

Chapter 15

Japan and Spain

SUMMARY OF EVENTS

During the 20 years after Mussolini's March on Rome (1922), many other countries, faced with severe economic problems, followed the examples of Italy and Germany and turned to fascism or right-wing nationalism.

In **Japan** the democratically elected government, increasingly embarrassed by economic, financial and political problems, fell under the influence of the army in the early 1930s. The military soon involved Japan in war with China, and later took the country into the Second World War with its attack on Pearl Harbor (1941). After a brilliant start, the Japanese eventually suffered defeat and devastation when the two atomic bombs were dropped, the first on Hiroshima and the second on Nagasaki. After the war Japan returned to democracy and made a remarkable recovery, soon becoming one of the world's most powerful states economically. During the 1990s the economy began to stagnate; it seemed as though the time had come for some new economic policies.

In **Spain** an incompetent parliamentary government was replaced by General Primo de Rivera, who ruled from 1923 until 1930 as a sort of benevolent dictator. The world economic crisis brought him down, and in an atmosphere of growing republicanism, King Alfonso XIII abdicated, hoping to avoid bloodshed (1931). Various republican governments failed to solve the many problems facing them, and the situation deteriorated into civil war (1936–9) with the forces of the right fighting the left-wing republic. The war was won by the right-wing Nationalists, whose leader, General Franco, became head of the government. He kept Spain neutral during the Second World War, and stayed in power until his death in 1975, after which the monarchy was restored and the country gradually returned to democracy. In 1986 Spain became a member of the European Union.

Portugal also had a right-wing dictatorship – Antonio Salazar ruled from 1932 until he had a stroke in 1968. His *Estado Novo* (New State) was sustained by the army and the secret police. In 1974 his successor was overthrown and democracy returned to Portugal. Although all three regimes – in Japan, Spain and Portugal – had many features similar to the regimes of Mussolini and Hitler, such as a one-party totalitarian state, death or imprisonment of opponents, secret police and brutal repression, they were not, strictly speaking, fascist states: they lacked the vital element of mass mobilization in pursuit of the rebirth of the nation, which was such a striking feature in Italy and Germany.

Many South American politicians were influenced by fascism. Juan Perón, leader of **Argentina** from 1943 until 1955 and again in 1973–4, and Getulio Vargas, who led *Estado Novo* (New State) in **Brazil** from 1939 until 1945, were two of those who were impressed by the apparent success of Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany. They adopted some of the European fascist ideas, especially the mobilization of mass support. They won huge support from the poor working classes in the mass union movement. But they weren't really like Mussolini and Hitler either. Their governments can best be summed up as a combination of nationalism and social reform. As historian Eric Hobsbawm puts it (in his

The Age of Extremes): 'European fascist movements destroyed labour movements, the Latin American leaders they inspired, created them.'

15.1 JAPAN BEFORE THE SECOND WORLD WAR

(a) In 1918 Japan was in a strong position in the Far East

Japan's close contact with the West dated back to 1853, when the American Commodore Matthew Perry sailed into Yokohama harbour with four battleships and demanded that Japan should open up trade with the USA. Over the next five years Japan had little choice but to sign trade treaties with several Western countries. It was clear that the Western powers had imperialist designs on Japan, and the signing of these treaties was regarded by the Japanese as a great national humiliation. Gradually a determination to modernize and strengthen the country developed. Beginning in 1868 with the restoration of the Meiji emperor, the Japanese embarked on a policy of building railways, improving the road system, starting modern industries, like cotton and silk manufacture, and introducing a more democratic parliamentary system, modelled on Germany's constitution. For the first time in over two and a half centuries Japan became a unified and centralized empire. The government decided that the best way to prevent the western powers from treating Japan in the same way as China was to occupy neighbouring territories; first Korea and then Manchuria were 'colonized', but this caused two wars, first with China (1894–95) and then with Russia (1904–5). Japan was victorious in both wars; in the case of Russia, this was the first time that an Asian country had defeated one of the European great powers. It meant that Japan was now the dominant power in the Far East. A military alliance had already been signed with Britain in 1902, and when the First World War broke out in 1914, Japan entered the war on the side of Britain. Their main contribution was to seize German colonies and bases in China. Japan was represented at the Versailles peace conference in 1919, became a member of the League of Nations and was officially recognized as one of the 'Big Five' world powers. Japan now had a powerful navy, a well-trained and well-equipped army and a great deal of influence in China.

Japan had also benefited economically from the First World War, while the states of Europe were busy fighting each other. Japan took advantage of the situation both by providing the Allies with shipping and other goods, and by stepping in to supply orders, especially in Asia, which the Europeans could not fulfil. During the war years, the exports of Japanese cotton cloth almost trebled, while their merchant fleet doubled in tonnage. Politically the course seemed set fair for democracy when in 1925 all adult males were given the vote. Hopes were soon dashed: at the beginning of the 1930s the army assumed control of the government.

(b) Why did Japan become a military dictatorship?

