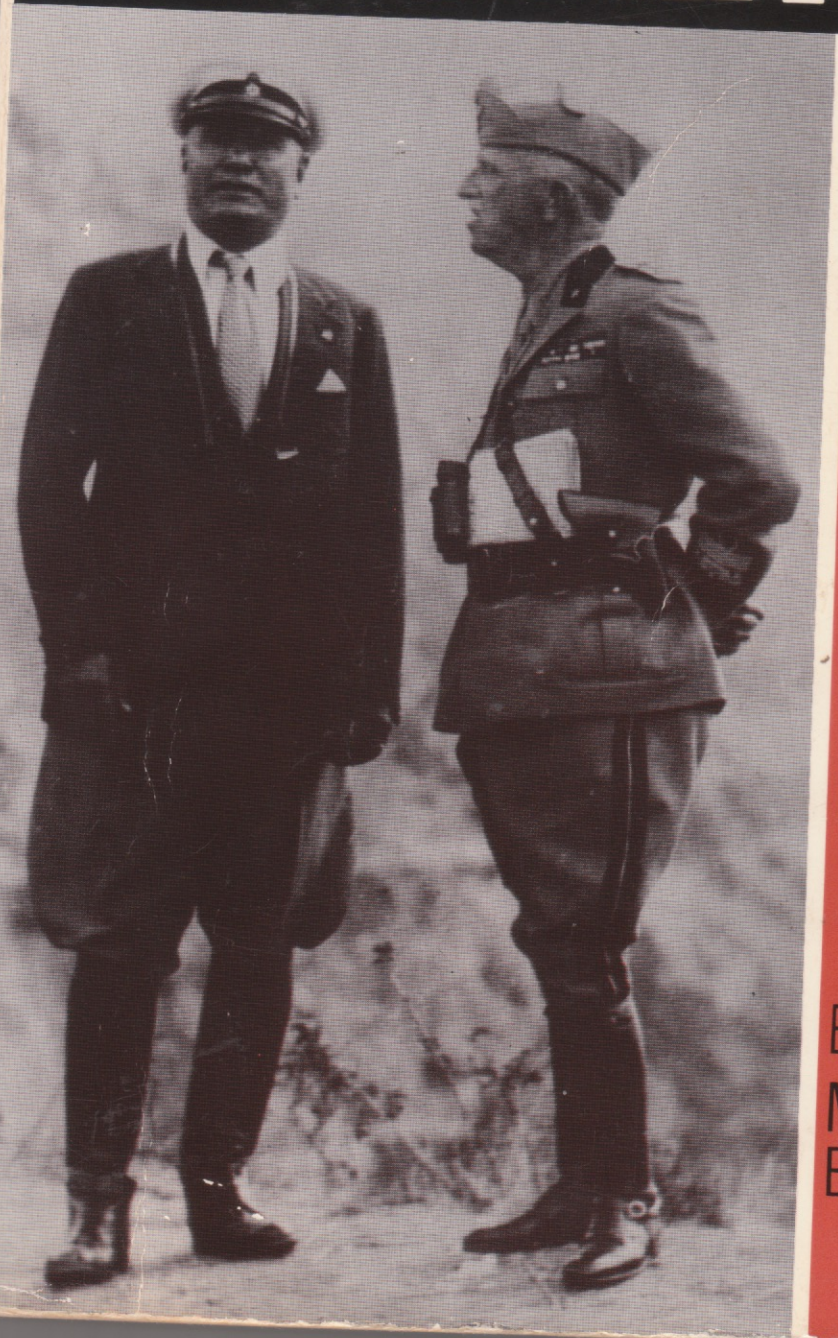
FASCISTS AND CONSERVATIVES



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7

Conservatism, traditionalism and fascism in Spain, 1898–1937

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In the light of the dramatic constitutional and political changes affecting pre-civil war Spain – constitutional monarchy until 1923, dictatorship between 1923 and 1931, and republican democracy between 1931 and 1936 – discussion of the relationship between conservatism and fascism requires, first of all, recognition that *social* conservatism and *political* conservatism may not always closely coincide. When a constitutional and political system is such as to facilitate the preservation of existing social hierarchies and differences, then it is likely that those who are socially conservative will be politically conservative also; thus it was in Spain during the later nineteenth century and into the twentieth. Where a political system becomes unconvincing as a defender of established interests, the latter may begin to explore its reform or replacement, as occurred in Spain during the 1910s and 1920s. And where a regime is introduced which unambiguously threatens the position of the wealthy, privileged and otherwise conservatively inclined, then social conservatism may engender an anything but 'conservative' political stance *vis-à-vis* the newly established institutions – as was the case during the Spanish Second Republic of 1931–6.

The notion of 'fascism' is also, of course, problematical. Some individuals and movements of the interwar European, and in this case Spanish, right enthusiastically adopted the label; others assumed an ambivalent stance towards whatever they understood by 'fascism'; and others claimed hostility towards it even while being regarded as fascists by their enemies on the left. It is probably wisest, however, whatever may be our ultimate conclusion, to adopt a pragmatic approach and begin by taking fascism to be that self-consciously 'radical' strand of the right which proclaims itself as such.

The main concern of this chapter will be the political strategies of the socially conservative in Spain during the years of the Second Republic, and in particular the relationship of 'fascism' to them. First, however, it is necessary to explore Spanish 'conservatism' in the years before the coming of Republican democracy.

Writers on the subject of 'Spanish fascism', notably Stanley Payne, have laid considerable stress on Spain's lack of a 'pre-fascist tradition' such as that enjoyed by *fin-de-siècle* and early twentieth-century Italy; this, Payne asserts, helps explain the extreme weakness of self-confessed fascism in Spain before 1936.[1] And it is perfectly true that Spain did not possess, to any serious degree, the kind of widely diffused irrationalist and radical-nationalist political strands which existed in Italy from the late nineteenth century onwards and which, boosted by injections from revolutionary syndicalism and interventionism, it may be argued gave Italian fascism much of its distinctive style and tone. It follows that any Spanish political movement which too closely aped Italian fascism was therefore unlikely to strike the intellectual and popular chords necessary to attract instant mass support. As we shall see, neither during the final crisis of the Liberal Monarchy (1917–23) nor during the greater part of the Second Republic did Italian-style 'radical fascism' appeal to many Spanish conservatives dissatisfied with the political status quo.

