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# **‘Anti-politics’, infrastructure policy and civil society mobilisations in Spain under the Primo de Rivera dictatorship (1923-1930)**

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## **Declaration**

I, Joel Baker, confirm that this thesis is my own work. I am aware of the University's Guidance on the Use of Unfair Means ([www.sheffield.ac.uk/ssid/unfair-means](http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/ssid/unfair-means)). This work has not been previously been presented for an award at this, or any other, university.

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## Abstract

During the early twentieth century, infrastructure development came to form an important policy agenda in public debate in Spain, influenced by 'regenerationist' thought that aimed to overcome the exclusionary politics of the Restoration era (1876-1923) through economic modernisation. The dictatorship of General Miguel Primo de Rivera (1923-1930) presented itself as the mechanism by which regenerationist hopes could be put into practice, using infrastructure investment to claim political legitimacy and developing an 'anti-political' populism that resonated with citizens who blamed 'professional politicians' for Spain's multiple crises during the early 1920s. This thesis examines public policy debate around infrastructure development during the 1920s, using this to explore the relationship between citizens and the Spanish state under Primo.

The regime's commitment to modernisation and condemnation of previous political elites drew regenerationist-minded citizens and civil-society campaigns into its ideological orbit. This provided it with a degree of initial support, although the failures of populist policy-making undermined the long-term viability of this support. The regenerationist policy agenda delineated a 'common good' that citizens imagined would improve their material conditions, making support for technocratic modernisation a tenet of 'good citizenship'. Civil society campaigns around infrastructure development reproduced regime discourses, reinforcing the cultural grip of regenerationist policy agendas. Moreover, developmentalist thinkers helped to provide a long-term socio-political vision for Spain's future that the regime initially lacked.

Civil society mobilisations that mediated the relationship between state and citizen under the less than democratic politics of the Restoration also offered a means of relating to the state as it was reshaped under Primo. These mobilisations coexisted with the dictatorship's attempts to 'nationalise the masses' and integrate citizens into state structures by imposing a conservative national identity through coercive institutions (Quiroga, 2007). Debates around infrastructure development created two-way, rather than top-down, interactions through which citizens identified with the *primorriverista* state.

## List of abbreviations

ACNP	<i>Asociación Nacional-Católica de Propagandistas</i> ; National-Catholic Association of Propagandists.
CFE	<i>Caja Ferroviaria del Estado</i> ; State Railway Fund.
CNT	<i>Confederación Nacional del Trabajo</i> ; National Confederation of Labour. Anarchist trade union confederation.
CRCF	<i>Construcciones Rapid Cem Fer</i> . A private company charged with building affordable homes in Zaragoza, whose bankruptcy significantly delayed the project.
CSFC	<i>Consejo Superior de Ferrocarriles</i> ; Railway Oversight Council.
CSH	<i>Confederación Sindical Hidrográfica</i> ; Syndical Hydrographic Confederation.
CSHE	<i>Confederación Sindical Hidrográfica del Ebro</i> ; CSH of the Ebro.
ILE	<i>Institución Libre de Enseñanza</i> . A group of liberal educationalists.
IRS	<i>Instituto de Reformas Sociales</i> ; Social Reform Institute.
MZA	Madrid to Zaragoza and Alicante railway company.
PSOE	<i>Partido Socialista Obrero Español</i> ; Spanish Socialist Workers' Party.
SZUC	<i>Sociedad Zaragozana de Urbanización y Construcción</i> ; Zaragoza Urbanisation and Construction Company. Company set up by landowners in Zaragoza to construct affordable housing.
UGT	<i>Unión General de Trabajadores</i> ; General Union of Workers. Socialist trade union confederation.
UP	<i>Unión Patriótica</i> ; Patriotic Union. Single party or 'league of citizens' formed by the Primo dictatorship.
URA	<i>Unión Regionalista Aragonesa</i> ; Aragonese Regionalist Union.



## Introduction

During the autumn of 1928, the dictatorship of General Miguel Primo de Rivera celebrated five years since the general's 13 September 1923 coup, which had led to his taking over the government of Spain at the head of a euphemistically termed 'Military Directorate' (*Directorio Militar*) two days later. In a 'manifesto' issued to mark the anniversary, Primo de Rivera looked forward to what he hoped the next five years would hold for Spain.<sup>1</sup> He predicted a country 'traversed by good roads and railways, tourist and trade routes', 'abundant, luxurious fields fertilised by the exploitation of the [country's] waters' and municipal works that would allow 'even the most modest village [to] satisfy human needs'. If the country did not 'deviate from the trajectory we are following' and continued to 'use well ... with the effort, intelligence and activity of men, the treasures that nature offers us', Spain could become 'a true emporium of material wealth'.<sup>2</sup> The dictator saw such material development as an indispensable part of his programme. In a letter nominally addressed to the head of the *Unión Patriótica* (the single party or, in Primo's terms, 'league of citizens' that the regime had founded) but published for general consumption, he stated that 'the multiplication of cheap and affordable homes' and 'the tenacious and diligent pursuit of public works' were among the components of the movement's doctrine.<sup>3</sup> Press outlets friendly to the regime echoed this language. In an editorial of 10 October, *La Nación* praised the dictatorship for the construction of 'local roads [*caminos vecinales*] on an unprecedented scale', 'a real-terms increase in the construction of affordable homes', the 'enormous extension of irrigation', 'the

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<sup>1</sup> Miguel Primo de Rivera, *Del general Primo de Rivera: Documentos originales y artículos inspirados por él* (Madrid, 1928), pp. 11-20.

<sup>2</sup> Primo de Rivera, *Del general Primo de Rivera*, p. 18

<sup>3</sup> Reproduced in Primo de Rivera, *Del general Primo de Rivera*, pp. 2-3.

construction and repair of highways that were previously impassable and are now good tourist routes’, and ‘the funding and execution of various important railways’.<sup>4</sup>

These successes were ascribed to the rupture with constitutional politics in 1923.

Primo stated that ‘Spain has chosen ... the path of tranquillity and prosperity, that the anxieties, passions and pessimisms of yesterday did not allow it to see’. ‘After suffering ... so many disasters and obstacles in the past’, the country was now ‘crafting a decorous inheritance [for] future generations’.<sup>5</sup> *La Nación* asked rhetorically if this was not ‘worth a small loss of the freedom to play politics’, suggesting that ‘politics’ before the 1923 coup had been ‘sinister and corrupting’ and that banishing it ‘for a decade’ would be reasonable.<sup>6</sup> Restrictions on political freedom were taken to contribute to—and be compensated by—increased prosperity.

This relationship between infrastructure policy, Spanish citizens’ perception of ‘politics’ and their relationship with the state during the 1920s is the subject of this thesis. Infrastructure policy was not only associated with economic development. Debates around the subject affected and were influenced by citizens’ interpretations of the Restoration period (1875-1923) and of Primo’s self-presentation as a ruler who would correct the ‘disasters and obstacles’ associated with the previous order to create a more prosperous society and stable political community. Public works and modernisation played an important role in projects to reshape Spain’s society and politics, whether devised by government figures or by citizens. These projects informed the ways in which citizens and state negotiated their relationship in the period, even if hopes for greater material wellbeing based on a rupture with ‘the old politics’ were frequently disappointed. Indeed, citizens’ engagement with the state on

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<sup>4</sup> *La Nación*, 10/10/1928, p. 1.

<sup>5</sup> Primo de Rivera, *Del general Primo de Rivera*, p. 19.

<sup>6</sup> *La Nación*, 10/10/1928, p. 1

these matters frequently reflected embedded modes of political action inherited from the oligarchical system of the constitutional monarchy. The experience of a parliamentary system perceived as unrepresentative of most citizens, and its replacement with a military dictatorship, shaped the methods and organisation that citizens used in attempts to influence policy. The forms of political engagement that emerged as a result elucidate how Spaniards understood, experienced and related to the state during the country's turbulent early twentieth century.

### **Crisis, regenerationism and modernisation**

The desire for a break with the 'old politics' was a result of the multiple social, economic, political, military and moral crises that afflicted Spain during the first decades of the twentieth century. In 1898, the country had lost the last of its overseas colonial possessions—the Philippines, Cuba and Puerto Rico—following a humiliating defeat in the Spanish-American War.<sup>7</sup> The psychological shock for a country that had once controlled the world's largest empire was immense. To a great extent, the defeat could be ascribed to Spain's being, as Práxedes Sagasta observed in 1903, 'a poor country' unable to match the military strength of a more industrialised nation like the United States.<sup>8</sup> However, the 'Disaster' exacerbated a broad, pre-existing cultural pessimism and introspection resulting from perceived national decline, 'decadence' and 'degeneration'. Cultural production presented Spanish provincial life as benighted, inert, backward and cruel.<sup>9</sup> Cultural pessimism was intertwined with a crisis of political legitimacy for the governing structures of the Restoration monarchy. Since the promulgation of the 1876 constitution, the dynastic

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<sup>7</sup> Sebastian Balfour, *The End of the Spanish Empire, 1898–1923* (Oxford, 1997), pp. 11–48.

<sup>8</sup> Cited in Mary Vincent, *Spain 1833–2002: People and State* (Oxford, 2007), p. 87.

<sup>9</sup> Vincent, *People and State*, pp. 82–87; Joseph Harrison and Alan Hoyle (eds), *Spain's 1898 Crisis: Regenerationism, Modernism and Post-Colonialism* (Manchester / New York, 2000).

Liberal and Conservative parties had alternated in power under the so-called *turno pacífico*, with electoral results being fraudulently engineered to reflect the balance of power in Madrid.<sup>10</sup> The system was underpinned by *caciques*, local or provincial oligarchs and political strongmen who controlled patronage networks that facilitated corrupt electoral practices and controlled political access for citizens.<sup>11</sup> As Mary Vincent observes, these governing structures were ‘genuinely representative of those within [them]’, explaining their resilience even in the face of the debacle of 1898.<sup>12</sup> However, they excluded the majority of Spanish citizens, and a system based on graft, patronage and pork-barrel politics was a clear target for the criticisms of ‘regenerationist’ thinkers attempting to identify the ‘problem of Spain’ and reverse national decline.

One of the most renowned of these thinkers was Joaquín Costa, whose *Oligarquía y caciquismo como la forma actual de gobierno en España* (Oligarchy and Caciquismo as the Current Form of Government in Spain) exerted considerable influence on the ‘Generation of 1898’ of regenerationist writers and thinkers, who sought to define the fundamental national problems that had brought Spain low in 1898, and propose solutions.<sup>13</sup> Costa argued that *caciquismo* prevented Spain from being ‘free and sovereign’, that elections were meaningless, and that ‘there are no parties or Parliament, only oligarchies’. Spain was subject to ‘government by the worst’ and suffered the same ‘backwardness’ in the field of politics as Costa asserted it did in industry and science when compared to the rest of Europe. Spain’s

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<sup>10</sup> Paul Preston, *A People Betrayed: A History of Corruption, Political Incompetence and Social Division in Modern Spain 1874-2018* (London, 2020), pp. 18-30; Vincent, *People and State*, pp. 72-78; Raymond Carr, *Spain 1808-1975* (2<sup>nd</sup> edn, Oxford, 1982), pp. 366-379.

<sup>11</sup> Francisco J. Romero Salvadó, *The Foundations of Civil War: Revolution, Social Conflict and Reaction in Liberal Spain, 1916-1923* (2<sup>nd</sup> edn, Abingdon / New York, 2016), pp. 5-7.

<sup>12</sup> Vincent, *People and State*, p. 87.

<sup>13</sup> Joaquín Costa y Martínez, *Oligarquía y caciquismo como la forma actual de gobierno en España: Urgencia y modo de cambiarla* (Madrid, 1902).

government was not only thoroughly corrupt, but this corruption also led to a ‘social state of barbarism’ and ‘the passivity of the people’; *caciquismo* was immoral in itself and threatened the moral health of Spain’s ordinary citizens. The country required ‘very rapid’ (*sumarísima*) political action to ‘liquidate our past’, ‘renew our political personnel’ and provide ‘a new orientation and new ideal for the present and the future’.<sup>14</sup>

The solutions that Costa proposed were simultaneously authoritarian, modernising and technocratic. Spain required ‘surgical politics’, implemented by an ‘iron surgeon who knows the anatomy of the Spanish people and has infinite compassion for them’, who would cut the corruption from the body politic and ‘transfuse fresh blood’ into it.<sup>15</sup> Although he would later deny that the ‘iron surgeon’ would necessarily be a dictator, the principal distinction was that Costa did not support this leader arrogating the powers of the judiciary to himself. The iron surgeon was certainly an authoritarian figure, taking ‘personal charge’ of transformative policies and acting rapidly using executive power unfettered by a parliamentary regime that Costa damned as ‘incompatible with the necessary politics’. Although the eventual objective of ‘surgical politics’ should be to render parliamentary government possible in Spain (to ‘Europeanise’ the country, as *costistas* had it), this could only occur through ‘a revolution from power’ relying on a strong executive and a ‘presidential regime’. The models with which Costa illustrated how the iron surgeon’s regime should function—the dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz in Mexico, the leadership of Iwakura Tomomi in Meiji Japan, Otto von Bismarck, Oliver Cromwell and Peter the Great—were telling of the authoritarianism of the idea.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Costa, *Oligarquía y caciquismo*, pp. 20-27, 41-44, 62-68, 84, 110-113.

<sup>15</sup> Costa, *Oligarquía y caciquismo*, p. 86.

<sup>16</sup> Costa, *Oligarquía y caciquismo*, pp. 88-93, 103-111, 168-177, 218-238.

Beyond the ‘surgical’ removal of *caciquismo* and the ‘liquidation’ of oligarchical rule, Costa also promoted a modernising social and economic programme that he referred to as ‘hydraulic politics’ (*política hidráulica*).<sup>17</sup> As the name suggested, this rested on an expansion of irrigated agriculture, a development that Costa believed would begin to set Spain on a comparable economic, social and political footing to its European neighbours.<sup>18</sup> Other strands of regenerationist thought focused on achieving national ‘renewal’ through the formation of new elites capable of instituting their particular visions of Spain’s future.<sup>19</sup> A liberal, progressive movement that aimed to modernise and ‘Europeanise’ Spain coalesced around the *Institución Libre de Enseñanza*, founded by the Krausist educationalist Francisco Giner de los Ríos. Another, opposed project found inspiration in an idealised reading of Spain’s past and the rule of the ‘Catholic monarchs’ (*reyes católicos*), Isabella I of Castile and Ferdinand II of Aragon. In this view, regeneration required a renewal of Catholic faith and morals in Spanish society. Alumni of the private Jesuit university at Deusto played a fundamental role in the establishment of the *Asociación Nacional-Católica de Propagandistas* (National-Catholic Association of Propagandists; ACNP). ACNP members came to hold important positions in politics and in social-Catholic organisations, through which they aimed to regenerate Spain through ‘the restoration of Catholic morals and renewed religious faith’.<sup>20</sup> Costa’s vision of national regeneration, however, included a significant component of material development that privileged large-scale, state-driven public works. Where the ILE and the ACNP put their trust in new elites, for Costa it was the benefits of economic,

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<sup>17</sup> Costa, *Política hidráulica (Misión social de los riegos en España)* (Madrid, 1911), consulted online via Biblioteca Virtual Miguel de Cervantes, [http://www.cervantesvirtual.com/obra-visor/politica-hidraulica-mision-social-de-los-riegos-en-espana--0/html/fe3a3e80-82b1-11df-acc7-002185ce6064\\_4.html#I\\_o\\_](http://www.cervantesvirtual.com/obra-visor/politica-hidraulica-mision-social-de-los-riegos-en-espana--0/html/fe3a3e80-82b1-11df-acc7-002185ce6064_4.html#I_o_) [accessed 16/2/2021].

<sup>18</sup> Costa, *Oligarquía y caciquismo*, pp. 256-264.

<sup>19</sup> Balfour, *The End of the Spanish Empire*, pp. 64-91.

<sup>20</sup> Vincent, *People and State*, pp. 89-91.

and especially rural, modernisation that would produce the moral regeneration of Spain's political community.

Costa's focus on agricultural development through expanding irrigation was founded on the experience of his native Huesca province, the often drought-afflicted highlands of Aragon. As well as increasing food production, he preached the importance of education for improving the moral and intellectual health of the nation, and making it fit for 'self-government'.<sup>21</sup> Speaking from Upper Aragon's bitter experience, he insisted that realising such a project required an expansion of state power. Private initiative had proved incapable of providing the development and modernisation that Spain required to 'become European', so *política hidráulica* must be implemented by the government, with the iron surgeon's excision of *caciquismo* making this possible. Moreover, these policies required a technocratic relationship between state and individuals. It was useless for farmers to be provided with irrigation if they did not 'know how to make rational use' of it. Engineers employed by the state would provide education to ensure 'rational use'.<sup>22</sup> Modernisation was inextricably linked to extirpating 'the old politics', and achieving this required increased state power and involvement in Spaniards' lives.

### **Ongoing crisis**

The first two decades of the twentieth century brought Spain further economic, political and military crises. Spain remained neutral during the First World War, but did not escape all of the conflict's negative effects. Disruption to global trade led to inflation in the price of staple goods and a cost-of-living crisis for the country's least

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<sup>21</sup> Costa, *Oligarquía y caciquismo*, p. 80, 256-264.

<sup>22</sup> Costa, *Política hidráulica*, ch. 3, ch. 10. As the online version of the text is not paginated, I will refer to chapters and, where relevant, section.

well-off citizens. Neutrality and the ability to supply both sides of the war led to increased profits for some, most notably industrialists in the Basque metalworking and Catalan textiles sectors.<sup>23</sup> However, these economic benefits did not translate into wages that kept up with inflation for workers in these regions, and as construction materials became scarcer and more expensive, housing shortages in expanding urban centres became more and more acute.<sup>24</sup> The 1917 revolutions in Russia alarmed the ruling classes as much as they elated anarchists and socialists. In 1917, the anarchist and socialist trade union movements declared a joint, national general strike.<sup>25</sup> This hastily arranged attempt was easily crushed by the forces of law and order, establishing a pattern of increasing labour unrest being met by violent repression on the part of state authorities. Social conflict spread to the Andalusian countryside in what became known as the ‘Bolshevik Triennium’ from 1918 to 1920, leading to frequent declarations of martial law.<sup>26</sup> In Barcelona, anarchist agitation was countered by the blackleg *Sindicatos Libres*, which also employed gunmen to target left-wing trade unionists.<sup>27</sup> In 1920, the newly appointed civil governor of Barcelona province, General Severiano Martínez Anido, reinstated the *Ley de fugas*, providing for the extra-judicial shooting of prisoners supposedly ‘trying to escape’.

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<sup>23</sup> Balfour, *The End of the Spanish Empire*, pp. 211-212.

<sup>24</sup> Romero Salvadó, ‘Spain’s Revolutionary Crisis of 1917: A Reckless Gamble’ in Francisco J. Romero Salvadó and Angel Smith (eds), *The Agony of Spanish Liberalism: From Revolution to Dictatorship, 1913–23* (Basingstoke, 2010), p. 64-66; *The Foundations of Civil War*, pp. 67-92.

<sup>25</sup> Romero Salvadó, ‘A Reckless Gamble’, pp. 62-91; Carolyn Boyd, *Praetorian Politics in Liberal Spain* (Chapel Hill, 1979), pp. 69-93; Balfour, *The End of the Spanish Empire*, pp. 218-219.

<sup>26</sup> Francisco Cobo Romero, ‘“The Red Dawn” of the Andalusian Countryside: Peasant Protest during the “Bolshevik Triennium”, 1918-1920’ in Romero Salvadó and Smith (eds), *The Agony of Spanish Liberalism*, pp. 121-144; Gerald H. Meaker, *The Revolutionary Left in Spain, 1914-1923* (Stanford, 1974), pp. 133-145; Boyd, *Praetorian Politics*, pp. 114-159; Francisco Acosta (ed.), *La aurora de los rojos dedos: El Trienio Bolchvique desde el Sur de España* (Granada, 2019); Juan Díaz del Moral, *Historia de las agitaciones campesinas andaluzas – Córdoba (Antecedentes para una reforma agraria)* (3<sup>rd</sup> Alianza Universidad edn, Madrid, 1979); Romero Salvadó, *The Foundations of Civil War*, pp. 149-184.

<sup>27</sup> Romero Salvadó, ‘“Si Vis Pacem Para Bellum”: The Catalan Employers’ Dirty War, 1919–23’ in Romero Salvadó and Smith (eds), *The Agony of Spanish Liberalism*, pp. 175-201; *The Foundations of Civil War*, pp. 211-236; Colin M. Winston, *Workers and the Right in Spain, 1900–1936* (Princeton, 1985), pp. 108-170; ‘The Proletarian Carlist Road to Fascism: Sindicalismo Libre’, *Journal of Contemporary History* 17.4 (1982), pp. 557-585; Balfour, *The End of the Spanish Empire*, p. 223.



Such severely repressive measures only served to illustrate the overall weakness and instability of Spain's governments in this period—the country had thirty-four governments between 1902 and 1923—and their inability to incorporate the majority of citizens into the social and political structures of the Spanish state.<sup>28</sup>

Despite its importance in meting out repressive violence, the place of the army within the Spanish state was also problematic.<sup>29</sup> The nineteenth century had seen numerous *pronunciamientos*, 'pronouncements' by senior army officers that often precipitated the fall of the government of the day.<sup>30</sup> The sense that the army's officer corps considered itself above civilian rule was confirmed in 1905, when the premises of the Catalan satirical magazine *CuCut!* were attacked by a group of officers who objected to a cartoon that they considered insulting to the military. The response of the government was to pass a 'Law of Jurisdictions', which made insults to the military subject to court martial, even when committed by civilians.<sup>31</sup> Disputes around soldiers' pay contributed to the public-order crisis of 1917, although the army quickly realigned with the government when its demands were fulfilled.<sup>32</sup> An unpopular colonial war in Morocco that had commenced in 1909 rumbled on, causing continued public resentment of conscription.<sup>33</sup> In July 1921, Spanish positions at Annual in eastern Morocco came under attack by Riffian forces, and an attempted fighting withdrawal degenerated into a disorderly rout. Over the course of two-and-a-half

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<sup>28</sup> Vincent, *People and State*, p. 106.

<sup>29</sup> For an overview of the political role of the military between 1898 and 1923, see Balfour, *The End of the Spanish Empire*, pp. 164-187.

<sup>30</sup> Boyd, *Praetorian Politics*, pp. 4-9; Vincent, *People and State*, pp. 33-36.

<sup>31</sup> Boyd, *Praetorian Politics*, pp. 12-15; Vincent, *People and State*, p. 101; Sebastian Balfour, 'The Making of an Interventionist Army: 1898-1923' in Romero Salvadó and Smith (eds), *The Agony of Spanish Liberalism*, pp. 261-262; Preston, *A People Betrayed*, pp. 65-66; Joaquín Romero Maura, *The Spanish Army and Catalonia: The 'CuCut Incident' and the Law of Jurisdictions, 1905-1906* (London, 1977); María Socorro Arroyo, 'Política y periodismo: La caricatura de *iCu-Cut!*, desencadenante de la ley de jurisdicciones', *Documentación de las Ciencias de la Información* 13 (1990), pp. 11-21; Balfour, *The End of the Spanish Empire*, p.

<sup>32</sup> Boyd, *Praetorian Politics*, pp. 44-93; Vincent, *People and State*, p. 105.

<sup>33</sup> Balfour, *The End of the Spanish Empire*, pp. 92-131.

weeks, Spanish positions collapsed one after another, and more than 8,000 soldiers were killed.<sup>34</sup> Senior army commanders perceived subsequent parliamentary investigations into the ‘responsibilities’ for this debacle as an attack on their profession. Meanwhile, internal disagreements regarding promotions based on battlefield service in Morocco set the *africanista* and *peninsular* segments of the army—those who fought in Morocco and those who remained on garrison duty in mainland Spain—at loggerheads with each other and with the government.<sup>35</sup>

A further issue undermining the stability of the Spanish state was that of Catalan nationalism.<sup>36</sup> A sense of cultural and linguistic distinctiveness had developed in both Catalonia and the Basque Country during the late nineteenth century, and regionalist political parties were formed in both of these more heavily industrialised regions during the early years of the twentieth century.<sup>37</sup> Increasing agitation by groups that challenged Spanish national unity was anathema to the army officer corps. Simultaneously, the question of Catalan autonomy was a polarising one in the *Cortes* (parliament), destabilising the government of the Count of Romanones as it attempted to reach a compromise position during the winter of 1918-1919.<sup>38</sup>

### **Primo de Rivera’s coup**

During the summer of 1923, these different challenges combined. In June, a transport strike was declared in Barcelona in protest at the dismissal of workers.

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<sup>34</sup> Boyd, *Praetorian Politics*, pp. 179-182; Romero Salvadó and Smith, ‘The Agony of Spanish Liberalism and the Origins of Dictatorship: A European Framework’ in Romero Salvadó and Smith (eds), *The Agony of Spanish Liberalism*, p. 22; Pablo La Porte, ‘The Moroccan Quagmire and the Crisis of Spain’s Liberal System’ in Romero Salvadó and Smith (eds), *The Agony of Spanish Liberalism*, pp. 230-254; Eduardo González Calleja, *La España de Primo de Rivera: La modernización autoritaria* (Madrid, 2005), pp. 31-34; Romero Salvadó, *The Foundations of Civil War*, pp. 237-247.

<sup>35</sup> Boyd, *Praetorian Politics*, pp. 183-235.

<sup>36</sup> See Romero Salvadó, *The Foundations of Civil War*, pp. 93-122.

<sup>37</sup> Balfour, *The End of the Spanish Empire*, pp. 132-165.

<sup>38</sup> Boyd, *Praetorian Politics*, pp. 117-121.

General Miguel Primo de Rivera, Captain-General of Catalonia, was involved in attempts to mediate between employers and striking workers, but ordered arrests for ‘sedition’ on 28 June when the strikes resumed. During the same month, the *Cortes* began debating the question of ‘responsibilities’ for the Annual disaster, resulting in the indictment of General Dámaso Berenguer, High Commissioner in Morocco at the time of the rout. In a visit to Madrid, Primo began plotting a coup with other senior generals, and was given tacit royal support when King Alfonso XIII opined in a speech on 26 June that dictatorship might be admissible in ‘moments of extraordinary gravity’ where parliamentary governments appeared unable to represent the popular will.<sup>39</sup> On 11 September, Catalonia’s national day, regional nationalists from Catalonia, the Basque Country and Galicia gathered in Barcelona, demanding autonomy for the three regions. This alarmed military authoritarians, and the planned coup was brought forward. In the early hours of 13 September 1923, Primo declared martial law in the city and issued a ‘manifesto to the country and the army’.<sup>40</sup> Although some declared themselves willing to resist the rebellion in arms, most of the army’s senior officers indicated they would await the king’s orders. On 14 September, Alfonso invited Primo to form a government. Primo arrived in Madrid the following day to become the president of the new ‘Military Directorate’.<sup>41</sup>

Primo’s ‘manifesto’ justified his coup not only in terms of defending public order, but also in populist terms that resonated with the regenerationist thought and disillusionment with the political elites and crisis-ridden political system of the time.

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<sup>39</sup> Boyd, *Praetorian Politics*, pp. 251-258.

<sup>40</sup> Leandro Álvarez Rey (ed.). *Bajo el fuero militar: La Dictadura de Primo de Rivera en sus documentos (1923-1930)* (Seville, 2006), pp. 56-60.

<sup>41</sup> Boyd, *Praetorian Politics*, pp. 262-273; Alejandro Quiroga, *Making Spaniards: Primo de Rivera and the Nationalization of the Masses, 1923-30* (Basingstoke, 2007), pp. 32-35; Javier Tusell, *Historia de España en el siglo XX, tomo 1. Del 98 a la proclamación de la República* (2<sup>nd</sup> edn, Madrid, 2007), pp. 443-450; González Calleja, *Modernización autoritaria*, pp. 37-50.

He characterised the plotters as ‘those who, loving the *Patria*, see no other solution than to liberate it from professional politicians’, whom he blamed for ‘the immoralities that began in 1898 and threaten Spain with a tragic and dishonourable end’.<sup>42</sup> He damned the politics of the *turno pacífico*, through which politicians ‘divide the spoils and designate the succession themselves’. The general asserted that ‘we do not have to justify our action, which the healthy people [*pueblo sano*] demands and imposes’. The manifesto suggested a clear division between the ‘healthy people’ and the country’s political elites; ‘politics’ corrupted the moral health of the nation, and in its current iteration was antithetical to patriotism.