During the 1920s problems developed, as they did in Italy and Germany, which democratically elected governments seemed incapable of solving.

1 Influential elite groups began to oppose democracy

Democracy was still relatively new in Japan; it was during the 1880s that the emperor gave way to the growing demands for a national assembly, in the belief that it was constitutions and representative government which had made the USA and the countries of western Europe so successful. Gradually a more representative system was introduced consisting of a house of appointed peers, a cabinet of ministers appointed by the emperor, and a Privy

Council whose function was to interpret and safeguard the new constitution, which was formally accepted in 1889. It provided for an elected lower house of parliament (the Diet); the first elections were held and the Diet met in 1890. However, the system was far from democratic and the emperor retained enormous power: he could dissolve the Diet whenever he felt like it, he took decisions about war and peace, he was commander-in-chief of the armed forces, and he was regarded as 'sacred and inviolable'. But the Diet had one great advantage: it could initiate new laws, and consequently the cabinet found that it was not as susceptible to their will as they had expected.

At first the elite groups in society were content to give the government free rein, but after the First World War they began to be more critical. Especially troublesome were the army and the conservatives, who were strongly entrenched in the house of Peers and in the Privy Council. They seized every opportunity to discredit the government. For example, they criticized Baron Shidehara Kijuro (foreign minister 1924–7) for his conciliatory approach to China, which he thought was the best way to strengthen Japan's economic hold over that country. The army was itching to interfere in China, which was torn by civil war, and considered Shidehara's policy to be 'soft'. They were strong enough to bring the government down in 1927 and reverse his policy.

2 Corrupt politicians

Many politicians were corrupt and regularly accepted bribes from big business; sometimes fighting broke out in the lower house (the Diet) as charges and counter-charges of corruption were flung about. The system no longer inspired respect, and the prestige of parliament suffered.

3 The trade boom ended

When economic problems were added to the political ones, the situation became serious. The great trading boom of the war years lasted only until the middle of 1921, when Europe began to revive and recover lost markets. In Japan, unemployment and industrial unrest developed, and at the same time farmers were hit by the rapidly falling price of rice caused by a series of bumper harvests. When farmers and industrial workers tried to organize themselves into a political party, they were ruthlessly suppressed by the police. Thus the workers, as well as the army and the right, gradually became hostile to a parliament which posed as democratic, but allowed the left to be suppressed, and accepted bribes from big business.

4 The world economic crisis

The world economic crisis beginning in 1929 (see Section 22.6) affected Japan severely. Exports shrank disastrously and other countries introduced or raised tariffs against Japanese goods to safeguard their own industries. One of the worst affected trades was the export of raw silk, which went mostly to the USA. The period after the Wall Street Crash was no time for luxuries, and the Americans drastically reduced their imports of raw silk, so that by 1932 the price had fallen to less than one-fifth of the 1923 figure. This was a further blow for Japanese farmers, since about half of them relied for their livelihood on the production of raw silk as well as rice. There was desperate poverty, especially in the north, for which factory workers and peasants blamed the government and big business. Most of the army recruits were peasants; consequently the rank-and-file as well as the officer class were disgusted with what they took to be weak parliamentary government. As early as 1927, many officers, attracted by fascism, were planning to seize power and introduce a strong nationalist government.

5 The situation in Manchuria

Matters were brought to a head in 1931 by the situation in Manchuria, a large province of China, with a population of 30 million, in which Japan had valuable investments and trade.

The Chinese were trying to squeeze out Japanese trade and business, which would have been a severe blow to a Japanese economy already hard hit by the depression. To preserve their economic advantages, Japanese army units invaded and occupied Manchuria (September 1931) without permission from the government. When Prime Minister Inukai criticized extremism, he was assassinated by a group of army officers (May 1932); not surprisingly, his successor felt he had to support the army's actions.

For the next 13 years the army more or less ran the country, introducing similar methods to those adopted in Italy and Germany: ruthless suppression of communists, assassination of opponents, tight control of education, a build-up of armaments and an aggressive foreign policy which aimed to capture territory in Asia to serve as markets for Japanese exports. This led to an attack on China (1937) and participation in the Second World War in the Pacific (see Section 6.2(c), Maps 6.4 and 5.1 for Japanese conquests). Some historians blame Emperor Hirohito who, though he deplored the attack on Manchuria, refused to become involved in political controversy, afraid to risk his orders for a withdrawal being ignored. Historian Richard Storry claims that 'it would have been better for Japan and for the world if the risk had been taken'. He believes that Hirohito's prestige was so great that the majority of officers would have obeyed him if he had tried to restrain the attacks on Manchuria and China. When the Second World War began, it seems that the emperor genuinely wanted to stay out of it, and hesitated over whether or not to sign an alliance with Nazi Germany. However, after the early successes of the German *Blitzkrieg* he agreed to the alliance, and eventually, to the attack on Pearl Harbor (see Section 6.2(c)), thereby giving the military the chance to achieve their ambition – to continue with the conquest of China and south-east Asia.