Emphasis upon a distinctively Italian 'pre-fascist tradition', such as helped shape Italian fascism but whose absence in Spain prevented the early emergence of a successful facsimile of the Italian original, is nevertheless of limited value. It might perhaps be more fruitful to attempt to identify an indigenous, national, *counter-revolutionary* tradition capable, as was 'pre-fascism' in Italy and, more dramatically still, *völkisch* nationalism in Germany, of being harnessed in order to play a broadly similar role. Conservative Spaniards of the 1930s, even many of the more demogogically inclined, repeatedly insisted that Spain had no need of an Italianate or Germanic form of anti-liberal, anti-leftist mass movement for the simple reason that the country possessed a vigorous counter-revolutionary heritage of its own. This politico-cultural tradition, largely lacking in Italy with its very different tradition of church–state relations, might best be labelled 'Catholic traditionalism'.

Catholic traditionalism was an important political, intellectual and cultural force in Spain throughout the 1800s. During the early part of the century it became attached to, and closely associated with, Carlism, a dynastic cause born in the 1830s and which for the next century served as a vehicle for varied, fluctuating and sometimes conflicting strands of opposition to Spain's dominant liberal system. Carlism contributed to Catholic traditionalism its popular, emotional, mythic and indeed militaristic elements, while the intellectual offerings of Carlist publicists and propagandists such as Antonio Aparisi y Guijarro, Cándido Nocedal, Ramón Nocedal and Juan Vázquez de Mella were complemented by the work of non-Carlist Catholic intellectuals like Jaime Balmes, Juan Donoso Cortés, Bishop Torres y Bages and Marcelino Menéndez Pelayo.[2]

Although by the early twentieth century Carlism as a political movement was in poor shape, Catholic traditionalism retained a powerful influence within the Church, among both clergy and laity, and at court. By this time it had absorbed, without too much discomfort, many of the ideas of fashionable European neo-Thomist intellectuals and the social-Catholicism of Leo XIII, and had come to infuse the large and complex network of Catholic social and professional organizations which proliferated after 1900. In political terms, as most lucidly expounded by Mella, Catholic traditionalism stressed the central role of Catholic Christianity as the foundation of a corporate order which, it was fondly hoped, would restore harmony to Spain's society and polity; through 'Catholic unity', liberal individualism and parliamentarism would be superseded and the appeal of the left neutralized without recourse to centralization, bloated bureaucracies, or outright repression.[3]

Notwithstanding the declining hold of the Church and the Catholic faith upon the early twentieth-century liberal intelligentsia and working class, Catholic traditionalism also possessed what might be termed a 'constituency' – a significant section of the Spanish population, extending well beyond wealthy Catholic conservatives and intransigent clerics, which was sufficiently influenced by religious devotion and, more importantly, by the Church itself, to be attractable, should the appropriate circumstances arise, to a political party or parties espousing one or other form of Catholic corporatism. This constituency mostly consisted of the numerous small and middling peasant proprietors and tenant farmers of northern, north-central and parts of eastern Spain, together with elements of the Catholic petty bourgeoisie, *rentier* class and artisanate in most other regions. It was people such as these who provided Carlism with its admittedly contracting support as the twentieth century opened, and who during the early part of the century came to form the mass membership of Catholic interest groups, syndicates and farmers' associations; of these the most powerful and significant was the Confederación Nacional Católico-Agraria (CNCA), a sprawling organization through which wealthy Catholic landowners attempted to ensure the political passivity of smallholders and tenants. Binding such bodies together, as elsewhere in Catholic Europe, was the lay organization Catholic Action, whilst another body, the Asociación Católica Nacional de Propagandistas (ACNP), channelled the energies of the Catholic intellectual elite.[4]

During the golden age of Spain's Liberal Monarchy, from 1875 down to the end of the century, the majority of those Spaniards who deliberately or unthinkingly embraced Catholic-traditionalist ideas and values nevertheless went along more or less contentedly with the political status quo. Following the turbulent years of 1868–74, the late nineteenth-century liberal system appeared to guarantee political stability. Its two main parties, Conservative and Liberal, representing different sections of an

agrarian, banking and manufacturing oligarchy, alternated politely and artificially in office, sustained by gentlemen's-club politics, clientelism and election-rigging. Crucially, and notwithstanding its 'liberal' label, the system was culturally as well as materially conservative. Thanks largely to a close church–state relationship, the Liberal Monarchy exhibited little of the institutionalized anti-clericalism which characterized its Italian counterpart. As long as the 'Alfonsine' monarchy adequately upheld the interests of religion and property, and its actual institutions functioned in doing so with relative smoothness, the power of Catholic traditionalism as the basis of a possible counter-revolutionary movement remained latent. The steady and seemingly irreversible decline of the Carlist cause, the principal repository of open traditionalist *opposition* to the system, was nevertheless deceptive as an indicator of *potential* strength, which remained considerable. For our purposes the significance of this point is twofold. In the first place, Catholic traditionalism functioned within the loose embrace of the Liberal Monarchy as a kind of 'alternative' conservatism *vis-à-vis* the 'official' conservatism of the regime; secondly, its strength not only indicated its counter-revolutionary potential but also suggested that any future mass movements of the right were likely to have to take notice of its values and constituency.

From the late 1890s, and especially following Spain's humiliation at the hands of the United States in 1898, the liberal system that had presided over a generation of political stability and relative social peace began to disintegrate. That 'oligarchic liberalism' was increasingly out of phase with a rapidly, if unevenly, changing society was clear; what remained in doubt was whether such a system was capable of maturing into a more genuinely representative liberal democracy. The disintegrative process, involving the splitting and ultimate paralysis of both major political parties, was a protracted one, gradual at first and accelerating to a climax – as in Italy – during and after the First World War. Critiques of, and challenges to, the status quo were presented by much of the Spanish intelligentsia, by the emergent forces of Catalan and Basque regionalism, and by the socialist and anarcho-syndicalist wings of a growing labour movement. These elements, together with professional discontent within the army, converged in 1917 to produce a crisis which the monarchy itself survived mainly because moderate critics drew back from the brink. The agony of the liberal system grew more, not less, acute thereafter, with the old-style party system in disarray, rural Andalusia and urban Catalonia in a state of near revolution, and Spanish arms humiliated in Morocco at the defeat of Anual (1921).[5]

The early stages of Spain's liberal crisis, between 1898 and 1917, inspired a motley range of proposals for Spain's 'regeneration'.[6] Among the first political 'regenerationists' were the Carlists, who from outside the

ruling system called for its replacement by their decentralized, Catholic, 'traditional monarchy'. From within the system, some Conservatives even before 1898 had grasped the need to pre-empt total political, and possibly social, collapse through carefully controlled reform. In the wake of 1898 such hopes gradually focused on the Conservative statesman Antonio Maura. After Maura's hopes of Conservative reform were dashed, however, there emerged around his person a new and singular phenomenon, that of Maurism. Always a loose political movement, Maurism combined a Maurassian sense of the 'Pays réel' and a street element, the Young Maurists, in such a way as to suggest resemblances to Action Française, though scarcely to the European fascism of the next decade. Although Maurism achieved little and soon withered away, it was important as a forcing ground for two new forms of rightism: a politicized social-Catholicism and an authoritarian nationalism, as represented, respectively, by two of Maura's principal lieutenants, Angel Ossorio y Gallardo and Antonio Goicoechea. In its anti-parliamentarism after 1919, and in particular the behaviour of the Young Maurists, Maurism may have looked 'forward' to a new kind of authoritarianism, but what is equally striking is the extent to which it borrowed from, and indeed attempted with some success to harness, the Catholic traditionalist heritage.[7]

