Fulgencio* has been the final straw. The route I will take is already determined in the direction that you know."[17] Romanones believed that, diplomatically, Spain could not afford to allow this treatment by the Germans. If Spain did not stand up against these attacks, he feared it would mark Spain's final demise into the realm of insignificant European powers. He intended to forward a strongly-worded note to the German government as a prelude to breaking off relations. However, Romanones fully realized the dangerous game he was playing. In his letter to León y Castillo, he related "the struggle between the Germanophiles and myself is to the death."[18]

Although Romanones was adamant in how Spain should proceed at this point, other members of the Cortes and, more importantly, King Alfonso XIII disagreed. They refused to accept Romanones' harsh language for fear of drawing Spain into the conflict. The German propaganda campaign aimed against Romanones reached astounding levels, even affecting the opinions of governmental members. The Germans threatened the ruling elites that if Spain joined the Entente, they may suffer the same fate as the Russian ruling class following the revolution. Even the British Ambassador to Spain, Sir Arthur Hardinge reported, "It is quite true that the Russian revolution produced an entire change

[17] Count Romanones to Fernando León y Castillo, 14 April 1917, as quoted in Salvadó, *Spain 1914-1918*, 79-80.
[18] Ibid.

in the King of Spain's feelings towards the Allies."[19] The situation was exacerbated by the fact that Romanones' policies received overwhelming support from members of the left including Socialist leader Pablo Iglesias. Famed writer and intellectual, Miguel de Unamuno even directly called for a complete rupture in diplomatic relations with Germany and a re-orientation of Spain's international politics to favor the Entente.[20] As domestic opinion continued to destabilize, virtually all members of the Spanish government demanded the maintenance of strict neutrality. These events forced Romanones to resign, but he refused to leave quietly. On 19 April he stated, "The time has come when every man of conscience must give his vote and take part in the European conflict. In tendering my resignation to the King, I voted for France."[21]

What could have drastically impacted the future of Spain would result in diplomatic humiliation and Romanones' demise. The Entente did not respond to his approaches because there was no certainty that Spanish involvement would have any effect on the war's outcome. Thus, Entente members believed the best course for Spain would be to remain neutral. This, coupled with Germany's resolve to ensure Spanish neutrality, proved to be insurmountable obstacles for Romanones. Although realizing the potential consequences of absolute neutrality, he maintained the minority view. With the destructive war continuing without end, the chaos that had emerged in Russia and Spain's own domestic troubles, the government, supported by much of the population, believed that intervention in the war was not only undesirable, but also impossible.

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[19] Kenneth Bourne and D. Cameron Watts, eds. *British Documents on Foreign Affairs: Reports and Papers from the Foreign Office Confidential Print*. Part II, From the First to the Second World War. Vol. 3, *The Allied and Neutral Powers: Diplomacy and War Aims, III: January 1917-July 1918*. The First World War, 1914-1918, ser. ed. David Stevenson (University Publications of America, 1989), 359.
[20] *El Liberal*, 27 May 1917, in Fernando Diaz-Plaja, *La historia de España en sus documentos: el siglo XX* (Madrid: 1960), 364.
[21] Romanones as quoted in Meaker, "A Civil War of Words," 40.

Chapter Five

A Nation Revolts

The war is a revolution, and here in Spain we must make [a revolution] of our own.[1]

While the government wrestled with the most difficult diplomatic crisis of the war, it neglected to recognize increasing domestic discontent. The maintenance of Spain's neutrality remained foremost in the politician's minds because no matter what their personal inclinations, they believed involvement was not just undesirable, but impossible. While the government acknowledged the fact that Spain was in no position to participate in the war, it refused to acknowledge why. The liberal monarchy failed to come to grips with the extreme changes occurring in the country. The division of opinion over the war paved the way for the rise of mass politics in Spain, but the government leaders neglected to identify the emerging triple threat—the working class, the military and a political party —whose opposition to the government through 1917 would undermine the foundation of power on which the *turno* so desperately depended.[2]