The war began successfully for the Japanese: by May 1942 they had captured Hong Kong, Malaya, Singapore and Burma (all belonging to Britain), the Dutch East Indies, the Philippines and two American possessions – Guam and Wake Island. There seemed no way of stopping them. However, it became clear that the attack on Pearl Harbor was not quite the success it had seemed at first. It did not destroy the American aircraft carriers which were out at sea, and it was the aircraft carriers that were to prove the vital element in Japan's defeat. In June the Americans, using planes from three aircraft carriers, inflicted a severe defeat on the Japanese at Midway Island (see Section 6.3(a)). This proved to be a crucial turning point in the war, with Japan suffering a series of reverses over the next over the next three years. It was a long and bitter struggle which ended in August 1945 with the Japanese surrender after the Americans had dropped two atomic bombs, one on Hiroshima and the second on Nagasaki. Japan's ambitions of a great empire were dashed and the country and its economy were largely in ruins.

15.2 JAPAN RECOVERS

At the end of the Second World War the Japanese were defeated; their economy was in ruins with a large proportion of their factories and a quarter of their housing destroyed by bombing (see Sections 6.5(f) and 6.6(d)). Until 1952 the country was occupied by Allied troops, mostly American, under the command of General MacArthur. For the first three years the Americans aimed to make sure the Japanese could never again start a war – they were forbidden to have armed forces and were given a democratic constitution under which ministers had to be members of the Diet (parliament). The Emperor Hirohito was allowed to remain on the throne, but in a purely symbolic role. Nationalist organizations were disbanded and the armaments industry was dismantled. People who had played leading roles during the war were removed, and an international tribunal was set up to deal with those accused of war crimes. The wartime prime minister, Tojo, and six others were executed, and 16 men were given life sentences.

The Americans did not at this stage seem concerned to restore the Japanese economy. During 1948 the American attitude gradually changed: as the Cold War developed in Europe and the Kuomintang crumbled in China, they felt the need for a strong ally in south-east Asia and began to encourage Japanese economic recovery. From 1950 industry recovered rapidly and by 1953 production had reached the 1937 levels. American occupying forces were withdrawn in April 1952 (as had been agreed by the *Treaty of San Francisco* the previous September) though some American troops remained for defence purposes.

(a) How was Japan's rapid recovery possible?

- 1 *American help was vital in the early years of Japanese recovery.* The USA decided that an economically healthy Japan would be a strong bulwark against the spread of communism in south-east Asia. The Americans believed that it was important to move Japan away from the semi-feudal and hierarchical system, which was restrictive of progress. For example, half the agricultural land was owned by wealthy landlords who lived in the cities and rented small plots out to tenants, most of whom were little more than subsistence farmers. *A land-reform plan was introduced* which took much of the land away from the landlords and sold it to the tenants at reasonable rates, creating a new class of owner-farmers. This was a great success: the farmers, helped by government subsidies and regulations which kept agricultural prices high, became a prosperous and influential group. The Americans helped in other ways too: Japanese goods were allowed into American markets on favourable terms and the USA supplied aid and new equipment.
- 2 *The Korean War (1950–3) gave an important boost to Japan's recovery.* Japan was ideally placed to act as a base for the United Nations forces involved in Korea; Japanese manufacturers were used to provide a wide range of materials and supplies. The close relationship with the USA meant that Japan's security was well taken care of; this meant that Japan was able to invest in industry all the cash that would otherwise have been spent on armaments.
- 3 Much of Japan's industry had been destroyed during the war; this enabled *the new factories and plants to start afresh with all the latest technology*. In 1959 the government decided to concentrate on high-technology goods both for the home market and for export. The domestic consumer market was helped by another government initiative started in 1960, which aimed to double incomes over the next decade. The demands of the export market led to the construction of larger and faster transport ships. Japanese products gained a reputation for high quality and reliability and were highly competitive in foreign markets. Throughout the 1960s, Japanese exports expanded at an annual rate of over 15 per cent. By 1972 Japan had overtaken West Germany to become the world's third largest economy, specializing in shipbuilding, radio, television and hi-fi equipment, cameras, steel, motorcycles, motor cars and textiles.
- 4 *Recovery was helped by a series of stable governments.* The dominant party was the Liberal-Democratic Party (LDP); it was conservative and pro-business in character, and it had the solid support of the farmers who had benefited from the land reform carried through by the Americans. They were afraid that their land would be nationalized if the socialists came to power; so the LDP was consistently in government from 1952 until 1993. The main opposition was provided by the Japan Socialist Party, which changed its name to the Social Democratic Party of Japan in 1991; it drew most of its support from workers, trade unions and a large slice of the city population. There were two smaller socialist parties and the Japan Communist

Party. This fragmentation of the left was one of the reasons for the LDP's continued success.