In a long list of ills affecting Spain, Primo included issues of economic malaise, social disorder, and immorality in public life: the depreciation of the peseta, ‘social indiscipline that makes ... agricultural and industrial production precarious and ruinous’, ‘unchecked communist propaganda’, ‘political influences on the administration of justice’, and ‘shameless separatist propaganda’. He thus presented economic, moral and political problems as intertwined, and implied that they required holistic solutions. This notion reflected Costa’s brand of regenerationism, which recommended ‘surgical politics’ both to drive immorality from Spain’s public administration and to accelerate economic development, which in turn would contribute to the moral regeneration of the nation as a whole. Primo called on ‘all good citizens’ to support the government in providing ‘rapid and radical remedies’ to these challenges. The general hoped that Spain would ‘soon offer us upright, wise, hard-working and honest men’ to return the country to civilian rule. He declared that a necessary precondition for this was to ‘throw the ministers out of the window’, in a

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<sup>42</sup> Álvarez Rey (ed.). *Bajo el fuero militar*, p. 57.

formulation that associated his mission with that of Costa's iron surgeon.<sup>43</sup> Drawing a sharp distinction with the incompetence and venality of the Restoration, Primo's manifesto promised a 'quick, dignified and sensible solution' to war in Morocco and insisted that the coup had not been made out of self-interest. The plotters felt 'no other ambition than to serve Spain'. Indeed, it would not even be just to suggest that they had 'conspired'. Instead, they had merely 'brought together ... popular anxiety and given it a degree of organisation, channelling it towards a patriotic goal devoid of [personal] ambitions'.<sup>44</sup>

### **Conceptualising 'anti-politics' and populism**

The ideas synthesised in Primo's manifesto typified a loose constellation of ideas that exercised significant influence on the regime and was found more broadly in Spanish society during the 1920s. These reflected an opposition to all that was identified as 'political', meaning both the *caciquil* workings of the *turno pacífico* and left-wing mobilisations. 'Anti-politics' was a malleable idiom and hence useful or appealing in different manners to different groups of Spanish citizens, as will be demonstrated throughout the substantive chapter of this thesis.<sup>45</sup> As an idiom, 'anti-politics' had

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<sup>43</sup> Quoted in Ben-Ami, *Fascism from Above*, p. 64.

<sup>44</sup> Álvarez Rey (ed.), *Bajo el fuero militar*, pp. 58-59.

<sup>45</sup> The notion of 'anti-politics' will be familiar to development scholars from James Ferguson's study of international development programmes in Lesotho during the 1970s and 1980s, *The Anti-Politics Machine*. Ferguson argues that development professionals viewed Basotho society merely as a series of technical challenges to be overcome in order to secure economic growth, and thus overlooked the fundamentally political nature of their aims, and of the extension of state power through their projects; James Ferguson, *The Anti-Politics Machine: 'Development', Depoliticization and Bureaucratic Power in Lesotho* (Minneapolis / London, 1990). This understanding of 'anti-politics' can be useful in examining public works and infrastructure development under Primo de Rivera, especially in understanding how government-employed technocrats conceptualised ideal relations between the state and Spanish citizens. However, *primorriverista* anti-politics, as I use the term in this thesis, was characterised less by political primacy for technocrats than it was by a sweeping repudiation of the *caciquil* politics of the *turno pacífico* and a rejection of left-wing political ideologies. Replacing these with right-wing patriotism justified Primo's coup and the power of the military men—rather than engineers—who controlled Spain's government from 1923 to 1930. On *primorriverista* 'anti-politics', see Alejandro Quiroga, *Los orígenes del nacionalcatolicismo: José Pemartín y la Dictadura de Primo de Rivera* (Granada, 2006), pp. 61-73, 80-90; Ramón Tamames, *Ni Mussolini ni Franco: La dictadura de Primo de Rivera y su tiempo* (Barcelona, 2008), 205-223, especially pp. 208-209.

four key features. Anti-political thought condemned Restoration political elites as corrupt; it denounced the ‘doctrinaire’ ideas of liberalism, republicanism and left-wing ideologies; it suggested that such ‘political’ ideas should be replaced by patriotism and a pursuit of a supposedly monolithic national good; and from 1923 it identified Primo de Rivera as the ‘iron surgeon’ who would implement this agenda.

Anti-politics rejected party politics as synonymous with *caciquismo*, and thus sweepingly denounced the politicians of the *turno pacífico* as corrupt and self-serving. This generalised disdain for politicians was well established by 1923. In the months preceding Primo’s coup, a campaign against a *cacique* in Almería province had organised under the slogan ‘Almería without members of parliament!’ (*iAlmería sin diputados!*).<sup>46</sup>

Primo’s determination to ‘liberate Spain from professional politicians’ thus responded to and reinforced regenerationist criticisms of the Restoration system, and the low opinion in which much of the population held politicians in 1923.<sup>47</sup> As Alejandro Quiroga observes, ‘regenerationist topics and vocabulary had penetrated deep into the Spanish consciousness, most notably among the middle classes, and the popularization of these ideas as expressed in Primo’s manifesto had a large potential audience’.<sup>48</sup> The familiarity and popularity of ‘anti-political’ discourse helped secure initial public acceptance of the dictatorship, particularly as it could be deployed by private citizens, regenerationist civil society movements, the national and regional press and the national government. Primo’s regime continued to use

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<sup>46</sup> Pedro Martínez Gómez, *La dictadura de Primo de Rivera en Almería (1923-1930). Entre el continuismo y la modernización* (Almería, 2007), p. 12.

<sup>47</sup> Álvarez Rey (ed.), *Bajo el fuero militar*, p. 57.

<sup>48</sup> Quiroga, *Making Spaniards*, p. 36. The considerable power that regenerationist ideas and tropes held during the dictatorship is aptly demonstrated by the fact that they were sufficiently familiar to be used in advertising. One manufacturer of health tonics, for example, advertised its wares as ‘the great national reconstituent’, echoing the regenerationist obsession with ‘national reconstitution’; see e.g. *Heraldo de Aragón*, 18/4/1925, p. 5.

this rejection of ‘politics’ to legitimise its actions and institutions throughout the rest of its course. For instance, Primo de Rivera’s letter of 22 September 1928 to José Gabilán (Chair of the National Executive Committee of the *Unión Patriótica*), cited at the start of this introduction, stated that the UP was ‘not a political party but a league of citizens. It abhors political—which is to say *caciquil*—organisations and procedures, and repudiates the doctrines, fictions and compromises of politics’.<sup>49</sup>

As well as abhorring politicians and *caciquismo*, *primorriverista* ‘anti-politics’ aimed to replace commitment to political ideologies—especially the left-wing and regionalist worldviews associated with ‘disorder’ in Primo’s manifesto—with a right-wing, authoritarian brand of patriotism. However implausibly, the dictatorship claimed to be ‘not a class-based government, but a truly national one, “for Spain and for the Spanish”’.<sup>50</sup> The *Unión Patriótica*, founded in 1924 to organise support for the dictatorship, presented itself as an ‘anti-party’ or an ‘apolitical’ party, allegedly organising ‘all Spaniards of good will’ around a love of Spain, the monarchy and the Catholic religion rather than political dogma.<sup>51</sup> This was, of course, a profoundly political programme, yet regime discourse coded this value system as apolitical by dint of its being pursued outside dynastic, Marxist, regionalist or republican political parties. This rejection of party politics legitimised an active role for civil society

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<sup>49</sup> Primo de Rivera, *Del general Primo de Rivera*, p. 1.

<sup>50</sup> Primo de Rivera, *Del general Primo de Rivera*, pp. 1, 7.

<sup>51</sup> Carr, *Spain 1808-1975*, p. 576; Vincent, *People and State*, p. 114; Tamames, *Ni Mussolini ni Franco*, pp. 205-209; González Calleja, *Modernización autoritaria*, pp. 179-200. For Tamames, although the dictatorship could have used the UP to build a firm basis of power in much the same way as Mussolini used the National Fascist Party, its national organisation was rather weak, and even after December 1925 did little to transcend the largely provincial, ‘provisional’ organisation of its early days. González Calleja also concludes that the UP showed marked differences with the political organisations promoted by Mussolini and Franco, although with a different line of reasoning. He argues for an interpretation in which the dictator and regime ideologues were much more active in attempting to strengthen the UP from late 1925 onwards. The Union functioned as a species of ‘macroparty’ more than an ‘anti-party’, uniting a wide range of conservative interests. However, it had little in the way of clear doctrine beyond ‘a basic conservatism with shades of corporatism, anti-parliamentarism and authoritarianism’. Like the parties of other monarchical dictatorships, for example in Poland, Portugal and the Balkans, it was fundamentally controlled from above to protect the power of the dictatorship, and not organised from below to take power in the manner of Italian Fascism.

mobilisations in campaigning for particular policy measures. 'Civil society' is used here in an expansive sense, covering both formal organisations such as employers' associations or housing cooperatives, and looser coalitions of local, regional or corporate interests. These groups mobilised citizens to campaign for particular policy measures based on their socio-economic interests, but without seeking political office or advancing a party-political analysis beyond regime-endorsed notions of national reconstruction.

Indeed, the alleged rejection of class politics and its replacement with an authoritarian mode of patriotism meant that Primo's 'anti-politics' assumed the *true* national interest (as opposed to a vision distorted by party-political ideologies) to be singular and monolithic, and to serve the good of all Spaniards. Moreover, the notion that the pursuit of a shared national good was the only legitimate motivation for political action meant that groups campaigning for particular government interventions in infrastructure development could obscure self-interest by framing their requests in terms of the national good. Debates around infrastructure development often demonstrated the tensions that these notions inevitably produced. Moreover, the idea that there was a single, objectively determinable 'national good' that government ought to pursue helped to underpin the legitimacy of technocratic policy-making, increasing the power of state-employed technicians and broadly regenerationist and conservative engineers friendly to the regime.

'Anti-political' thought in Spain under Primo de Rivera both informed and was reinforced by the populist style in which the general was presented by regime propaganda, as Costa's 'iron surgeon' and thus the supposed saviour of the Spanish nation. As Quiroga argues, regime propaganda and ceremonial pursued the 'charismatic construction' of a personality cult around Primo, who was presented as



‘the saviour of the *Patria*’, similarly to Miklós von Horthy in Hungary, Benito Mussolini in Italy, or Józef Piłsudski in Poland.<sup>52</sup> Although less successful than the Italian dictator in building a durable political base, Primo’s dictatorship drew on the appeal of anti-political and regenerationist ideas, especially among middle-class Spaniards, to legitimise the 1923 coup and to promote the image of a perceptive and physically strong leader contributing to the reconstruction of a nation laid low by ‘politics’. Spaniards who had developed a regenerationist, anti-political analysis of the country’s ills over preceding decades were encouraged to view Primo as the protector of their interests against ‘political’ elites. As this thesis will argue, this populist and anti-political discourse found a receptive audience in 1923, although the limitations of the dictatorship’s actions in areas such as infrastructure policy made it more difficult to retain the support that it inspired in the longer term.

As suggested above, *primorriverista* ‘anti-politics’ was a populist current of thought. ‘Populism’ is a diffuse concept, and attempting to define it has given rise to a considerable body of political-science literature, much of which is influenced by the rise of anti-establishment and often xenophobic political movements in Europe and North America since the 2008 financial crisis, or by anti-oligarchical politics in Latin America.<sup>53</sup> Cas Mudde and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser note that ‘agreement is

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<sup>52</sup> Alejandro Quiroga, ‘Cirujano de Hierro. La construcción carismática del general Primo de Rivera’, *Ayer* 91.3 (2013), pp. 147-168.

<sup>53</sup> See e.g. Rogers Brubaker, ‘Populism and Nationalism’, *Nations and Nationalism* 26.1 (2020), pp. 44-66; Kirk A. Hawkins and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser, ‘The Ideational Approach to Populism’, *Latin America Research Review* 52.4 (2017), pp. 513-528; Oran Doyle, Erik Longo and Andrea Pin, ‘Populism: A Health Check for Constitutional Democracy?’, *German Law Journal* 20 (2019), pp. 401-407; Cas Mudde and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser, *Populism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford, 2017); ‘Exclusionary vs. Inclusionary Populism: Comparing Contemporary Europe and Latin America’, *Government and Opposition* 48.2 (2013), pp. 147-174; Claudia Alvares and Peter Dahlgren, ‘Populism, Extremism and Media: Mapping an Uncertain Terrain’, *European Journal of Communication* 3.1 (2016), pp. 46-57; Ernesto Laclau, *On Populist Reason* (London / Brooklyn, 2005); Aníbal F. Gauna, ‘Explaining Populism Beyond Laclau: A Historical-Comparative Assessment of *On Populist Reason*’, *Thesis Eleven* 140.1 (2017), pp. 38-55; Colin Arnold, ‘Regrounding Populism: Moving Beyond Questions of Definition and Content’, *Journal of World-Systems Research* 24.2 (2018), pp. 337-347; Alfredo Ramírez Nardiz, ‘Propuesta de definición del populism desde el pensamiento de Karl R. Popper’, *Revista Española de Ciencia Política* 48 (2018), pp. 153-179; Daniele

general that all forms of populism include some kind of appeal to “the people” and a denunciation of “the elite”. They argue for a definition of populism as ‘a thin-centred ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogenous and antagonistic camps, “the pure people” versus “the corrupt elite,” and which argues that politics should be an expression of the ... general will ... of the people’.<sup>54</sup>

This understanding of populism can be readily applied to Primo de Rivera’s regime, with the reservation that some political groups—Catalan nationalists or anarchists, for example—were not coded as ‘elites’, but were nonetheless not part of the ‘true Spanish people’. Instead, conservative Spanish nationalism cast such groups as part of an ‘anti-Spain’.<sup>55</sup> This observation aside, *primorriverista* anti-politics identified *caciquil* elites and other ‘political’ groups and individuals as the opponents of the majority of Spanish citizens and claimed to identify a supposedly monolithic ‘general will’ or shared interest of the people. Enric Ucelay-Da Cal uses a similar approach to Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser in the context of *fin-de-siècle* Spain, seeing populism as a phenomenon that can belong to the political left or right, but that privileges the supposed interests of ‘the people’ against those of the elite.<sup>56</sup> Ucelay-Da Cal identifies *costista* regenerationism, the idiosyncratic republicanism of both Vicente Blasco Ibáñez and Alejandro Lerroux, and certain social-Catholic movements as ‘populist’. In this sense, Primo de Rivera’s appeal to ‘the healthy people’ against *caciquil*

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Albertazzi and Duncan McDonnell (eds), *Twenty-First Century Populism: The Spectre of Western European Democracy* (Basingstoke, 2008); Takis S. Pappas, *Populism and Liberal Democracy: A Comparative and Theoretical Analysis* (Oxford, 2019); Michael L. Conniff (ed.), *Populism in Latin America* (2<sup>nd</sup> edn, Tuscaloosa, 2012); Sergiu Gherghina, Segiu Mişcoiu and Sorina Soare (eds), *Contemporary Populism: A Controversial Concept and Its Diverse Forms* (Newcastle upon Tyne, 2013); Ghita Ionescu and Ernest Gellner, *Populism: Its Meanings and National Characteristics* (London, 1969).

<sup>54</sup> Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, *Populism: A Very Short Introduction*, pp. 5-6; ‘Exclusionary vs. Inclusionary Populism’, pp. 149-151.

<sup>55</sup> Alejandro Quiroga, *Making Spaniards*, pp. 44-53; *Los orígenes del nacionalcatolicismo: José Pemartín y la Dictadura de Primo de Rivera* (Granada, 2007), pp. 49-59; Ismael Saz, *España contra España: Los nacionalismos franquistas* (Madrid, 2003), pp. 59-99.

<sup>56</sup> Enric Ucelay-Da Cal, ‘Acerca del concepto “populismo”’, *Historia Social* 2 (1988), pp. 51-74.

‘professional politicians’ demonstrated a populist conception of his coup’s aims.<sup>57</sup>

Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser observe that ‘populism almost always appears attached to other ideological elements’.<sup>58</sup> This was certainly the case for the anti-political populism of Primo’s regime. *Primorriverista* populism was right-wing, nationalist, Catholic, anti-*caciquil* and regenerationist. Where this thesis discusses anti-political or *primorriverista* populism, this is the ideological content to which it refers.

### **The course of Primo de Rivera’s dictatorship**

The September 1923 coup provoked little meaningful resistance. It was welcomed by a range of broadly conservative and regenerationist opinion in Spain, from social Catholics and traditionalists to employers’ and property-owners’ associations, professional organisations and much of the military. These groups were collectively referred to as the ‘vital forces’ (*fuerzas vivas*) of Spanish society—in distinction to moribund *caciquismo*—and were courted by the regime through the remainder of the 1920s. The military plotters easily suppressed communist and anarchist attempts at resistance. Come October, the socialist trade union federation, the *Unión General de Trabajadores* (General Union of Workers) began collaborating with the new military government.<sup>59</sup> Primo de Rivera and his supporters initially defended the coup by pointing out that the 1876 constitution allowed the monarch to suspend the *Cortes*

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<sup>57</sup> Álvarez Rey (ed.), *Bajo el fuero militar*, p. 57.

<sup>58</sup> Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, *Populism: A Very Short Introduction*, p. 6.

<sup>59</sup> On the socialist movement’s collaboration with the dictatorship, see Shlomo Ben-Ami, *Fascism from Above: The Dictatorship of Primo de Rivera in Spain, 1923-1930* (Oxford, 1983), pp. 282-298; Eduardo González Calleja, *La España de Primo de Rivera: La modernización autoritaria, 1923-1930* (Madrid, 2005), pp. 326-333; Tamames, *Ni Mussolini ni Franco*, pp. 155-163; Javier Tusell, *Historia de España en el siglo XX, tomo 1. Del 98 a la proclamación de la República* (2<sup>nd</sup> edn, Madrid, 2007), pp. 514-523.

for up to ninety days.<sup>60</sup> Yet it quickly became apparent that the general and the king intended to break definitively with constitutional norms, and that the dictatorship was to exceed this limit. In the event, Primo governed Spain until January 1930.

True to the coup's regenerationist manifesto, the dictatorship's first measures included attempts to purge *caciques*. All municipal authorities (*ayuntamientos*) across Spain were disbanded and replaced, and the government arrogated the right to appoint mayors of cities of more than 100,000 inhabitants.<sup>61</sup> 'Government military delegates' were assigned to inspect and report on the functioning of all *ayuntamientos* within each judicial district (*partido judicial*).<sup>62</sup> The new government encouraged citizens to denounce abuses by the traditional political classes. That 'anti-political' discourses resonated with ordinary Spaniards was aptly demonstrated by the wave of denunciations that followed. General Martínez Anido—now responsible for the day-to-day running of the Interior Ministry—found himself forced to write to the Civil Governors of Spain's provinces requesting that they reduce the number of detentions based on such denunciations, for fear that subsequent judicial proceedings would go against the regime and show it in a negative light.<sup>63</sup> New laws prohibited certain functionaries from exercising more than one public office simultaneously. A similar change in political personnel was carried out at the highest levels of the executive. The Military Directorate was composed of Primo de Rivera as head of government and 'single minister', and nine other members (*vocales*): eight generals and one admiral. The administrative structures of each ministry remained

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<sup>60</sup> Primo himself told the press on 17 September that "We will see what nine men of good will, working intensely for nine or ten hours a day, can accomplish in ... ninety days"; González Calleja, *Modernización autoritaria*, p. 63.

<sup>61</sup> González Calleja, *Modernización autoritaria*, p. 130.

<sup>62</sup> María Teresa González Calbet, *La Dictadura de Primo de Rivera. El Directorio Militar* (Madrid, 1987), pp. 152-157.

<sup>63</sup> Quiroga, *Making Spaniards*, pp. 45-46.

in place, but were led by ‘undersecretaries’ rather than ministers. Each *vocal* of the Military Directorate headed an office (*ponencia*), some of which had responsibility for policy areas spanning several ministerial portfolios.<sup>64</sup>

Primo kept up a populist relationship towards the Spanish people, using ‘official notes’ (*notas oficiosas*) to communicate directly with them, presenting his government as being familiar with and responsive to the concerns of ordinary citizens, and appearing to demystify the workings and priorities of the government. However, the dictatorship was also highly authoritarian. Not only did it mandate the inclusion of *notas oficiosas* in newspapers, but the press and the telegraph service became subject to censorship. The Catalan language and anything that smacked of ‘separatism’ were vigorously suppressed. A centralist and unitary Spanish nationalism was imposed in schools and in the press, and regularly performed at public events and in official ceremonial.<sup>65</sup> A new ‘Municipal Statute’ passed in March 1924 and a ‘Provincial Statute’ passed one year later established the municipality and the province as the component units of the nation, reflecting the dictatorship’s antipathy towards the region as a political—as opposed to cultural—unit. The *Somatén*, a conservative citizens’ militia originating in Catalonia, was extended to the whole of the nation on 17 September 1923, and acted as a vehicle for the ‘nationalisation of the masses’.<sup>66</sup> April 1924 saw the establishment of the *Unión Patriótica*, which Primo claimed was open to ‘all people of honour and good will’, integrating conservative and regenerationist *fuerzas vivas* into the Spanish state’s

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<sup>64</sup> González Calleja, *Modernización autoritaria*, p. 51.

<sup>65</sup> See Clive Beadman, ‘Official nationalism of the Primo de Rivera regime: Some Findings from the Pages of *Unión Patriótica* and *Somatén*’, *International Journal of Iberian Studies* 11.2 (1998), pp. 69-75; Vincent, *People and State*, p. 113; Quiroga, *Making Spaniards*, pp. 77-188.

<sup>66</sup> Quiroga, *Making Spaniards*, pp. 146-164.

structures and providing another tool for controlled, 'anti-political', and nationalising mobilisation.<sup>67</sup>

By late 1925, an improving military situation in Morocco appeared to confirm Primo's argument that his dictatorship might reverse national decline where the *caciquil* governments of the Restoration had failed. Buoyed by this success, he began to make more active efforts to set his regime on a stable footing for the longer term. In December 1925, he formed a 'Civil Directorate', a regular cabinet including civilian ministers, although military men retained half the cabinet seats, including key posts such as Martínez Anido's position as Interior Minister.<sup>68</sup> Among the highest-profile civilian cabinet ministers over the next four years would be Minister of Finance José Calvo Sotelo, a one-time supporter of the former conservative Prime Minister Antonio Maura; the former civil engineer Rafael Benjumea y Burín, Count of Guadalhorce, as Minister of Development; and the corporatist thinker and writer Eduardo Aunós Pérez as Minister of Labour, Commerce and Industry.

The Civil Directorate saw the dictatorship introduce significant reforms on a number of social issues. Under Aunós's leadership and with the collaboration of the socialist trade unions, the Ministry of Labour, Commerce and Industry incorporated established labour conciliation committees (*comités paritarios*) into a National Corporative Organisation (*Organización Corporativa Nacional*; ONC), inspired in part by the 'corporativism' envisioned by Mussolini in Italy.<sup>69</sup> The ONC aimed to

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<sup>67</sup> Quiroga, *Making Spaniards*, pp. 165-182; Álvarez Rey (ed.), *Bajo el fuero militar*, pp.70-71; 75-76, 134-135; Carr, *Spain 1808-1975*, pp. 566-567; Beadman, 'Official Nationalism'; Primo de Rivera, *Del general Primo de Rivera*, pp. 1-10; Ben-Ami, *Fascism from Above*, pp. 126-160, 174-189; Tamames, *Ni Mussolini ni Franco*, pp. 205-209; Quiroga, *Los orígenes del nacionalcatolicismo*, pp. 80-90; Vincent, *People and State*, pp. 112-115; Tusell, *Historia de España en el Siglo XX, 1*, pp. 463-469; González Calleja, *Modernización autoritaria*, pp. 164-204; González Calbet, *El Directorio Militar*, pp. 130-141.

<sup>68</sup> González Calleja, *Modernización autoritaria*, pp. 51-53.

<sup>69</sup> González Calleja, *Modernización autoritaria*, pp. 153-163; Tamames, *Ni Mussolini ni Franco*, pp. 281-289; Tusell, *Historia de España en el Siglo XX, 1*, pp. 512-513. In Italy, the Fascist state

create national ‘corporations’ that brought together employers and workers and would allow disputes to be resolved in an allegedly ‘apolitical’ setting, as well as organising local *comités paritarios* to exercise these functions at lower territorial levels. The ONC enjoyed somewhat limited success; Eduardo González Calleja observes that it developed unevenly and was sometimes resisted by social-Catholic groups suspicious of its fascist and hence ‘statist’ inspiration, while Ramón Tamames argues that it served principally to protect the interests of capital despite its claims to ‘harmonise’ these with those of labour.<sup>70</sup> Yet it was indicative of the kind of anti-political and corporatist mechanisms by which *primorriverista* thinkers hoped to organise Spain’s economy and society.

From late 1925, Primo and his collaborators began to lay plans to create a corporatist parliament to support the regime. The UP’s 1926 National Congress supported the principle of an elected consultative body, and the Union’s central committee requested the government to set up a National Assembly and a ‘plebiscite’ to legitimate this decision. The ‘plebiscite’ took place between 11 and 13 September 1926, coinciding with the anniversary of Primo’s coup, and invited citizens from the age of eighteen to sign their names in support of the plan. Somewhat more than fifty

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theoretically organised the economy into ‘corporations’, representing and mediating between employers and employees in each given sector, although in practice the corporations were not as significant as regime propaganda suggested, and, importantly, exercised a greater degree of control over workers than over employers, who still retained relative freedom of action. See Roger Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism* (Abingdon, 1991), pp. 72-78; Christopher Duggan, *Fascist Voices: An Intimate History of Mussolini’s Italy* (London, 2012), pp. 238-240; Irene Stolzi, ‘Corporatism and Neo-Corporatism: Developments in the 20<sup>th</sup>-Century Italian Legal Order’, *Estudios Históricos* 31.64 (2018), pp. 221-242; Mariuccia Salvati, ‘The Long History of Corporatism in Italy: A Question of Culture or Economics?’, *Contemporary European History* 15.2 (2006), pp. 223-244. On corporatism in a broader inter-war European context, see Philippe C. Schmitter, ‘Still the Century of Corporatism?’, *The Review of Politics* 36.1 (1974), pp. 85-131; Mike Hawkins, ‘Corporatism and Third Way Discourses in Inter-War France’, *Journal of Political Ideologies* 7.3 (2002), pp. 301-314; Richard Vinen, *A History in Fragments: Europe in the Twentieth Century* (London, 2000), pp. 197-199; Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes: 1914-1991* (London, 1994), pp. 113-115; Mark Mazower, *Dark Continent: Europe’s Twentieth Century* (London, 1998), pp. 28-31.

<sup>70</sup> González Calleja, *Modernización autoritaria*, pp. 156-163; Tamames, *Ni Mussolini ni Franco*, pp. 287-288.

percent of the thirteen million Spaniards with the right to 'vote' did so. The decision of many citizens to sign also reflected a degree of personal support for Primo de Rivera, given the successful conclusion of hostilities in Morocco earlier that year. The new National Assembly first sat in October 1927, and was organised along corporatist lines. Some members were elected by universal suffrage; others by municipal and provincial councillors; some were designated by the government to represent sectors of the economy; and others still were members *ex officio* based on their positions in the state administration, the military, or the church.<sup>71</sup> The Assembly was not a legislative chamber as such, but was intended to act as a consultative body and to draw up a new corporatist constitution. The actions of the Civil Directorate both confirmed that Primo would attempt to stay in power beyond the resolution of the most pressing problems that he identified in 1923, as well as showing how anti-political populism translated into corporatist policy.

At the Ministry of Development, the Count of Guadalhorce presided over a large-scale programme of public works aimed at economic modernisation, improving national infrastructure and alleviating unemployment. The dictatorship constructed some 2,800 kilometres of roads, although this was significantly less than initially planned.<sup>72</sup> It established a national organisation, the *Circuito Nacional de Firms Especiales*, responsible for building and managing roads intended to encourage tourism in the country. Ports were modernised and support provided for the shipping industry. The dictatorship reformed the system of state financial support to

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<sup>71</sup> González Calleja, *Modernización autoritaria*, pp. 139-147; Ben-Ami, *Fascism from Above*, pp. 210-215; Quiroga, *Making Spaniards*, p. 65.

<sup>72</sup> González Calleja, *Modernización autoritaria*, pp. 232-233; Tusell, *Historia de España en el siglo XX*, 1, pp. 505-506.



Spain's railway companies, allowing a modernisation of the country's rolling stock.<sup>73</sup> New railways were constructed, although not necessarily at the pace envisaged by the government.<sup>74</sup> The dictatorship engaged in a programme of comprehensive economic nationalism, encouraging the use of Spanish-produced goods through tariff barriers and establishing national monopolies in petroleum and telephony.<sup>75</sup> The regime thus followed the modernising aspects of regenerationism as much as the anti-*caciquil* ones. This was most obviously the case in the March 1926 establishment of the Syndical Hydrographic Confederations (*Confederaciones Sindicales Hidrográficas*; CSHs), which took on responsibility for the holistic management of irrigation and rural development in Spain's river basins. Unsurprisingly for an initiative influenced by Costa's *política hidráulica*, the first of these was established in the basin of the river Ebro, which includes the majority of the region of Aragon. The Ebro CSH was the only Confederation to achieve notable successes during the dictatorship, and as in other areas of infrastructure policy these often comprised completing projects planned or commenced but delayed under the Restoration.<sup>76</sup> Even so, considerable additional funding was channelled to infrastructure development. The implementation of 'anti-political' principles drew on modernising regenerationist discourses, and made national prosperity through rural and industrial development a measure on which citizens could judge its success.

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<sup>73</sup> Tamames, *Ni Mussolini ni Franco*, p. 319; James H. Rial, *Revolution from Above: The Primo de Rivera Dictatorship in Spain, 1923-1930* (London / Toronto, 1986), pp. 155-159; González Calleja, *Modernización autoritaria*, pp. 233-234.

<sup>74</sup> Rial, *Revolution from Above*, p. 157; González Calleja, *Modernización autoritaria*, pp. 233-234.

<sup>75</sup> Ben-Ami, *Fascism from Above*, pp. 240-266; Tusell, *Historia de España en el siglo XX, 1*, pp. 500-508; González Calleja, *La modernización autoritaria*, pp. 213-216; 223-232; Tamames, *Ni Mussolini ni Franco*, pp. 292-301; 323-336; Álvarez Rey (ed.), *Bajo el fuero militar*, pp. 132-133.