The more complex and profound crisis of the early 1920s did much to destroy the ambivalence which many conservative 'liberals' had earlier felt regarding the parliamentary system. Some, it is true, responded to the paralysis of old-style liberal politics and the emergence of a powerful and militant left by grasping the need for greater democratization, via either Christian Democracy or a moderate form of republicanism. Spain's first Christian Democratic party, the Partido Social Popular, founded in 1922, perished a year later when the parliamentary system itself was brought down by the *coup d'état* of General Primo de Rivera.[8] Conservative republicanism was to have its brief and illusory heyday in 1930–1. As the widespread welcome extended to Primo's *pronunciamiento* indicates, however, many other conservatives now began to abandon a liberalism which was ceasing to appear a convincing defender of their interests and of the supposed 'eternal values' of Spain.

A superficial comparison of Spain with Italy might encourage the conclusion that Spain after 1917 was fertile ground for the emergence of fascist-style movements. Important differences nevertheless dictated that the outcome of Spain's first liberal crisis would be unlike Italy's. Spain's lack of a 'pre-fascist culture' was clearly one factor, though the mixed bag of regenerationism certainly contained items susceptible to use by a radical right. Far more significant was the absence, thanks to Spain's wartime neutrality, of a postwar trauma comprised of 'mutilated victory' and a massive demobilization problem: two ingredients without which Italian fascism probably could not have existed and certainly could

not have succeeded. Those middling social layers which in Italy formed most of the fascist rank and file, in Spain were at this stage either attracted to democratic republicanism or regionalist politics, or passively caught up in the Catholic-traditionalist world already referred to.[9] Spain possessed something else that Italy lacked, and that was crucially to influence the development of the Spanish right: a highly 'political' army which, while not politically monolithic, in a truly serious crisis could be expected to respond to conservative invitations to 'save' the 'essential Spain'.[10] Primo de Rivera's seizure of power may not on its own explain why no significant fascist movement appeared in Spain before the 1930s; what it does help to demonstrate is why, unlike their Italian counterparts, Spanish conservatives in the early 1920s had no need to look for protection to new and untried political forces.

The Primo de Rivera dictatorship (1923–30) occupies a distinctive place in the history of Spanish fascism, and of the conservative–fascist relationship. In the sense that it rested upon no prior mass movement and lacked a totalitarian vision, the regime was not a fascist one. Primo de Rivera himself was a benevolent and sincere paternalist, neither a radical demagogue nor a systematic hammer of the left. The nearest thing to a 'single party', Unión Patriótica, was an artificial affair designed to do little more than provide the regime with legitimacy and powers of endurance. In neither respect was it successful; when in 1928–9 the regime began to totter, any possibility of Primo's emulating Mussolini's tactic in 1924 by threatening an ungrateful establishment with the unleashing of a 'second wave' was, as he realized, utterly out of the question. Nevertheless the Dictatorship was one of the first European regimes to borrow selectively from its Italian Fascist counterpart. Although Primo himself flatly rejected the fascist label which others sought to pin on him, several of his leading political lieutenants felt very differently, admiring the Fascist regime, happily employing *fascisant* rhetoric, and attempting to introduce policies and invent institutions which offended conservative orthodoxies. It was the paternalistically reforming aspect of the dictatorship, among other things, which alienated much of Spain's oligarchy, and ultimately left Primo bereft of conservative support. In January 1930, abandoned by the Crown, the wealthy classes and his fellow officers, Primo de Rivera surrendered power.[11]

The fascist or *fascisant* elements of the Dictatorship played an important transitional role in the development of the Spanish right. Shlomo Ben-Ami has convincingly argued that the regime served as a crucible for the forging of right-wing authoritarian ideas and values and a training school for a new generation of rightist activists; it also, he suggests, via Unión Patriótica accelerated the political mobilization of the more traditional sectors of the petty bourgeoisie and peasantry. The overall result was to bequeath to the right of the 1930s a transformed value-system and a fresh leadership cadre

which, whether or not they be regarded as 'fascist', were unquestionably authoritarian rather than democratic in temper.[12]

Prior to 1930, defenders of the socioeconomic status quo in Spain were never placed in the kind of situation that, elsewhere, made radical fascism an attractive proposition. The social and political crisis of 1917–23, acute as it was, in the final analysis was capable of being confronted by essentially conventional means: police and military repression and, ultimately, outright praetorianism. In April 1931, however, just over a year after the collapse of Primo de Rivera's dictatorship, the monarchy itself fell, creating an entirely novel situation. The Second Republic arrived at a time which, given the impact of the depression and the retreat of democracy abroad, could hardly have been less propitious for a new, would-be democratic regime. Although the monarchy had fallen in part through a failure of Spain's propertied classes, and the armed forces, to rally to its defence in the crisis of 1930–1, few wealthy conservatives had any genuine enthusiasm for the new regime.[13] The advent of the Republic thrust Spain, for the first time and almost overnight, into the arena of mass politics; from the start it was clear that its founders intended it to be a radically reforming regime. Between 1931 and 1933 the governing alliance of left-wing Republicans and Socialists endeavoured, by means of social, agrarian, educational, institutional and anti-clerical legislation, to transform Spanish society. In such a situation, the question was: what kind of political formations and strategies would be adopted by those anxious to resist attempts to redistribute property and reduce the influence of the Church, and how successful would they be in rallying mass support?

Since the Republic had little chance of surviving unless conservatives could be persuaded to accept it, one of its greatest tragedies must be considered to have been the political failure of Catholic republicanism.[14] Under the Republic – as under Weimar and in postwar Italy – there failed to develop a party or parties capable of providing for social and religious conservatives a political haven that would speak for their interests while cleaving sincerely and consistently to the principles and practices of parliamentary democracy. More particularly, no such party emerged that was able to embrace, and in the process republicanize, the mass of culturally traditionalist Catholics, thereby undercutting the position of their propertied and clerical patrons.