(b) Japanese recovery was not without its problems

- 1 *There was a good deal of anti-American feeling in some quarters.*
 - Many Japanese felt inhibited by their close ties with the USA.
 - They felt that the Americans exaggerated the threat from communist China; they wanted good relations with China and the USSR but this was difficult with Japan so firmly in the American camp.
 - The renewal of the defence treaty with the USA in 1960 caused strikes and demonstrations.
 - There was resentment among the older generation at the way in which Japanese youth culture was taking on all things American, which were seen as a sign of 'moral decay'.
- 2 *Another problem was working-class unrest at long working hours and overcrowded living conditions.* As industry expanded, workers flocked into the industrial areas from the countryside; the rural population fell from about 50 per cent of the total in 1945, to only 20 per cent in 1970. This caused severe overcrowding in most towns and cities, where flats were tiny compared with those in the West. As property prices rose, the chances of ordinary workers being able to buy their own homes virtually disappeared. As cities grew larger, there were serious problems of congestion and pollution. Commuting times became longer; male workers were expected to dedicate themselves to the 'firm' or the 'office culture', and leisure time dwindled.
- 3 *During the early 1970s the high economic growth rate came to an end.* A variety of factors contributed to this. Japanese competitiveness in world markets declined in certain industries – particularly shipbuilding and steel. Concerns about the growing problems of urban life led to some questioning of the assumption that continuing growth was essential for national success. The economy was disrupted by fluctuating oil prices; in 1973–4 the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) raised their oil prices, partly in order to conserve supplies. The same happened in 1979–81, and on both occasions Japan suffered recessions. One Japanese response to this was to increase investment in the generation of nuclear power.
- 4 *Japan's prosperity aroused some hostility abroad.* There were constant protests from the USA, Canada and western Europe that the Japanese were flooding foreign markets with their exports while refusing to buy a comparable amount of imports from their customers. In response Japan abolished or reduced import duties on almost 200 commodities (1982–3) and agreed to limit car exports to the USA (November 1983); the French themselves restricted imports of cars, televisions and radios from Japan. To compensate for these setbacks the Japanese managed to achieve a 20 per cent increase in exports to the European Community between January and May 1986.

In spite of these problems, there is no doubt that in the mid-1980s the Japanese economy was still a staggering success; the total Gross National Product (GNP) amounted to about one-tenth of world output. With its huge export trade and relatively modest domestic consumption, Japan enjoyed an enormous trade surplus, was the world's leading net creditor nation

and gave away more in development aid than any other country. Inflation was well under control at below 3 per cent and unemployment was relatively low at less than 3 per cent of the working population (1.6 million in 1984). The Japanese success story was symbolized by a remarkable engineering feat – a tunnel 54 kilometres long linking Honshu (the largest island) with Hokkaido to the north. Completed in 1985, it had taken 21 years to build and was the world's longest tunnel. Another new development which continued into the 1990s was that Japanese manufacturers were beginning to set up car, electronics and textile factories in the USA, Britain and western Europe; Japanese economic success and power seemed without limit.

(c) Economic and political change: 1990–2004

During the early 1990s the strange paradox of the Japanese economy became more obvious: domestic consumption began to stagnate; statistics showed that the Japanese were now consuming less than the Americans, British and Germans, because of higher Japanese prices, wage increases which lagged behind inflation, and the exorbitant cost of property in Japan. It was the export trade which continued to earn the Japanese their massive surpluses. The 1980s had been a time of feverish speculation and government overspending in order, it was claimed, to improve the country's infrastructure. However, this led to a severe recession in 1992–3 and left the public finances in an unhealthy state.

As economic growth slowed down and then stagnated, worker productivity declined and industry became less competitive. Although unemployment was low by Western standards, layoffs became more common and the traditional Japanese policies of jobs for life and company paternalism began to be abandoned. Industrialists began to produce more goods in other countries outside Japan in order to remain competitive. By the end of the century there were worrying signs: Japan had moved into a recession and there seemed little prospect of an end to it. The statistics were discouraging; the trade surplus was shrinking rapidly and exports were falling – the first six months of 2001 showed the largest export fall on record. By the end of the year industrial production had fallen to a 13-year low. Worse still, unemployment had risen to 5.4 per cent, an unheard of level since the 1930s.

As American historian and Japanese expert R. T. Murphy put it (in 2002):

The Japanese government has been presiding for a decade now over a stagnant economy, a ruined financial system and a demoralized citizenry. ... Japan finds itself unable to rethink the economic policies pursued since the immediate postwar years. Those policies – export like mad and hoard foreign exchange earnings – were so obvious they required no political discussion. But now that the policies must be reordered [given that there is reduced demand for Japanese exports] Japan is waking up to the melancholy reality that it is unable to change course.

He lays the blame for this on the bureaucracy and the debt-laden banking community, which, he says, are insulated from any kind of government interference and control, and have been guilty of 'disastrous irresponsibility'.