While the government struggled with Spain's declining international prestige resulting from the German unrestricted submarine campaign, internal strife escalated to a critical point. The *crisis de subsistencias* continued to devastate the majority of the Spanish population resulting in a storm of protest, and finally culminating in action.[3] In July 1916, the working class emerged as a formidable opponent to the Liberal Monarchy

[1] Roberto Castrovido as quoted in Meaker, "A Civil War of Words," 41.
[2] García-Nieto and Calderón, *Crisis social y dictadura,* 16.
[3] Ibid., 15.

when two rival workers' trade unions, the Socialist UGT and the Anarcho-Syndicalist CNT, joined forces in an attempt to force the government to address the problems of inflation and the *crisis de subsistencias*. Once united, they issued a manifesto in March 1917, which attacked the government as the cause of the problems plaguing Spain.

> Is there any Spanish ruler who could affirm that our unbearable living conditions are not the consequence of a regime of privileges, of a constant orgy of private ambitions, of an unchecked immorality, which finds in our public institutions a shelter which should instead be provided for the fundamental interests of the people?... The organized labour movement has therefore concluded that it must be united in the common fight against a system of government which protects exploitation.[4]

While an attack from the country's working-class parties may not have been a great surprise, the *crisis de subsistencias* produced a protest from an unexpected source. The economic hardships had a tremendous effect on the Spanish Army's officer corps, the military middle class. Beginning in mid-1916, officers began organizing into military trade unions, the *juntas de defensa*, to combat corruption in the army and to demand pay increases because their buying power had been reduced by inflation. They, as with so many others, simply believed they had suffered enough and wanted only to make a peaceful *pronunciamento*.[5] Furthermore, they wanted to create a movement that would not just represent their own interests, but those of all groups struggling under the current system.[6] Their original intent was not to overthrow the government or be a major participant in Spanish politics.

With the Bolshevik revolution consuming Russia in early 1917, King Alfonso

[4] Salvadó, "Spain and the First World War," 86.
[5] Carr, *Spain, 1808-1939*, 500.
[6] Fernando Díaz-Plaja, *España, los años decisivos: 1917* (Barcelona: Plaza & Janes, 1969), 19.

became increasingly concerned about the rising influence of the *juntas de defensa* and their increasing popularity as a movement to change the existing regime. As a result, Alfonso ordered the new War Minister, General Aguilera, to disband them. On 1 June 1917, the *juntas de defensa* issued a declaration that announced their refusal to disband and acknowledged their revolt against the government:

> The administration has not improved and the Army is absolutely disorganized, despised and disregarded in its vital needs: (1) 'In its moral needs,' which produces a lack of inner satisfaction and stifles enthusiasm; (2) 'In its professional or technical needs,' through the absence of military knowledge, which there are no means of acquiring, through the lack of unity of doctrine to direct it, and the lack of material to carry out its ends; (3) 'In its economic needs,' since officers and men are treated worse than in any other country and are even worse than civilians in analogous circumstance in their own country.[7]

As the laborers and officers protested, the government faced a third attack, this one from the Catalan industrial bourgeoisie represented by the *Lliga Regionalista* and led by Francisco de Asís Cambó. The *Lliga*, while by no means a revolutionary party, became leaders in the attempt to establish a coalition opposing the *turno.* As Spain appeared to crumble around them, they realized the necessity of having to realign the existing political regime by wresting power from the landed oligarchy that had controlled the country for so many years. On 19 July, Francisco Cambó organized a peaceful "Assembly of Parliamentarians" in Barcelona where sixty-eight gathered to denounce the *turno* and demand a reorganization of the government to reflect the will of the people. He and the *Lliga* gained significant support because the Republicans and Socialists decided to participate in this initiative that, if successful, would prevent a violent insurrection.

[7] A. Ramos Oliveira, *Politics, Economics and Men of Modern Spain 1808-1946* (New York: Arno Press, 1972), 169.