<sup>76</sup> González Calleja, *La modernización autoritaria*, pp. 222-223; Ben-Ami, *Fascism from Above*, pp. 253-254; Rial, *Revolution from Above*, pp. 177-178; Tusell, *Historia de España en el siglo XX, 1*, p. 505; Tamames, *Ni Mussolini ni Franco*, pp. 315-318; Erik Swyngedouw, *Liquid Power: Water and Contested Modernities in Spain, 1898-2010* (London, 2015), pp. 83-95; Eloy Fernández Clemente, *Gente de orden: Aragón durante la dictadura de Primo de Rivera (1923-1930)* (Zaragoza, 1997), vol. 3: La economía, pp. 121-141.

However, this programme put a strain on Spain's national finances. Calvo Sotelo attempted significant fiscal reform, including the introduction of a progressive income tax, new taxes on rents and profits, and a re-evaluation of property for tax purposes. However, these measures were strongly resisted by the business community and rural landowners. In the end, Calvo Sotelo's reforms largely failed to come to fruition, and the Minister had to make do with merely attempting to improve tax collection. The state's income did increase, but by no means in sufficient measure to cover higher spending, and the public debt climbed during Primo's dictatorship.<sup>77</sup> The impact of the Wall Street Crash cut off access to the borrowing that had fuelled this spending. The value of the peseta began to drop, and attempts at economic modernisation faltered.

Meanwhile, political opposition to the dictatorship began to intensify. The draft of a new constitution produced by the National Assembly failed to find favour with public opinion.<sup>78</sup> Trade unions and students contributed to an increase in 'disorderly' protest over the course of 1929. Inflation as the result of the depreciating peseta undermined whatever support ordinary Spaniards may have harboured for the regime. While plans for a transition to a new regime under a new constitution failed to thrive, the king was also becoming keen to return to some kind of constitutional normality. Army officers were concerned that the regime's growing unpopularity might also affect the army's standing with citizens.<sup>79</sup> Aware that support for his government was slipping away, Primo appealed to the Captains-General of Spain's military regions on 26 January 1930 to ascertain whether he still enjoyed their support. This move infuriated the king and monarchist generals, as it seemed to

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<sup>77</sup> González Calleja, *La modernización autoritaria*, pp. 245-248; Ben-Ami, *Fascism from Above*, pp. 266-270.

<sup>78</sup> Ben-Ami, *Fascism from Above*, pp. 365-368.

<sup>79</sup> Ben-Ami, *Fascism from Above*, pp. 382-384.

usurp the monarch's prerogative to choose the country's government. The responses to Primo's appeal reiterated his fellow officers' 'total subordination to the king and to whatever government enjoyed his confidence'. With the army's support lost, Martínez Anido persuaded Primo to tender his resignation on 28 January.<sup>80</sup>

### **The social construction of the Primo de Rivera regime: Historiographical approaches and challenges**

Although the Primo dictatorship does not benefit from the copious historiography dedicated to the Spanish Second Republic and Civil War, political historians have generally appreciated its significance as a rupture from the constitutional politics of the Restoration. As Carolyn Boyd argues, the 1923 coup cut short any possibility of democratic reform of the Restoration's constitutional arrangements which may have set the constitutional monarchy on a more stable footing and, given Alfonso XIII's support for the rebellion, fatally weakened the monarchy's legitimacy.<sup>81</sup> This understanding of Primo de Rivera's regime as one of the many and varied anti-democratic attacks on parliamentary regimes in inter-war Europe informed subsequent political histories, such as those by Shlomo Ben-Ami and José Luis Gómez-Navarro, that aimed to consider the dictatorship in its international context.<sup>82</sup>

Ben-Ami's study remains a landmark work in the English-language historiography on the Primo regime. Ben-Ami finds that the dictatorship can in many ways be more productively compared with the contemporaneous monarchical dictatorships in the

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<sup>80</sup> Ben-Ami, *Fascism from Above*, pp. 386-387.

<sup>81</sup> Boyd, *Praetorian Politics*, p. 273. Stanley Payne also argues that were it not for Primo's coup, 'the parliamentary system might very well have struggled along for another decade until a constitutional resolution of the conflicting pressures [on it] had been achieved'; *Politics and the Military in Modern Spain* (Stanford / London, 1967), p. 203.

<sup>82</sup> Ben-Ami, *Fascism from Above*; José Luis Gómez-Navarro, *El régimen de Primo de Rivera: Reyes, dictaduras y dictadores* (Madrid, 1991).

Balkans than with Italian fascism. In his view, the political practice of these regimes was more complex than the most basic kind of authoritarianism. Understanding that the increasing politicisation of their respective societies meant that mass political mobilisation would henceforth be a fact of life, they chose to control this mobilisation, maintain power and ‘manipulat[e] public opinion’ through the creation of official parties, although these parties ultimately failed to gain a mass following.<sup>83</sup> These regimes may have been a ‘defensive reaction against uncontrolled politicization’, yet they also represented a rupture with the past, doing away with previous party systems and political elites. In the case of Primo de Rivera, Ben-Ami, like Boyd, concludes that this ‘shattered the foundations of the old regime without enthroning a new state’, creating a ‘dangerous vacuum of power.’ Problems supposedly solved turned out merely to have been ‘temporarily frozen.’ The dictatorship’s policies bore much resemblance to anti-democratic traditionalism, combining this with contemporary anti-liberalism to break definitively with parliamentarism, and introducing a social project based on corporatist labour relations and economic *dirigisme*.<sup>84</sup> Primo de Rivera’s economic and social policy was, however, rife with contradictions. Being entwined with the rural landowning oligarchy, he refused to countenance serious agrarian reform.<sup>85</sup> Large business concerns (but not smaller ones) could reckon with state favour, while there was some attempt to improve urban workers’ lot at the expense of their employers.<sup>86</sup> This

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<sup>83</sup> Ben-Ami, *Fascism from Above*, pp. 393-399. As Mary Vincent points out, the widely noted public apathy with which Primo’s coup was received makes it difficult to view it ‘as a last-ditch defence of the established interest’; Vincent, *People and State*, p. 107. However, it is also important to remember that, alongside criticisms of political intrigue ‘immorality’, Primo also justified his coup with reference to ‘social indiscipline’, ‘unpunished communist propaganda’ and ‘shameless separatist propaganda’, all of which suggest that the coup did respond to a *perception* that political freedom and mobilisation were out of control in a way that was threatening to Spain’s stability. See Primo’s ‘Manifesto’ in Álvarez Rey (ed.), *Bajo el fuero militar*, p. 57.

<sup>84</sup> Ben-Ami, *Fascism from Above*, pp. 394-402.

<sup>85</sup> Ben-Ami, *Fascism from Above*, pp. 240-250

<sup>86</sup> Ben-Ami, *Fascism from Above*, pp. 298-303.

concern with bettering the position of the masses—largely a defensive measure, ‘a “revolution from above” ... to avoid that from “below”’—simultaneously alienated those who wished to turn the clock back to an idealised traditionalist past and those who desired meaningful social change.<sup>87</sup>

Gómez-Navarro concurs with Ben-Ami’s assessment that Primo’s dictatorship is best viewed alongside other interwar ‘military-corporatist’ dictatorships in southern and eastern Europe, and pursues a comparative study of the regimes in question in the first two chapters of his monograph, before proceeding to examine the political institutions of the *primorriverista* state.<sup>88</sup> This allows him to use his study of the Primo regime to draw conclusions about the commonalities between such regimes and the characteristics that distinguished them from fascist regimes. He finds that these regimes came about in peripheral countries which had experienced a relatively late and limited industrialisation. This created new social forces—the urban working classes and the industrial bourgeoisie—that required integration into governing structures. However, the old regimes of these states proved incapable of integrating these classes, leading to a crisis of legitimacy that they were incapable of resolving. In Germany and Italy, characterised by a ‘high level of social organisation’, the answer to this crisis came from civil society in the form of Fascism and Nazism.<sup>89</sup> In contrast, the ‘low level of political and social organisation’ of peripheral countries including Spain meant that ‘their armies ... appeared doomed to intervene in politics’.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Ben-Ami, *Fascism from Above*, pp. 400-401.

<sup>88</sup> Gómez-Navarro, *El régimen de Primo de Rivera*, pp. 13-100.

<sup>89</sup> Gómez-Navarro, *El régimen de Primo de Rivera*, pp. 53-100, 487-489.

<sup>90</sup> Gómez-Navarro, *El régimen de Primo de Rivera*, p. 489.

While the basic facts underpinning this argument are true enough, the interpretation which Gómez-Navarro builds around them displays a number of flaws. Like many highly structuralist interpretations, it presents the historical processes under examination as essentially inevitable, thus entirely overlooking the agency of the elite actors involved. It is never inevitable that individual political actors will respond to structural crises in a pre-ordained manner. Primo was not ‘doomed’ to rebel against the constitutional government, nor was Alfonso XIII ‘doomed’ to support his coup. These were political choices made in response to a given set of circumstances viewed through the lens of their ideological prejudices.<sup>91</sup> Furthermore, his reference to ‘low levels of political and social organisation’ in Spain portrays the Primo de Rivera regime as only a top-down imposition from outside Spanish society. In contrast, and as this thesis will show, Spanish civil society organisations *did* actively engage with the regime, but these mobilisations were not the formally structured political parties that dominated Hitler’s Germany and Mussolini’s Italy.

Gómez-Navarro engages in a state-centric analysis throughout. Setting out from the view that both the 1923 coup and Primo’s eventual resignation were the result of political crises, and reasoning that the dictatorship severely restricted the margins for political action outside the state, he finds no reason to broaden his field of analysis beyond state institutions—especially given his claim that the state became more capable of acting autonomously from socio-economic elites.<sup>92</sup> An entirely state-centric analysis flatly rejects the possibility that ordinary Spaniards’ lived experience of the dictatorship and their engagement with *primorriverismo* outside state-

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<sup>91</sup> As noted by Michael Mann two years after the publication of Gómez-Navarro’s study, state institutions (including militaries) are staffed not by structures and processes but by people with their own ‘social identities’ which motivate them to act in certain ways in the capacity as state functionaries. Mann, *The Sources of Social Power, volume II: The Rise of Classes and Nation-States, 1760-1914* (Cambridge, 1993), pp. 50-51.

<sup>92</sup> Gómez-Navarro, *Primo de Rivera*, pp. 8-11.

sanctioned mobilisations may be worthy subjects of study. It assumes that political engagement with state authorities only meaningfully takes place through formally and explicitly political organisations such as political parties and trade unions: the kinds of action that were curtailed or straightforwardly repressed by Primo's policies. Yet, as Francesco Cavatorta observes, other means exist by which civil society can engage with authoritarian regimes, 'from individual writings to mass participation to non-political events to artistic expression'.<sup>93</sup> Moreover, such modes of engagement do not have to be considered within a 'democratisation framework'. Civil society activism is not inherently democratising, but it can and does shape the relationship of societies to authoritarian regimes, even as the authoritarian context shapes the forms that citizens' engagement with the state can take. As this thesis will show, citizens continued to engage with the Spanish state under Primo de Rivera outside explicitly political organisations, and through mobilisations that were not organised by state authorities in the first instance. The less than representative nature of official politics under the Restoration led citizens to develop modes of engaging with the government outside established political parties, and these embedded modes of action continued to function under the explicitly undemocratic military regime. Moreover, the experience of the Restoration made anti-political populism into a shared ideological language that regenerationist-minded citizens could use to attempt to influence policy, and that the dictatorship could use to attract support. Such interactions shaped the relationship between state and citizens, even as their form was shaped by Primo's authoritarianism.

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<sup>93</sup> Francesco Cavatorta, 'Civil Society Activism under Authoritarian Constraints' in Francesco Cavatorta (ed.), *Civil Society Activism under Authoritarian Rule: A Comparative Perspective* (New York, 2013), p. 2.

Javier Tusell's examination of the dictatorship in his general history of twentieth-century Spain makes some contribution to addressing the role of Spanish civil society at large in defining the workings of the state.<sup>94</sup> It could seem at first that Tusell goes too far in stating that the dictatorship can be adequately understood by examining Primo's personality, but he quickly moderates this position. Primo de Rivera's personality is, in Tusell's view, important insofar as the general was the 'expression ... definer, and representative' of regenerationist thought. In this sense, Primo's political thought and practice constituted a conduit by which 'the topics of contemporary Spaniards' conversations in cafés' became a 'principle of government'.<sup>95</sup> There is a danger that Tusell's focus on Primo's 'natural goodness', 'lack of education [*formación*]' and paternalism could occlude the general's authoritarianism. However, the importance of Tusell's analysis rests in the insight that regenerationist ideology was one of the principal means by which the dictatorship appealed to Spanish citizens—from right-wing intellectuals and developmentalist members of the intelligentsia to agriculturalists and workers—for support, and underlay some of the regime's paternalistic socio-economic policies.<sup>96</sup> This interpretation of the importance of regenerationist thought to *primorriverista* policy recognises—in a way that Gómez-Navarro's analysis does not—that states and societies are not separate entities, but rather bound together in 'power networks', which allowed civil society to provide some of the ideological impetus behind *primorriverismo*.<sup>97</sup> The nature of the Primo de Rivera regime was not simply dictated by structural economic changes; the regenerationist social and intellectual context also played a role in shaping it, both by shaping citizens' expectations of the

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<sup>94</sup> Tusell, *Historia de España en el siglo XX*, 1, pp. 443-577.

<sup>95</sup> Tusell, *Historia de España en el siglo XX*, 1, p. 453.

<sup>96</sup> Tusell, *Historia de España en el siglo XX*, 1, pp. 453-457.

<sup>97</sup> Tusell, *Historia de España en el siglo XX*, 1,. For the conceptualisation of states as complexes of 'power networks', see Mann, *The Sources of Social Power*, volume II, p. 56.



*primorriverista* state and as it influenced the functionaries and intellectuals associated with the regime.

Yet, as Pablo Montes argues, the tendency to overlook ordinary Spaniards' political agency in their interactions with the state remains a flaw in the historiography on the Primo de Rivera dictatorship.<sup>98</sup> Montes points out that political historians have privileged the actions of bourgeois republican politicians over those of working-class socialist and anarchist militants in understanding the dictator's fall.<sup>99</sup> While he observes that local histories of working-class, often anarchist, political activism such as those by Pamela Beth Radcliff and Chris Ealham have done much to address the political agency of working-class Spaniards in the first third of the twentieth century, it is equally true that these studies have addressed the Primo years only 'tangentially'.<sup>100</sup> Ealham devotes barely more than two pages of his monograph on class identities in Barcelona to the period 1923-1930, although his treatment of working-class political organisations' role in the final crisis of the monarchy following Primo's resignation is fuller.<sup>101</sup> Radcliff describes the years 1923-1930 variously as an 'interlude', a 'pause', and a 'hiatus' in the processes of political polarisation in the northern city of Gijón, and almost entirely passes over the period in her analysis.<sup>102</sup> This tendency to gloss over the Primo years appears to be a result of both studies' focus on working-class citizens' experiences within explicitly political

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<sup>98</sup> Pablo Montes, 'La Dictadura de Primo de Rivera y la historiografía. Una confrontación metodológica', *Historia Social* 74 (2012), pp. 167-184. For example, Genoveva García Queipo de Llano approaches the regime through its relationship with (a necessarily restricted group of) intellectuals; *Los intelectuales y la dictadura de Primo de Rivera* (Madrid, 1988).

<sup>99</sup> On anarchism under the Primo de Rivera dictatorship, see Antonio Elorza, 'El anarcosindicalismo español bajo la Dictadura (1923-1930): la génesis de la Federación Anarquista Ibérica (I).', *Revista de Trabajo* 39 (1972), pp. 123-218.

<sup>100</sup> Chris Ealham, *Class, Culture and Conflict in Barcelona 1898-1937* (Abingdon / New York, 2005); Pamela Beth Radcliff, *From Mobilization to Civil War: The Politics of Polarization in the Spanish City of Gijón, 1900-1937* (Cambridge, 1996).

<sup>101</sup> Ealham, *Class, Culture and Conflict*, pp. 51-63.

<sup>102</sup> Radcliff, *Gijón, 1900-1937*, pp. 136, 182, 279.

movements, especially anarchist and republican organisations that were suppressed under the dictatorship. In contrast, this thesis examines how the relationship between the *primorriverista* state and Spanish citizens—from the working and the middle classes—was constructed and negotiated in other ways, thus accounting more fully for their agency in the social construction of the Spanish state. While this approach admittedly does not respond directly to Montes’s call for greater historiographical attention for those members of the working classes who were part of the organised opposition, it enhances our understanding of how less explicitly ‘political’ individuals and civil society movements related to the *primorriverista* authorities.

Some more recent studies have begun to work in this direction. Eduardo González Calleja’s chapter on social and cultural life in 1920s Spain, for example, shows that the 1920s were a period of fundamental changes not only in politics but also in Spanish society, and that both state and citizens played a role in these changes.<sup>103</sup> González Calleja explores the emergent mass-leisure culture in the fields of sport, music, tourism, cinema and media at some length, an important reminder of the far-reaching changes affecting Spanish society outside political and state institutions in this period. While such changes involved citizens as consumers, an understanding of the ways in which state action was implicated in these developments is equally important to González Calleja’s argument. These included increased employment opportunities in the public sector and the provision of subsidised housing, which contributed to the development of a consumer culture, and investment in transport infrastructure, which facilitated both the transport of consumer goods to market and the growth of tourism. González Calleja’s study represents progress over Ben-Ami’s

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<sup>103</sup> González Calleja, *Modernización autoritaria*, pp. 259-316.

chapter on ‘Primo de Rivera’s social deal’. Whereas the latter devotes much attention to state measures inspired in many cases by social-Catholicism, actual social changes are addressed relatively briefly and largely through reference to the growth and greater ‘life’ of cities.<sup>104</sup> González Calleja’s exploration of mass culture provides a more detailed picture, and views ordinary people as agents of the social changes under consideration, *alongside* the state. However, González Calleja recognises citizens’ agency more as consumers of leisure activities than as agents attempting to influence policy. Indeed, his discussions of political developments and economic reforms in other chapters of his study focus on the actions of elite and state actors more than on their interactions with citizens.

An important study which does address a significant aspect of state–citizen interactions under Primo de Rivera, and that also illuminates how one aspect of Primo de Rivera’s ideological project worked out in reality, is Alejandro Quiroga’s examination of the dictatorship’s attempts to ‘nationalize the masses’.<sup>105</sup> Quiroga situates the regime within a wider debate on the ‘nationalisation of the masses’ in Spain.<sup>106</sup> He contends that the Primo dictatorship pursued a ‘negative integration’ of the masses into the nation-state, similar to that pursued with relative success in

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<sup>104</sup> Ben-Ami, *Fascism from Above*, pp. 282-318. For urban growth and the disappearance of past ‘inertia’, see pp. 310-316.

<sup>105</sup> Quiroga, *Making Spaniards: Primo de Rivera and the Nationalization of the Masses, 1923-30* (Basingstoke, 2007). See also Quiroga, *Haciendo Españoles: La nacionalización de las masas en la Dictadura de Primo de Rivera (1923-1930)*, trans. Liduam Pong (Madrid, 2008).

<sup>106</sup> In the Spanish historiography, this debate stems largely from Juan José Linz, ‘Early State-Building and Late Peripheral Nationalisms Against the State: The Case of Spain’ in Shmuel Eisenstadt and Stein Rokkan (eds), *Building States and Nations* (Beverly Hills / London, 1973), pp. 32-116. The thesis of ‘weak nationalism’ of citizens in Spain became highly influential during the 1990s, following its elaboration by Borja de Riquer i Pemanyer, ‘La débil nacionalización española del siglo XIX’, *Historia Social* 20 (1994), pp. 97-114. For a more thorough exploration of the subsequent debate than it is possible to give here, see Quiroga, *Haciendo Españoles*, pp. 13-19 [the chapter ‘Nación, dictadura y religión política. Estudios y conceptos’, pp. 9-32 in the Spanish version does not appear in the original English-language work] and Fernando Molina Aparicio, ‘Modernidad e identidad nacional. El nacionalismo español del siglo XIX y su historiografía’, *Historia Social* 52 (2005), pp. 147-171.

Wilhelmine Germany.<sup>107</sup> The term ‘negative integration’ is taken from Hans Ulrich Wehler, and refers to the nationalist indoctrination of the lower and middle classes by emphasising the danger posed by external enemies of the nation and internal enemies of the established order.<sup>108</sup> States that pursued ‘negative integration’ did so with the aim of legitimising undemocratic regimes and undermining revolutionary and democratic opposition by encouraging citizens to identify with the existing power structures.

Alongside chapters on official regime discourse, Quiroga also studies this process as realised through institutions that integrated individual citizens into the power networks of the state: the army, the education system, the *Somatén* and the *Unión Patriótica*.<sup>109</sup> Compulsory military service was supposed to act as a ‘school of patriots’, but budgetary, material and staffing constraints, combined with an overwhelming increase in the number of recruits, meant that the result was a generation of apathetic soldiers rather than ‘New Spaniards’.<sup>110</sup> Despite improvements in literacy, the dictatorship did not manage to transform primary schools into an effective vehicle for nationalist indoctrination, again as a result of budgetary constraints.<sup>111</sup> The *Somatén* and the *Unión Patriótica* both failed to instil national unity after being tainted by their use as repressive tools by the dictatorship.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> Quiroga, *Haciendo Españoles*, pp. 1-2.

<sup>108</sup> Hans Ulrich Wehler, *The German Empire, 1870-1914* (Leamington Spa, 1985), pp. 100-137.

<sup>109</sup> On the notion of ‘power networks’ constituting modern states, see Mann, *The Sources of Social Power, volume II*, p. 56.

<sup>110</sup> Quiroga, *Making Spaniards*, pp. 77-92.

<sup>111</sup> Quiroga, *Making Spaniards*, pp. 122-128. See also Quiroga, ‘Maestros, espías y lentejas. Educación y nacionalización de las masas durante la Dictadura de Primo de Rivera’ in Javier Moreno Luzón (ed.), *Construir España: Nacionalismo español y procesos de nacionalización* (Madrid, 2007), pp. 183-206.

<sup>112</sup> Quiroga, *Making Spaniards*, pp. 146-188.

Quiroga's work offers an important examination of how right-wing nationalists attempted to enforce their ideas on Spanish society, developing our understanding of the relationship between state and society in early twentieth-century Spain. However, as can be seen from the above, much of Quiroga's analysis focuses on the nationalistic indoctrination of citizens in more or less coercive institutions. This is partly a result of Quiroga's use of George Mosse's conceptual framework, which does indeed present the nationalisation of the masses in this top-down manner.<sup>113</sup> Quiroga explicitly acknowledges that his study follows a top-down perspective, but the existing historiography still lacks a body of work that proceeds from a point of view that emphasises the construction and negotiation of the relationship between state and citizens in two-directional interactions.<sup>114</sup> More recently, Quiroga has examined how the nationalisation of the masses took place at the local level, through a microhistorical study of nationalist discourses and symbols in the Aragonese town of Alagón.<sup>115</sup> In addition to the 'official public sphere', he also examines how these discourses permeated the 'non-official public sphere' and the 'private sphere' of life in Alagón. This approach is certainly productive in bringing into focus the local texture of Primo's nationalising drive, but the thematic scope of the study does not examine citizen's interactions with the state beyond nationalising discourses. This thesis examines processes by which the relationship between citizens and state was negotiated both from the top down and the bottom up, and in ways that went beyond the construction of national identity. This helps to reveal methods by which citizens engaged with the Spanish state, how the dictatorship used anti-political discourse to

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<sup>113</sup> George Mosse, *The Nationalization of the Masses: Political Symbolism and Mass Movements in Germany from the Napoleonic Wars through the Third Reich* (Ithaca, 1975).

<sup>114</sup> Quiroga, *Making Spaniards*, pp. 4-5.

<sup>115</sup> 'Home Patriots: Spanish Nation-Building at a Local Level in the Primo de Rivera Dictatorship (1923-1930)', *European History Quarterly* 50.2 (2020), pp. 266-289.

build legitimacy, and the obstacles that both the state and citizens encountered in these processes.

María Luisa Rico Gómez's research on vocational education under Primo de Rivera represents a significant line of enquiry in understanding the social construction of the dictatorship outside explicitly coercive institutions.<sup>116</sup> She finds that the Primo regime attempted to use its reforms of professional education to create a new 'technical middle class' that would include Spaniards born into working-class families.<sup>117</sup> This was a moralising and modernising initiative from above, that sought to integrate citizens into corporatist economic structures, organising Spanish workers outside trade unions, and infusing their professional lives with a sense of patriotism that would render class struggle undesirable and unnecessary.<sup>118</sup>

However, Rico Gómez concludes that the *primorriverista* state failed in these objectives, not least because the instruction offered in Spanish technical schools under the dictatorship did not go beyond the basic professional skills for most students. Rather than forming a lower-middle class convinced of *primorriverista* ideological precepts, the relative paucity of instruction in more advanced subjects served merely to reinforce social hierarchies that place technical workers above between manual workers. In part due to unequal provision across Spain's territory, the system was ultimately more successful in disciplining and training workers within local employment markets than in creating a national stratum of patriotic

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<sup>116</sup> Rico Gómez, María Luisa, 'The Socio-Economic Reality of Industrial Vocational Training During the Dictatorship of Primo de Rivera in Spain, 1923–1930', *Paedagogica Historica* 57 (2021), pp. 1–23. *La formación profesional obrera en España durante la dictadura de Primo de Rivera y la Segunda República* (Madrid, 2014); 'Adiestrando a la juventud obrera: La política de formación técnica-industrial de la dictadura *primorriverista*', *Pasado y Memoria* 12 (2013), pp. 109–137; 'La enseñanza profesional y las clases media técnicas en España (1924–1931)', *Hispania* LXXII.240 (2012), pp. 119–146.

<sup>117</sup> Rico Gómez, *La formación profesional obrera*, pp. 20–21; 'La enseñanza profesional y las clases media técnicas'.

<sup>118</sup> Rico Gómez, *La formación profesional obrera*, pp. 18–21.

manual and technical workers who rejected class politics and subscribed to *primorriverista* corporatist organisation.<sup>119</sup>

Moving away from explicitly political or coercive institutions and writing histories that emphasise interactions outside these institutions—including but not limited to histories of everyday life—has proved instructive for Hispanists examining other periods of the twentieth century.<sup>120</sup> Combining social and political histories has proved useful to historians of other twentieth-century European authoritarianisms, as well.<sup>121</sup> Victoria de Grazia has used this approach to great effect in examining the various ways in which Italian Fascism engaged with citizens at the level of the everyday and the social.<sup>122</sup> In her study of the *dopolavoro* mass leisure organisation, she argues that Mussolini’s regime used ‘the deceptively apolitical mechanism of leisure-time organizing’ to ‘penetrate every domain of social life from industrial enterprise and city neighborhood to rural village’, creating a ‘depoliticized underside

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<sup>119</sup> Rico Gómez, *La formación profesional obrera*, pp. 327-334.

<sup>120</sup> Jerome R. Mintz, *The Anarchists of Casas Viejas* (Chicago / London, 1982); Antonio Cazorla Sánchez, *Fear and Progress: Ordinary Lives in Franco’s Spain, 1939-1975* (Chichester, 2010); Claudio Hernández Burgos, ‘“The Triumph of “Normality”, Social Attitudes and Popular Opinion and the Construction of the Franco Regime in Post-War Rural Spain’, *European History Quarterly* 46.2 (2016), pp. 291-310; ‘Más allá del consenso y la oposición: Las actitudes de la “gente corriente” en regímenes dictatoriales. Una propuesta de análisis desde el régimen franquista’, *Revista de Estudios Sociales* 50 (2014), pp. 87-100; *Granada azul: La construcción de la «Cultura de la Victoria» en el primer franquismo* (Granada, 2011); Miguel Ángel del Arco Blanco, ‘The Struggle Continues: Everyday Repression and Resistance in Post-War Spain’ in Peter Anderson and Del Arco Blanco (eds), *Mass Killings and Violence in Spain, 1936-1952: Grappling with the Past* (New York / Abingdon, 2015), pp. 156-172; ‘Hunger and the Consolidation of the Francoist Regime (1939-1951)’, *European History Quarterly* 40.3 (2010), pp. 458-483; ‘El secreto del consenso en el régimen franquista: Cultura de victoria, represión y hambre’, *Ayer* 76 (2009), pp. 245-268; *Hambre de siglos: Mundo rural y apoyos sociales del franquismo en Andalucía oriental, 1936-1951* (Granada, 2007); Ismael Saz, *Fascismo y franquismo* (Valencia, 2004), pp. 171-242; Pedro Ramos Pinto, ‘“Everyday Citizenship” under Authoritarianism: The Cases of Spain and Portugal’ in Francesco Cavatorta (ed.), *Civil Society Activism under Authoritarian Rule: A Comparative Perspective* (New York, 2013), pp. 13-33.

<sup>121</sup> In addition to the work by Victoria de Grazia discussed during the rest of this paragraph, see e.g. Paul Steege, *Black Market, Cold War: Everyday Life in Berlin, 1946-1949* (Cambridge, 2007); R. J. B. Bosworth, ‘Everyday Mussolinism: Friends, Family, Locality and Violence in Fascist Italy’, *Contemporary European History* 14.1 (2005), pp. 23-43.