The creation of such a force was never likely to be easy, given the social and religious conflicts released by Spain's new democracy, the sheer strength of traditionalism on the Spanish right, and the authoritarian legacies of the Dictatorship. Its desirability was grasped, and the task undertaken in the early months of the Republic, by former monarchists who during the 1920s had become convinced that the monarchy was

incapable of regeneration and democratization. Two members of the Provisional Government, Niceto Alcalá Zamora, an Andalusian landowner and former Liberal minister, and Miguel Maura, son of Antonio Maura, hoped to assist in the creation of a republic that would be politically democratic and cautiously reformist, yet sensitive to conservative and in particular Catholic interests and feelings. Even before the end of 1931, however, it was clear that their hopes were to be frustrated. In the first place, their participation in the Provisional Government was not sufficient to prevent the passage of a constitution, and the adoption of legislative plans, more radical, and in particular more anti-clerical, than they were able to tolerate. This drove them to resign from the government; Maura went into the political wilderness where he was to play the role of republican Cassandra, while Alcalá Zamora was elevated into the presidency of the Republic, a post important in the creation and demolition of cabinets but of little direct executive or policy-making importance. Their political party, the Liberal Republican Right, split into two smaller, highly personalist parties, Alcalá Zamora's Progressives and Maura's Conservatives; these, along with other conservative groups like the Liberal Democrats of Melquiades Álvarez, operated during the Republic as coteries of individuals, weak in genuine popular support and achieving their very limited electoral successes through a combination of clientelism and coat-tailing.

Conservative republicanism fell between two stools. On the one hand its identification with Catholicism, and even with the old regime, alienated many convinced republicans of otherwise moderate temper. On the other hand it was too identified with an anti-clerical republic, and insufficiently ostentatious in its own Catholicism, to win the loyalties either of clergy or, in large enough numbers, of Catholic laity. The root of the problem was the inability of conservative republicans to penetrate, much less take over, the complex network of organizations – Catholic Action, the CNCA, the ACNP, etc. – within which so many Catholics were enmeshed. It was this Catholic and traditionalist subculture that was to provide the more successful political parties of social conservatism with their foundations.

The rapid failure of Catholic republicanism was accompanied by the more gradual rise and fall of another possible vehicle for the republicanization of social conservatism, the Radical Party.[15] By 1931 the Radical Party, the self-styled 'historic' republican party of Spain, had already left its genuinely 'radical' past behind it. During 1931–2 it admitted as members numerous pragmatic ex-monarchists, notably in the business sector, and established itself as the main party of *republican* opposition to the governing left. In November 1933 it won an electoral success which made it the principal focus of political power for the next two years. In 1935–6, however, the Radical Party's attempt to become a cross-class, republican, conservative party collapsed in ruins. Its populist

rhetoric proved insufficient to retain a once considerable working-class base as its new social constituency pushed it rightwards. At the same time, the territory of Catholic traditionalism was closed to it by virtue of its republicanism and residual anti-clericalism. It was increasingly discredited owing to the personal corruption of leading figures, and was ultimately torn apart owing to its political alliance, during 1934–5, with a new mass party of non-republican Catholicism, the Confederación Española de Derechas Autónomas (CEDA).

For a century before the coming of the Republic, the chief political standard-bearer of Catholic-traditionalist opposition to Spanish liberalism had been Carlism. The collapse of the Alfonsine monarchy and the advent of a radical and anti-clerical regime abruptly reversed Carlism's decline, and from the outset the movement constituted an important strand of right-wing, Catholic antagonism to the Republic. The growth and territorial expansion of Carlism's political organization, the Comunión Tradicionalista, from late 1931 was remarkable. With its lively youth wing and its paramilitary Requeté, the movement recruited tens of thousands of Spaniards attracted by an extreme, potentially violent alternative to the republic.[16]

Doctrinally speaking, Carlism was certainly not 'fascist' in any serious sense of the word. Carlist doctrine in the 1930s was most clearly set out by its leading ideologist, Víctor Pradera, in his book *El Estado Nuevo* ('The New State') (1935). In addition to its support for the restoration (or, more precisely, '*instauración*') of the Carlist branch of the Spanish Bourbons, Carlism in the immediate pre-civil war years was notable for its vocal defence of the Church's role in Spanish life, and in particular in the spheres of education, culture and opinion-making, and its advocacy of administrative devolution. Since the late nineteenth century Carlism had also absorbed social-Catholic ideas, and now envisaged the setting up of a corporate state held together by unanimous but voluntary religious belief, and lacking political parties, class conflict and much of the apparatus of the modern bureaucratic state. Given the conditions then prevailing in Spain this was obviously a utopian vision; social conflict, after all, could be either rendered unnecessary or, alternatively, silenced, only through the erection and operation of a powerful coercive state of some form or other. However, anti-liberalism and increasingly, in the circumstances of the 1930s, anti-socialism were so intense in Carlist minds that a latent authoritarianism always underlay this idealized conception of a decentralized, paternalistic arcadia. At the same time it has to be recognized that the 'official' Carlism of the movement's elites was often at variance with the simpler sentiments of the rank and file, whose peasant and petty bourgeois members found it possible to combine bitter hostility to the Republic and the left with a populist hatred of excessive wealth.

Not even a hint of such contradictions troubled the rival monarchist cause, Alfonsism. Before 1923 most active supporters of the monarchy of Alfonso XII and Alfonso XIII were, naturally enough, 'liberals': that is, they accepted a pluralist society and the parliamentary system as operative in the Spain of their day. As already stated, however, the liberalism of many monarchists had always been contingent rather than passionate, and a minority had always been susceptible to the neo-traditionalism of a Menéndez Pelayo, the temptation of praetorianism, or the 'modern' authoritarian ideas associated with Maurism. Maurism proved a crossroads for many monarchists: some gravitating thereafter towards conservative republicanism, others passing via the dictatorship into the authoritarian camp.

The fall of the monarchy reinforced the latter process, not least since it could be seen as vindicating time-worn Carlist arguments that, in Spain at any rate, monarchy and liberalism were ultimately incompatible principles. Although few of the mainly well-heeled potentates of Alfonsism were likely to find the plebeian raucousness of an Italian-style fascist *movement* personally appealing, during the dictatorship and the Republic many came to be attracted to selected aspects of the Italian fascist *regime*, and to the idea of introducing an appropriately adapted version of it in Spain. If, early in the Republic, the principal influence upon the political and intellectual leaders of Alfonsism was still Catholic traditionalism, as the months passed it was increasingly blended with that of foreign authoritarian examples: Action Française, Portuguese Integralism and above all Italian fascism.