There were important changes on the political scene. In the early 1990s, the LDP, which had held power since 1952, suffered a series of unpleasant shocks when some of its members were involved in corruption scandals. There were many resignations and in the election of July 1993, the LDP lost its majority to a coalition of opposition parties. There was a period of political instability, with no fewer than four different prime ministers in the year following the election. One of them was a socialist, the first left-wing prime minister since 1948. However, the LDP kept a foothold in government by forming a surprise coalition with the Social Democratic Party of Japan (formerly the Japan Socialist

Party). At the end of 1994 the other opposition parties also formed a coalition, calling themselves the New Frontier Party. The LDP remained in government through to the elections of 2001, in which it scored yet another victory, this time in coalition with the New Conservative Party and a Buddhist party.

15.3 SPAIN

(a) Spain in the 1920s and 1930s

The constitutional monarchy under Alfonso XIII (king since 1885) was never very efficient and reached rock bottom in 1921 when a Spanish army, sent to put down a revolt led by Abd-el-Krim in Spanish Morocco, was massacred by the Moors. In 1923 General Primo de Rivera seized power in a bloodless coup, with Alfonso's approval, and ruled for the next seven years. The king called him 'my Mussolini', but though Primo was a military dictator, he was not a fascist. He was responsible for a number of public works – railways, roads and irrigation schemes; industrial production developed at three times the rate before 1923; most impressive of all, he succeeded in ending the war in Morocco (1925).

When the world economic crisis reached Spain in 1930, unemployment rose, and Primo and his advisers bungled the finances, causing depreciation of the currency. The army withdrew its support, whereupon Primo resigned. In April 1931 municipal elections were held in which the Republicans won control of all the large cities. As huge crowds gathered on the streets of Madrid, Alfonso decided to abdicate to avoid bloodshed, and a republic was proclaimed. The monarchy had been overthrown without bloodshed, but unfortunately the slaughter had merely been postponed until 1936.

(b) Why did civil war break out in Spain in 1936?

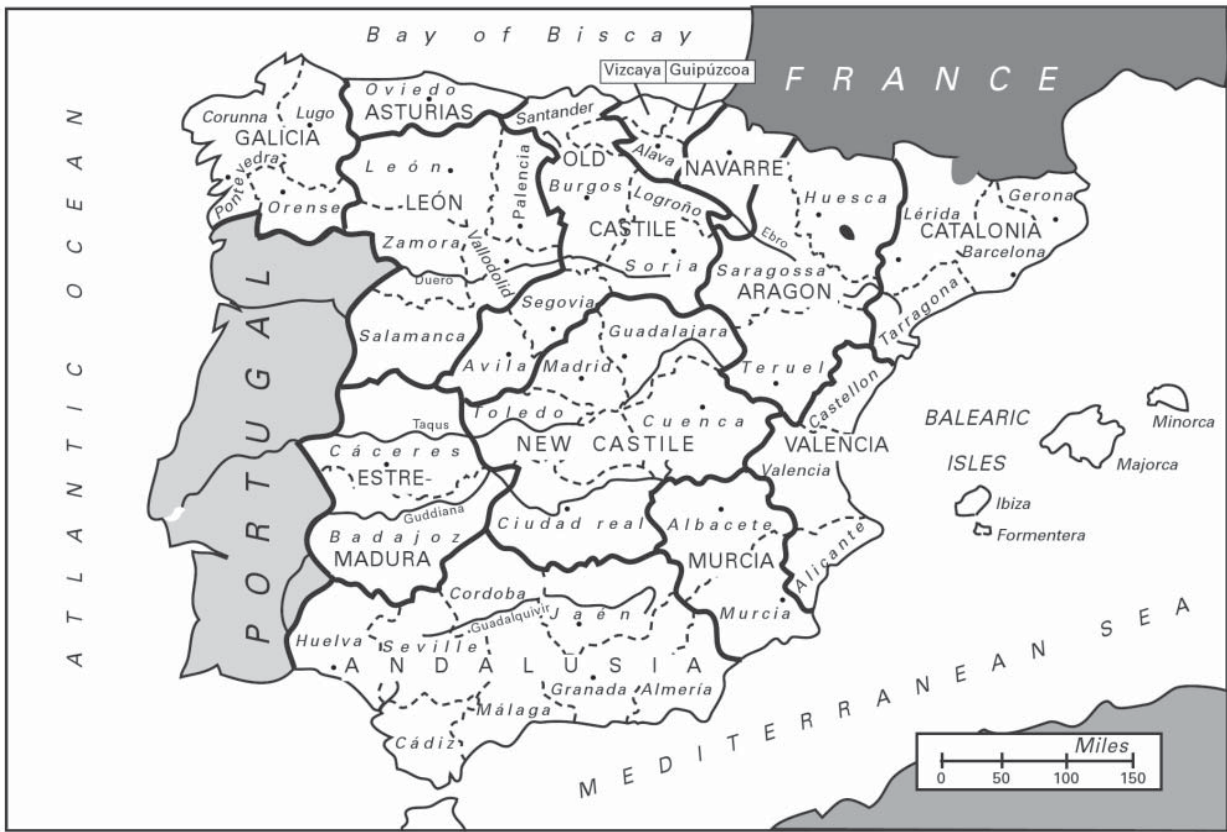
1 *The new republic faced some serious problems*

- Catalonia and the Basque provinces (see Map 15.1) wanted independence.
- The Roman Catholic Church was bitterly hostile to the republic, which in return disliked the Church and was determined to reduce its power.
- It was felt that the army had too much influence in politics and might attempt another coup.
- There were additional problems caused by the depression: agricultural prices were falling, wine and olive exports declined, land went out of cultivation and peasant unemployment rose. In industry, iron production fell by a third and steel production by almost half. It was a time of falling wages, unemployment and declining standards of living. Unless it could make some headway with this final problem, the republic was likely to lose the support of the workers.