<sup>122</sup> Victoria de Grazia, *How Fascism Ruled Women: Italy, 1922-1945* (Berkeley / Los Angeles / London, 1992); *The Culture of Consent: Mass Organization of Leisure in Fascist Italy* (Cambridge, 1981).

of fascism [that was] a decisive support for that consent to fascist rule essential to Mussolini's continuance in power over two decades'.<sup>123</sup> However, her study also shows how such organising eventually ran up against 'the limits of consent'; depoliticisation may have helped secure Mussolini's rule for a time, but it did not build active support for or deep identification with his regime. De Grazia also shows how workers were able to attempt minor reforms to make life under Fascism more tolerable, despite the regime's having destroyed and replaced previous forms of labour organisation.<sup>124</sup> De Grazia's study does not 'see' its subject matter exclusively 'like a state', to adopt James C. Scott's formulation.<sup>125</sup> Instead, it focuses firmly on the interface between the state and the citizen, recognising that both possess their own (not necessarily equal) agency.

The historiography of the Primo de Rivera dictatorship currently lacks a similar study of the social construction and negotiation of the relationships between state and society. While the means by which the regime attempted to make its ideology felt in certain ideological institutions have been examined, most notably by Quiroga and Rico Gómez, this analysis has not addressed less explicitly political organisations, and has tended to approach the relationship between state and society as a top-down interaction. This thesis demonstrates how regenerationist discourse shaped citizens' interactions with the *primorriverista* state, and how the regime's commitment to infrastructure development provided a space in which citizens actively negotiated their relationship with the state. The study proceeds from the view that the social reality and lived experience of the Primo dictatorship is not best understood by classifying the regime as 'Caesarist' or 'Bonapartist', or by debating the extent to

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<sup>123</sup> De Grazia, *Culture of Consent*, pp. vii-viii.

<sup>124</sup> De Grazia, *Culture of Consent*, pp. 225-232.

<sup>125</sup> James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven / London, 1998).



which it resembled Italian Fascism or later Francoism.<sup>126</sup> Rather, the regime should be assessed on the terms with which it described its aims at the time. This means engaging with the language of regenerationism, and its related ‘anti-political’ populism.

The intertwined idioms of regenerationism and ‘anti-politics’ inform the choice of public works and infrastructure projects as the subject matter of this thesis.

Infrastructure projects responded to the regenerationist concern with modernising Spain economically. Julio López Iñíguez’s study of municipal politics in Valencia under Primo de Rivera demonstrates that infrastructure development could be framed in populist terms by state authorities; critics of urban regeneration projects were accused of being ‘bad citizens’ who undermined the ‘grandeur’ of the city and the wellbeing of their fellow citizens.<sup>127</sup> As the thesis will show, citizens could also mobilise the discourses of regenerationism in an attempt to engage with the state in ways that would improve their own material and economic wellbeing. Public works were a policy area in which the technocracy and corporatism that Francisco Villacorta Baños establishes as two defining ideological components of Primo’s

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<sup>126</sup> See, for example, Gómez-Navarro, *Primo de Rivera*, pp. 94-100; Benjamín Oltra and Armando de Miguel, ‘Bonapartismo y catolicismo: orígenes ideológicos del franquismo’, *Papers* 8 (1978), pp. 53-102; Stanley G. Payne, *Fascism in Spain, 1923-1977* (Madison / London, 1999), pp. 23-41; Tamames, *Ni Mussolini ni Franco*, pp. 417-437; Tusell and Genoveva García Queipo de Llano, ‘La Dictadura de Primo de Rivera como regimen político. Un intento de interpretación’, *Cuadernos de Información Comercial Española* 10 (1979) pp. 37-63. In a similar vein, many of the contributions to Francisco Villacorta Baños and María Luisa Rico Gómez’s edited collection develop models of authoritarian ‘solutions’ to crises modernisation, and proceed to apply them to the Primo dictatorship, rather than using empirical examples to develop or nuance current interpretations of the regime. The result is an assessment of the extent to which the dictatorship matched models of political modernisation (apparently approached by most contributors as a process with identifiable start and end points) developed after the event, and the extent to which its attempts at modernisations were successful. This approach does little to develop understandings of how citizens understood and experienced their relationship with the state, or even how state policy-makers conceptualised their actions at the time. Historical actors’ ideas, decisions and aims are overshadowed by schemas subsequently developed by social scientists. Villacorta Baños and Rico Gómez (eds), *Regeneracionismo autoritario. Desafíos y bloqueos de una sociedad en transformación: España, 1923-1930* (Madrid, 2013).

<sup>127</sup> Julio López Iñíguez, ‘Populismo y propaganda municipal en la Valencia del general Primo de Rivera: El marqués de Sotelo (1923-1930)’, *Espacio, Tiempo y Forma, serie V: Historia contemporánea* 28 (2016), pp. 307-328.

modernising, regenerationist programme were applied to the relationship between citizen and state.<sup>128</sup> Although Villacorta Baños primarily examines top-down attempts to impose these policy agendas, examining debates around public works, affordable housing and infrastructure development shows how citizens responded to technocratic and corporatist politics, and used mechanisms shaped by these ideas to engage with government policy. Moreover, infrastructure development projects were a means by which state policy—informed by such ideological preferences—directly affected citizens’ lived experience and by which the state took physical form in local communities. This makes them a useful and important subject in understanding the negotiation of the state–citizens relationship in 1920s Spain. As Pedro Ramos Pinto argues, ‘attitudes, preferences and values are much more likely to be shaped by mundane encounters with the state’; citizens experience their relationship with the state much more frequently in everyday settings than in the ‘extraordinary’ ones like military service.<sup>129</sup>

### **Public works and infrastructure development under Primo de Rivera in existing historiography**

State-sponsored public works, affordable housing provision and infrastructure development projects were a notable feature of the early twentieth century, and especially the inter-war years, throughout Europe. These were often linked to broader political programmes of national reconstruction following the First World War.<sup>130</sup> Efforts to improve the provision of affordable housing for the urban working

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<sup>128</sup> Villacorta Baños, ‘Intervencionismo y corporativismo. Estado y sociedad durante la Dictadura de Primo de Rivera, 1923-1930’ in Villacorta Baños and Rico Gómez (eds), *Regeneracionismo autoritario*, pp. 107-130, especially pp. 113-119.

<sup>129</sup> Pedro Ramos Pinto, “Everyday Citizenship” under Authoritarianism: The Cases of Spain and Portugal’ in Cavatorta (ed.), *Civil Society Activism*, pp. 16-17.

<sup>130</sup> See, for example, Elizabeth Lebas, Susanna Magri and Christian Topalov, ‘Reconstruction and Popular Housing after the First World War: A Comparative Study of France, Great Britain, Italy and the United States’, *Planning Perspectives* 6.3 (2007), pp. 249-267.

classes and lower middle classes in, for example, Britain, Austria, and Weimar Germany are also familiar.<sup>131</sup> Beyond Europe, the early twentieth century also saw considerable investment in dam-building and irrigation works in the United States of America that, Donald Worster argues, continued the process of building a hydraulic empire in what was once the country's western frontier regions.<sup>132</sup>

However, the use of public works to promote an authoritarian programme of national regeneration during the 1920s and 1930s is most familiar in examinations of Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany. Jeffrey Herf identifies a trend of 'reactionary modernism' in early twentieth-century Germany that combined a commitment to technological progress while retaining conservative social structures and aesthetics, and was influential both during the Weimar Republic and during the Nazi regime.<sup>133</sup> Under Hitler, projects such as the construction of new *Autobahnen* featured prominently in regime propaganda and in attempts to institute a 'völkisch technocracy', although intervention in the railway sector prevented the new motorways from competing effectively for freight traffic.<sup>134</sup> Mussolini's regime is also

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<sup>131</sup> See e.g. Ian Kershaw, *To Hell and Back: Europe 1914–1949* (London, 2015), pp. 154-156; Roger Smith and Paul Whysall, 'The Addison Act and the Local Authority Response: Housing Policy Formulation and Implementation in Nottingham, 1917-1922', *The Town Planning Review* 61.2 (1990), pp. 185-206; James Smyth and Douglas Robertson, 'Local Elites and Social Control: Building Council Houses in Stirling between the Wars', *Urban History* 40.2 (2013), pp. 336-354; A. Peter Fawcett, 'A Tale of Two Cities: Sheffield and Nottingham – Architecture and the Provincial City in Inter-War Britain', *Planning Perspectives* 15 (2000), pp. 25-54; Marta García Carbonero, 'Suburban Garden in the Interwar Planning Agenda: London's Becontree vs. Frankfurt's Römerstadt', *Planning Perspectives* 36.4 (2021), pp. 859-872; Kevin Morgan, 'The Problem of the Epoch? Labour and Housing, 1918–51', *Twentieth Century British History* 16.3 (2005), pp. 227-255.

<sup>132</sup> Donald Worster, *Rivers of Empire: Water, Aridity, and the Growth of the American West* (Oxford, 1985), especially pp. 129-256. See also Richard White, *The Organic Machine: The Remaking of the Columbia River* (New York, 1995), pp. 31-88.

<sup>133</sup> Jeffrey Herf, *Reactionary Modernism: Technology, Culture and Politics in Weimar and the Third Reich* (Cambridge, 1986).

<sup>134</sup> John C. Guse, 'Nazi Technical Thought Revisited', *History and Technology* 26.1 (2010), pp. 3-38; Christopher Kopper, 'Germany's National Socialist Transport Policy and the Claim of Modernity: Reality or Fake?', *The Journal of Transport History* 34.2 (2013), pp. 162-176; Richard Vahrenkamp, 'Automobile Tourism and Nazi Propaganda: Constructing the Munich–Salzburg *Autobahn*, 1933-1939', *The Journal of Transport History* 27.2 (2006), pp. 21-38; James D. Shand, 'The *Reichsautobahn*: Symbol for the Third Reich', *Journal of Contemporary History* 19 (1984), pp. 189-195; Thomas Zeller, *Driving Germany: The Landscape of the German *Autobahn*, 1930-1970*, trans. Thomas Dunlap (New York / Oxford, 2007), especially pp. 47-78.

associated with the first appearance of motorways in the Italian peninsula.<sup>135</sup> These construction projects held considerable ‘visionary and palingenetic value’, and the *Duce* made flamboyant use of this for propaganda purposes, contributing to attempts to depoliticise with Italian population through a ‘banal nationalism’ associated with the lifestyles associated with urban modernity.<sup>136</sup>

However, it was in projects to drain and colonise the Pontine marshes, south of Rome, that Fascism’s discourse of nationalist renewal most obviously intersected with modernising infrastructure policy. Numerous previous attempts to drain the marshes had failed and this, along with their proximity to the capital city, meant the area could function as a blank canvas for the on which the dictatorship could attempt to create an idealised Fascist rural society, and claim to have delivered national regeneration, even if much of the relevant planning had been completed before Mussolini came to power.<sup>137</sup> The project was overlaid with Fascist ideological preoccupations, contributing to the goal of encouraging the population to return to rural settlements; to the so-called ‘battle for grain’; and the development of a peculiarly Fascist urban and architectural landscape.<sup>138</sup> The need to reduce the prevalence of malaria meant that medical and biological experts and technicians

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<sup>135</sup> Massimo Moraglio, *Driving Modernity: Technology, Experts, Politics and Fascist Motorways, 1922-1943* (New York, 2017).

<sup>136</sup> Moraglio, *Driving Modernity*, pp. 1-2, 6-7, 12. See also Roger Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism*, (London, 1991), pp. 79-80; Michael Billing, *Banal Nationalism*, (London, 1995).

<sup>137</sup> Federico Caprotti, ‘Destructive Creation: Fascist Urban Planning, Architecture and New Towns in the Pontine Marshes’, *Journal of Historical Geography* 33 (2007), pp. 651-679; Steen Bo Frandsen, ‘“The War that We Prefer”: The Reclamation of the Pontine Marshes and Fascist Expansion’, *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 2.3 (2001), pp. 69-82.

<sup>138</sup> Suzanne Stewart-Steinberg, ‘Grounds for Reclamation: Fascism and Postfascism in the Pontine Marshes’, *Differences* 27.1 (2016), pp. 94-142; Caprotti, ‘Destructive Creation’; Frandsen ‘“The War that We Prefer”’. On ‘the battle for grain’, and Mussolini’s tendency to conduct economic policy through various similar ‘battles’, see Tiago Saraiva ‘Fascist Labscapes: Geneticists, Wheat, and the Landscapes of fascism in Italy and Portugal’, *Historical Studies in the Natural Sciences* 40.4 (2010), pp. 457-498; Martin Blinkhorn, *Mussolini and Fascist Italy* (3<sup>rd</sup> edn, Abingdon / New York, 2006), pp. 46-49; John Whittam, *Fascist Italy* (Manchester / New York, 1995), pp. 60-65. On Fascist urbanism, see Aristotle Kallis, ‘Futures Made Present: Architecture, Monument, and the Battle for the “Third Way” in Fascist Italy’, *Fascism* 7 (2018), pp. 45-79.

played a significant role in the project, extending state power in a self-consciously modern manner.<sup>139</sup> As much as any other project, Italian Fascists' designs on the Pontine marshes show that Spanish *costistas* were not alone in early twentieth-century Europe in seeing state-backed engineering projects as potentially constitutive of a healthy rural society and national regeneration.

In the Spanish case, existing historiography has tended towards the top-down perspective that marks general analyses of the Primo de Rivera regime in its treatment of the dictatorship's public works and infrastructure policy. Many historians limit themselves to discussing raw numbers—kilometres of roads built and railways laid, and pesetas added to the national debt—and state-level reforms. To take one example, Raymond Carr comments that 'the increase in road-building ... was spectacular by Spanish standards; ... the railways were re-equipped'.<sup>140</sup> González Calleja, among others, considers the creation of a *Circuito Nacional de Turismo de Firms Especiales* to oversee the improvement of Spain's road system as a significant aspect of Primo's public-works policy.<sup>141</sup> The organisation drew up plans for the construction of 7,086 kilometres of new roads with a budget of 600 million pesetas, although by 1930 only 2,800 kilometres had been constructed at the considerable cost of 450 million pesetas. Furthermore, a 1925 plan proposed 10,000 kilometres of new railways for a budget of 2.6 billion pesetas, although ultimately 'the construction of [new] lines continued more slowly than in previous years'.

This enumerative approach does little to consider the social and political significance of these infrastructure projects beyond the purely macroeconomic. James Rial

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<sup>139</sup> Stewart-Steinberg, 'Grounds for Reclamation'; Caprotti, 'Malaria and Technological Networks: Medical Geography in the Pontine Marshes, Italy, in the 1930s', *The Geographical Journal* 172.2 (2006), pp. 145-155.

<sup>140</sup> Raymond Carr, *Spain 1808-1975*, (2<sup>nd</sup> edn, Oxford, 1982), pp. 580-581.

<sup>141</sup> Eduardo González Calleja, *Modernización autoritaria*, pp. 232-233; Tusell, *Historia de España en el siglo XX*, 1, pp. 505-506; Tamames, *Ni Mussolini ni Franco*, pp. 320-321.

considers transport a crucial element of Primo's modernisation plans, although his examination of this policy area struggles to move beyond the descriptive.<sup>142</sup> A financial crisis in the country's railway companies required greater state involvement in the industry. Rial's account indicates that Primo's regime increased investment in the railways, and indicates that this additional investment essentially functioned as 'regressive transfer payments benefiting a small group of stockholders and financial institutions'. He does not consider the perspective of other citizens who had a stake in the expansion or proper functioning of Spain's railway network. He notes the importance of the construction of roads to tourism, but approaches the matter primarily as a destination of significant state investment and a cause of considerable indebtedness, in return of an annual average of 1,576 kilometres of new roads laid. While Ramón Tamames, for example, is more positive about the outcome of Primo's investment in public works, he continues to focus on returns on investment and institutional reforms.<sup>143</sup> Unsurprisingly for an economic historian, his approach views infrastructure in instrumentalist terms, as a policy that was either successful or unsuccessful based almost exclusively on economic factors. The same approach is commonly taken where local studies deal with public works.<sup>144</sup> Similar treatment is given to affordable housing development in local and national histories, which usually focus on the question of whether sufficient affordable housing was built to

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<sup>142</sup> Rial, *Revolution from Above*, pp. 155-161.

<sup>143</sup> Tamames, *Ni Mussolini ni Franco*, pp. 281-336.

<sup>144</sup> Alfonso Gutiérrez Barba, 'Llerena durante la dictadura de Primo de Rivera', *Actas de la II jornada de historia de Llerena* (Llerena, 2001), p. 169; Pedro Martínez Gómez, *La dictadura de Primo de Rivera en Almería (1923-1930). Entre el continuismo y la modernización* (Almería, 2007), pp. 88-89, 94, 133-136, 205-206; Francisco Alía Miranda, *Ciudad Real durante la Dictadura de Primo de Rivera* (Ciudad Real, 1986), pp. 115-126; Emilio Pérez Romero, *La Provincia de Soria durante la dictadura de Primo de Rivera (1923-1930)* (Soria, 1983), pp. 99-115; Joan Domènech i Moner, 'El període 1923-1930 a Lloret de Mar' in E.U. da Cal, J. Clara, J. Domenèch, F. Ferrer, A. Jiménez, S. Marquès, J. Puigbert and J. Soler, 'La dictadura de Primo de Rivera: Estudis sobre les comarques gironines' (Gerona, 1992), pp. 166-167'; Nuria Rodríguez Martín, 'La capital de un sueño: Madrid 1900-1936: La formación de una metrópoli europea' (PhD thesis, Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 2013), pp. 144-149.

alleviate housing shortages in a given locality, without exploring themes of socio-political power or the relationship between citizen and state.<sup>145</sup>

The question of whether projects were economically successful has also characterised assessments of the Hydrographic Confederations. Ben-Ami does recognise that the policy was one of the key legacies of regenerationist thought in *primorriverista* policy. However, his analysis weighs the Ebro CSH's irrigation or improvement of over 180,000 hectares against the more than 175 million pesetas invested, and concludes that the dictatorship achieved very little in other regions as the Confederations had little time in which to function.<sup>146</sup> Similarly, Tamames concludes that 'such a policy required time to bear fruit, meaning the dictatorship cannot be blamed for its failure to achieve its grandiose aims'.<sup>147</sup> González Calleja also focuses on economic outcomes, although he better highlights the experience of ordinary rural Spaniards in concluding that 'the vicious cycle of decapitalisation, low yields and low wages and standards of living was maintained'.<sup>148</sup> The ways in which the Confederations attempted to change relationships between state and citizen, or were influenced by existing models of political engagement, does not appear in this analysis.

The largely enumerative approach to public works and infrastructure development takes on a specific form in discussions of affordable housing policy in 1920s Spain. Although there is a large body of urban history studies related to the period, these

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<sup>145</sup> See e.g. Miguel Ángel García Díaz, *Vieja y nueva política: Huelva bajo el régimen de Primo de Rivera (1923-1930)* (Huelva, 2004), pp. 101-103; Fernández Clemente, *Gente de orden*, vol. 1: La política, (Zaragoza, 1997), pp. 131-133; Gutiérrez Barba, 'Llerena', *Actas de la II jornada*, p. 169; Alía Miranda, *Ciudad Real*, pp. 82-83; Ealham, *Class, Culture and Conflict*, pp. 5-10; Rodríguez Martín, 'La capital de un sueño', pp. 34-54, 84-97.

<sup>146</sup> Ben-Ami, *Fascism from Above*, pp. 253-254.

<sup>147</sup> Tamames, *Ni Mussolini ni Franco*, p. 318.

<sup>148</sup> González Calleja, *Modernización autoritaria*, pp. 222-223.

have generally focused on debates around the form and design of new housing.<sup>149</sup> Isabel Yeste Navarro's research on the development of workers' housing in Zaragoza prior to the Civil War refers to the debate over whether it was preferable to build workers' housing in blocks of flats, or in more extensive garden-city developments.<sup>150</sup> As elsewhere in Europe, this was a persistent debate in Spain throughout the period.<sup>151</sup> Other scholars focus on how housing policy shaped urban growth, rather than on the form of new homes, for example Carlos Sambricio who, concentrating on the national implications of housing policy, argued in the 1980s that the Primo de Rivera dictatorship saw Spain's first attempts at urban 'zoning'.<sup>152</sup> Paloma Barreiro Pereira also focuses on the growth of cities, showing how affordable housing and new municipal policy instruments to encourage and coordinate this contributed to Madrid's urban growth in the first four decades of the twentieth century.<sup>153</sup> However, the scholarly conversation regarding these discussions of urban growth and form in the early twentieth century has stagnated, with numerous studies examining fundamentally the same debates in different contexts without proposing new

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<sup>149</sup> Luis Enrique Otero Carvajal and Rubén Pallol Trigueros, 'El Madrid moderno, capital de una España urbana en transformación, 1860-1931', *Historia Contemporánea* 39 (2009), pp. 541-588; Ramón Queiro Quijada, 'Patronato Municipal y Real Patronato de Casas Baratas de Sevilla. Aportaciones a la conformación de la ciudad a través de la vivienda social: 1913-1986' (PhD thesis, University of Seville, 2016); Ana Azpiri Albistegui, 'Urbanismo en Bilbao, 1900-1930', (PhD thesis, Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 2000); Ramón Ripoll Masferrer, Fernando Julián Pérez, Xavier Espinach Orus and Narcís Verdaguier Pujadas, 'La arquitectura de la escasez: Las casas baratas de Sant Cugat de Salt de 1956', *Expresión Gráfica Arquitectónica* 19 (2012), pp. 262-269; Jorge Doménech Romá, *Urbanismo y vivienda obrera en Alcoy: Siglos XIX y XX* (Alicante, 2016); Antònia Casellas, 'Barcelona's Urban Landscape: The Making of a Tourist Product', *Journal of Urban History* 35.6 (2009), pp. 815-832.

<sup>150</sup> Yeste Navarro, 'Una aproximación al tema de la vivienda obrera: La barriada Rusiñol en Zaragoza', *Artígrama* 18 (2003), pp. 549-572; 'La vivienda barata en Zaragoza (1860-1936)', pp. 135-155.

<sup>151</sup> Vanderpelen-Diagre, 'Le monde catholique et les cités-jardins'; Kafkoulá, 'On Garden-City Lines'; Michel Geertse, 'The International Garden City Campaign: Transnational Negotiations on Town Planning Methods 1913-1926', *Journal of Urban History* 42.4 (2016), pp. 733-752; Stanley Buder, *Visionaries and Planners: The Garden City and the Modern Community* (Oxford, 1990); Stephen Ward, *The Garden City: Past, Present and Future* (London / New York, 1992); Carlos Sambiricio, 'De la ciudad lineal a la ciudad jardín: Sobre la difusión en España de los supuestos urbanísticos a comienzos del siglo', *Ciudad y Territorio* 94 (1992), pp. 147-159.

<sup>152</sup> Carlos Sambricio, 'La política urbana de Primo de Rivera: Del Plan Regional a la política de Casa Baratas', *Ciudad y territorio: Revista de ciencia urbana* 54 (1982), pp. 33-54.

<sup>153</sup> Paloma Barreiro Pereira, *Casas baratas: La vivienda social en Madrid, 1900-1939* (Madrid, 1991).



interpretations.<sup>154</sup> The interactions of housing policy with national political dynamics remain largely incidental to such accounts.

A different approach has been taken by Luis Arias González, whose study of the Pablo Iglesias Socialist Cheap Housing Cooperative (*Cooperativa Socialista de Casas Baratas 'Pablo Iglesias'*) examines the organisation's actions in the context of debates within the Spanish socialist movement regarding the right to private property, and whether the movement should support policy measures that would facilitate workers becoming homeowners.<sup>155</sup> Arias González addresses the institutional and administrative contexts in which house-building took place, and thus demonstrates that doing so can allow scholars to relate such construction work to wider political developments. By examining debates around housing policy, rural development and transport infrastructure within a national framework, as opposed to producing a comprehensive history of a single organisation, this thesis demonstrates that interactions between state and citizens in these policy areas point to important similarities in Spain's political culture under Primo's regime to the political culture of the Restoration system.

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<sup>154</sup> Manuel Alejandro Ródenas López, 'Los orígenes de la vivienda social en la región de Murcia, 1900-1936: Las iniciativas de casas baratas en Cartagena y Murcia', (PhD thesis, Universitat Politècnica de Valencia, 2016); María del Mar Domingo Hernández, 'La implicación privada en la construcción de casas baratas en Bizkaia entre 1911 y 1936: Altos Hornos de Vizcaya y la Sociedad de Casas Baratas de Baracaldo y Sestao', *Vasconia* 30 (2000), pp. 323-334; Carlos Sambricio, 'La ingeniería en las revistas españolas de arquitectura: 1920-1936', *Informes de la Construcción* 60.510 (2008), pp. 35-44; Carlos Sambricio (ed.), *Un siglo de vivienda social: 1903-2003* (Madrid, 2003); Ana Cravino, 'Historia de la vivienda social. Primera parte: Del conventillo a las casas baratas', *Vivienda y Ciudad* 3 (2016), pp. 7-24; Ana Julia Gómez, 'La imagen de la vivienda obrera: La tipología de las casas baratas en Bilbao', *Bidebarrieta* 15 (2004), pp. 173-201; 'La arquitectura neovasca y su aportación a las viviendas de casas baratas', *Zainak* 23 (2003), pp. 351-376; Marian Jiménez Riesco, 'La vivienda barata en España (1883-1936): Un estado de la cuestión', *Memoria y Civilización* 10 (2007), pp. 137-181. While Stefano Portelli's investigation of 'urbanism and resistance in a neighbourhood of *casas baratas*'—Barcelona's Bon Pastor district—makes a clear contribution to debates about state power and the history of everyday life in Franco's Spain, the section on the neighbourhood's *primorriverista* origins is intended only as background and is largely descriptive; *La ciudad horizontal: Urbanismo y Resistencia en un barrio de casas baratas* (Barcelona, 2015), pp. 38-46.

<sup>155</sup> Luis Arias González, *Socialismo y vivienda obrera*, pp. 212-218.

Some histories have drawn out some of the socio-political significance of investment in infrastructure development during the dictatorship. Ben-Ami describes Primo's rule as 'an era of cement and roads'. His chapter on 'Dictatorship and "Development"' argues that the expansion of Spain's road network and the re-equipment of its railways were some of the foremost successes of a regenerationist agenda aimed at rapid modernisation of the economy. In his pursuit of this goal, the dictator was 'a fanatic interventionist', given to protectionism, economic nationalism, the formation of state monopolies and a tendency to subsidise big business—often including close allies of the regime—in ways that undermined the regime's claim to be eliminating graft in Spain's public life.<sup>156</sup> Ben-Ami notes some of the changes in ordinary Spaniards' everyday life brought about by transport infrastructure development. People travelled more often, and as new communications infrastructure entered provincial society, they made the romanticised vision of an inert and backward rural Spain increasingly untenable.<sup>157</sup>

Javier Tusell argues that the regime's public-works investment and reforms were characteristic of the influence of regenerationist and nationalist thought on Primo's economic policy.<sup>158</sup> For Tusell, this was one of many policy areas in which the dictatorship adopted solutions proposed but never made into effective policy under the Restoration system. It applied these solutions in a corporatist, interventionist and protectionist manner concerned with 'strengthening the *Patria*'. Tusell does understand the Hydrographic Confederations as contributing to defining the relationship between state authorities and citizens. They were clearly founded on

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<sup>156</sup> Ben-Ami, *Fascism from Above*, pp. 240-256. Similar observations about the tendency of authoritarian modernisation efforts to favour big business could also be made in the case of Fascist Italy; see Blinkhorn, *Mussolini and Fascist Italy*, pp. 43-44.

<sup>157</sup> Ben-Ami, *Fascism from Above*, pp. 314-318.

<sup>158</sup> Tusell, *Historia de España en el siglo XX*, 1, pp. 501-502.

modernising, *costista*, regenerationist lines and ‘in theory ... were meant to have a democratic internal organisation. However, as in other cases, this facet of regenerationism was quickly forgotten’.<sup>159</sup>

Tusell and Ben-Ami link public works to wider questions and debates about the nature of the Primo regime, and indicate their relevance to regenerationist thought and changes in citizens’ daily lives. However, Ben-Ami approaches infrastructure policy primarily as a tool of statecraft that the dictatorship used in a misguided and expensive pursuit of economic nationalism; to ingratiate itself with business elites; or to maintain its alliance with a socialist movement convinced that Spain required a ‘bourgeois revolution’ before a proletarian one.<sup>160</sup> Policies and development are seen simply as a product of government decisions, state spending and the formation of new public bodies, institutions and administrative structures. Similarly, Carr concludes that provisions such as investment in affordable homes were a means of compensating working-class citizens for the regime’s attempts to force ‘the gospel of work’ on them.<sup>161</sup> Citizens thus merely engage with infrastructure created by state action, rather than with the state itself. Tusell lacks sufficient space in his survey of Spain’s early twentieth century to fully explore the mechanisms by which regenerationist-minded citizens engaged with and attempted to influence government policy; he merely states that Primo de Rivera made the regenerationist content of Spaniards’ café conversations into ‘a principle of government’.<sup>162</sup> Presenting Primo as the primary actor through whom—almost by osmosis—these ideas made their way into government policy overlooks active citizen engagement. Spanish citizens were not passive recipients of state spending, and frequently

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<sup>159</sup> Tusell, *Historia de España en el siglo XX*, 1, p. 505.

<sup>160</sup> Ben-Ami, *Fascism from Above*, pp. 240-281.

<sup>161</sup> Raymond Carr, *Spain 1808-1975* (2<sup>nd</sup> edn, Oxford, 1982), p. 170.