Alfonsism during the 1930s, it must be stressed, was not so much a true political party as a privileged persons' pressure group: a clique of individual politicians, intellectuals, landowners and businessmen, many of whom had traditionally been close to the centre of power and who, unlike Alcalá Zamora and Miguel Maura, had rejected the tempting embrace of republicanism when the monarchy's glow began to dim. Under the Second Republic, Alfonsism never acquired a mass following; its party, Renovación Española, founded in 1933, was, a Carlist rival sneered, a 'general staff without an army'.[17] There was therefore never much likelihood of its achieving a monarchical restoration, or the introduction of any congenial regime, through the conquest of popular opinion or the development of a mass movement. Instead, Alfonsism's leaders followed a dual strategy, consisting first of an elitist attempt at 'influencing the influencers', in particular the economic oligarchy (to which many of them belonged) and the officer corps of the Spanish army, and secondly of sponsoring anti-republican conspiracy and de-stabilization.[18]

Alfonsism's failure to attract a mass following during the Second Republic is directly attributable, like that of conservative republicanism and, as we shall see, of the radical right, to the success of what in its various guises was known as 'accidentalism'. Accidentalism involved *de*

facto recognition of the Republic without acceptance of its constitution, legislation, ethos or permanence. The principle, nurtured within the ACNP and propounded in the influential Catholic daily *El Debate*, took political form until early 1932 in a right-wing umbrella organization, Acción Nacional, to which unrepentant Alfonsists, and for a time some Carlists, belonged. In 1932 the organization was renamed Acción Popular; and in March 1933, with the departure of monarchist intransigents to found Renovación Española, this in turn became the political core of the CEDA. At the moment of its birth the CEDA, with three-quarters of a million members, was the largest political party Spain had yet seen. This was because, within its confederal structure, it embraced most of the sprawling social-Catholic network referred to earlier, most notably the vast CNCA.

Under the leadership of José María Gil Robles, the CEDA's official strategy involved the use of republican democracy in order to win power, and then the use of that power to transform Spain into a corporate state. The strategy was pursued with considerable success between 1933 and 1935. In November 1933 the CEDA recorded a remarkable electoral triumph, becoming the largest single party in the Cortes. For almost a year thereafter it bolstered up a series of Radical governments, tilting the balance of Spanish politics sharply to the right. In October 1934 its pressure at last won it entry into government, provoking elements of the left into rebellion at what they considered the advance of 'fascism'. The rising, most serious in the region of Asturias, was crushed; by the spring of 1935 the CEDA appeared poised for the acquisition of 'full power'.

The tactical parallel between the CEDA and Hitler's post-1923 career is evident, but a more precise – and more openly admitted – example was provided by the Austrian Christian Social Party and its authoritarian creations the Fatherland Front and the *Ständestaat*. The kind of corporate state envisaged by Gil Robles (the son of a prominent Carlist ideologue), the CEDA's *éminence grise*, Angel Herrera, and other thinking *cedistas* was essentially Catholic-traditionalist in inspiration. *Cedistas* claimed to distrust the all-powerful modern state, whether liberal, socialist, or fascist Italian-style; the corporate state, they hoped, would be built upon consent and would ensure general harmony without undue coercion or excessive bureaucracy. Such was the theory: yet at a time when their Austrian exemplars were having recourse to all manner of coercion and repression in pursuit of what *cedistas* admitted to being similar goals, it is hardly surprising if Spanish republicans and leftists took CEDA criticisms of 'fascism' with a pinch of salt.[19]

For the handful of Spaniards seriously interested in a radical, Italian- or German-style fascism, the political transition of 1930–1 created a somewhat contradictory climate. On the one hand, the advent of an unprecedentedly

open democracy promised the appearance of sharpened political and social conflicts amid which radicalized, altogether more extreme forms of rightism might, in the European climate of the 1930s, be expected to blossom. On the other hand, the recent discrediting and collapse of a dictatorship with Italianate borrowings and fascist fringes appeared to dull the bloom of dictatorship and fascism in general. Moreover, even if a mood of nostalgia for the days of dictatorship were to seize the Spanish middle classes, it was more likely to focus on the army than on a putative fascism.

Either way, movements of the self-consciously radical right failed to flourish until the critical months of early 1936. The Partido Nacionalista Español (PNE), founded in 1930 by a bellowing Valencian neurologist, José María Albiñana, superimposed fascist trappings on a programme combining rabid nationalism with Catholic traditionalism. Despite the early publicity attracted by its paramilitary 'legionaries', the PNE never commanded mass support, or much support at all outside its home-base of Burgos. More calculatingly radical were the Juntas de Ofensiva Nacional Sindicalista (JONS), founded in October 1931 through the fusion of two smaller groups, led by Ramiro Ledesma and Onésimo Redondo and based respectively in Madrid and the Old Castilian city of Valladolid. The JONS were clearly and frankly fascist in their plebeianism, their hostility to a traditional establishment with which they had few organizational or personal ties, and their acceptance of political violence. Their 'national syndicalism', resembling that of Edmondo Rossoni and the Italian fascist 'left' and clearly intended to attract the working class and peasantry, placed them squarely on the radical right. Thanks mainly to the influence of the devout Redondo, however, they also displayed a characteristically Hispanic respect for Catholicism. Whilst prospering slightly more than the PNE, the JONS nevertheless remained irrelevant to the mainstream of Spanish politics in the early years of the Second Republic.[20]

Another strand of Spanish fascism was slower to take shape. Falange Española, founded in October 1933, was the fruit of sporadic discussions concerning the foundation of a Spanish fascist party which, almost since the Republic's birth, had been taking place in circles much closer to the old political establishment and social elite than those occupied by the JONS.[21] The Falange, leadership of which was quickly assumed by the son of the late dictator, José Antonio Primo de Rivera, adopted a 'neither right nor left' posture, hostile both to the organized left and to unrestrained capitalism, secularist and ultra-nationalistic. Together with a vague commitment to modernization and 'productivism', it also, like the rest of the right, paid homage to rural, peasant values. Although José Antonio's social connections guaranteed the Falange considerable publicity, it too failed to achieve a quick take-off, and in the spring of 1934 fused with the similarly languishing JONS to form what then became

Spain's sole significant fascist party, Falange Española de las JONS. This new version of the Falange increased its support somewhat during the politically polarized years 1934–5, yet neither to a politically significant degree nor among a particularly varied social constituency. A movement led by *señoritos* ('gents') and supported disproportionately by the sons of the wealthy, not surprisingly its radical rhetoric cut little ice with the populace at large.[22]

Radical fascism, as represented by the JONS, the Falange and FE de las JONS, had thus made little impact in Spain as 1936 opened. The explanation for this, however, lies not so much, as (say) in Britain, in the moderation and commitment to democracy of political conservatism, as in the availability of alternative channels for anti-republican, or at the very least non-republican, opinion. Some pragmatic people of property, it is true, for a considerable time looked to the Radicals to protect their interests, but often with little or no commitment to the Republic – or indeed to the party itself, which many cynically abandoned in 1935–6. A minority of Castilian landowners stuck to the Agrarian Party, a rump of pre-1923 monarchical liberalism which eventually accepted the Republic, and in Catalonia businessmen and landowners remained attached to the region's own conservative party, the Lliga Catalana. For most social conservatives, however, and in particular for the rural landlords of Castile, the latifundists of Andalusia and Extremadura, and the prosperous peasantry of Valencia, it was the CEDA which seemed to offer them what they needed: the prospect at the very least of power within the Republic, and every likelihood of the Republic's eventually being transformed into a more congenial regime in which the left would be silenced and traditional cultural and religious values restored to their proper place. Those unwilling to compromise their monarchist principles and loyalties might cling to Renovación Española or to Carlism, but out-and-out 'fascism' seemed to have little to offer.