2 *Right-wing opposition*

The left's solutions to these problems were not acceptable to the right, which became increasingly alarmed at the prospect of social revolution. The dominant grouping in the *Cortes* (parliament), the socialists and middle-class radicals, began energetically:

- Catalonia was allowed some self-government.
- An attack was made on the Church – Church and State were separated, priests would no longer be paid by the government, Jesuits were expelled, other orders could be dissolved and religious education in schools ceased.



Map 15.1 Regions and provinces of Spain

- A large number of army officers were compulsorily retired.
- A start was made on the nationalization of large estates.
- Attempts were made to raise the wages of industrial workers.

Each of these measures infuriated one or other of the right-wing groups – Church, army, landowners and industrialists. In 1932 some army officers tried to overthrow the prime minister, Manuel Azaña, but the rising was easily suppressed, as the majority of the army remained loyal at this stage. A new right-wing party, the *Ceda*, was formed to defend the Church and the landlords.

3 *Left-wing opposition*

The republic was further weakened by opposition from two powerful left-wing groups, the anarchists and the syndicalists (a group of powerful trade unions), who favoured a general strike and the overthrow of the capitalist system. They despised the socialists for co-operating with the middle-class groups. They organized strikes, riots and assassinations. Matters came to a head in January 1933 when some government guards set fire to houses in the village of Casas Viejas near Cadiz, to smoke out some anarchists. In total 25 people were killed, which lost the government much working-class support, and caused even the socialists to withdraw support from Azaña, who resigned. In the following elections (November 1933) the right-wing parties won a majority, the largest group being the new Catholic *Ceda* under its leader Gil Robles.

4 *The actions of the new right-wing government*

The actions of the new right-wing government were designed to reverse the progressive elements of Azaña's policies, and understandably aroused the left to fury. They

- cancelled most of Azaña's reforms;
- interfered with the working of the new Catalan government; and
- refused to allow the Basques self-government. This was a serious error, since the Basques had supported the right in the elections, but now switched to the left.

As the government moved further right, the left-wing groups (socialists, anarchists, syndicalists and now communists) drew closer together to form a *Popular Front*. Revolutionary violence grew: anarchists derailed the Barcelona–Seville express, killing 19 people; there was a general strike in 1934 and there were rebellions in Catalonia and Asturias. The miners of Asturias fought bravely but were crushed ruthlessly by troops under the command of General Franco. In the words of historian Hugh Thomas, 'after the manner in which the revolution had been quelled, it would have required a superhuman effort to avoid the culminating disaster of civil war. But no such effort was forthcoming.' Instead, as the financial, as well as the political situation deteriorated, the right fell apart, and in the elections of February 1936 the *Popular Front* emerged victorious.

5 *The new government turned out to be ineffective*

The left-wing socialists, led by Largo Caballero, decided not to support the government, since it was largely middle-class and 'bourgeois'; the communists supported him, hoping that the government would fail so that they could seize power. In fact, Caballero had made no plans for a revolution of this sort, in spite of his revolutionary language. The government seemed incapable of keeping order, and crisis point came in July 1936 when Calvo Sotelo, the leading right-wing politician, was murdered by members of the Republican guard. This terrified the right and convinced them that revolution was imminent. They decided that *the only way to restore order was by a military dictatorship*. A group of army leaders, chiefly Generals Mola and Sanjurjos, conspiring with the right, especially with the

new fascist *Falange* party of José Antonio de Rivera (Primo's son), had already planned a military takeover. Using Calvo Sotelo's murder as a pretext, they began a revolt in Morocco, where General Franco soon assumed the leadership. They claimed to be fighting to restore law and order and to defend the Church against the godless communists. The civil war had begun.