<sup>162</sup> Tusell, *Historia de España en el siglo XX*, 1, p. 453.

attempted—alone or as part of organisations—to influence government policy and actions, whether in the context of personal or local issues or questions of regional significance. Sometimes they attempted to enlist the *primorriverista* state, and sometimes they opposed its policies. Whether or not they were successful, this engagement shaped the relationship between state and citizens in 1920s Spain.

### **Case studies, sources and theoretical approaches**

The thesis approaches the issue of infrastructure policy and public works by examining three national policy areas: affordable housing, transport infrastructure and administration, and water management and rural development. Irrigation was a key issue in Spain. The country was still predominantly agrarian during the 1920s, but large regions received scarce rainfall. This was also a policy area in which the Primo regime made one of its most ambitious and longest-lived reforms: the creation of a Hydrographic Confederation in each of Spain's major river basins. This policy showed continuities in thought with Costa's *política hidráulica*, and this is a key case study for an examination of the importance of regenerationist thought in *primorriverista* public-works policy. These new structures served as a means for reimagining Spain's national community along *costista* and 'anti-political' lines.

Transport infrastructure and administration is one of the most widely cited areas of state action in public-works policy under Primo de Rivera. Road and railway construction are closely associated with the regime's public-works policy in the historiography, making them an important topic in studying infrastructure development in the period. It is also a policy area that was truly national in scope, allowing the examination of national political dynamics. Transport also offers an opportunity to explore public works within a local and regional context, through examples such as the Barcelona metro system and the Canfranc international

railway, which enjoyed significant support from civil society groups in Aragon. Studying transport infrastructure administration—especially but not only of the railway network—offers an opportunity to explore the place of private companies within *primorriverista* infrastructure policy, and how this matched or contradicted the discourses of ‘anti-politics’.

Of the three subjects studied in this thesis, affordable housing is unique in that it was not the responsibility of the Ministry of Development, instead being part of the Labour, Commerce and Industry portfolio. As in other European nations, housing was a significant challenge for the Spanish state, as rural citizens migrated to urban centres, both the great cities and smaller provincial capitals. Improving citizens’ living conditions was crucial to regenerationist policy agendas.<sup>163</sup> The shortcomings of affordable housing policies directly and negatively affected citizens’ daily lived experience, making it an important case study for the development of ‘anti-political’ feeling around infrastructure policies. The fact that citizens with direct interests in this area could have directly opposed interests (as landlords or tenants, for example) makes it a particularly instructive topic in understanding how Primo’s eclectic, populist discourse appealed to a broad range of social groups.

The sources that underpin this study include letters and petitions; administrative records and memoranda from local and national government as well as non-state actors; reproductions of speeches and lectures, including proceedings of relevant conferences and congresses; the local and national press; and publications by government bodies and civil society campaigning organisations, including periodical magazines. They are predominantly discursive in nature, speaking to debates, discussions, complaints and propaganda around the projects rather than the

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<sup>163</sup> Costa, *Oligarquía y caciquismo*, pp. 62-65; *Política hidráulica*, ch. 1-2.

technical specifications or detailed planning of given public works. Using these sources makes it possible write a history of public works and infrastructure development as a topic of public policy debate and as a subject around which citizens and the state encountered and interacted with each other during the 1920s. This approach casts new light on the nature of the Primo de Rivera dictatorship, on broader national political dynamics, and on the relationship between Spaniards and the state.

The majority of these sources were gathered during primary research trips to national archives and research libraries in Madrid, and to local archives in Madrid, Barcelona and Zaragoza. Others were consulted via online repositories. Records held at the *Archivo Histórico Ferroviario* (Historical Railway Archive) at the Madrid Railway Museum proved valuable in understanding the dictatorship's attempts to respond to the crisis that affected Spanish railways during the first decades of the twentieth century and the attitudes of the large railway companies that produced the majority of these records. Its extensive archival series relating to the crisis faced by Spain's railway companies during the 1920s enabled me to interrogate the tension between the anti-political notion of a shared national good and the private interests of the companies that operated Spain's transport infrastructure. The *Archivo Histórico Nacional* holds a rich collection of petitions and letters addressed to Primo de Rivera relating to public works and infrastructure policy. Combined with relevant press sources, these allowed me to establish that public assemblies and petitioning were commonplace methods of engaging with the Spanish state in the period, and to critically interrogate the ideological idioms employed by the coalitions of interests involved. Published sources held at the *Biblioteca Nacional de España* (Spanish National Library) offered access to speeches by a range of figures regarding

development policy directly before, during, and immediately following the dictatorship.

Conducting the majority of my primary research at national archives and research libraries allowed me to access a representative sample of sources in order to develop a national picture of the phenomena I examine. I was able to engage with material from all regions of Spain and thus build up a source base that allowed me to explore national political dynamics. Examining letters, petitions and publications from around the country made it possible to develop a rich source base demonstrating the interactions of a wide variety of non-state actors with the Primo dictatorship, the discursive practices employed in these interactions, and their administrative handling where relevant. Contrasting the broadly populist language of regenerationism favoured by many groups campaigning for infrastructure development with the failure of the dictatorship to revolutionise the functioning of the Spanish state in this policy area proved to be a productive line of enquiry. The gulf between the expectations of regenerationism and the reality of *primorriverista* rule is an important theme that runs through this thesis. These dynamics, identified in my analysis of source material from national archives, are validated by case studies based on local archives, notably in Barcelona and Zaragoza.

Holdings at these municipal archives offered useful sources relating to the construction of affordable homes. The affordable housing cooperative established by a group of journalists in Barcelona during the final decade of the Restoration played an important role in campaigns for improved housing provision during the 1920s; its records helped me to unpick how Spain's housing crisis informed anti-political populism in the period. Moreover, the opening of the Barcelona metro system was a notable event in transport infrastructure development in Spain during the period

examined; conducting research in the Catalan capital allowed me to integrate discussion of the system's construction into my examination of competing interests in transport infrastructure under Primo's dictatorship.

The Zaragoza municipal archive provided important material for a case study focused on an affordable housing project proposed in the city during the dictatorship. This project was nationally significant, being approved by the central government in a 1925 Royal Decree. Its frustrated progress helps to elucidate, in a clearly circumscribed setting, wider dynamics that I identify from national archival holdings. The region of Aragon faced significant challenges in terms of road transport in the period, in part due to the challenging topography of Huesca and Teruel provinces. Combined with the region's position as a significant centre of regenerationist thought, this made it an appropriate location to study the articulation of a modernising policy agenda in the area of transport infrastructure. Evidence of this policy agenda can be found throughout Spain, but examining it in the Aragonese context, particularly through the regional press, also demonstrates how it interacted with existing regional identities.

The municipal archive of Zaragoza also offered access to a range of sources regarding the development of the Syndical Hydrographic Confederations, especially the CSH of the Ebro (CSHE). The CSHE is the case study for the chapter on the CSHs principally because it was the Hydrographic Confederation that made the most concrete progress in its plans under the Primo dictatorship. Furthermore, the Ebro basin is significant as the region in which the model for the Confederations was developed by civil engineer Manuel Lorenzo Pardo, and as the native region of Joaquín Costa. The chapter on the CSHE focuses on examining the ideology and assumptions underlying the policy, as a means of understanding the long-term socio-political vision that



animated the collaboration between the dictatorship and representatives of the regenerationist Aragonese bourgeoisie. The chapter therefore draws primarily on press sources and CSHE publications, especially contributions by senior functionaries to the Confederation's monthly magazine.

Throughout this thesis, I draw on the theoretical framework elaborated by Michael Mann in *The Sources of Social Power*. Mann argues that the modern state should not be viewed as essentially 'unitary', or entirely 'cohesive' or monolithic. Rather, it has a 'dual' nature. It relies on society for military, economic, ideological and political resources and is staffed by individuals with their own 'social identities'; modern states do not simply rule over societies, but are also bound to them in, and constituted by, 'overlapping, intersecting power networks'.<sup>164</sup> This theoretical framework allows for a focus on two-way interactions between citizens and the state, and thus a fuller understanding of this relationship under the Primo de Rivera regime than top-down analytical perspectives. This thesis approaches public works and infrastructure development as a policy area through which state actors could construct networks of bureaucratic and ideological power, through administrative processes and by propagating certain discourses around public works. However, citizens could also shape their place within these networks of power through their engagement with these administrative processes and their adoption and adaptation of regime-sponsored discourses. Exploring how the *primorriverista* state and Spanish citizens shaped these networks of power, while taking the notion of 'anti-politics' seriously, helps to cast new light on the processes by which the 1923 coup achieved widespread acceptance, and that contributed to the dictatorship's fall in 1930.

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<sup>164</sup> Mann, *Sources of Social Power*, volume II, pp. 46-47, 50-56.

As discussed above, under the *turno pacífico*, the Spanish state's networks of social power crystallised into a system based on patronage networks and electoral falsification. Despite the anti-*caciquil* language of Primo's 1923 manifesto, corrupt practices continued to be widespread under the dictatorship.<sup>165</sup> The government's decision to award a monopoly on the tobacco trade in Spain's Moroccan Protectorate to the notorious smuggler Juan March was a particularly flagrant instance.<sup>166</sup> Indeed, large parts of the chapters on Primo's dictatorship in Paul Preston's recent monograph read as a catalogue of financial malpractice and (unsurprisingly for a military dictatorship) abuses of the rule of law. Public works projects could be the vehicles for the dishonest accrual of considerable fortunes by private companies, and senior state actors including the king and the dictator were alleged to have taken bribes to intervene in the process of awarding contracts. Such allegations were suppressed through the regime's censorship structures.<sup>167</sup>

However, Jonathan Rose and Paul Heywood argue that in accounting for corrupt practices in political systems, it is a mistake to focus only on instances of grand corruption.<sup>168</sup> A less clearly delineated but more pervasive *lack of integrity* can be just as damaging. Self-interest and a lack of integrity are easier than illicit financial practices to trace in sources that speak to discussions, debates and cultural-political perceptions around infrastructure policy, and are thus a clear focus of this thesis. Moreover, such an approach is more suitable for a study that focuses on interactions between citizens and state in networks of power. Preston views Spanish citizens as

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<sup>165</sup> Paul Preston, *A People Betrayed: A History of Corruption, Political Incompetence and Social Division in Modern Spain 1874-2018* (London, 2020), pp. 157-225; Ben-Ami, *Fascism from Above*, pp. 245-248; Martínez Gómez, *Almería (1923-1930)*, pp. 145-146, 347.

<sup>166</sup> Tamames, *Ni Mussolini ni Franco*, pp. 324-327; Ben-Ami, *Fascism from Above*, p. 247; Preston, *A People Betrayed*, pp. 162-164.

<sup>167</sup> Preston, *A People Betrayed*, pp. 157-225. See especially pp. 178-181, 185-186.

<sup>168</sup> Jonathan Rose and Paul M. Heywood, 'Political Science Approaches to Integrity and Corruption', *Human Affairs* 23 (2013), pp. 148-159.

having been ‘betrayed’ by corrupt and incompetent governments—including Primo de Rivera’s—for the majority of the country’s history since the late nineteenth century.<sup>169</sup> However, citizens were not passive victims of improper conduct in public life. Corruption under the Restoration system informed some citizens’ rejection of ‘politics’ during the 1920s, as well as the forms or organisation and discourses that they employed in their relations with Primo’s regime. Moreover, Spanish citizens were not themselves separate or immune from the lack of integrity in the state administration during the Restoration and the dictatorship. Examples of self-interested appeals to the government to intervene in or prioritise particular public-works projects show that a reliance on political favour—whether of *caciquil* patrons or of Primo de Rivera as head of government—shaped ordinary Spaniards’ interactions with representatives of the state.

### **Structure of the thesis**

This thesis is divided into three substantive chapters, followed by a brief concluding chapter. The first substantive chapter will examine the ways that regenerationist and anti-political thought informed civil society mobilisations around the issue of affordable housing provision in 1920s Spain. A substantial section of this chapter will cover relations between affordable housing cooperatives and the governments of the final years of the Restoration. This discussion provides important illustrations of how regenerationist and anti-political discourses influenced Spanish citizens’ interpretations of government action (or inaction) and their own material conditions prior to Primo’s coup, and how this informed their response to the new dictatorship. The Restoration’s lacklustre attempts to resolve the housing crisis acted as a crucible for anti-political feeling, with citizens concluding that gaining access to government

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<sup>169</sup> Preston, *A People Betrayed*.

funds for the construction of affordable homes required one to secure ‘a political friend’ through *caciquil* patronage networks. These citizens interpreted cumbersome administrative processes through the lens of regenerationist condemnations of ‘inertia’ in Spain’s public life.

Spaniards interested in the construction of affordable housing channelled their campaigns to improve the government policy in the area through civil society mobilisations based on socio-economic position, rather than on overarching ideologies as might influence a political party. While working-class Spaniards were perhaps the most obvious recipients of state support for the provision of affordable housing, many groups aimed to secure these benefits for lower-middle-class professionals as well. These forms of mobilisation made good sense under the less than democratic parliamentary politics of the Restoration, and continued to function during Primo’s dictatorship. These embedded modes of political action, the mechanisms by which citizens chose to engage with the state, persisted despite the destruction of the 1876 constitutional settlement. While such civil society mobilisations now engaged with the new personnel of the *primorriverista* state—not least by petitioning the head of government directly, rather than local *caciques*—much the same organisations continued to act as Spaniards’ interlocuters with the state.

Groups interested in the area of affordable housing found that Primo’s anti-political populism reflected their understanding of the kinds of transformations necessary in state action, securing their support—even if tentative—for the dictatorship in its early stages. The chapter examines petitions from tenants, landlords, housing cooperatives and other civil society organisations involved in this policy area, showing how these groups adopted and adapted the language of the dictatorship. Primo’s semantically

flexible populism helped to attract a broad but ultimately unstable coalition of support. When actually legislating, it was not possible to maintain support from groups with opposed interests, even if the vague populism of Primo's September 1923 manifesto appealed to a wide range of groups in Spanish society. Moreover, organisations such as cheap housing cooperatives continued to complain of much the same policy shortcomings as they had prior to 1923; citizens' experience of Spain's housing shortage did not improve despite a moderate increase in the pace of construction. This did not prevent Primo's regime from continued attempts publicly to co-opt these movements. This constituted a route to integration into the structures of the Spanish state through organisations formed from the bottom up, rather than coercive, top-down institutions like the army. The chapter concludes with a case study that illustrates many of the dynamics discussed in previous sections: the *ayuntamiento* of Zaragoza's attempts to support affordable housing construction in the city, which were disrupted variously by the unreliability of private companies, administrative delays, and citizens' attempts to defend their class interests even while professing to pursue 'the common good'.

The second substantive chapter examines debates around transport infrastructure policy under the dictatorship. It uses petitions and letters from around Spain to demonstrate the importance of regenerationism in elaborating a modernising policy agenda in 1920s Spain. This agenda informed citizens' attempts to secure regime support for given projects in which they had a direct material stake. Such petitions regularly adopted the language of patriotism, arguing in favour of particular policy interventions on the basis that they would promote national prosperity, obscuring the private or local interests that would be served by these schemes. As well as demonstrating a continuing tendency to approach the state as the administrator of

pork-barrel politics (even following an explicitly regenerationist, anti-*caciquil* coup), this raises questions about whether regenerationist discourses always reflected a genuine desire to see greater integrity in Spanish public life, or whether they sometimes reflected a desire of petitioners for state action that supported their own interests. Campaigns for transport development also served as an arena for regional *fuerzas vivas* that identified with the regime to define regenerationist models of good citizenship.

As in the case of housing, material improvements were not always as ‘rapid and radical’ as anti-political populism suggested. Moreover, individual villages’, districts’ and regions’ attempts to defend their interests could be a key factor in delaying the associated administrative processes. Despite this, the regime was able to use transport infrastructure development for propaganda purposes and to perform its support for regional *fuerzas vivas*. This tendency simultaneously drew on and strengthened the cultural importance of the regenerationist policy agenda, while using the language of national grandeur to obscure the contradictions between different the interests involved. Transport infrastructure policy presents an opportunity to examine the relationship between the *primorriverista* state and private companies, especially those that owned and operated much of Spain’s rail network. Examining the dictatorship’s attempts to reform the railway system and make it financially stable makes it possible to explore the relationship of these companies to regenerationist worldviews and critically to interrogate *primorriverista* discourses that portrayed all stakeholders as working together for the national good. While railway companies reproduced this language, the fact that they continued in private ownership meant that they represented the private

interests of shareholders that often conflicted with the dictatorship's understanding of a shared national good.

The final substantive chapter explores the creation of the Syndical Hydrographic Confederations (CSHs), and focuses particularly on the CSH of the Ebro (CSHE). The chapter explores the conception of the policy following contacts between regime figures—especially the Count of Guadalhorce—and representatives of modernising, *costista* groups in Aragon. The CSHs were established at a time when the Civil Directorate was considering measures to secure a longer-term future for a regime based on *primorriverista* ideological precepts, through the formation of a National Assembly and the drafting of a new, corporatist constitution. These attempts were not restricted to central state institutions in Madrid, but were also expressed in the social and economic order that *primorriverista*, regenerationist reforms aimed to create. Using discursive sources such as publications and speeches by the CSHE, its functionaries and other senior figures associated with the policy, this chapter explores how the encounter between the dictatorship and *costista* developmentalists provided a long-term socio-political vision for the regime. This encounter was productive for both parties, providing regenerationist technocrats with the political access they required to execute their plans, while also making it possible to imagine a long-term *primorriverista* utopia.

The chapter unpicks how this programme imagined and shaped the relationship between rural Spanish citizens and the government. State institutions were to be extended into rural communities with the aim of 'coordinating' citizens' different interests with the aim of securing general prosperity. This would create a new 'national spirit' under which prosperity would eliminate the need for, and thus the legitimacy of, political conflict. While Spaniards were encouraged to identify state

action with their economic interests, this was a deeply hierarchical social programme, relying on citizens' subordination to plans drawn up by technocratic state institutions. Whereas bourgeois, regenerationist figures and coalitions of interests could use anti-*caciquil* and developmentalist ideas to gain a privileged position in the military dictatorship's networks of social power, rural citizens were expected to accept greater state direction of their lives in return for increased prosperity. This mirrored a broader pattern under which the dictatorship used the aim of increased material wealth as a kind of compensation for working-class Spaniards' lack of political freedom.<sup>170</sup> Rural development policy also provided an impetus for public events and ceremonies that encouraged citizens to identify with the *primorriverista* state, thus expanding on existing understandings that view Primo's mobilisation of citizens primarily in coercive or more explicitly nationalising institutions. Policies like the Syndical Hydrographic Confederations created a route to the integration of citizens based on their economic position rather than through the imposition of nationalist symbols. The often intertwined discourses of nationalism and prosperity complemented each other in the Spanish state's attempts to integrate citizens into its structures during the early twentieth century.

This thesis provides a history of national political debates, illustrating citizens' engagement with the *primorriverista* state through these. While it would be possible to write histories of infrastructure development focused on the design, technical specifications and actual construction of public-works projects, that is not the intention here. Instead, the focus lies on discussions and ideas around public works and infrastructure development and on how Spanish citizens and government figures

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<sup>170</sup> See e.g. Carr, *Spain 1808-1975*, pp. 570-571; González Calleja, *Modernización autoritaria*, pp. 153-154, 266-268; Ben-Ami, *Fascism from Above*, pp. 282-318.



thought about, understood and positioned themselves with regards to these policies. Many of the sources on which it draws could also be examined within locally focused studies or histories of everyday life. Here, sources from across Spain are instead used to elucidate national political dynamics, and the importance of infrastructure development within these. This is not a top-down political history, but nor is it a history of on everyday life in *primorriverista* Spain with particular reference to infrastructure policy. It sits between the two, focusing on how topics that affected their everyday lives influenced citizens' engagement with and understanding of the Spanish state. It reveals how this relationship was constructed around socio-economic issues and outside coercive institutions, through two-directional interactions rather than top-down impositions.

## Chapter One

# Affordable Housing and the Limits of Primorriverista Populism

One of the crises that most directly affected Spanish citizens' everyday lives during the 1920s was a chronic shortage of affordable housing, especially in urban centres.<sup>1</sup> The disruption of global trade during the First World War led to increasing prices of raw materials for the construction industry, and combined with migration to cities to worsen the existing scarcity of hygienic and affordable housing.<sup>2</sup> This exacerbated a cost-of-living crisis for ordinary Spaniards facing steep price inflation on staple food products, while wages remained comparatively stagnant.<sup>3</sup> However, the political significance of this crisis during the Primo de Rivera regime, and the dictatorship's attempts to resolve it, have not been the subject of systematic study.

By focusing on national debates around the subject this chapter uses the question of affordable housing to engage with broader debates around the nature of the Primo regime. It explores affordable housing policy under Primo de Rivera as an issue of national political significance rather than through its effects on the urban development of particular towns and cities. Instead of considering 'bricks-and-

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<sup>1</sup> Romero Salvadó, 'A Reckless Gamble' in Romero Salvadó and Smith (eds), *The Agony of Spanish Liberalism*, pp. 65-66.; Ealham, *Class, Culture and Conflict*, pp. 5-10; Luis Arias González, *Socialismo y vivienda obrera en España (1926-1939): La cooperativa socialista de casas baratas «Pablo Iglesias»* (Salamanca, 2003), pp. 30-44, 53-68.

<sup>2</sup> Cámara Oficial de la Propiedad Urbana de Madrid, *Informe que la Comisión de Asuntos Municipales que preside el Excmo. Sr. D. Joaquín Ruiz Giménez ha presentado al Pleno de la Cámara Oficial de la Propiedad Urbana de Madrid* (Madrid, 1924), pp. 5-7; Ministerio de Trabajo, Comercio e Industria: Instituto de Reformas Sociales, *Conferencia Nacional de la Edificación, Madrid, 1923: Memoria* (Madrid, 1924), pp. 9-19; 33-37; José Subirá, *La crisis de la vivienda: Sus causas, males y remedios* (Madrid, 1924), pp. 16-17; Juan Pérez Herrero, *Casas baratas: Recopilación de lo actuado por la Corporación Municipal para la solución del problema y disposiciones por el poder público, dictadas especialmente para esta ciudad* (Zaragoza, 1930), pp. 2-4; Isabel Yeste Navarro 'Desarrollo industrial y crecimiento urbano: La vivienda barata en Zaragoza (1860-1936)', *Artigrama* 14 (1999), p. 140; Sambricio, 'La ingeniería en las revistas españolas de arquitectura', p. 36.

<sup>3</sup> Tusell, *Historia de España en el siglo XX*, 1, p. 309; Romero Salvadó, 'A Reckless Gamble', p. 64.

mortar' questions of how many new homes were built, where and when, it asks how developments and debates around affordable housing policy in the period can enhance our understanding of the political dynamics of Primo's rule. It necessarily examines local case studies, but draws on material from around Spain including national government records. It examines citizens' engagement with the national government during the 1920s, considering how citizens understood national politics through the lens of local and personal conditions, with the intention of casting new light on the broader political development of the Primo de Rivera dictatorship and changing conceptions of the role of the state in Spanish society.

The chapter demonstrates that housing policy and access to affordable housing were sensitive and urgent political issues in 1920s Spain. It begins its analysis with an examination of public debates and perceptions around the implementation of affordable housing policy under the Restoration. This reveals that citizens interpreted the housing crisis during this period in regenerationist and anti-*caciquil* terms, which would be significant in informing public policy debates in this area under Primo's dictatorship. The poor supply of affordable housing was understood in part as a consequence of the incompetence or corruption of political elites. These perceptions informed citizens' campaigns to resolve the issue, which often took the form of mobilisations based on socio-economic interests rather than the overarching ideologies that animated political parties. Such movements made good sense as a means of organising and of engaging with state authorities under the unrepresentative electoral politics of the Restoration, and they continued to serve this function when Primo's coup ended even the pretence of liberal democracy. This dynamic points to important continuities between political practice under the

Restoration and under Primo: while the 1923 coup ended the outward forms of the parliamentary constitution, certain embedded modes of political action persisted.

Even so, 'anti-political' interpretations of the Restoration system's failure to address the housing crisis made this a policy area in which Primo's populist denunciations of the previous regime resonated with citizens' concerns. Primo's anti-*caciquil* populism allowed his regime to mobilise resentments generated by the housing crisis, and to co-opt relevant civil society organisations. However, citizens' interests were often contradictory and could not all be fulfilled, preventing this from becoming a basis for lasting support. The regime provided incentives for the formation of cheap housing cooperatives, and stimulated more house-building than previous governments.<sup>4</sup> However, this new housing was insufficient to alleviate the sense of crisis among citizens, and cooperatives continued to complain of cumbersome administrative processes and inadequate financial support from the state.<sup>5</sup> Primo de Rivera promised 'rapid and radical remedies' to the country's multiple crises in his 13 September 1923 manifesto.<sup>6</sup> The success of his programme was linked to the implementation of such measures and yet, in the sensitive policy area of housing, the remedies his regime proposed were neither rapid nor radical.

### **Spain's housing crisis and Restoration-era palliatives**

As in other European countries, by the early 1920s the rented housing sector in Spain had been troubled for many years. The government of José Canalejas Méndez introduced a *Ley de casas baratas* (Cheap Housing Act) in 1911, but the sector's

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<sup>4</sup> Arias González, *Socialismo y vivienda obrera*, pp. 217-221; Carmen Delgado Viñas, 'El problema de la vivienda obrera en las ciudades españolas (Burgos, 1850-1936)', *Ería* 27 (1992), pp. 33-56. See especially pp. 45-50.

<sup>5</sup> Primer Congreso Nacional de Cooperativas de Casas Baratas, *Primer Congreso Nacional de Cooperativas de Casas Baratas: 29 Octubre – 4 Noviembre 1927* (Barcelona, 1928), pp. 19-37.

<sup>6</sup> Álvarez Rey (ed.), *Bajo el fuero militar*, p. 57.

problems were severely aggravated by the economic impact of the First World War, provoking a systemic, nationwide crisis.<sup>7</sup> The construction industry experienced a rapid increase in the cost of raw materials, and imports suddenly became curtailed. Wartime increases in the price of coal in turn increased the price of iron, bricks, cement and gypsum. As a result, the material costs of building new homes increased by a factor of three and a half over the course of the conflict, and labour costs more than doubled under the influence of more general cost-of-living inflation. An unreliable transport network both increased the cost of materials and led to construction work being suspended when sufficient supplies were not available.<sup>8</sup> Labour migration to cities during the industrial boom created by the conflict created new pressure on urban housing stocks.<sup>9</sup> These increased costs discouraged investment in construction, and led to higher prices and rents for new housing.<sup>10</sup> The result was an undersupply of housing, and wages struggled to keep up with increasing rents, especially given the inflationary consequences of the First World War for other basic living costs.<sup>11</sup> In addition to these issues, the Primo dictatorship later also attributed the housing shortage to land speculation and insufficient credit facilities.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> *Gaceta de Madrid*, 13/6/1911, pp. 755-758. I will henceforth refer to *casas baratas* using the Spanish term to avoid confusion with the related but distinct legal category of *casas* or *viviendas económicas*. The latter, whose construction was supported by the provisions of the *Real Decreto-Ley* of 29 July 1925, was intended to provide lower-middle-class Spaniards with decent housing within their economic means. The maximum permitted rent for these homes was therefore higher than that for *casas baratas*. See *Gaceta de Madrid*, 5/8/1925, pp. 842-846. 'Affordable housing', when used in English in this chapter, refers to low-cost housing more broadly, including these two legal categories.

<sup>8</sup> Ministerio de Trabajo, Comercio e Industria: Instituto de Reformas Sociales, *Conferencia Nacional de la Edificación, Madrid, 1923: Memoria* (Madrid, 1924), p. 535-536.

<sup>9</sup> Romero Salvadó, 'A Reckless Gamble', p. 66; Ministerio de Trabajo, Comercio e Industria, *Conferencia Nacional de la Edificación: Memoria*, p. 536.

<sup>10</sup> Ministerio de Trabajo, *Conferencia Nacional de la Edificación: Memoria*, p. 536.

<sup>11</sup> Romero Salvadó, 'A Reckless Gamble', p. 64.

<sup>12</sup> *Gaceta de Madrid*, 8/12/1924, p. 1274.

During the crisis of the Restoration system, the conservative government of Eduardo Dato (May 1920-March 1921) and the government of national unity headed by Antonio Maura (August 1921-March 1922) attempted to resolve the crisis. Temporary rent controls outlawing rent increases for residential and commercial lets in population centres of 20,000 or more inhabitants were signed into law on 21 June 1920.<sup>13</sup> The provisions of the decree were intended to remain in force until 31 December 1921, and to provide some relief to urban residential tenants and small business owners while the government examined the issue with the aim of developing a more systematic and permanent policy.<sup>14</sup> However, by further eroding the construction industry's profit margins, these measures discouraged new construction.<sup>15</sup> To correct the undersupply of housing would require policies that would stimulate the construction of new housing regardless of profitability. However, the 1911 *Ley de casas baratas* struggled to achieve this. By 1920, throughout Spain, only 1,295 homes had been built under the legislation, 215 were under construction, and a further 1,852 were planned.<sup>16</sup> While representing an improvement for the households concerned, this was hardly sufficient on a national scale. Rent controls had to be extended in October 1921, still pending the development of enduring solutions to the crisis.<sup>17</sup>

December 1921 saw the passage of a new *Ley de casas baratas*.<sup>18</sup> The construction of affordable housing under this law was not centrally controlled. Rather, new homes which met the 'technical, hygienic and economic' conditions set out in the law and

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<sup>13</sup> *Gaceta de Madrid*, 22/6/1920, pp. 1138-1140.