One significant qualification does need to be entered at this point. Among the Alfonsine monarchists of Renovación Española, many of whom knew José Antonio Primo de Rivera personally, and some of whom had collaborated with him during 1930–1 in an ephemeral authoritarian-monarchist party, Unión Monárquica Española, there existed for a time a certain patronizing benevolence towards the Falange. In 1933, for example, one of Renovación Española's neo-traditionalist intellectuals, Pedro Sáinz Rodríguez, helped José Antonio develop the Falange's programme, and in 1934 the Renovación Española leader, Goicoechea, agreed to help finance the struggling Falange. In each case the understanding was that the Falange would refrain from making life difficult for the Alfonsine cause.[23] Renovación's monarchists, understandably in view of the Falange's weakness during 1933–5, saw it not as a serious competitor, much less a possible threat, but as a tool for accomplishing the paramilitary and

terroristic de-stabilization of the Republic. This was a role which the Falange was indeed to play in 1935–6, although the outcome proved to be not quite the immediate restoration that its monarchist patrons had had in mind.

Parallel with Renovación Española's attempts to use the Falange for its own purposes, Alfonsine monarchism was undergoing a species of 'fascistization' itself. The first signs of such a trajectory had, of course, been visible during the Primo de Rivera dictatorship, but had then gathered momentum via organizations such as Unión Monárquica and, with the coming of the Republic, the influential intellectual 'think-tank', Acción Española.[24] Especially from 1934, as the influence of the ambitious and tough-minded José Calvo Sotelo began to tell within the monarchist ranks, Renovación Española fell prey to a frankly authoritarian, statist brand of corporatism.[25] It is in areas such as this that the quest for rigour in the use of the word 'fascism' risks becoming self-defeating. As a party or movement of opposition, neither Renovación Española nor its attempt at creating a broader base in 1934–6, the Bloque Nacional, bore much resemblance to the Italian Fascist movement of 1919–22.[26] If anything, their spirit, rhetoric and programme were much closer to those of the Italian Nationalist Association prior to its fusion with the Fascist Party in 1923. However, what inspired them was not the radicalism of Italian fascism's opposition phase, so much as what they grasped were certain essential characteristics of the Italian Fascist regime – characteristics, moreover, which owed much to the Nationalist contribution to fascism: its reverence for the state, concessions to established elites, commitment to a directed economy, etc. In other words, what the monarchist right was seeking was to achieve the 'benefits' of a fascist regime without the need for a radical-fascist mass movement.

Fascist influences were also apparent within the CEDA and the Carlist Comunión Tradicionalista, whilst taking different forms. In the former, there can be little question that authoritarian tendencies, constantly struggling with Christian Democratic ones, were both more powerful and more successful than might otherwise have been the case owing to the frank admiration for Mussolini and even Hitler that infected CEDA ranks. Most of those *cedistas* who bothered to think about it rejected Nazi racism and the extreme statism of both dictatorships, but others worried little about such details. Within the CEDA youth movement, the Juventud de Acción Popular (JAP), the influence of fascism was inescapable: representing, it is true, less a considered acceptance either of radical-rightist ideas or of the detailed realities of the Italian Fascist or Nazi regimes, than at least a partial surrender to fascist 'style', youth worship and taste for violence.[27]

To a more limited extent, something similar occurred within Carlism. Elements of the Carlist youth, especially among students, embraced

socially radical ideas – or at least mouthed socially radical rhetoric – which combined violent anti-leftism with excited hostility towards the social oligarchy influential within Renovación and the CEDA. Some of the older generation, especially those with closest contacts with their Alfonsist opposite numbers, and perhaps sensing the likely impracticability of Carlist devolutionary ideas, displayed something of the Alfonsists' admiration for foreign fascist authoritarianism.[28] For all that, there nevertheless survived within Carlism a powerful resistance to centralized authority which, notwithstanding Carlist anti-leftism and acceptance of violence, on balance places the movement in a different category from fascism.

The support of so many Spanish conservatives for the CEDA represented not their rejection of an essentially authoritarian resolution of Spain's social and political conflicts, but a preference for reaching some such goal by gradual and, if possible, peaceful means. In contrast, the rest of the right offered 'catastrophism': the conviction that the Republic could be overthrown only by violence. In terms of the kind of state that it was hoped would replace the Republic in its existing form, *cedistas*, strongly influenced by Spain's Catholic-traditionalist heritage, preferred the 'Austrian' model; Carlists (officially at least) a traditional, decentralized arcadia; and Falangists and Alfonsists their respective interpretations of Italian fascism.

For the ostensibly gradualist majority of Spanish conservatives, the problem was always what course to adopt should the 'accidentalist' strategy fail and 'full power' not pass peacefully to the CEDA. In 1935–6 the nightmare came true, as the CEDA first was cast out of government and then, in February 1936, lost a general election to the Republican-Leftist Popular Front. With its strategy in ruins, the party quickly began to disintegrate from the base upwards. As it did so, both the Carlist movement and, more particularly and sensationally, the Falange expanded. This phenomenon is highly significant to the present analysis. The events of spring 1936 illustrate the relative unimportance of *ideological* nuances on the Spanish right, in comparison with strategic and stylistic ones. Much of the already *fascisant* JAP now switched to the Falange, not for doctrinal reasons but because of the latter's unambiguous acceptance of the violence that thousands of *japistas* now became convinced was necessary; some JAP sections and many individual *japistas* became Carlists for essentially the same reason, the difference in their course generally reflecting local conditions rather than a considered choice between Carlist traditionalism and Falangist fascism.[29]

Many of those conservatives, especially rich and influential ones, who still in 1936 resisted the embrace of the extreme right as embodied in the Falange and the Comunión Tradicionalista, placed their faith in the military and some not clearly identified form of authoritarian future. For

them the man of the hour, until his assassination in July 1936, was no longer the has-been Gil Robles, but the ruthless 'monarcho–fascist' Calvo Sotelo. Given the growth of the extreme right in 1936, it was only in part fear of radicalism that continued to hold back many conservatives from an Italian-style accommodation with 'revolutionary' fascism. More decisive was the continued presence in the Spanish political kaleidoscope of a safer alternative: an army which, it was reasonable to hope, might carry out the *negative* task of fascism – that is, overthrow the Popular Front government and, in any recognizable form, the Republic itself – without fascism's worrying 'revolutionary' overtones. In July 1936, the hope was fulfilled.