(c) The civil war, 1936–9

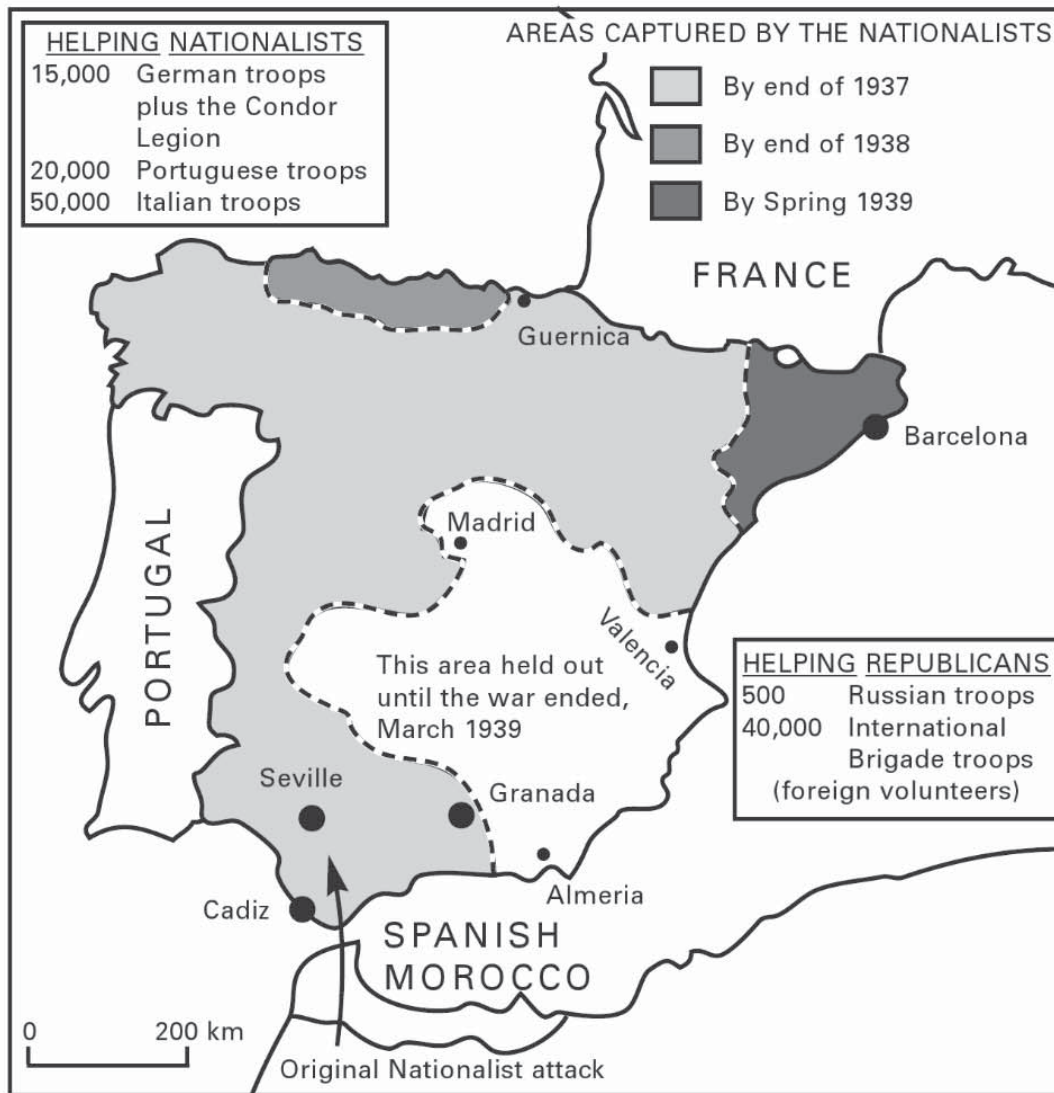
By the end of July 1936, the right, calling themselves *Nationalists*, controlled much of the north, where they set up their capital at Burgos, and the area around Cadiz and Seville in the south. However, the risings in Madrid and Barcelona, the two most important cities, had been suppressed. This meant that the plan to take over the whole country in one fell swoop had failed, leaving the *Republicans* in control of the centre and north-east, including Madrid and Barcelona. The military strengths of the two sides seemed to be fairly evenly balanced with about half the army, air force and navy remaining on the side of the Republic.

The struggle was a bitter one in which both sides committed terrible atrocities. The Church suffered horrifying losses at the hands of the Republicans, with over 6000 priests and nuns murdered. When the Nationalists captured Republican areas, they killed thousands of Republican leaders and supporters. According to Hugh Thomas, the Nationalists murdered 75 000 people, the Republicans 55 000. Together with those killed in battle, the total deaths in the war reached around half a million. The Nationalists were helped by Italy and Germany, who sent arms and men, together with food supplies and raw materials. Mussolini provided 70 000 troops and Hitler sent tanks and allowed his air force to practice bombing undefended civilian targets. The most notorious of these attacks took place in April 1937 when around a hundred bombers of the German Condor Legion destroyed the defenceless Basque market town of Guernica, killing 1600 people.

The Republicans received some help from Russia in the form of troops, tanks and planes, but France and Britain refused to intervene. In fact all the powers – Germany, Italy, Britain, France and the USSR – had given an undertaking to remain neutral, but only Britain and France kept the agreement. The Republicans were also helped by some 40 000 foreign volunteers from over fifty nations. These International Brigades were organized and deployed by the Russians, working from a base in Paris. The Nationalists slowly but surely wore down the Republicans, capturing Barcelona and the whole of Catalonia in January 1939. Only Madrid remained in Republican hands and the war ended in March 1939 when Madrid surrendered to Franco's forces (Map 15.2).