<sup>14</sup> *Gaceta de Madrid*, 22/6/1920, pp. 1138-1139.

<sup>15</sup> Cámara Oficial de la Propiedad Urbana de Barcelona, *Las recientes disposiciones del Directorio encaminadas a impulsar la construcción de viviendas económicas* (Barcelona, 1924), pp. 10-11.

<sup>16</sup> Ministerio de Trabajo, *Conferencia Nacional de la Edificación: Memoria*, pp. 537-538.

<sup>17</sup> *Gaceta de Madrid*, 20/10/1921, p. 194.

<sup>18</sup> *Gaceta de Madrid*, 11/12/1921, pp. 858-866.

subsequent regulations could be recognised as *casas baratas*, and the law authorised ‘the State [i.e. the central government], municipal authorities [*Ayuntamientos*] ... corporations of all types and private individuals’ to construct such homes.<sup>19</sup> The regulations for the Act’s application, passed in 1922, stipulated a maximum annual income of 6,000 pesetas for the inhabitants of *casas baratas*, and annual rents were not to exceed one fifth of this figure.<sup>20</sup> The law granted a series of tax exemptions and made various grants available for those building or inhabiting *casas baratas*, as well as authorising local authorities to raise loans and expropriate land to construct affordable homes.<sup>21</sup> However, a further renewal of the rent controls was passed in December 1922.<sup>22</sup> The government was still not confident that it had developed a solution to the problem.

Not only did *casas baratas* legislation fail to stimulate the construction of enough houses to justify an end to rent controls, but the conditions of the homes constructed often did not meet the tenants’ needs or fulfil relevant legal stipulations. During the summer of 1925, inspectors in Madrid province found legal and hygienic infractions in affordable homes that had been approved prior to Primo’s coup. In one apartment building in the capital’s Chamberí district, the majority of tenants were found to earn more than the maximum salary specified in the regulations, while storage spaces in the approved plans had been converted into basement flats.<sup>23</sup> In a number of cases, the tenants or owners named in the original paperwork had died, moved on or sold the property, with no examination of the eligibility of the new occupiers having taken

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<sup>19</sup> *Gaceta de Madrid*, 11/12/1921, p. 858.

<sup>20</sup> *Gaceta de Madrid*, 11/12/1921, p. 858; 28/7/1922, pp. 363-399; 25/8/1922, p. 792. For the figure of 6,000 pesetas, see 28/7/1922, p. 365.

<sup>21</sup> *Gaceta de Madrid*, 11/12/1921, pp. 858-862.

<sup>22</sup> *Gaceta de Madrid*, 5/12/1922, pp. 970-971.

<sup>23</sup> Archivo General de la Administración [hereafter AGA], caja 44/2430, legajo 1, report on c/Meléndez Valdés 13, July 1925.

place.<sup>24</sup> A company building one development in the Atocha neighbourhood was required to submit new plans, having deviated significantly from the original ones approved in August 1916.<sup>25</sup> There is no indication in the records as to why this building should still have been under construction nine years after the approval of the plans, but such delays could not have persuaded ordinary Spaniards that the Restoration authorities had taken energetic measures to resolve the housing crisis. At another property in the Castellana neighbourhood, the running water that had been planned for all flats had not been fully installed. In all but a few flats where tenants had installed drinking water taps themselves, the mains water supply was limited to the toilet, with tenants siphoning drinking water from the cisterns.<sup>26</sup>

Delays, regulatory infringements and poor sanitary conditions such as those discovered by the provincial inspectors in Madrid would not only have undermined the confidence of individual residents in the capacity of the *casas baratas* framework to meet their needs during the final years of the Restoration system, but such shortcomings would also have been well known in the local communities directly affected. As Luis Arias González reminds us, housing conditions have a more direct impact on citizens' sense of dignity than other issues often emphasised in political history, such as press censorship or secularism in education.<sup>27</sup> For infractions such as those discussed above to be widely known or discussed in a locality would certainly have brought the authorities into disrepute and generated resentment towards Spain's governing classes. Such conditions were rife in cities, and well known by citizens outside the areas most directly affected. For instance, delegates at the

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<sup>24</sup> AGA, caja 44/2430, legajo 1, report on c/Ramón Sainz 6, 11/7/1925; report on c/Cardenal Bellgua 14, 24/6/1925; report on Sociedad Cooperativa de Casas baratas, ladera del Monte Albantos, Barrio de las Casillas, 24/6/1925.

<sup>25</sup> AGA, caja 44/2430, legajo 1, report on c/Ramírez de Prado 8, 10/7/1925.

<sup>26</sup> AGA, caja 44/2430, legajo 1, report on c/Diego de León 23, 2/7/1925.

<sup>27</sup> Arias González, *Socialismo y vivienda obrera*, p. 16.



National Building Conference (*Conferencia Nacional de la Edificación*) in the summer of 1923 noted that ‘the outskirts of [Madrid] have been covered with a great mass of cheap dwellings, built with no forward planning [*sin trazo alguno previo*] and without meeting the appropriate sanitary conditions’.<sup>28</sup>

Housing policy prior to Primo’s coup failed to resolve the crisis at a structural level, and in numerous cases failed to deliver reasonable living conditions to individual tenants. The *casas baratas* framework placed most emphasis on bottom-up attempts to address the issue. Although *ayuntamientos* (municipal authorities) were theoretically required to draw up plans to develop their stock of affordable housing where necessary, few did so in practice.<sup>29</sup> Instead of direct intervention by state institutions, the solutions attempted under the Restoration amounted mainly to the provision of funds to civil society organisations attempting to address the issue. Affordable housing cooperatives established to take advantage of the *casas baratas* framework and private companies that aimed to do the same proposed projects throughout the country, but small-scale, discrete initiatives could not reasonably be expected to resolve a systemic, nationwide problem. They often lacked the technical expertise that would support their aims, and found that government financial assistance was both scarcer and more complicated to obtain than they required in order to realise their aims effectively. Under such conditions, they could not be expected to act on a sufficiently large scale to resolve the problem.

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<sup>28</sup> Ministerio de Trabajo, *Conferencia Nacional de la Edificación: Memoria*, p. 540.

<sup>29</sup> Ministerio de Trabajo, Comercio e Industria: Instituto de Reformas Sociales, *Conferencia Nacional de la Edificación, Madrid, 1923. Tema III del cuestionario: Modificaciones que pueden introducirse en la legislación de casas baratas* (Madrid, 1923), pp. 12-17.

## **Housing policy as a crucible of anti-*caciquismo*: Administrative obstacles and the need for political connections**

Despite the fact that they were a crucial and widespread element in Restoration-era palliatives for the housing crisis, the experiences of cooperatives and associations dedicated to the construction of *casas baratas* demonstrate the flaws of these attempts to solve the crisis and their capacity to inform opposition to the Restoration system. The Barcelona *Cooperativa de Periodistas para la Construcción de Casas Baratas* (Journalists' Cooperative for the Construction of *Casas Baratas*), formed in 1914, considered itself to be on the verge of achieving its aims in providing homes to its members by the end of 1917, despite having only existed for an 'extremely brief period' relative to the 'gigantic aspiration' it aimed to achieve.<sup>30</sup> The Cooperative's managing committee informed members that 'We have been victorious in our labour ... All that remains is that which no longer depends on our effort: technical works, [finding a] work force, the necessary official processes; everything that requires [only] the provision of time'. This optimism derived primarily from the fact that the Cooperative had managed to secure 'a substantial loan' from Ana Girona, Marquess of Caldas de Montbuy and widow of Domingo Sanllehy, a former mayor of Barcelona who 'in life always professed' a 'love for [journalists]'. Along with further financial support from the Sanllehy-Girona family and statutory subsidies, this allowed the Cooperative to secure more land on which to construct *casas baratas*.<sup>31</sup>

However, even the Barcelona journalists' apparent success in 1917 demonstrates weaknesses in the *casas baratas* framework. The loans that allowed them to foresee

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<sup>30</sup> Arxiu Històric de la Ciutat de Barcelona [hereafter AHCB], Ent. 171-4 (1918), *Cooperativa de Periodistas para la Construcción de Casas Baratas, Memoria de los trabajos realizados por el Consejo Directivo durante el año 1917* (Barcelona, 1918), pp. 3-4. For the foundation date of the Cooperative, see Marc Dalmau i Torvà, *Gráfica cooperativa en Barcelona: Iconografía del cooperativismo obrero (1875-1939)* (Barcelona, 2018), p. 100.

<sup>31</sup> AHCB, Ent. 171-4 (1918), *Cooperativa de Periodistas, Memoria de ... 1917*, pp. 4, 8-10.

their goals being achieved were only possible thanks to a reform of the 1911 Act to allow cooperatives to contract loans with private parties, which had been passed thanks in part to a visit to Madrid by three members of the Cooperative to argue for such an adjustment. Without this change, its activities would have been ‘in grave danger’.<sup>32</sup> Not all cooperatives had the capacity to send members to Madrid for protracted lobbying, nor the contacts to do so effectively. It is equally inconceivable that every group of workers who might have wished to benefit from the provisions of the *Ley de casas baratas* had the support of wealthy benefactors like the Sanllehy-Girona family. In a context marked by increasing resentment towards clientelistic socio-political relations, it was precisely these kinds of networks that allowed the Barcelona journalists their successes in 1917. These networks of influence made it possible for a group composed of well-connected professionals to secure government support to construct homes under a scheme nominally aimed at workers. This typified a recurring pattern in which representatives of the lower middle classes used networks of influence in attempts to secure the benefits of affordable housing for themselves.

The trajectory of the Journalists’ Cooperative over the final years of the Restoration period continued to demonstrate similar problems. The members of its managing committee experienced a ‘spectacular’ increase in their workload during 1922. It had previously been possible for the cooperative’s secretary to discharge his duties with no extra administrative help, attending the cooperative’s office once or twice a week. The president needed only to attend ahead of meetings to sign any necessary paperwork. By 1922, the president was attending the office every evening and ‘acting effectively as a third secretary’, supporting two secretaries and ‘three intelligent and

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<sup>32</sup> AHCB, Ent. 171-4 (1918), *Cooperativa de Periodistas, Memoria de ... 1917*, p. 7.

active administrative staff' whose efforts were 'barely sufficient' to keep on top of their duties, despite their 'assiduity'. The cooperative's position as Spain's largest made such administrative support feasible, but it is doubtful that this would have been the case for smaller organisations.<sup>33</sup>

Even despite its administrative capacity, the Cooperative found the *Ley de casas baratas* 'a veritable puzzle, little short of indecipherable and ... utterly unfit for its purpose'. Its stringent administrative and technical requirements led the *Instituto de Reformas Sociales* (Social Reform Institute; IRS)—the agency of the Ministry of Labour charged with managing the *casas baratas* framework—to strip eleven of the Cooperative's *casas baratas* of their legal status as such.<sup>34</sup> Noting that it had also been prevented from contracting another loan through what it considered an 'erroneous' interpretation of the law, the Cooperative accused the IRS of discharging its duties with 'excessive zeal, which often leads to near-irreparable damage' and would only make the construction of affordable housing more difficult. It complained that 'the delays—traditional in Spain—in all bureaucratic processes have prevented a resolution'. More seriously, it accused the IRS of showing 'a certain animosity and unusual rigour towards our organisation, which it certainly has not shown towards profit-seeking businesses'.<sup>35</sup>

The journalists suggested that the IRS's attitude towards their projects stemmed from a feeling that "The *Ley de casas baratas* was established for workers, not rich kids [*señoritos*]"'. The IRS functionaries considered the decorative exteriors of the

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<sup>33</sup> AHCB, Ent. 171-4 (1923), *Cooperativa de Periodistas para la Construcción de Casas Baratas, Memoria de los trabajos realizados por el Consejo Directivo durante el año 1922* (Barcelona, 1923), pp. 3-5.

<sup>34</sup> AHCB, Ent. 171-4 (1923), *Cooperativa de Periodistas para la Construcción de Casas Baratas, Memoria de ... 1922*, p. 7.

<sup>35</sup> AHCB, Ent. 171-4 (1923), *Cooperativa de Periodistas para la Construcción de Casas Baratas, Memoria de ... 1922*, pp. 9-11.

Cooperative's houses to be incompatible with the modesty they expected from *casas baratas*. The journalists disagreed with the IRS's understanding of which citizens should be considered to belong to the working classes. They argued that the label of 'obrero' covered 'not only those who wear smocks and espadrilles, but everyone who works for a modest remuneration from which they live'.<sup>36</sup> They were

all the more worthy of protection, the more society demands of them ...  
[J]ournalists ... must mingle with all social classes. They must attend aristocratic halls where brilliant parties are held, and meetings of manual workers. We must dress decently, and our profession creates relations that require our homes to be presented tastefully.<sup>37</sup>

In comparison, the cooperative complained that typesetters employed by the same newspapers might earn between 125 and 175 pesetas a week, more than many journalists.<sup>38</sup>

This conception of what constituted 'the working class' aimed to counter any objections that the cooperative's members, if not wealthy, were not in the greatest need of improved housing conditions when compared to other citizens. The argument that lower-middle-class should be able to access social provision intended for workers was a common one during the 1920s. Even as the journalists complained about the shortcomings of the IRS, relatively successful attempts by this group of professionals to access such social provision may have instilled a perception in less comfortably-off citizens that affordable housing was another locus for the maintenance of patronage networks from which they were excluded. The reliance on

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<sup>36</sup> AHCB, Ent. 171-4 (1923), *Cooperativa de Periodistas para la Construcción de Casas Baratas, Memoria de ... 1922*, pp. 12-13.

<sup>37</sup> AHCB, Ent. 171-4 (1923), *Cooperativa de Periodistas para la Construcción de Casas Baratas, Memoria de ... 1922*, p. 13.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

cooperative forms of organisation may also have been experienced as exclusionary, weighting the framework in favour of trades with professional associations or strong trade unions.

The journalists not only complained of hostility on the IRS's part, but also of its incompetence. The litany of errors and delays that they ascribed to it included late, unhelpful or entirely absent responses to letters; files being returned to the Cooperative for resubmission 'several times for the most futile motives'; and other files lost, causing their duplicates to be assessed under a different set of less favourable regulations.<sup>39</sup> The situation of the eleven homes stripped of their status as *casas baratas* was eventually resolved in the Cooperative's favour after its president and one of its secretaries held a series of face-to-face meetings with the IRS in Madrid, during which time the Marquis of Mariano, a patron of the Cooperative, gave them the use of his house in the capital.<sup>40</sup> Facing similar obstacles, smaller and less well-connected cooperatives or businesses must have struggled to secure a similarly favourable resolution.<sup>41</sup> Such conditions would have made anti-*caciquil* populism resonate with Spaniards concerned at the shortage of affordable housing.

Organisations aiming to build affordable houses sometimes blamed the clientelistic politics of the Restoration if they struggled to bring their projects to fruition. In a meeting of 13 July 1923, the members of the Madrid-based *Confederación*

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<sup>39</sup> AHCB, Ent. 171-4 (1923), *Cooperativa de Periodistas para la Construcción de Casas Baratas, Memoria de ... 1922*, pp. 11-12.

<sup>40</sup> AHCB, Ent. 171-4 (1923), *Cooperativa de Periodistas para la Construcción de Casas Baratas, Memoria de ... 1922*, pp. 7-8.

<sup>41</sup> The Cooperative's patrons [*socios protectores*] helped the journalists in other ways. General Severiano Martínez Anido was counted among their number during his tenure as Civil Governor of Barcelona province (1920-1922), which may have created opportunities for political access not available to organisations without similar patronage. The Marquis of Foronda, managing director of *Tranvías de Barcelona*, offered newspaper employees free-circulation passes for the company's tram network, making it feasible for the Cooperative to build houses in the city's outskirts. See AHCB, Ent. 171-4 (1923), *Cooperativa de Periodistas para la Construcción de Casas Baratas, Memoria de ... 1922*, pp. 24-25.

*Constructora Católica de Casas Baratas* (Catholic Confederation for the Construction of *Casas Baratas*) decided to dissolve the association less than eighteen months after its formation, having concluded that ‘we will not achieve anything practical’ and that they stood to waste significant sums of money.<sup>42</sup> The organisation’s attempts to find land on which to build new homes had been amateurish. It had found that landowners in the capital’s *ensanche*—the area of land earmarked for urban expansion—would only sell land in small units, making the purchase more expensive, and without any urbanisation work having taken place. This should have been foreseen, but the costs involved led the association to reject this course of action. It then wrote to Alfonso XIII proposing (however naïvely) that the Crown could donate land around El Pardo, then used as a camping and exercise ground by the scouts. The report of the 13 June 1923 meeting claimed that while both the king and the Superintendent of the Royal Houses and Estates had shown ‘great interest’ in the scheme, it could not go ahead as the crown did not own the lands but held them in usufruct, preventing construction.<sup>43</sup> This mismanagement speaks to a lack of specialist knowledge within the organisations to which the state delegated responsibility for housing construction under the *Ley de casas baratas*, which impeded the development of a sustainable solution to the crisis.

Despite its own shortcomings having caused some of its problems, the association attributed its failure to the shortcomings of the Restoration state. It found the administrative requirements of the IRS cumbersome. For instance, it had been obliged by the Civil Governor of Madrid and the IRS to amend its statutes, only to

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<sup>42</sup> Archivo Histórico Nacional [hereafter AHN], Fondos Contemporáneos [hereafter FFCC], Presidencia del Gobierno, Primo de Rivera, caja 231, expediente 764, copy of report of meeting on 13/6/1923.

<sup>43</sup> AHN, FFCC, Presidencia del Gobierno, Primo de Rivera, caja 231, expediente 764, copy of report of meeting on 13/6/1923.

have the IRS again reject the amended version.<sup>44</sup> Although the difficulties that the association experienced in securing land on which to build new homes should have been foreseeable and possible to mitigate, its experience of these administrative obstacles led its board to conclude that the *Ley de casas baratas* and its 1922 Regulations ‘were created for the private ends of the politicians, and given that we do not have—and nor do we desire—their support, we believe the moment has come to propose the dissolution of our Association’. The board recognised that some members may wish to continue their attempts to build new affordable homes and, as well as giving them advice regarding construction techniques, recommended that they pay ‘particular attention’ to securing ‘a political friend’. The inefficiencies of the Restoration’s housing policy, combined with public distaste for *caciquismo*, led citizens to ascribe the housing crisis not only to the incompetence of the ruling classes and the system’s reliance on networks of patronage. This made affordable housing into a policy area in which citizens rehearsed and reproduced the disdain for ‘politics’ and politicians that would underpin *primorriverista* populism.

Such resentments provided the impetus for civil society organisations that aimed to press for changes in affordable housing policy. In 1923, in contrast to the confidence of 1917, the Barcelona Journalists’ Cooperative found that their means for completing their projects were ‘scarce’. They were required to pay municipal rates on homes that would be exempt once legally certified as *casas baratas*—a process that took much longer than they had anticipated—and complained again that there was ‘material for an extensive volume’ of administrative delays and failings. In response, they convened a meeting of other *casas baratas* cooperatives based in Catalonia and

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<sup>44</sup> AHN, FFCC, Presidencia del Gobierno, Primo de Rivera, caja 231, expediente 764, copy of report of meeting on 13/6/1923.



the Balearic Islands, during which all of the cooperatives involved made similar complaints. As the Barcelona journalists observed, ‘it is inconceivable that everyone was acting incorrectly. The rot was higher, in the law, in the complications and demands of official bureaucracy, in external causes that must be fought against’. Finding that the Act ‘does not respond to the ends for which it was created’, these cooperatives decided to form a federation that initially included fourteen cooperatives with a total of 3,000 members. Juan José Pou de Barros, President of the Journalists’ Cooperative, took on the same role in the new federation.<sup>45</sup> The case of *casas baratas* cooperatives and associations struggling with the administrative hurdles of Restoration-era legislation demonstrates how practical impediments to citizens’ desires to improve their material conditions could produce frustration with the constitutional regime. These resentments could mobilise regenerationist constituencies with the aim of policy reform.

### ***The Conferencia Nacional de la Edificación***

These civil society mobilisations in favour of policy reform articulated new expectations of the state’s role in Spanish society. As the *Confederación Constructora Católica de Casas Baratas* argued, ‘the only means of resolving this issue is for the Government to take several million pesetas from the budget for *casas baratas* and use these to construct homes’ that it planned itself and paid for directly, in emulation of the French and Belgian governments.<sup>46</sup> Such ideas united coalitions of interested citizens in lobbying the government for policy change. Citizens concerned with the construction of affordable housing also agitated for the central

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<sup>45</sup> AHCB, Ent. 171-4 (1924), *Cooperativa de Periodistas para la Construcción de Casas Baratas, Memoria de los trabajos realizados por el Consejo Directivo durante el año 1923* (Barcelona, 1924), pp. 4-7.

<sup>46</sup> AHN, FFCC, Presidencia del Gobierno, Primo de Rivera, caja 231, expediente 764, copy of report of meeting on 13/6/1923.

government to take a more active role at the *Conferencia Nacional de la Edificación* (National Building Conference), held in Madrid by the Ministry of Labour between 28 May and 28 June 1923.<sup>47</sup> Similar to the support expressed by the *Confederación Constructora Católica de Casas Baratas* for the housing interventions of the French and Belgian governments, the Conference's proceedings explicitly located the organisations and interests it represented within a transnational movement interested in improving the availability of affordable housing for the working and lower middle classes. They cited actions by governments and civil society groups elsewhere in Europe and the Americas—including in Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Argentina and the United States—and made suggestions as to how similar measures could inform policy interventions in Spain, as well as relying on the thinking of French and American planners.<sup>48</sup> As well as referring to this international conference, the Conference addressed numerous technical and legal issues specific to Spain in intricate detail, but over several days of deliberations a broad body of ideas became clear.

The Conference's report did not explicitly support direct central government intervention in the housing market, but asserted that it was the government's 'mission' to 'channel the national finances' to use them for the construction of affordable homes, stating that such investment would certainly be 'productive and increase the nation's assets'.<sup>49</sup> Such action should include direct intervention in relevant industries, for example to improve the transport network and reduce the tariffs for transporting construction materials.<sup>50</sup> This was a regenerationist call for

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<sup>47</sup> Ministerio de Trabajo, *Conferencia Nacional de la Edificación: Memoria*.

<sup>48</sup> See e.g. Ministerio de Trabajo, *Conferencia Nacional de la Edificación: Memoria*, pp. 19-32; 66-69; 506-523; 675-702.

<sup>49</sup> Ministerio de Trabajo, *Conferencia Nacional de la Edificación. Tema III*, p. 16.

<sup>50</sup> Ministerio de Trabajo, *Conferencia Nacional de la Edificación: Memoria*, pp. 575-576.

the government to exercise more technocratic powers in pursuit of ‘the common good’ of Spanish citizens. Despite the complaints directed against current government policy, this view rested on an assumption that the central state could be competent to determine, interpret, represent and promote this common good.

However, it was not principally through the central government that state authorities should exercise this intervention. Rather, arguing that ‘Although it requires the organisation, protection and oversight of the central government, the construction of *casas baratas* is a fundamentally municipal problem’, the Conference called for the legislation to be reformed to give *ayuntamientos* new powers, obligations and resources. The municipal authorities of large cities would thus be required to publish comprehensive housing plans and would be granted compulsory-purchase powers to fulfil these. Furthermore, in recognition of the ‘technical ... and economic difficulties’ they faced, the central government should provide loans for the completion of these plans.<sup>51</sup> Suggestions that the central government and the municipalities should enjoy new powers reflected a perception that *state* actors should have more direct responsibility for planning and building new affordable housing, in contrast to a policy that placed that responsibility on under-resourced and uncoordinated third parties. Noting that cooperatives ‘composed of individuals of modest means’ had found difficulties in assembling funds, it was suggested that the government should give them new authorisations to take out loans.<sup>52</sup> Providing more latitude for cooperatives to take these decisions would reduce their reliance on state subsidies, so was perhaps conceived as a means of mitigating perceived inefficiencies in state administration.

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<sup>51</sup> Ministerio de Trabajo *Conferencia Nacional de la Edificación: Tema III*, pp. 11-14.

<sup>52</sup> Ministerio de Trabajo, *Conferencia Nacional de la Edificación: Memoria*, p. 537.

Another key responsibility of the state should be the ‘coordination of all elements’ involved in housing construction. The Conference recognised that this was difficult to achieve ‘voluntarily’, given the contradictory interests and ‘irreconcilable’ aspirations of different parties involved. The solution resided in instituting corporatist structures in the construction industry: joint industry committees should examine which parts of the relevant supply chains were leading to excessive costs, and industry-wide standard contracts could guarantee stable annual salaries and avoid the disruption of strikes and lock-outs.<sup>53</sup> The anti-political resentments generated by the Restoration’s failure to resolve the housing crisis led to the formation of a broadly regenerationist policy agenda in this area. Greater intervention in economic relations was thus expected of a state that would be more representative of citizens’ common good. The government should act as a supposedly neutral arbiter of competing interests to determine this common good.

Such desires for ‘coordination’ included a suspicion of the profit motive in house-building. Social conflict could be reduced and production increased if the sector were to ‘respond to the general interest more than to private interests’. Achieving this could involve technical staff and labourers holding a ‘preponderant and directive’ role in managing the industry; the elimination of profit for intermediaries in the production chain; and efforts ‘to reduce the rights of landowners as far as is decently possible’.<sup>54</sup> Such antipathy to private profit—and thus to elite interests—was supported by an appendix to the Conference’s proceedings which detailed how the Austrian government had ‘achieved respectable successes, especially in Vienna’ by ‘replacing private construction with construction by public Corporations, especially

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<sup>53</sup> Ministerio de Trabajo, *Conferencia Nacional de la Edificación: Memoria*, pp. 478-480.

<sup>54</sup> Ministerio de Trabajo, *Conferencia Nacional de la Edificación: Memoria*, p. 479.

Municipalities'.<sup>55</sup> It also underlay a proposal that Spanish housing policy should favour cooperatives that aimed to construct new homes to be made available to their occupiers—tenants or owners—at cost price.<sup>56</sup> The housing crisis created resentment against economic elites, and a desire for the government to curtail their interests in favour of the good of ordinary citizens. Anti-political policy agendas in this area pitted the lower middle classes and the working classes against the interests of landowners and speculators.

Despite the Conference's recognition that the challenge of providing affordable housing affected many other countries, policy suggestions for resolving Spain's housing crisis could thus also be intertwined with the populist regenerationist narrative that considered ordinary Spaniards' interests to be excluded from a political system that favoured a venal and ineffective ruling class. The demands for changes to the functioning of the Spanish state made at the *Conferencia Nacional de la Edificación* reflected a desire to overturn this state of affairs. Furthermore, these desires provided a point around which citizens with specific interests in the policy area of housing could unite to lobby the government. They formed movements based more on specific socio-economic interests—the desire to access affordable housing—than on the explicitly ideological programmes that might motivate activists of a political party. In the absence of genuinely representative party politics, these mobilisations provided a means for citizens to engage with the Spanish state and attempt to influence government policy. They also continued to operate under the Primo dictatorship. Indeed, the recommendations of the Conference informed the dictatorship's modest reform of the *Ley de casas baratas* in 1924.<sup>57</sup> The new act

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<sup>55</sup> Ministerio de Trabajo, *Conferencia Nacional de la Edificación: Memoria*, p. 685.

<sup>56</sup> Ministerio de Trabajo, *Conferencia Nacional de la Edificación: Memoria*, pp. 482-483.

<sup>57</sup> *Gaceta de Madrid*, 15/10/1924, pp. 258-265.

responded to complaints from organisations engaged in the construction of *casas baratas* that the previous framework did not provide certainty about the level of financial support that a given project would receive. The system of annual ‘competitions’ for subsidies was abolished and replaced with fixed subsidies and a system of loans to make up any remaining shortfall. However, such measures still fell rather short of the municipalisation of affordable housing construction in Austria and Belgium that delegates of the *Conferencia Nacional de la Edificación* cited as an example that Spain ought to follow, or the direct support for large-scale construction of affordable homes by local authorities promoted by the 1919 Addison Act in Britain.

### **Citizens’ petitions and affordable housing policy: Relating to a populist dictatorship**

Given how the issue of housing informed opposition to the Restoration system, citizens with particular interests in the area saw Primo de Rivera’s coup as a political moment in which the new authorities might be more receptive to their views, and more inclined to implement the reforms they desired. The general’s promise of ‘rapid and radical remedies’ to Spain’s multiple crises in the interests of ‘good citizens’ rather than venal politicians encouraged Spaniards—as individuals and as members of civil society mobilisations—to address their concerns about housing and recommend their favoured policy measures directly to the new government.<sup>58</sup> This desire to influence the new regime, and hope or expectation that it would represent their interests, is apparent in the voluminous correspondence the Military Directorate received during the final months of 1923.<sup>59</sup> The vast majority of the surviving correspondence is addressed to Primo de Rivera personally, demonstrating

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<sup>58</sup> Álvarez Rey (ed.), *Bajo el fuero militar*, p. 57.

<sup>59</sup> See, for example, Archivo Histórico Nacional [hereafter AHN], Fondos Contemporáneos [hereafter FFCC], Directorio Militar, caja 230, legajos 9-1923, 10-1923 and 11-1923.

an important change in how citizens approached the state following Primo's coup: whereas the networks of social power that underpinned the Restoration order revolved around the local *cacique*, from September 1923 the person of the dictator was taken to represent the structures of the state and it seemed natural to petition him directly, as the head of government. Primo's self-presentation as the 'iron surgeon' made citizens feel they could appeal to him directly in the hope of securing government support for their proposals. However, for all that Primo promised a rupture with the politics of the *turno pacífico* and radically altered the personnel of the Spanish state, embedded modes of political action inherited from the Restoration continued to shape the means by which citizens engaged with the state under his dictatorship.