However, Cambó failed because of his inability to secure the support of Antonio Maura, the former leader of the *turno* and recent advocate of government reform. Maura and his followers, the *Mauristas,* believed in the necessity of a conservative revolution to abolish the *turno,* which they believed had become a sham. The *Lliga* proposal seemed the perfect opportunity for Maura as Cambó, a moderate politician, desired a regeneration of conservatism. However, Maura refused to support the *Lliga's* motion, while the *juntas* also pursued Maura's support. Thus, in 1917, Maura had the opportunity to change the course of Spanish politics by serving as the link to join these two oppositionist movements. In the end, however, despite his complaints against the existing system, Maura remained loyal to the monarchy and the Liberal regime and thus would not participate in any action that might threaten their power.[8]

In 1917, the country hovered on the brink of domestic chaos, compelling many to question the leadership that had brought them to this position. It was a year of diplomatic turning points as well with the German submarine crisis humiliating Spain and reaffirming the belief that Madrid still represented an insignificant continental power. Socialist journalist Luis Araquistain related, "Awakened by the war, fueled by the Russian Revolution and the lessons of Greece, the spirit of renewal has exploded in Spanish life."[9] However, despite these threats, the government obviously remained resolute in maintaining its power.

But it was not meant to be. It became increasingly apparent that the government could no longer continue its present oligarchical system. When Romanones resigned, his

[8] Francisco J. Romero Salvadó, *Twentieth-Century Spain: Politics and Society in Spain, 1898-1998* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), 36-37.
[9] Araquistain, *Entre la guerra y la revolucion,* 119.

Liberal rival, Marquis of Alhucemas became Prime Minister. The Marquis attempted to resolve some of the Romanones administration's problems, but it proved to be too little, too late. His government, which lasted only fifty-three days, failed because of his inability to resolve the *juntas* crisis. Eduardo Dato, who fell from power in December 1915, replaced Alhucemas, but appointed almost the same Cabinet that proved unable to handle the diplomatic and domestic concerns two years earlier. His return resulted in outrage from all the groups excluded from the *turno.*

In an attempt to neutralize the growing domestic crisis and the emerging threat against the regime, Dato's Cabinet developed a strategy designed to quell both the danger of Spain's unified working class and the rising popularity of the *juntas.* Dato hoped to capitalize on bourgeois fears stemming from revolutionary activity in Russia by forcing the workers into launching a general strike. He believed that the workers would be unable to plan and organize in advance; therefore, such a strike could be easily quelled. He also intended to implicate the officers in the strike's repression to provide the government the opportunity to become the "saviour of social order."[10]

Dato's opportunity arose during a transport strike that began in Valencia on 19 July between workers and the railroad company, Compañía del Norte. The dispute developed into a violent confrontation that halted seventy percent of Valencia's transport. As events stabilized, the Compañía del Norte refused to re-hire several workers fired during the conflict. The UGT and PSOE reacted by issuing an ultimatum that they would launch a general strike if the company did not re-hire the workers. The Compañía del Norte refused and a strike commenced on 13 August. Those on the left immediately came

[10] Francisco J. Romero Salvadó, "Spain and the First World War: The Structural Crisis of the Liberal Monarchy," *European History Quarterly* 25, no. 4 (October 1995): 543.

to the defense of the struggling workers. The leftist periodical *España* encouraged, "The Spanish rail workers are not alone in this struggle… this mobilization of the proletariat cannot stop until it is sufficient enough to guarantee the regime change necessary to save the dignity and decorum of our national life."[11] However, not all were so sympathetic. An article in *El Debate* called the strike a "seditious, antipatriotic, revolutionary, antisocial work of a turbulent minority."[12] Exactly as Dato anticipated, the strike failed. Successful in limited areas, the army violently suppressed the revolt. Evidence strongly suggests that this was not the Socialists' preferred course of action, but that the situation was forced upon them. Daniel Anguiano, a member of the strike committee and President of the Railway Trade Union asked:

> Who could benefit from a strike then? ...We did not want it… We were prepared to accept all kinds of compromises… We intended to avoid it until the last moment… but Dato wanted to discredit the labour movement and to justify the repression of a general strike which he himself was provoking so as to consolidate his position in power, obtain a decree of dissolution of Cortes and maintain the fiction of the *Turno.*[13]

Although the strike failed as planned, Dato's hopes of changing the population's perceptions of the government were dashed. The crushing of the workers' parties did nothing to address the severe domestic issues plaguing the country, German submarines still wreaked havoc on Spanish shipping, and most of the social and political forces in Spain came to despise the government. Although Dato intended to link this perceived revolution to the Assembly of Parliamentarians, he failed, and the government settled into

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[11] *España*, 25 October 1917, in Fernando Diaz-Plaja, *España, los años decisivos: 1917,* 89.
[12] *El Debate*, 15 August 1917, in Manuel Tuñón de Lara, *La España del siglo XX* (Barcelona: Editorial Laia, 1974), 69.
[13] Daniel Anguiano as quoted in Salvadó, *Spain 1914-1918,* 124.

an extremely perilous situation.

Further complicating matters was the *juntas'* loss of popularity due to their brutal crushing of the August strike. The *juntas* realized that Dato had forced them to repress a strike provoked by his government and now decided to assume a more active role in destroying the political corruption that had permeated Spain for so long. The situation came to a head on 26 October when the *juntas* delivered an ultimatum to the king, demanding that he create a national government that respected the popular vote. This ultimatum led to the demise of Dato and end of the *turno* as it had previously existed. After a record eight days without a government, King Alfonso established a new Cabinet with the Marquis of Alhucemas again as Prime Minister. Although the *turno* still maintained a majority within the administration, these events proved to be a turning point for them.

Increasing divisions and growing opposition plagued a government that for so long had not been challenged. The dynastic parties never again enjoyed the hegemonic control they once held as the war brought increasing political awareness to a previously apathetic population. As Luis Arquistain warned, "A government that attempts to suffocate public opinion goes the way of political suicide and historic failure."[14] While the country could revel somewhat in the fact that the *turno* had been overthrown, the devastating failure of the August strike crushed any hopes of democracy becoming a reality for Spain. Political strife only increased and although the dynastic elites' power had been checked, internal divisions and rival factions among the other political parties created an atmosphere of instability.

[14] Araquistain, *Entre la guerra y la revolucion*, 145-146.

Chapter Six

The End of an Empire

"'Fatal Neutralities' was not only an editorial, but is becoming a prophecy and if God does not protect us it could become a catastrophe."[1]

While domestic crisis enveloped the country, diplomatically, Spain's position continued to deteriorate even at the war's end. Between 1918 and 1923, Spain's status as a continental power diminished further as it dealt with the consequences of its neutrality policy. In the latter months of the war, Germany's submarine campaign persisted unabated. Even when this threat finally ended with the November 1918 armistice, Spain's troubles continued. As the peace negotiations commenced, it became evident that King Alfonso and the government's ambitions for Spain's postwar role would not come to fruition. Instead, Spain was forced to come to terms with the bitter consequences of its four-year neutrality policy.

Even after ousting the pro-Allied Prime Minister Conde de Romanones from power in April 1917, Germany remained unrelenting in its submarine campaign believing that Spain still favored the Entente. Following the signing of the March 1918 Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, which ended Russia's participation in the war, Germany launched its major Spring 1918 Western front offensive, expanding its attack against Spanish merchant ships, much to the dismay of the Spanish people. In a poem entitled, "La guerra submarina," poet Goy de Silva lamented, "the waters are always restless, dancing

[1] Fernando León y Castillo as quoted in Salvadó, *Spain 1914-1918,* 63.

eternally while death prowls at the bottom of the sea."[2] An article in the newspaper, *España Nueva*, lashed out more directly against these attacks and encouraged the government to act. "We believe the government must hurry to formulate a response of protest to Germany as this constitutes a violation of the rights of Spanish citizens to trade with whomever they please."[3]