Reasons for the Nationalist victory

- Franco was extremely skilful in holding together the various right-wing groups (army, Church, monarchists and Falangists) so that they worked as a single military and political unit, with one central aim – to crush the godless republicans.
- The Republicans were much less united, and anarchists and communists actually fought each other for a time in Barcelona. At first things seemed to go well. Largo Caballero was the head of the Popular Front government and the communists announced that they were postponing the revolution in order to work with socialists and republicans to defeat the hated fascists (they labelled all the Nationalist groups as fascists). Even the anarchists joined the government. But gradually the unity began to fall apart. The communists themselves were divided: some were Stalinists and some were Trotskyites (known by their initials as POUM). Disagreements developed in Barcelona, and the Stalinists came to blows with the other two groups. Caballero was replaced by the socialist Juan Negrín.



Map 15.2 The Spanish Civil War, 1936-9

- The extent of foreign help for the Nationalists was probably decisive, especially in the early part of the war. For example, Mussolini provided the transport aircraft to bring Franco's army across to Spain from Morocco, after Franco had decided it was too risky to bring them by sea.

(d) Franco in power

In the immediate aftermath of the war, thousands of republicans fled the country, many of them crossing the frontier into France. But thousands more were captured by Nationalist forces and imprisoned. It is estimated that between 1939 and 1943 about 150 000 of them were executed. Meanwhile General Franco, taking the title *Caudillo* (leader), set up a government which was similar in many ways to those of Mussolini and Hitler. It was marked by repression, military courts and mass executions. But in other ways it was not fascist: for example, the regime supported the Church, which was given back its control over education and other areas. That would never have happened in a true fascist state. Franco amalgamated all the right-wing parties under the Falange label, and all other parties and trade unions were banned. Franco himself ruled as a dictator. There was a strict censorship of all media and anyone who criticized the regime was likely to be arrested and sent to a concentration camp. Persistent critics faced the death penalty.

Franco was also shrewd enough to keep Spain out of the Second World War, though Hitler expected Spanish help and tried to persuade Franco to get involved. When Hitler and Mussolini were defeated, Franco survived and ruled Spain until his death in 1975. As Spain moved into the 1950s the regime became less violent, but it continued to be repressive. Franco tried to enforce a rigid nationalism based on traditional Spanish culture. For example, bullfighting and flamenco were encouraged, but the Sardana, the national dance of Catalonia, was banned because it was 'not Spanish'. The use of the Galician, Catalan and Basque languages in official documents was forbidden. The Roman Catholic Church became the established state Church once again and regained many of the privileges that it had lost under the Republic. For example, all civil servants had to be Catholic, and non-church weddings, divorce, contraceptives and abortion were forbidden. Homosexuality and prostitution were criminal offences. All the Republic's legislation designed to improve the position of women in society was cancelled. Now women could not become judges or university professors and could not testify in trials. The civil war had left the economy in ruins and Franco did not help matters by insisting on isolating Spain economically, as far as possible, from the rest of the world. However, the USA and the IMF persuaded him to change to a more free-market economy. In the mid-1950s the economy slowly began to revive.

During the 1960s Franco gradually relaxed the repressiveness of his regime: military courts were abolished, workers were allowed a limited right to strike and elections were introduced for some members of parliament (though political parties were still banned). Much was done to modernize Spanish agriculture and industry and the economy was helped by Spain's growing tourist industry. By the time Franco died at the age of 82 in 1975, most people had begun to enjoy a higher standard of living than ever before. Eventually Franco came to be regarded as standing above politics. He was preparing Alfonso XIII's grandson, Juan Carlos, to succeed him, believing that a conservative monarchy was the best way of keeping Spain stable. When Franco died, Juan Carlos became king, and soon showed that he was in favour of a return to all-party democracy. The first free elections were held in 1977. Later, under the leadership of socialist Prime Minister Felipe González, Spain joined the European Community (January 1986). The economy seemed to be flourishing at first; tourism was a huge revenue earner, and during the early years of the twenty-first century there was a massive boom in house and property building. But following the great financial meltdown of 2008 (see Section 27.7) the euro-zone found itself in serious crisis; Spain's housing and property market collapsed, and Spain, along with Portugal, the Irish Republic and worst of all Greece, was left heavily in debt and needing help from the European Central Bank.

FURTHER READING

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QUESTIONS

- 1 How far would you agree that it was the world economic crisis which caused Japan to fall under military rule in the early 1930s?
- 2 'Japan's recovery after the Second World War was not without its associated problems.' How far do you agree with this view?
- 3 Explain what changes and problems were experienced by Japan in the years after 1990.
- 4 Assess the reasons for the outbreak of civil war in Spain in 1936.
- 5 How far would you agree that it was mainly help from outside that made the Nationalist victory in the Spanish Civil War possible?



There is a document question about the Spanish Civil War on the website.