The importance of letter-writing as a means of engaging with the *primorriverista* state for ordinary citizens has also been identified by Richard Gow, who points out that it was 'one of the few channels of public expression to be tolerated openly by an otherwise highly repressive regime'.<sup>60</sup> Gow situates the writing of letters and petitions in the context of Primo's purge of local government, the role of the *delegados militares* in auditing *ayuntamientos* during the Military Directorate and, especially, the regime's efforts to nationalise the masses through municipal reform and by associating local identities with the nation.<sup>61</sup> The work of attempting to inculcate national feeling through engagement with localities meant that the *delegados* were a point of contact for 'a population eager to have its voice heard by the government', meaning that they gathered and forwarded to Madrid large bodies

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<sup>60</sup> Richard Gow, 'Patria and Citizenship: Miguel Primo de Rivera, *Caciques* and Military *Delegados*, 1923–1924' in Susana Bayó Belenguer and Nicola Brady (eds), *Pulling Together or Pulling Apart? Perspectives on Nationhood, Identity and Belonging in Europe* (Oxford, 2020), pp. 147–175. For the direct quotation, see p. 149.

<sup>61</sup> Gow, 'Patria and Citizenship', pp. 147–158.

of ‘often mundane information about local goings-on’.<sup>62</sup> The actions of the *delegados* also became the subject of letters, petitions and complaints written directly to Primo de Rivera, whether because of perceived overzealousness, inadequate action, or political favouritism.<sup>63</sup> A frequent feature of these letters was a disavowal of politics. Letter-writers aligned themselves with the regime’s claims to be ending ‘politics’ (even where clearly asking for action against their local political opponents) and framed their petitions in terms of the good of the nation.<sup>64</sup> Often, they did not make direct requests, but instead merely described the situation that they felt to be undesirable, before expressing faith in Primo as the ‘saviour’, ‘benevolent father’ or ‘ultimate guarantor’ of the nation—a phenomenon that demonstrates how the regime’s ‘charismatic construction’ of Primo quickly became a well-known ideological idiom.<sup>65</sup>

The examination of petitions and letters in this and subsequent chapters develops Gow’s line of by considering this phenomenon in the context of housing and infrastructure policy, demonstrating that this tendency shaped relationships between state and citizen beyond areas of policy primarily concerned with purging *caciques* and building national sentiment. It finds that many of Gow’s observations also hold true in this area of state action. Petitioners frequently claimed not to be pursuing ‘politics’ or selfish ends but rather what was just, moral, or in the national interest, even when they were fundamentally lobbying the government to support private or local interests. They sometimes appeared to attempt to educate the central state about local conditions, leveraging a sense of privileged knowledge in order to support their requests, whether these requests were explicit or implicit based on the

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<sup>62</sup> Gow, ‘*Patria* and Citizenship’, pp. 159-161.

<sup>63</sup> Gow, ‘*Patria* and Citizenship’, pp. 161-168.

<sup>64</sup> Gow, ‘*Patria* and Citizenship’, pp. 163-164.

<sup>65</sup> Gow, ‘*Patria* and Citizenship’, pp. 166-168; Quiroga, ‘La construcción carismática’.



petitioner's description of what they considered undesirable. The ideological idioms that denounced 'politics', *caciquismo* and 'disorder', and that identified the regime as a protector of the nation and 'legitimate interests', were also commonplace.

The study of petitioning in this context also enhances our understanding of the class politics of 1920s Spain in a way that is not clearly addressed by Gow's research. The malleable language of anti-politics could cut across class divides, being mobilised by both landlords and tenant, helping to explain the broad support or acceptance that the regime enjoyed in its early stages, as well as the fact that this support—coming, as it did, from opposed sources—proved unstable in the longer term. Moreover, especially in relation to affordable housing provision, the petitions of middle-class professionals show the authors' particular conception of their place within *primorriverista* networks of power. These petitioners conceived of themselves as potential partners in the new regime, proposing policy solutions to the country's housing crisis that would also morally reform Spain's working classes, turning them away from left-wing agitation and promoting conservative attitudes. These letter-writers understood the Spanish nation divided into those who shared the worldview of the regime, and those who the former group could help—and rely on—the new regime to discipline. Petitioning thus illustrates how Primo's rhetoric attracted socially conservative Spaniards who saw an opportunity to gain a new degree of political influence, while reducing the risk of working-class revolution.

The letters and petitions of organisations and individuals concerned with affordable housing policy continued existing efforts by civil society coalitions—including *casas baratas* cooperatives, tenants' associations and similar organisations—to secure particular policy changes. On 15 October 1923, the President of a *casas baratas* cooperative for office workers in Bilbao wrote to Primo drawing his attention to 'the

great problem of housing', which he said was 'singularly aggravated in these industrious [Basque] towns'.<sup>66</sup> In common with the Barcelona journalists' cooperative and in line with the *Conferencia Nacional de la Edificación's* recommendation that the provisions of the *Ley de casas baratas* should be extended, he presented his cooperative's members as representatives of the 'long-suffering middle classes' and urged Primo to increase the legislation's income ceiling, allowing more lower-middle-class Spaniards currently renting accommodation to become homeowners. He told the dictator that the cooperative's members were keen for the regime to adopt the recommendations of the *Conferencia Nacional* regarding the need to decentralise the authority to approve new construction projects. The writer expressed disappointment that the previous government had—in his view—failed to take these recommendations seriously.<sup>67</sup> It would not be reasonable to have expected the government of Manuel García Prieto to have implemented these recommendations in the short time since the Conference. The widespread distaste for Restoration politicians made them easy targets, however, making 'anti-political' rhetoric a means by which Primo could suggest he shared the concerns of ordinary Spaniards. The writer repurposed the sense in regime rhetoric that Spain required a rupture with its recent political past, and presented taking account of these proposals as a means by which the new regime could differentiate itself from the old. In this sense, the idea of rupture was attractive to groups of citizens who had felt themselves excluded by the Restoration system.

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<sup>66</sup> AHN, FFCC, Directorio Militar, caja 230, legajo 10-1923, unnumbered file, Marila Mateos to Primo de Rivera, 15/10/1923.

<sup>67</sup> AHN, FFCC, Directorio Militar, caja 230, legajo 10-1923, unnumbered file, Marila Mateos to Primo de Rivera, 15/10/1923. It would not be reasonable to have expected the government of Manuel García Prieto to have implemented these recommendations in the short time since the Conference. The widespread distaste for Restoration politicians made them easy targets, however. This made 'anti-political' rhetoric a means by which Primo could suggest he shared the concerns of ordinary Spaniards.

The writer closed by linking his requests directly to the dictator's aim of restoring 'social discipline', telling him that '[w]e fully trust that the Directorate will welcome this proposal with special sympathy, as it is the most urgent in terms of social order and the most practical for ending the actions of communism, by reducing the sadly high levels of mortality which result from the deplorable conditions in which people live'. No record has survived of how—or even whether—the Military Directorate responded to this letter, but it demonstrates how Primo's combination of anti-political and economic populism with a reactionary approach to public order could be adopted and adapted by middle-class citizens hoping to influence housing policy. At least in its early stages, the possibility of framing proposals in such language encouraged citizens to identify with the regime's ideals and to see it as a means by which their own ideas could be more effectively reflected in government policy.

The twin lines of argument in this letter demonstrate how, although working-class Spaniards did benefit from the *casas baratas* framework, housing was also a subject of middle-class concern. In common with the Barcelona journalists prior to the 1923 coup and other petitioners under the Primo dictatorship, the writer considered that significant portions of the middle classes found themselves in sufficiently difficult financial circumstances that the state ought to provide support for them. In addition, the writer considered that affordable housing was a means by which the dictatorship might combat 'social indiscipline' associated with the organised working class. On both counts, such petitioners believed that the dictatorship would be receptive to their arguments, suggesting a belief that the September 1923 coup would defend the class interests of lower-middle-class citizens largely excluded from political influence under the Restoration, but who were equally concerned about labour unrest.

Although these were not the only class interests organising around the question of

affordable housing (manual labourers in various sectors continued to organise cooperatives), the dictatorship was also aware that this was a significant constituency attracted by its anti-political populism; a 1925 law extended state provision to those on moderate incomes through the funding of *casas económicas*, which benefited ‘artists, journalists, intellectuals, and lower-paid government employees’.<sup>68</sup> Despite the existence of this additional category, the majority of citizens’ engagement with the government regarding affordable housing—through petitions, public assemblies, congresses and even press coverage—continued to revolve around the subjects of *casas baratas* and rent controls. *Casas económicas* thus appear markedly less frequently in archival records examined during this research project, and it is reasonable to speculate that citizens able to afford them found it more straightforward to achieve their aims.

Other petitions came from companies and individuals looking for business from the state. In late December 1923, the director of a private company engaged in constructing affordable housing in Barcelona, the *Sociedad de Fomento de Casas Baratas*, wrote to the governor of the province asking him to forward a letter to the central government.<sup>69</sup> The company set out a budget for a ‘model group’ of 200 *casas baratas* which would serve as a basis for the ‘rapid construction’ of further subsidised housing, and requested ‘tutelary’ and ‘moral support’ from the central government. It made clear the public perception in Spain’s largest industrial centre that Restoration housing policy had failed to remedy the issue; it was taken as an ‘incontrovertible truth’ that the crisis was worsening.

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<sup>68</sup> *Gaceta de Madrid*, 5/8/1925, pp. 842-846; Rial, *Revolution from Above*, p. 197.

<sup>69</sup> AHN, FFCC, Directorio Militar, caja 231, expediente 1265, Sociedad de Fomento de Casas Baratas to Primo de Rivera, late December 1923, stamped as received 20/2/1924.

The company's bid for business echoed the language of Primo's 'manifesto', blaming the failure of previous policies in part on the alleged inefficiency, malpractice or outright criminality of other companies, while emphasising its own probity and capacity to make the solutions it proposed 'an immediate reality'. This could not, in the company's view, be ignored by a government 'which, with such laudable zeal, is setting the nation on the course to prosperity'. Such prosperity was considered entwined with notions of modernity and national prestige; the company presented constructing more affordable housing as necessary in order to 'realise in a short space of time the ideal of modern nations, among which we want our beloved Spain to have a place'.

Despite adopting aspects of *primorriverista* ideological language, this petition is indicative of continuities in how Spaniards approached the state, in this case as the administrator of networks of patronage and political favours. At the most basic level, the writer chose to frame his proposals in the regime's ideological language in order to solicit state-subsidised business. Similarly, in a verbose letter dated 22 November 1923, a resident of Madrid proposed a project to construct low-cost dwellings in the capital and in the Sierra de Guadarrama.<sup>70</sup> He hoped this would foster 'friendly links between capital and labour', echoing contemporary desires, inspired in many cases by social-Catholic ideals and endorsed by the regime, to end labour unrest through corporatist policies that would improve the conditions of the working classes while rejecting Marxist class struggle.<sup>71</sup> The correspondent requested a state loan of ten

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<sup>70</sup> AHN, FFCC, Directorio Militar, caja 228, legajo 3B, expediente 282, Lima to Primo de Rivera, 22/11/1923.

<sup>71</sup> AHN, FFCC, Directorio Militar, caja 228, legajo 3B, expediente 282, Lima to Primo de Rivera, 22/11/1923.. On the corporatist labour conciliation policies introduced, developed and extended by the dictatorship, see Ben-Ami, *Fascism from Above*, pp. 290-295; Tamames, *Ni Mussolini ni Franco: La dictadura de Primo de Rivera y su tiempo* (Barcelona, 2008), p. 337. The Minister of Labour under the Civil Directorate (1926-1930), Eduardo Aunós Pérez, was a staunch defender of such corporatist policies; see e.g. Aunós Pérez, *El Estado Corporativo: Discurso*

million pesetas at five per cent interest or, if that was not possible, that the government should buy a majority share in the company that he intended to establish to complete the project.<sup>72</sup>

Beyond the mere pursuit of profit, however, both petitions show how citizens could use the regime's ideological idiom to locate themselves within the 'networks of social power' that underpinned the Spanish state and which appeared open to reconfiguration in the wake of Primo's coup.<sup>73</sup> The correspondent from Barcelona did so by identifying himself and his company in opposition to the Restoration elites who had attracted the general's ire, in the same style as many of the petitioners studied by Gow.<sup>74</sup> He could thus count himself as a 'good citizen'.<sup>75</sup> This self-identification created a sense of 'duty' to share his company's proposals with the dictator and request state support. Primo de Rivera had stated explicitly that he expected all 'good Spaniards' to 'collaborate' with his programme of government, and this encouraged citizens—especially conservative and middle-class Spaniards who shared his concern about 'disorder'—to construct a space for themselves within state policy-making through correspondence with the general.<sup>76</sup> 'Prosperity', 'modernity' and improving Spain's international stature were easily identified as key tenets of the regime. The regenerationist foundations of the new dictatorship meant that groups who shared

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*pronunciado en la Unión Patriótica de Madrid, el día 16 de Abril* (Madrid, 1928). On social-Catholicism in inter-war Spain, see Mary Vincent, *Catholicism in the Second Spanish Republic: Religion and Politics in Salamanca, 1930–1936* (Oxford, 1996), pp. 109–134; Feliciano Montero, 'Origen y evolución de la Acción Católica Española' in Julio de la Cueva Merino and Ángel Luis López Villaverde (eds), *Clericalismo y asociacionismo católico en España: De la restauración a la transición* (Cuenca, 2005), pp. 133–159; Colin M. Winston, *Workers and the Right in Spain: 1900–1936* (Princeton, 1985), pp. 38–225; Inmaculada Blasco Herranz, 'Citizenship and Female Catholic Militancy in 1920s Spain', *Gender & History* 19.3 (2007), pp. 441–466.

<sup>72</sup> AHN, FFCC, Directorio Militar, caja 228, legajo 3B, expediente 282, Lima to Primo de Rivera, 22/11/1923.

<sup>73</sup> See Mann, *The Sources of Social Power, volume II*, pp. 46–56.

<sup>74</sup> Gow, 'Patria and Citizenship'.

<sup>75</sup> AHN, FFCC, Directorio Militar, caja 231, expediente 1265, Sociedad de Fomento de Casas Baratas to Primo de Rivera, late December 1923, stamped as received 20/2/1924.

<sup>76</sup> Álvarez Rey (ed.), *Bajo el fuero militar*, pp. 56–60.

these concerns felt themselves to be represented by the new regime, and also gave them an ideological language with which to approach it.

Other petitioners were concerned with the moral implications of housing policy. The Barcelona Official Chambers of Urban Property wrote to the government in May 1925 requesting ‘the re-establishment of free contracts’—that is, the end of rent controls—and arguing that the ‘regime of exception’ ‘denaturalised the essence’ of property, the possession of which was a ‘sacred right’.<sup>77</sup> The regime, it said, did not ‘need the covetous and unthinking cheers of the gallery’ in order to govern. The letter shows how the Primo de Rivera regime’s different rhetorical idioms appealed to different groups in Spanish society: on the one hand, populist outcry against economic crisis and perceived national decline, and on the other, the language of order, conservatism and tradition (understood to be synonymous with Catholicism). However, the gravity of the housing crisis prevented the government from implementing the property-owners’ interpretation of ‘sacred rights’. A civil servant scrawled across the front of the file that the petition would likely be ignored, as ‘they are asking for the moon’.<sup>78</sup> Being able to frame one’s petition in *primorriverista* ideological language was not a guarantee of success. The significance of this engagement with regime rhetoric lay rather in the fact that it allowed citizens from a range of ideological traditions and positions to form a tentatively supportive relationship with the dictatorship. Although they may have disagreed with each other on a number of counts, these citizens were united in welcoming the end of the *turno*

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<sup>77</sup> AHN, FFCC, Directorio Militar, caja 230, legajo 9 (documentos sueltos), Cámara Oficial de la Propiedad Urbana de Barcelona to Primo de Rivera, 26/5/1925.

<sup>78</sup> AHN, FFCC, Directorio Militar, caja 230, legajo 9 (documentos sueltos), Cámara Oficial de la Propiedad Urbana de Barcelona to Primo de Rivera, 26/5/1925.

*pacífico* and in their hope that the new dictatorship marked a rupture that would move Spain's political community in the direction that they considered desirable.

Social-Catholic ideas and concerns with moral reform formed an important ideological underpinning for citizens' attempts to influence *primorriverista* housing policy. One correspondent from Zaragoza who identified himself only as 'an engineer' wrote to the dictator in early 1924 offering a 'partial yet important, immediate and coordinated solution to the problems of those with no home, job or property'.<sup>79</sup> He worried that the demoralising effects of this situation could plant 'a destructive germ ... in [these individuals'] brains', and was also concerned at the moral implications of cramped housing in apartment buildings, which saw 'brothers of ours ... sometimes sleeping on the floor, and even on occasion in a confused combination of different sexes and ages'. Despite using the language of brotherhood, with its implication of relative equality, the correspondent conceived of Spanish citizens as divided into at least two categories. Conservative, bourgeois professionals such as himself shared the dictatorship's concern with public order and professed a sense of morality that he expected the military regime to share. On the other hand, he expected working-class Spaniards to act primarily as recipients of charity and the provision of affordable housing, through which the state and wealthier citizens could shape their habits. Writing to the dictator allowed this anonymous engineer both to position himself within the Spanish state's networks of power, and to define to position he believed other citizens should occupy.

Such concerns reflected a very active current of social-Catholic thought in earlier twentieth-century Spain, influenced by Pope Leo XIII's landmark 1891 encyclical,

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<sup>79</sup> AGA, caja 51/464, expediente 28, 'Un ingeniero' to Primo de Rivera. The letter itself is undated and—unusually—was not stamped on receipt by the government. However, it is filed with other documents relating to the early months of 1924, suggesting that it was also received around this time.



*Rerum Novarum*.<sup>80</sup> Leo XIII linked the socio-economic changes associated with industrialisation to disparities of wealth, the ‘wretchedness and misery’ of the working classes, and ‘prevailing moral degeneracy’.<sup>81</sup> He denounced the ‘false teachings’ with which socialism attempted to remedy these problems, instead relying Catholic mutual associations that would work to improve the conditions of the working class, and on corporatist solutions according to which the state would pursue the shared good of the community, ensuring that the rights of individuals and social classes were respected. The question of housing and property was especially important in this vision of society. The encyclical considered the ability to obtain and possess private property as a God-given right, ‘in accordance with the law of nature’, and foundational to human society.<sup>82</sup> Moreover, the possession of the home as private property was the proper backdrop to patriarchal family life based on Christian marriage.<sup>83</sup> Correspondents including the engineer from Zaragoza drew on this familiar body of ideas, which shared *primorriverista* concerns with the maintenance of conservative social order, in proposing their favoured solutions to Spain’s housing crisis.

Moreover, affordable housing policy could offer a means of integrating working-class Spaniards more closely into ideological networks of power informed by such concerns by propagating the social-Catholic values that the anonymous engineer believed he and the government shared. A large-scale house-building programme was required, he said, to provide employment to unskilled labourers and make as many as possible of these into ‘property owners, and therefore in all probability

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<sup>80</sup> Vincent, *Catholicism in the Second Spanish Republic*, pp. 109-134; Montero, ‘Origen y evolución de la Acción Católica Española’; Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum* (1891), via [http://w2.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_l-xiii\\_enc\\_15051891\\_rerum-novarum.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_15051891_rerum-novarum.html) (accessed 5/1/2018).

<sup>81</sup> Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum*, paragraphs 1-3.

<sup>82</sup> Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum*, paragraphs 5-11.

<sup>83</sup> Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum*, paragraphs 12-14.

economically conservative men of order'.<sup>84</sup> For the moral health of tenants these should be detached houses with a garden large enough to allow the cultivation of vegetables and the keeping of some livestock. This would allow the labour of the whole family to be employed in order to avoid idleness and scarcity, which could otherwise encourage 'vice'.

Indeed, the form of housing could be used to implement *nacional* as well as individual moral reform. The engineer argued that the Spanish state's financial resources were insufficient to implement his proposed policy if using the best building techniques and materials, and therefore recommended the use of cheap supplies including adobe bricks and light cement foundations.<sup>85</sup> Houses so constructed would be 'hygienic, durable, [and] extra-economic', be ready in their hundreds before the end of the year, and address what the correspondent called 'an endemic national disease: the desire to pass ... from almost total poverty to opulence, missing out the prudent middle ground of being able to covers one's basic needs through rational economies'. As well as casting himself as a voice of financial responsibility, as befitted a member of his profession, the writer deployed the medical metaphors that marked regenerationist thought and informed Primo's self-presentation as Costa's 'iron surgeon'. In diagnosing a national ill and prescribing a cure based on his expertise, the correspondent positioned himself as part of a *primorriverista* policy-making community. The language of the regime, easy to reuse and relatively flexible in its meaning, allowed him to define a privileged place for himself and citizens with similar class and ideological interests within the dictatorship's networks of social and ideological power.

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<sup>84</sup> AGA, caja 51/464, expediente 28, 'Un ingeniero' to Primo de Rivera.

<sup>85</sup> AGA, caja 51/464, expediente 28, 'Un ingeniero' to Primo de Rivera.

Similarly, less than three weeks after Primo de Rivera's coup, a resident of Barcelona wrote to the new government arguing that the social objectives of housing cooperatives, if better protected and directed, would 'not only mitigate the rancorous character of social conflicts but also improve the citizen of tomorrow'.<sup>86</sup> This could, he said, be achieved by encouraging housing cooperatives to avoid constructing apartment buildings, and instead focus on 'single-family' (*unifamiliar*; detached or semi-detached) houses, of which Spanish cities required 'several thousand'. According to the writer, it was 'proven that such houses achieve a very rapid moral reform of the families which live in them—husband, wife and children—and they change in a few days the way they behave, as some perturbing element has suddenly been removed'. Again, this correspondent divided Spanish citizens into the categories of those who held correct moral principles—among whom they counted the government—and those in need of moral reform. Affordable housing policy could allow the state to act on the latter in a paternalistic manner in an attempt to recruit them to the ranks of the former. Meanwhile, those citizens who shared the writer's moral principles could enjoy a less unidirectional relationship with the state authorities, using the opportunity of the new regime to campaign for those policy measures they considered necessary. Reproducing the language of anti-politics in petitions was a means by which citizens could construct a direct relationship with the dictatorship, imagining themselves into the Spanish state's networks of ideological power in a way that complemented 'negative' integration through coercive, nationalising institutions.

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<sup>86</sup> AHN, FFCC, Directorio Militar, caja 228, legajo 3B, unnumbered file, letter to Primo de Rivera, signature illegible, 29/9/1923.

However, petitions and policy suggestions were not necessarily welcome. A civil servant, charged with reviewing the proposal discussed above for the construction of affordable houses in Madrid and the Sierra de Guadarrama, wrote in the summer of 1924 that

Given that the letter merely presents an idea with no [detailed] project, budget, or anything else that might demonstrate serious study, and also considering that the State cannot lend money without solid guarantees, nor buy shares in limited companies that are not yet established ... this *ponencia* is of the opinion that the proposal ... is *yet another of the many* that it receives but which contain no ideas of any practical use.<sup>87</sup>

The sense among some Spanish citizens that the dictatorship could govern more effectively than previous regimes, and be amenable to including them in networks of patronage, resulted in their wishing him to know their analysis of the country's situation. This perception existed among a sufficiently large number of Spaniards for these petitions and policy proposals to become recognised by civil servants in Madrid as a distinct and voluminous genre. However, although this perception of Primo as a representative of citizens' interests and an efficient policy-maker was politically expedient for the regime in terms of securing acceptance of or support, this did not mean that unsolicited policy proposals were welcome or likely to be taken seriously. One reason for this, alluded to above, was the sheer volume of petitions. Even if civil servants had been so inclined, the central state administration did not have the capacity to examine so many letters in detail, or to establish how 'mere ideas' could be translated into action. Civil servants also had to cope with new structures in the

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<sup>87</sup> AHN, FFCC, Directorio Militar, caja 228, legajo 3B, expediente 282, note regarding Lima to Primo de Rivera (22/11/1923, 7/1/1924, 19/5/1924), July 1924. Emphasis added.

day-to-day running of government. The nine *ponencias* of the Military Directorate were responsible in the first instance for dealing with the letters and petitions discussed here. They dealt with an eclectic range of subjects, and a single *ponencia* might be responsible for aspects of several different ministerial portfolios, with no readily apparent rhyme or reason.<sup>88</sup> Even if citizens' petitions and proposals contained detailed and well-considered plans, such a situation was hardly conducive to the rapid or efficient action for which they hoped. The fact that it took over half a year for a civil servant to examine the abovementioned proposal and conclude that it offered no concrete basis for further action is as apt a demonstration of this as any.<sup>89</sup> Furthermore, it is reasonable to assume that civil servants, faced with a large body of letters from unknown citizens writing from outside more usual policy-making structures, would find little reason to consider these with the same seriousness that might be accorded to interlocutors with recognisable expertise. It was more straightforward to inform petitioners that they should refer to the provisions and processes of the *Ley de casas baratas* than to engage seriously with unsolicited policy proposals.<sup>90</sup> While there were good reasons for civil servants to act in this way, citizens who were accustomed to blaming an 'inefficient' state bureaucracy for Spain's multiple crisis would have felt their hopes for a rupture with the structures of the Restoration regime disappointed.

Even where proposals were merely local in scope and would contribute to ameliorating the crisis, administrative obstacles could delay progress for months, as

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<sup>88</sup> An illustration of the administrative complications this could cause can be found in the vast indices of documents transferred from the various *ponencias* to the regular ministries when the latter were re-established at the start of 1926; AHN, FFCC, Presidencia del Gobierno, Primo de Rivera, caja 206.

<sup>89</sup> AHN, FFCC, Directorio Militar, caja 228, legajo 3B, expediente 282, note regarding Lima to Primo de Rivera (22/11/1923, 7/1/1924, 19/5/1924), July 1924.

<sup>90</sup> See, for example, AHN, FFCC, Directorio Militar, caja 231, expediente 775, response to Ferrer Tarrazona to Primo de Rivera, 6/10/1924.

a Basque soap-manufacturing company discovered between November 1923 and June 1924.<sup>91</sup> The company wished to convert a number of disused buildings into affordable housing for its employees, but conversion as opposed to new construction was not unambiguously covered by the law. Despite recognising that the proposal would contribute to improving the local housing situation, civil servants struggled to accommodate it under the *Ley de casas baratas*. The fact that the company wrote to the IRS with a clearly defined project rather than to Primo de Rivera as head of government probably explains why efforts were made to accommodate it at all.

Furthermore, while the government's continued reliance on local cooperatives and companies to plan and execute projects could have brought benefits in terms of local knowledge, it also had costs. As already observed, cooperatives that had difficulty finding the funds or location to construct their new homes could lose members and momentum.<sup>92</sup> Other organisations, perhaps lacking the relevant expertise, found they were sold unsuitable land by unscrupulous vendors. One cooperative in Valencia suffered delays to the approval of its project, having bought land located close to an unhealthy marsh.<sup>93</sup> Neither the anti-*caaciquil* policy agenda articulated by citizens nor Primo's populist rhetoric translated into new forms of government intervention or a straightforward solution to the crisis. Citizens' identification with the various strands of *primorriverista* thought created stronger 'networks of ideological power' linking state and citizens, but administrative relations between state and citizen in the area of affordable housing remained largely unchanged.

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<sup>91</sup> AGA, caja 44/2432, legajo 2, unnumbered file, Larrainzar y Vignau to Presidente del Instituto de Reformas Sociales, 3/11/1923 and subsequent correspondence.

<sup>92</sup> AGA, caja 44/310, legajo 1, annual report report of Mutualidad Obrera Ferroviara para la Construcción de Casas Baratas, Valencia, 19/1/1924.

<sup>93</sup> AGA, caja 44/2432, legajo 2, reports from Cooperativa 'La Dehesa del Cid', Valencia, 7/12/1927 and 14/3/1928.

## **Petitioning and the question of rent controls**

This lack of progress was evident in the continued debate over the rent controls that the dictatorship inherited from the Restoration, which generated a substantial correspondence between citizens and the new government.<sup>94</sup> Coordinated campaigns looked to secure favourable changes to legislation by both tenants' and landlords' associations from the early days of Primo's regime. During late September 1923, Chambers of Urban Property from the whole of Spain—from El Ferrol to Barcelona and from Huesca to Granada—sent telegrams demanding that the new regime 'support the rights of property' and allow the rent controls to lapse.<sup>95</sup> Some emphasised what they considered the dubious constitutional legality of the rent controls, or alleged 'abuses' perpetrated by tenants.<sup>96</sup> The use of almost identical formulations in a large number of these telegrams, and their arrival in Madrid within days of each other, indicates that this was a coordinated campaign.<sup>97</sup>

Similarly, during November and December, tenants' associations from across Spain inundated the Military Directorate with telegrams requesting the renewal of the rent controls and their expansion to cover the whole of Spain.<sup>98</sup> The vast majority of these

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<sup>94</sup> See AHN, FFCC, Directorio Militar, caja 230.