The government, however, proved unwilling to challenge Germany. The Germanophile newspaper, *ABC*, quoted Antonio Maura as saying, "nothing we have suffered justifies rupturing relations."[4] Such unwillingness was met by great opposition from the Spanish populace, as demonstrated in writer and intellectual Miguel de Unamuno's reply to Maura's speech: "In 1898, the tragic year for the regency, they sacrificed the dignity of the country for dynastic interests. Today, we do not know what dark interests or evils they want to sacrifice."[5] Even Britain and France expressed outrage over Spanish losses, urging Spain to demand that the German government replace ships lost to submarines. But neither domestic opposition nor Entente encouragement could convince Spain to take a stand against the German threat. Madrid feigned negotiations and as an article in *Diario Universal* reported, "While Spain negotiates, Germany sinks our ships."[6]

Thus, the Spanish government found itself in the same position as in early 1917, as German attacks flourished and Madrid had to decide how much more they would tolerate. In March 1918, King Alfonso appeared to have finally formed a government that

[2] Goy de Silva, "La guerra submarina," in Fernando Diaz-Plaja, *España, los años decisivos: 1917*, 115.
[3] *España Nueva*, 31 January 1918, in *Algunos datos sobre la guerra submarina*, 35-36.
[4] *ABC*, 4 April 1917, in Fernando Diaz-Plaja, *La historia de España en sus documentos: el siglo XX* (Madrid: 1960), 350.
[5] *El Liberal*, 27 May 1917, in Diaz-Plaja, *La historia de España en sus documentos: el siglo XX*, 352.
[6] *Diario Universal*, 22 February 1918, in *Algunos datos sobre la guerra submarina*, 38.

could assist Spain in its continued trouble as the *Ministerio de Primates* (Cabinet of Titans) assumed power. Headed by former Prime Minister Antonio Maura, it included two other previous *turno* leaders, Eduardo Dato and Conde de Romanones, as well as a group of Spain's most experienced and dynamic politicians. Had Spain finally found the leadership necessary to restore its national honor?

Despite the apparent strength of the new regime, it proved just as incapable as the previous governments in neutralizing the German threat, which had now expanded its disturbances within Spanish borders. In early 1918, several Spanish newspapers reported extensive German espionage being conducted in Spain and revealed Germany funded anarchists wreaking havoc within the country. Rather than address these subversive activities, the Cabinet of Titans revealed their impotence by passing a law of espionage in July, which essentially silenced the Spanish press.[7] The law forbade the press from reporting on news that related to the Spanish neutrality policy, while also forbidding all negative representations of diplomats or political leaders. In addition, it restricted the "spreading of news of a nature to alarm Spaniards."[8]

As German attacks continued, events finally came to a head during an incident that forced the government to realize that the situation was spiraling out of control. On 13 July, the Germans torpedoed the Spanish ship *Ramón de Larriñaga*, carrying oil from New York, as it entered Spanish waters even machine-gunning its sailors after they abandoned ship. Maura finally responded with outrage stating, "The limits of Spanish patience have been reached… This last example of contempt and brutality will have to be

[7] Francisco Romero Salvadó, "'Fatal Neutrality': Pragmatism or Capitulation? Spain's Foreign Policy during the Great War," *European History Quarterly* 33, no. 3 (2003): 306-308.
[8] Ibid., 307-308.

solved by the government without further delays."[9] At last, it appeared that the Spanish government would stand up against the German violation of its neutral rights. The government warned Germany on 10 August that if they sank any further Spanish vessels, any tonnage lost would be replaced by German and Austro-Hungarian ships which had sought refuge in Spanish ports at the war's outbreak. However, Spanish expectations were completely dashed, as Germany replied that any seizure of its ships would be considered an act of war. Germany then continued to torpedo five more Spanish vessels the following month.

In summer 1918, the Spanish government once again had to decide if they would halt German bullying. Spain's leaders buckled and again cowered to German wishes. Spain did not achieve a diplomatic victory as hoped by Maura and his Cabinet. Rather than seizing German vessels in port, the Spanish government was forced to accept a German agreement to loan ships to Spain only after Germany decided which ones to loan. Thus, the Germans completely humiliated the Spanish as the war turned to the Entente's favor.