The military rebellion of 17–18 July 1936, and the civil war which it unleashed, decisively influenced the conservative–fascist relationship in Spain. The military leadership, concentrated from the end of September 1936 in General Franco, from the start had the unquestioning support of the great majority of those influential conservatives who until recently had looked to the CEDA or even the Radicals to protect their interests. In the insurgent or Nationalist zone, normal politics were now at an end. With the CEDA reduced to shreds and Alfonsism functioning as an admittedly influential politico-military clique, two mass parties emerged, the Carlists and the Falange. Both, in the new climate, continued their recent expansion, the Falange at a phenomenal rate.[30] By the end of 1936, however, all the Falange's first-rank leaders were dead, either killed by leftist militia or, in José Antonio's case, 'legally' executed by order of the Republican authorities. With rival factions struggling for the party leadership, the Falange was in no shape to make a serious bid for power within Nationalist Spain. Indeed, it was unable to offer significant resistance when, in April 1937, Franco forcibly fused it with the Carlists and the rest of the Spanish right to form under his leadership a single political organization, Falange Española Tradicionalista y de las JONS (FET).[31]

The experience of the Falange between February 1936 and April 1937 invites comparison with that of Italian fascism during its rise to power. At the start of 1936 the Falange was still a marginal element in Spanish politics. After the February election, despite its activities for much of the time being banned and its leaders jailed, it grew as the 'established' right crumbled. From the start of the civil war its militants played an important part in physically crushing the left within the Nationalist zone, and the movement expanded still further through the recruitment mainly of conservative Spaniards won over by its ruthlessness, but also that of leftists desperate for self-preservation and organizational protection now that their own organizations had been destroyed. In April 1937 it united formally with the rest of the right – Carlist traditionalists, the

'monarcho–fascists' of Renovación Española and the residues of the CEDA – to form the monopolistic party of a state many would regard as 'fascist'. The parallel with Italian fascism's rise from radicalism and obscurity, via anti-leftist *squadrismo* and ideological de-radicalization, to compromise with the establishment, the acquisition of power, and fusion with Nationalism and the clerical right, is clear. In both cases there exists a coincidence between, on the one hand, numerical expansion and the achievement of power, and, on the other, a dilution of radicalism and gradual accommodation with conservative forces.

This is not to deny the existence of important differences. The relationships of Franco and Mussolini with their single parties were quite different, as were the actual processes of fusion. The role of the FET, or Movimiento as it came more loosely to be known, within Franco's Spain was designed from the outset to be instrumental and subordinate to leader and state, whereas the reduction of the Italian Fascist party to a similar role was a lengthy and less total process. As was to be expected, the influence of Catholicism within Franco's Spain was more central than it could ever be in Fascist Italy. When all is said and done, however, both regimes were alliances of the radical and the conservative right in which the latter more than held its own.

If 'fascism' is defined in terms of the highly self-conscious, not to say self-regarding, radicalism of those who founded, led and held office within interwar radical-rightist movements, then it is inescapably clear that before the spring of 1936 there were few fascists in Spain. The reasons why up to that time few social conservatives were attracted to the JONS, the Falange or the fused FE de las JONS are unsensational. Both for the wealthy and for the peasants and the provincial petty bourgeoisie, the rhetoric, values and symbols of Catholic traditionalism, employed by the CEDA and the Carlists, and more ambiguously by their youth movements and by Renovacíon Española, were simply more familiar than outright 'fascism' and bore sufficient promise of a congenial future to deter them from flirting with the unfamiliar. Moreover the CEDA, for two years at least, seemed likely to succeed. The CEDA's electoral failure in February 1936, and the coming to office of a Popular Front government, transformed this situation.

Since it cannot be disputed that the great majority of those who flocked to the Falange after February 1936 had previously been conservative in socioeconomic, religious and cultural terms, even if in many cases reactionary or 'conservative-revolutionary' politically, this development raises interesting issues concerning the relationship betwen conservatism and fascism. Why, in certain circumstances, do conservatives 'become' fascists? Stress upon the ideological and programmatic differences between conservatism and fascism suggests a process of conversion based upon

acceptance of ideas previously rejected, yet it is difficult to accept such a thing in this case. It is straining credulity to imagine thousands of middle-class, mainly youngish Spaniards agonizing over the compatibility or otherwise between the social encyclicals of the papacy and the Falange's Twenty-Seven Points – or that significantly different worries preoccupied those who, rejecting the CEDA, opted not for the Falange but for the Carlists. Rather the choice was a much simpler one which suggests a stress upon style, tactics and function rather than on ideology and programmatic detail. Spanish conservatives, previously content either with the gradual road towards authoritarianism represented by the CEDA, or even with the hope of a conservative republic offered by the Radical Party, opted during the spring of 1936 for the violent route represented by the Falange, the Carlists or, of course, the military rebels of July.

This is not to say that the radicalism, totalitarianism, etc., of fascist militants is unimportant or insincere, or that the strains within enlarged fascist movements or actual regimes between 'fascist' zealots and 'conservative' *arrivistes* are insignificant either. What the Spanish case nevertheless does suggest is that to define fascism purely or primarily in terms of its ostentatiously 'radical' origins is actually to define only part and not all of a complex process involving the pursuit, and less commonly the winning and exercising, of power. Fascism does not cease to be fascism when, as in Spain in 1936–7, it broadens its base to include unabashed conservatives, or makes the compromises with established forces necessary to win and hold power. Those Spanish leftists who recognized the shallowness and contradictoriness of Falangist demagogy, who saw the various strands of the Spanish right as brothers under the skin, and who feared for the future of freedom whichever emerged dominant, knew reality when they saw it.

NOTES

1 S. G. Payne, 'Spanish fascism in comparative perspective', in H. A. Turner (ed.), *Reappraisals of Fascism* (New York, 1975), pp. 142–69.

2 For an introduction to nineteenth-century Carlism, see M. Blinkhorn, *Carlismo y contrarrevolución en España, 1931–1939* (Barcelona, 1979), pp. 15–68.

3 M. Blinkhorn, 'Ideology and schism in Spanish traditionalism, 1874–1931', *Iberian Studies*, vol. I, no. 1 (1972).

4 See Frances Lannon, *Privilege, Persecution and Prophecy. The Catholic Church in Spain, 1875–1875* (Oxford, 1987), pp. 146–69; J. J. Castillo, *Propietarios muy pobres. Sobre la subordinación política del pequeño campesino. La Confederación Nacional Católico-Agraria, 1917–1942* (Madrid, 1979); J. Cuesta Bustillo, *Sindicalismo católico agrario en España (1917–1919)* (Madrid, 1978); J. Andrés-Gallego, *Pensamiento y acción social de la Iglesia en España* (Madrid, 1984).