When the armistice was ratified in November 1918, and Conde de Romanones again became Prime Minister in December, Spaniards retained the hope that their country could play a role in the new European political arena. After the United States entered the war in April 1917, King Alfonso, seeing himself as the leader of the neutral nations, stated that as, "the sole remaining neutral nation of influence and power," Spain should lead the rest of Europe to peace.[10] However, the Entente rebuffed Alfonso's claim. A

[9] Antonio Maura as quoted in Salvadó, "Fatal Neutrality," 307-308.
[10] Thomas A. Bailey, *The Policy of the United States Toward the Neutrals, 1917-1918* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1942), 22.

letter from the head of the British Foreign Office to the British Ambassador to Spain described a recent discussion with the Spanish Ambassador and responded to the Spanish Ambassador's claims:

> I listened to this enumeration with some surprise, and, indeed, felt some difficulty in reconciling the general arguments of his Excellency with my own recollection of the events of the past four years. I refrained, however, from casting any doubt upon his presentation of history, and contented myself with remarking that, if the Allies had profited by what they had obtained from Spain, Spain herself had been a much greater gainer by the transaction. She has escaped the ravages of war…. So far as my information went, there was no other European country that had suffered less from the war than Spain.[11]

Thus, the war not only failed to improve Spain's European position, it emphasized its status as a secondary continental power not even worthy of an invitation to the peace negotiations.

As if Spain's failed attempts to participate in the peace negotiations were not humiliating enough, France punished Madrid for the Germanophile stance of many of its key institutions. Following the war, Spain was embroiled in an unpopular and underfunded campaign in Morocco. Given the army's weakened condition, Spain was no match for the well-armed and well-trained Moroccan Moorish guerillas. Paris, however, did not come to Spain's aid. The result was the disaster at Annual in summer 1921, where more than 12,000 Spanish troops died, while the Moors overran most of the eastern Moroccan Protectorate.[12] Morocco, the territory Spain had been desperate to maintain and expand during the war, not only created an unsolvable problem with France, but also

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[11] Kenneth Bourne and D. Cameron Watts, eds. *British Documents on Foreign Affairs: Reports and Papers from the Foreign Office Confidential Print*. Part II, From the First to the Second World War. Vol. 7, *Portugal, Spain and the Peace Treaty; African Questions; Morocco; Germany and the Treaty*. The Paris Peace Conference of 1919, ser. ed. M. Dockrill, no. 9, (University Publications of America, 1989), 10.
[12] Salvadó, *Spain 1914-1918,* 181.

led to insurmountable problems with the indigenous population.[13] This postwar Moroccan crisis, much like the 1898 Spanish-American War disaster and Spanish impotence against the German submarine campaign, added to Spain's international humiliation and guaranteed that it would remain a secondary country in European politics.

As the war ended and the European nations attempted to bring peace to the ravaged continent, Spain found itself isolated. Germany had successfully embarrassed the formerly great empire and Spain had to accept its second-rate status. Romanones would later relate how neutrality "had a devastating effect in diminishing the international prestige of Spain" and "interrupted, if not destroyed, its work in international politics."[14] In addition, domestic discontent continued to ravage the country, as the government ultimately proved unable to create internal stability. Following numerous attempts to establish a government that would address the country's increasing problems, these regimes rose and fell until September 1923 when General Miguel Primo de Rivera's military dictatorship filled the long-standing political vacuum.

[13] Javier Tusell, Juan Avilés and Rosa Pardo, eds., *La política exterior de España en el siglo XX* (Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 2000), 16.
[14] Conde de Romanones as quoted in Rubén Domínguez Méndez, "La gran guerra y la neutralidad Española: entre la tradición historiográfica y las nuevas líneas de investigación," in *Spagna contemporanea* no. 23 (2008): 33.

Conclusion

The world in war and in peace, Spain is alone.[1]

When the European war broke out in 1914 and Spain immediately declared neutrality, the population felt optimistic about their nation's future. Realizing the country was in an unfavorable position militarily and economically, most Spaniards favored neutrality as the wisest course of action. They also believed that it offered the long-sought opportunity for Spain to regain its position as a major continental player. However, despite these high hopes, Spanish neutrality failed to yield such positive consequences.

While certainly not prepared to enter the war, the conflagration nevertheless affected Spain with devastating results. The government proved completely unprepared to address the domestic crises that materialized, particularly food shortages and inflation. The inability to resolve these issues, exacerbated by the intensifying divisions between Francophiles and Germanophiles, led to the emergence of a civil war of words. A country once consumed by apathy became filled with outrage. Individuals who had never participated in politics now chose a side in the conflict, seeking to save their country from further hardship. This, however, created further discontent, revolution, and the fall of numerous governments. Between 1918 and 1923, twelve governments and three parliaments failed to overcome the social instability. Each government proved either unable or unwilling to address the demands of the new politically conscious society, and

[1] Antonio Machado in Rafael Olivar Bertrand, "Repercusiones en España de la primera guerra mundial" *Cuadernos de historia diplomatica* 3, no. 176 (1956): 5.

the various political groups could not provide an organized, effective replacement government. “It was anarchy that led nowhere, more terrible than the anarchy of revolutions, because the instinct for self-preservation which breeds revolutions seemed to have died in Spanish society.”[2]

As Spain wrestled with these domestic crises, its diplomatic efforts also failed. The Spanish government’s unwillingness to join either alliance left them completely isolated at the war’s end. King Alfono’s desire to serve as the leader of the peace negotiations proved unrealistic, as Spain even failed to receive even an invitation to the Versailles conference. It had been completely humiliated by German actions, furthering the widely-held belief that Spain was barely a second-rate continental power.

However, while the negative consequences of Spanish neutrality appear obvious, would intervention have yielded more positive results? At the outbreak of the war, Spain was in no position to participate in a major military conflict on the continent. Militarily unprepared, economically backward and diplomatically isolated, the government realized that involvement was impossible, and Spain’s problems only worsened throughout the war. Although leaders, such as Conde de Romanones, desired intervention, the government’s general stance was that intervention would prove disastrous because of the serious potential for the outbreak of a civil war in the divided country. If Spain joined the Entente, German enmity would result. Considering the impact of Germany’s submarine campaign upon Spain, it could face maritime disaster if it intervened in the conflict. Germany, recognizing Spain’s endemic instability, would surely have created further chaos, particularly because of the incredibly strong Germanophile presence in the

[2] Oliveira, *Politics, Economics and Men of Modern Spain*, 183.

country. Germany controlled much of the Spanish press, while also maintaining a significant covert force for espionage and sabotage. Thus, Germany could easily wreak havoc if Spain opted to join the Entente. On the other hand, had Spain joined the Central Powers, Britain and France, because of their geographic location, could have easily inflicted similar damage upon the Spanish. So, as Italy, Romania and other nations abandoned neutrality in favor of intervention, Spain remained firm in its diplomatic position. Despite all the negative consequences of neutrality, it remained the only option given Spain's extreme instability.

The impact of the First World War upon the belligerent powers is obvious, but one must not ignore its impact on neutral powers. Spain suffered tremendously between 1914 and 1918. Although, in general, the government and population remained optimistic that neutrality would prove beneficial to the nation, it was in vain. Spain faced a tragic situation as either neutrality or intervention would have produced terrible consequences. The government chose what it anticipated to be the lesser of two evils and while this option proved costly, the alternative could have been even more devastating. Although Spain did not emerge from the war with increased prestige and diplomatic standing in Europe, as many had hoped, the outcome could have been even bleaker than the reality had it intervened. The belief that neutrality would enhance its status as a Great Power proved false and the Spanish Empire ceased to have any influence. Even more powerless and divided, Spain emerged from the war a mere shadow of its former self.

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