5 On 1917 see J. A. Lacomba, *La crisis española de 1917* (Madrid, 1970); also C. Boyd, *Praetorian Politics in Liberal Spain* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1979).

6 M. Blinkhorn, 'Spain: the "Spanish Problem" and the imperial myth', *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 15, no. 1 (January 1980), pp. 5–27; J. Varela Ortega,

'Aftermath of splendid disaster: Spanish politics before and after the Spanish-American War of 1898', *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 15, no. 2 (April 1980), pp. 317–44. The literature on 1898 and regenerationism is extensive; for a useful analysis see H. Ramsden, *The 1898 Movement in Spain. Towards a Reinterpretation* (Manchester, 1974).

7 On Maurism, see J. Tusell and J. Avilés, *La derecha española contemporánea. Sus orígenes: el maurismo* (Madrid, 1986), esp. pp. 159–218. For first-hand accounts, see J. Gutiérrez-Ravé, *Yo fuí un joven maurista*, 3rd edn (Madrid, n.d.), esp. pp. 159 ff. and A. Ossorio y Gallardo, *La España de mi vida* (Madrid, 1974), pp. 55–70.

8 Early Spanish Christian Democracy is covered in O. Alzaga Villaamil, *La primera democracia cristiana en España* (Barcelona, 1973); see also J. Tusell, *Historia de la democracia cristiana en España*, I: *Los antecedentes. La CEDA y la II República* (Madrid, 1974), pp. 104–19.

9 The traditionalist and potential fascist 'constituencies' are examined in M. Blinkhorn, 'The Iberian states', in D. Mühlberger (ed.), *The Social Basis of European Fascist Movements* (London, New York and Sydney, 1987), pp 320–48.

10 S. G. Payne, *Politics and the Military in Modern Spain* (Stanford, Calif., 1967) provides the most comprehensive general account of the Spanish army's political role in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

11 For a detailed and thought-provoking analysis of the Primo de Rivera regime, see S. Ben-Ami, *Fascism from Above. The Dictatorship of Primo de Rivera in Spain, 1923–1930* (Oxford, 1983).

12 S. Ben-Ami, 'The forerunners of Spanish fascism: Unión Patriótica and Unión Monárquica', in M. Blinkhorn (ed.), *Spain in Conflict 1931–1939. Democracy and its Enemies* (London, 1986), pp. 103–32.

13 On the role of economic elites under the Republic, see especially M. Cabrera, *La patronal ante la II República. Organizaciones y estrategia 1931–1936* (Madrid, 1983).

14 Conservative republicanism lacks a satisfactory scholarly study, but see N. Alcalá-Zamora, *Memorias* (Barcelona, 1977), esp. pp. 126–202, and M. Maura, *Así cayó Alfonso XIII* (Barcelona, 1962).

15 For a recent analysis of the Radicals under the Republic, see N. Townson, 'Algunas consideraciones sobre el proyecto "republicano" del Partido Radical', in M. Tuñón de Lara (ed.), *La II República española. Bienio rectificador y Frente Popular, 1934–1936* (Madrid, 1988), pp. 53–88; also O. Ruiz Manjón, *El Partido Republicano Radical 1908–1936* (Madrid, 1976), pp. 171–600.

16 M. Blinkhorn, *Carlism and Crisis in Spain, 1931–1939* (Cambridge, 1975), provides a detailed analysis of Carlism under the Republic.

17 ibid., p. 200.

18 P. Preston, 'Alfonsine monarchism and the coming of the Spanish Civil War', in Blinkhorn (ed.), *Spain in Conflict*, pp. 160–82. The words 'influencing the influencers' are Hilaire Belloc's.

19 The most complete study of the CEDA is J. R. Montero, *La CEDA. El catolicismo social y político en la II República*, 2 vols (Madrid, 1977); see also Tusell, *Democracia cristiana*, I, pp. 139 ff. R. A. H. Robinson, *The Origins of Franco's Spain. The Right, the Republic and Revolution* (Newton Abbot, 1970), concludes that the CEDA was a potentially Christian Democratic party pushed rightward by the conduct of the left; P. Preston, *The Coming of the Spanish Civil War. Reform, Reaction and Revolution in the Second Republic 1931–1936* (London, 1978), regards the CEDA as intrinsically reactionary and authoritarian in character.

20 On the JONS and the early history of Spanish fascism, see S. G. Payne, *Falange. A History of Spanish Fascism* (Stanford, Calif. and London, 1962), pp. 10–20; S. M. Ellwood, *Prietas las filas. Historia de Falange Española, 1933–1983* (Barcelona, 1984), pp. 25–34; S. Ellwood, 'Falange Española, 1933–9: from fascism to Francoism', in Blinkhorn (ed.), *Spain in Conflict*, pp. 206–11.

21 Ellwood, *Prietas las filas*, pp. 34–7; Payne, *Falange*, pp. 21–37.

22 Blinkhorn, 'Iberian states', pp. 332–7.

23 P. Sáinz Rodríguez, *Testimonio y recuerdos* (Barcelona, 1978), pp. 220, 375–6.

24 R. Morodo, *Los orígenes ideológicos del franquismo: Acción Española* (Madrid, 1985); on *Unión Monárquica* see Ben-Ami, 'Forerunners of Spanish fascism', in Blinkhorn (ed.), *Spain in Conflict*, pp. 114–26.

25 Preston, 'Alfonsine monarchism', in Blinkhorn (ed.), *Spain in Conflict*, pp. 170–9.

26 R. A. H. Robinson, 'Calvo Sotelo's *Bloque Nacional* and its manifesto', *University of Birmingham Historical Journal*, vol. X, no. 2 (1966).

27 For divergent views on the strength of 'fascist' tendencies in the CEDA, see Robinson, *Origins of Franco's Spain*, pp. 134–5, 209–11 and Preston, *Coming of the Spanish Civil War*, *passim*.

28 Blinkhorn, *Carlism and Crisis*, pp. 171–82.

29 Ellwood, *Prietas las filas*, pp. 72–7; Blinkhorn, *Carlism and Crisis*, p. 235.

30 Ellwood, *Prietas las filas*, pp. 78–82; Blinkhorn, *Carlism and Crisis*, pp. 256–8.

31 On the Unification, see M. García Venero, *Historia de la Unificación. Falange y Requeté en 1937* (Madrid, 1970); M. Hedilla Larrey, *Manuel Hedilla. Testimonio* (Barcelona, 1972), pp. 219–22; and, from a Carlist point of view, J. del Burgo, *Conspiración y guerra civil* (Madrid and Barcelona, 1970), pp. 743–822.