<sup>95</sup> AHN, FFCC, Directorio Militar, caja 230, legajo 9-1923, numerous telegrams. Direct quotation from Fernández de Córdoba on behalf of Cámara de Propiedad Urbana de Granada, telegram to Primo de Rivera, 27/9/1923; Cámara de Propiedad Urbana de Toledo, telegram to Primo de Rivera, 27/9/1923.

<sup>96</sup> AHN, FFCC, Directorio Militar, caja 230, legajo 9-1923, Cámara Cordobesa de la Propiedad Urbana, telegram to Primo de Rivera, late September 1923 (precise date unclear); Susin on behalf of Cámara Oficial de Propiedad Urbana de Huesca, telegram to Primo de Rivera, 25/9/1923; Fernández de Córdoba on behalf of Cámara de Propiedad Urbana de Granada, telegram to Primo de Rivera, 27/9/1923; Canisa on behalf of Cámara Oficial de Propiedad Urbana de Reus, telegram to Primo de Rivera, 28 September 1923.

<sup>97</sup> Compare e.g. AHN, FFCC, Directorio Militar, caja 230, legajo 9-1923, Susin on behalf of Cámara Oficial de Propiedad Urbana de Huesca, telegram to Primo de Rivera, 25/9/1923; Cámara Oficial de Propiedad Urbana de Palma de Mallorca, telegram to Primo de Rivera, date unclear; Cámara Oficial de Propiedad Urbana de El Ferrol, telegram to Primo de Rivera, 25/9/1923; Cámara de Propiedad Urbana de Sevilla, telegram to Primo de Rivera, 25/9/1923; Cámara de Propiedad Urbana de Salamanca, telegram to Primo de Rivera, 25/9/1923; Villardefrancos on behalf of Cámara de Propiedad Urbana de A Coruña, telegram to Primo de Rivera, 25/9/1923, Cámara Oficial de Propiedad Urbana de Zaragoza, telegram to Primo de Rivera, 25/9/1923.

<sup>98</sup> AHN, FFCC, Directorio Militar, caja 230, legajos 11-1923 and 12-1923, numerous telegrams. Further similar telegrams were addressed to the dictator, although possibly in a less coordinated manner,

telegrams referred to a deputation from the Santander Tenant's Association, which was to put these demands to the government in person.<sup>99</sup> The other associations expressed their absolute support for these demands; the Santander association was, in the words of its Cartagena counterpart, the 'interpreter of the desires of all tenants in Spain'.<sup>100</sup> A change of government was a sensitive time that could be expected to bring alterations in policy and legislation. Following the coup, and with no concrete indication of Primo's stance on rent controls, civil society organisations on both sides of the debate continued to use pre-existing means of lobbying. Such groups provided a means to engage with the Spanish state without necessarily participating in the mobilising institutions established by the dictatorship. If Primo's coup constituted a rupture with the previous regime in outward constitutional forms, these embedded modes of political action simultaneously provided a degree of continuity that would persist beyond the regime's first few months.

By the spring and summer of 1925, the debate was still ongoing. The rent controls, last renewed in December 1924, were again about to lapse, requiring the government once more to decide whether to retain them.<sup>101</sup> The new regime continued to struggle to develop a sustainable solution to the crisis, although some petitioners remained hopeful that 1925 would see the government 'definitively resolve' the issue.<sup>102</sup> The contradictory demands made in the hundreds of petitions received by the Military

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during the second half of September and into October. See AHN, FFCC, Directorio Militar, caja 230, legajos 9-1923 and 10-1923, numerous telegrams.

<sup>99</sup> AHN, FFCC, Directorio Militar, caja 230, legajo 11-1923, Martín Sainz on behalf of Liga de Inquilinos de Sestao, telegram to Primo de Rivera, received 27/11/1923.

<sup>100</sup> AHN, FFCC, Directorio Militar, caja 230, legajo 11-1923, Gines Saura on behalf of Asociación de Inquilinos y Consumidores de Cartagena, telegram to Primo de Rivera, 25/11/1923.

<sup>101</sup> *Gaceta de Madrid*, 8/12/1924, pp. 1274-1277

<sup>102</sup> AHN, FFCC, Directorio Militar, caja 230, legajo 4, expediente 1015, Mier Suárez to Primo de Rivera, 26/4/1925.



Directorate in this period demonstrated, moreover, the complexity of satisfying hopes of universal prosperity through new but still undefined policies.

For many correspondents, the only just course of action for the government to take was to renew the rent controls, indicating an enduring sense that current palliatives were insufficient to remove the need for such measures.<sup>103</sup> The Tenants' and Residents' Association of Logroño was one organisation that held this opinion.<sup>104</sup> It argued that rent controls should not only be renewed, but also extended to properties with higher rents. This would support the 'so-called middle classes [*mal llamadas clases medias*]'—a description that the Association said applied to the majority of its members—'who, despite bearing most of the burden of local rates and having certain unavoidable social obligations, do not possess the necessary means to pay exorbitant rents that consume fifty per cent of their normal income'. The Association's choice to emphasise the 'unavoidable obligations' on its members was a means of locating itself within the bounds of ideological respectability. Its members were thus identified as supporters of good social order, citizens who already contributed to the kind of society envisioned by the new authorities without needing to be morally disciplined. Adapting the *primorriverista* rhetoric of rectitude, the Association found it 'immoral' to insist that its members should pay such a high proportion of their salaries in rent, whereas Spanish society should be based on 'the strictest morality'.<sup>105</sup> Framing this as a matter of morality rather than a political choice was a means, similar to those noted by Gow, of campaigning for particular state measures

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<sup>103</sup> AHN, FFCC, Directorio Militar, caja 230, legajo 3, numerous letters and telegrams, January to June 1925.

<sup>104</sup> AHN, FFCC, Directorio Militar, caja 230, legajo 2, expediente 1921, Asociación de Inquilinos y vecinos de Logroño to Primo de Rivera, 23/5/1925.

<sup>105</sup> AHN, FFCC, Directorio Militar, caja 230, legajo 2, expediente 1921, Asociación de Inquilinos y vecinos de Logroño to Primo de Rivera, 23/5/1925.

while disavowing politics.<sup>106</sup> Using the dictatorship's rhetoric in this way allowed the Association to claim an entitlement to be heeded, while also integrating its lower-middle-class members into the *primorriverista* state's networks of ideological power.

As well as associations, individual tenants were also concerned that residents of smaller villages, and not just those of larger towns, should be protected. Writing in July 1925, a 'small tradesman' from Arriondas (Asturias) complained that his landlady was demanding ninety pesetas per month for a residence that had cost fifty per month less than three years earlier; the village was too small for him to be protected by the rent controls.<sup>107</sup> Addressing Primo de Rivera directly, the writer said that he and his neighbours

would be eternally grateful if Your Excellency, *working in the cause of justice*, put an end to these abuses once and for all ... My complaints are shared unanimously by all local residents and if the government over which Your Excellency presides ... would take the problem in hand, there would be universal gratitude, not only in this village but in many others like it. The truth is that it is not fair that we are not supported by the law ... I ask for legal protection not to gain advantage but *because it is just*.<sup>108</sup>

Notions like 'morality' and 'justice' were sufficiently capacious and flexible that citizens could understand Primo's promises to end the 'immorality' associated with 'politics' as giving hope that their own interests would now be supported by the government. The dictator's condemnation of *caciquismo* and its networks of

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<sup>106</sup> Gow, '*Patria* and Citizenship'.

<sup>107</sup> AHN, FFCC, Directorio Militar, caja 230, legajo 6, expediente 2134, González Blanco to Primo de Rivera, 4/7/1925.

<sup>108</sup> AHN, FFCC, Directorio Militar, caja 230, legajo 6, expediente 2134, González Blanco to Primo de Rivera, 4/7/1925. Emphasis added.

informal influence also conditioned the way this citizen framed his request, in much the same way as Gow observes in the case of petitions related to the work of the *delegados militares*.<sup>109</sup> He was careful explicitly to deny asking for favours, instead engaging the language of propriety and justice.

Like correspondents who worried that the housing crisis could encourage left-wing agitation, the petitioner from Arriondas used concerns about violence and disorder to make his point, albeit in a more threatening manner. To support his claim that his concerns were shared by all local residents, he recalled that the previous year, a crowd—of which he was part—protesting about these issues had forced Primo’s car to stop while the dictator was travelling to visit the sanctuary of Covadonga.<sup>110</sup> He reminded the general that ‘abuses’ of the kind he was reporting ‘have led a nation into violence and disorder on more than one occasion’. Despite brazenly identifying himself as a possible participant in such disorder, the writer also attempted to position himself within the bounds of *primorriverista* ideological acceptability, as a citizen ‘whose hard work contributes to the grandeur of the *patria*’, in contrast to ‘those people who wish to live purposelessly at the expense of their fellow citizens who toil and labour’. In the same way as the anonymous engineer from Zaragoza had located himself in a closer relationship with the *primorriverista* state in comparison to working-class Spaniards supposedly in need of moral discipline, this petitioner presented his—rather different—class interests as aligned with the dictator’s ideas.<sup>111</sup> His ‘toil and labour’ contributed to Spain’s national grandeur, making him more

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<sup>109</sup> Gow, ‘*Patria* and Citizenship’.

<sup>110</sup> AHN, FFCC, Directorio Militar, caja 230, legajo 6, expediente 2134, González Blanco to Primo de Rivera, 4/7/1925

<sup>111</sup> The correspondent’s self-definition as a ‘pequeño industrial’ is somewhat ambiguous in Spanish; in itself, it could be translated as or ‘small industrialist’ or ‘small tradesman’. The fact that he was struggling to pay his rent—combined with numerous idiosyncratic spelling errors in his letter that suggest that he had not received a classical education—makes ‘small tradesman’ the more plausible interpretation.

worthy of government support than landlords who, in living off rents extracted from hard-working citizens, had more in common with the image of the venal *cacique* accused of having brought Spain low over previous decades.

The dictatorship's concern with promoting a unitary conception of Spanish national identity provided a useful idiom for other petitioners advocating for extending rent controls to all population centres. On 10 December 1924, the Tenants' Association of Deusto, a municipality on the outskirts of Bilbao, sent a telegram to Primo de Rivera requesting that rent controls be renewed and extended to the whole of Spain.<sup>112</sup> Such a request was 'just', according to the telegram, as it would eliminate the 'inequalities between the villages of the same nation'. This sentiment was echoed, in an apparent coordination of petitioning efforts, by the organisation's counterpart in Baracaldo, another municipality bordering Bilbao, which on the same day also requested a similar 'democratic' reform of the law, 'believing it to be just that all Spaniards should have equal rights and responsibilities'. The regime's nationalist rhetoric provided these groups with an idiom in which they might address these concerns to the state and justify their proposed solution. It is noteworthy that petitions from local organisations in the Basque Country—another region with its own nationalist movement—should have chosen to frame their petitions with appeals to Spanish unity, distancing themselves from the 'separatism' to which Primo was opposed. The need to operate within *primorriverista* ideological acceptability conditioned how petitioners communicated their desires to the dictatorship. In using regime rhetoric to frame their petitions and imagining the government providing solutions to their problems, they identified with the regime as a potential representative of their

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<sup>112</sup> AHN, FFCC, Directorio Militar, caja 228, legajo 3B, expediente 1197, telegrams from Liga de Inquilinos de Deusto and Asociación de Inquilinos de Baracaldo to Primo de Rivera, both 10/12/1924.

interests and elided the fact that they hoped to secure a degree of political favour that would help them to defend their personal interests, in a way that suggests continuities with the political practices of the Restoration.

However, petitioners did not necessarily hold compatible interests. The subject of rent controls is a particularly illustrative case, as landlords also felt aggrieved at the status quo. In a letter addressed to Primo de Rivera and received by the Military Directorate in May 1925, during the debate around a further renewal of rent controls, a correspondent from Portugalete (Bizkaia province) introduced herself as ‘the daughter of a widow who is growing old’, before telling the dictator of the financial difficulties she and her mother were facing as a result of the rent controls.<sup>113</sup> They owned a small building of three apartments, and the only income they had was rent on these, which was limited to exactly the same amount as they had charged in 1914: thirty pesetas per month. The writer observed that ‘Everyone knows that everything costs twice as much as it did in 1914’; because the ‘accursed Law’ would not allow them increase the rent ‘we are almost destitute, almost dying of hunger’. She warned the dictator that ‘If you do not amend that Law you will be responsible for the death of my poor mother, and I will ask the heavens to do upon you the justice you deserve. I do not think you will force me to curse you.’ By emphasising that they were not wealthy—indeed, by highlighting their destitution and her mother’s age, both characteristics that might attract charitable support—, the writer suggested that justice required the government to support their interests. The fact that she felt it possible to claim near-destitution despite owning a building of three flats demonstrates how the malleable language of ‘justice’ could be appropriated by

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<sup>113</sup> AHN, FFCC, Directorio Militar, caja 230, legajo 4, expediente 1882, Arrieta to Primo de Rivera, 16/5/1925.

Spain's propertied classes, who identified the dictatorship as a potential protector of their interests.

Appeals to justice or the common good that elided the political nature of petitioners' aims, and expressions of gratitude that performatively aligned correspondents with the dictatorship, characterised other landlords' letters on the subject. An anonymous letter received by the government on 3 December 1924 demanded that, given that 'the Directorate cares about the good of everyone', the government should take more energetic measures to protect landlords from the consequences of non-payment of rent by tenants.<sup>114</sup> Another landlord in Madrid informed the government that nine of the seventy-three flats he owned across six buildings were unoccupied despite his spending 3,000 pesetas per month advertising them.<sup>115</sup> Furthermore, he had been forced to evict six tenants for non-payment of rent, losing more than a month's rent in each case. In his view, only an end to the 'regime of exception' (the rent controls) would end his financial difficulties. Another landlord wished Primo de Rivera to know that 'property-owners can never be thankful enough for the just, wise and opportune dispositions with which the Military Directorate is moving to harmonise the interests of landlords and tenants'.<sup>116</sup> However, they rejected the notion that this was possible, stating that 'the perfidy and malice of the tenant ... makes a peaceful and conciliatory situation between both parties absolutely impossible'. This outburst again indicates the extent to which propertied Spaniards were confident of an ideological alliance with Primo's dictatorship.

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<sup>114</sup> AHN, FFCC, Directorio Militar, caja 228, legajo 3B, expediente 1185, anonymous to Primo de Rivera, 3/12/1924.

<sup>115</sup> AHN, FFCC, Directorio Militar, caja 230, legajo 9 (documentos sueltos), Martínez de Abaria to Primo de Rivera, May 1925.

<sup>116</sup> AHN, FFCC, Directorio Militar, caja 230, legajo 9 (documentos sueltos), anonymous to Primo de Rivera, May 1925.

It was, however, not ‘perfidy and malice’ on either side that made conciliation impossible; it was the fact that landlords’ and tenants’ interests were inherently and diametrically opposed. Tenants would benefit from tighter rent controls, while landlords would benefit from their abolition. Both sides of the debate could adapt *primorrriverista* language to support their interests, and thus imagine themselves into a closer relationship with the new government, seeing it as a stronger representative of their interests than the previous regime. Seeming to represent the hopes of a variety of social sectors in this way may have been useful to the dictatorship in securing support—or at least acceptance—in its early stages. However, this did not eliminate the fundamental incompatibility of some of these interests. The dictatorship would eventually be forced to support one side or the other, preventing such support from being stable. In December 1924, the government renewed the rent controls in modified form, before renewing them again in June 1925.<sup>117</sup> Appearing to support both sides of the debate was unsustainable when actually legislating. Perhaps more seriously, the decision to renew rent controls was a tacit admission that—despite the 1924 reform of *casas baratas* legislation—the dictatorship had failed to produce the ‘rapid and radical remedies’ of Primo’s manifesto in its first two years, and the housing crisis remained unresolved.

### **The First National Congress of Casas Baratas Cooperatives (October–November 1927): A propaganda platform and a space for criticisms**

The housing crisis continued to be a cause for concern in public debate in Spain, even following the conclusion of debates around the renewal of rent controls and the introduction of the 1925 *Ley de casas económicas*.<sup>118</sup> Although housing construction

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<sup>117</sup> *Gaceta de Madrid*, 8/12/1924, pp. 1274-1277; 9/6/1925, p. 1650.

<sup>118</sup> See e.g. *El Debate*, 17/10/1924, p. 3; 19/11/1924, p. 1; 2/1/1925, p. 1; 14/7/1926, pp. 1, 4; 17/2/1927, p. 4; *Heraldo de Madrid*, 21/4/1925, evening edition, p. 5; 25/4/1925, evening edition, pp. 2, 4; *El*

did increase under the dictatorship, this was insufficient to alleviate citizens' sense of crisis.<sup>119</sup> Even *El Debate*, a newspaper normally noted for zealous support of the regime, portrayed attempts to resolve the crisis as a failure. A cartoon titled '*Las casas baratas*', published in June 1926, showed two figures surveying an empty landscape. One, gesturing enthusiastically, tells the other 'Look at them! There in the distance.' His companion replies 'I still can't see anything'.<sup>120</sup> Although the dictatorship had passed its reformed *Ley de casas baratas* in October 1924, the new regulations promised in the primary legislation had still not appeared three years later, meaning that the maligned 1922 regulations continued to apply.<sup>121</sup> While the promises of 'rapid and radical remedies' in Primo's 1923 manifesto could be effective in building coalitions of initial support or acceptance, they did not automatically lead to policy change or abolish administrative obstacles.<sup>122</sup>

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*Socialista*, 6/11/1925, p. 2; 13/11/1925, p. 1; 14/11/1925, p. 1; *Heraldo de Aragón*, 23/7/1925, p. 1; 24/7/1925, p. 1; 31/7/1925, p. 1; 6/8/1925, p. 1; 11/11/1925, pp. 1, 3; 19/11/1925, p. 2; 24/12/1925, p. 1; 18/12/1926, p. 1; 20/2/1927, p. 2; 17/3/1927, p. 3; 25/3/1927, p. 1; 10/6/1927, p. 1; 24/6/1927, p. 2; 28/7/1927, p. 1.

<sup>119</sup> For example, in Burgos, a municipal Commission for Economic Residences (*Comisión de Viviendas Económicas*) was established with the aim of facilitating the work of *casas baratas* and *casas económicas* cooperatives in 1926. Such cooperatives quickly proliferated in the city, and built 110 homes by the end of the autumn of 1927. However, even though around 500 homes had been constructed by 1933, this 'still did not cover more than one third of the housing deficit'. Moreover, the poorest *burgaleses* did not possess the financial means to become members of these cooperatives in the first place. Construction through cooperatives clearly would have failed to convince citizens during the late 1920s that the housing was solved; it was a 'late, insufficient and incomplete palliative at best', and was recognised as such in public debate in the local press during the dictatorship. Delgado Viñas, 'El problema de la vivienda obrera', pp. 45-50. Ben-Ami, *Fascism from Above*, pp. 287-289.

<sup>120</sup> *El Debate*, 17/6/1926, p. 2.

<sup>121</sup> Primer Congreso Nacional de Cooperativas de Casas Baratas, *Primer Congreso Nacional de Cooperativas de Casas Baratas: 29 Octubre – 4 Noviembre 1927* (Barcelona, 1928), pp. 19-20. For the 1924 Act, see *Gaceta de Madrid*, 15/10/1924, pp. 258-265.

<sup>122</sup> The delegation of responsibility for approving *casas baratas* construction (but not for processing the related financial support) to municipalities did not always result in greater efficiency. A series of misunderstandings between the *ayuntamiento*'s various departments led to construction licences for one group of houses in Madrid being delayed. A private company planning to build sixty-four *casas baratas* in the calle Francos Rodríguez had already obtained approval for six, but the January 1926 application for licences for the remaining fifty-eight went awry. Despite the architect involved being on familiar terms—using the *tú* form of address—with members of the municipal architect's staff, the mayor's office insisted on a remarkably over-zealous interpretation of the Municipal Ordinances, which stipulated that each individual application should include plans for the house's septic tank, even though these were identical for every house in the group. The company protested against this decision in a letter dated 23 February. On 2 March, the municipal waste-water department informed the mayor's office that the plans for the septic tanks should be amended to include ventilation tubes, but



The persistence of such frustrations was attested to in the continuation of civil society mobilisations to secure the reforms that protagonists believed would facilitate the construction of new affordable homes. The Federation of *Casas Baratas* Cooperatives of Catalonia and the Balearic Islands, in whose formation the Barcelona journalists' cooperative had played a crucial role, held a series of lectures in Barcelona during 1925, with the aim of presenting ideas that could contribute to remedying the 'great' 'disorientation of the Cooperatives' and the 'increasing' difficulties they had in achieving their 'exalted mission'. The final lecture in the series was delivered by Eduardo Aunós Pérez, Minister of Labour, Commerce and Industry.<sup>123</sup> Such events allowed the Primo de Rivera regime to demonstrate or perform support for local and regional *fuerzas vivas*, using their pre-existing mobilisations to propagate its ideas and policies. Simultaneously, such civil society campaigns could gain policy access and prestige, and feel their own grievances had a sympathetic audience in Madrid.

These ongoing grievances led the Federation, working with its counterparts from other regions, to organise the First National Congress of *Casas Baratas* Cooperatives in Barcelona between 19 October and 4 November 1927.<sup>124</sup> The Congress organisers repeated complaints that governments since June 1923—by October 1927,

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that it was acceptable for only one plan to be submitted for all houses. On 12 March, however, the *ayuntamiento's* secretariat informed the company that it must submit individual plans for the septic tank of every single home, having apparently misunderstood the requirement for each to have an 'independent drainage system'. Archivo de la Villa de Madrid [henceforth AVM], Fondo General del Ayuntamiento de Madrid, Gerencia Municipal de Urbanismo, file 27-295-45. See also files 27-295-33 through 27-295-44, 27-295-46 through 27-295-49. Contrast with similar applications in which separate plans for each home of a group were *not* required, with one plan being supplied for each *model* of house; AVM, files 25-288-1 through 25-288-46; 44-157-23 through 44-157-27. The municipality's response did not respond to any of the substantive points of the 23 February letter. Even for a well-connected, for-profit company this episode must have been deeply frustrating. For cooperatives that did not have the same level of expertise at their immediate disposal, the effect of such administrative miscommunications would have been even more serious.

<sup>123</sup> *Primer Congreso Nacional de Cooperativas de Casas Baratas*, p. 6.

<sup>124</sup> *Primer Congreso Nacional de Cooperativas de Casas Baratas*.

overwhelmingly those of the dictatorship—had failed to implement the recommendations of the *Conferencia Nacional de la Edificación*. Moreover, they suggested that many cooperatives had left the 1923 Conference with the impression that their interests would be better served by calling a congress specifically for organisations aiming to construct *casas baratas*, as opposed to the whole construction sector.<sup>125</sup> Although the 1927 Congress thus aimed to correct perceived flaws in civil society mobilisations under the Restoration, these references to the earlier Conference demonstrate how the passage of time meant that the dictatorship could increasingly be blamed for the same policy failures as the dynastic parties if citizens continued to feel that their preferred policy measures were not implemented, or that crises directly affecting them were left unresolved. Moreover, the means by which they went about trying to secure favourable policy changes in this area—through bottom-up mobilisations based on socio-economic status—showed the continued relevance of embedded modes of political action that had developed under the Restoration.

The Congress's most prominent conclusion was that the administrative processes associated with *casas baratas* provisions continued to be excessively complex. Its proceedings noted that several 'dispositions' had been passed since 1924, and that this showed 'a real interest in these questions on the part of the Public Authorities, an interest that should be praised and applauded'. However, this had 'produced a state of confusion that must be brought to an end by bringing together all legislation that has been passed, forming it into a single body of law, duly regulated and systematised'. A future revised version of the law must be 'definitive'.<sup>126</sup> Although the

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<sup>125</sup> *Primer Congreso Nacional de Cooperativas de Casas Baratas*, pp. 5-6.

<sup>126</sup> *Primer Congreso Nacional de Cooperativas de Casas Baratas*, pp. 18-19.

notion that any legislation or policy can truly be considered ‘definitive’ must be considered fanciful—they are complex and remain subject to revision as social and political circumstances change over time—, citizens continued to express the same desire for a ‘definitive’ solution to the housing crisis that had animated correspondents with the government earlier in his dictatorship. The final version of the Congress’s conclusions expressed a desire for a ‘stable’ legislative framework.<sup>127</sup> The view that there was no ‘stability’ in the relevant legislation was an indictment of perceived *primorriverista* policy failures.

Although such a desire might be simplistic, it was an understandable reaction to the political instability of Spain’s early twentieth century and, even more pertinently, the confusion around administrative processes relating to affordable housing. The 1922 Regulation was described as ‘bureaucratic fussiness’ (*chinchorrería burocrática*) with which ‘the most generous initiatives are tortured and drowned’. These inefficiencies were blamed in part on excessive centralisation in the Ministry of Labour, which was taken to be ‘the principal reason why [the law] ... has not had the popular effectiveness for which it aimed’.<sup>128</sup> As unimpressed as the Barcelona journalists’ cooperative had been with the operation of the IRS, the Institute’s abolition in 1924 had resulted in the *casas baratas* provisions being administered directly by an office of the Ministry. Criticisms of excessive centralisation created a desire—albeit an ill-defined one—for the Spanish state to be restructured with regards to the administration of *casas baratas* legislation, with the aim of eliminating perceived administrative inefficiency. ‘*Expedienteo*’—the seemingly interminable shuffling of documents between different government agencies and

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<sup>127</sup> *Primer Congreso Nacional de Cooperativas de Casas Baratas*, p. 143.

<sup>128</sup> *Primer Congreso Nacional de Cooperativas de Casas Baratas*, pp. 19–21.

departments that needed to approve them—was ‘one of the incurable ills of our public administration, [which] has invaded this field with devastating effects’.<sup>129</sup> Moreover, the cooperatives lamented that they received little administrative support from municipal and provincial authorities, which they speculated was due to these authorities struggling to make sense of the requirements themselves.<sup>130</sup> Much the same criticisms as had been made by civil society mobilisations interested in affordable under the Restoration continued to vex *casas baratas* cooperatives under Primo de Rivera, demonstrating that anti-political hopes for a reinvention of state administration in this area had been disappointed.

However, the delegates still felt that local authorities ‘forgot’ that cooperatives pursued ‘an elevated, civic and patriotic mission’ that would contribute to the prosperity of communities and, through property taxes once the exemptions accorded to *casas baratas* expired, to the finances of local government.<sup>131</sup> By framing their actions as contributing to national prosperity, and thus patriotic rather than self-interested, in true anti-political style, cooperatives could demand greater support from state bodies. They also felt neglected by the national government. While being careful to emphasise that they did not expect the central government to provide ‘manna from heaven’, the Congress found that ‘the State has the fundamental duty to continue contributing financial resources, to an even greater extent if possible—and it is possible’.<sup>132</sup> Municipal and provincial governments could also contribute greater resources, in the delegates’ opinion, although the current insufficiency of the funds they provided was blamed in part on their lack of confidence in the central government to provide the funding required for *casas*

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<sup>129</sup> *Primer Congreso Nacional de Cooperativas de Casas Baratas*, p. 19.

<sup>130</sup> *Primer Congreso Nacional de Cooperativas de Casas Baratas*, pp. 35-36.

<sup>131</sup> *Primer Congreso Nacional de Cooperativas de Casas Baratas*, p. 35.

<sup>132</sup> *Primer Congreso Nacional de Cooperativas de Casas Baratas*, p. 24.

*baratas* initiatives.<sup>133</sup> The Congress suggested that municipalities could support cooperatives by providing better and cheaper infrastructure (including urbanising land owned by cooperatives), by providing more money, and by expropriating land owned by speculators. Provincial authorities could buy land to donate to cooperatives. Such material support could help avoid the situation in which ‘many cooperatives have had to disappear in despair and exhaustion and others, despite functioning for a long time, have still been unable to build a single home’.<sup>134</sup> Despite the hopes engendered among some citizens that state action under Primo would become more direct and efficient in solving the housing crisis, even four years after his coup organisations involved in this policy area had fundamentally the same complaints: inefficient administration, excessive centralisation, and insufficient financial and material support from state bodies, despite the contribution they felt that could make to Spain’s prosperity. The ‘iron surgeon’ had been unable to cure these ills.

However, the continued existence of such complaints did not prevent the regime from using these demands and protests as a means of encouraging citizens to identify the government as a means to secure their demands, and thus of integrating them into the Spanish state’s power structures. In this sense, events such as the Congress became a locus for nationalising the masses outside the coercive institutions associated with the ‘negative integration’ examined by Quiroga.<sup>135</sup> In a Royal Order of 2 August 1927, the Congress was granted ‘official’ status, signalling government support and patronage of the initiative.<sup>136</sup> By granting the Congress state support, the

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<sup>133</sup> *Primer Congreso Nacional de Cooperativas de Casas Baratas*, p. 25.

<sup>134</sup> *Primer Congreso Nacional de Cooperativas de Casas Baratas*, p. 36.

<sup>135</sup> Quiroga, *Making Spaniards*.

<sup>136</sup> *Primer Congreso Nacional de Cooperativas de Casas Baratas*, p. 3.

Primo de Rivera regime was able to visibly co-opt the civil society mobilisations underlying it, integrating these into the regime's 'networks of social power'.<sup>137</sup>

The event became a set-piece of regime propaganda. King Alfonso XIII was named President of the Congress's 'Honorary Committee' (*Comité de honor*), while Primo de Rivera, Aunós, and Martínez Anido were Vice-Presidents. The rest of the Committee was composed of civic, military, religious, academic and judicial dignitaries from Barcelona province and Catalonia.<sup>138</sup> The king attended the inaugural session.<sup>139</sup> During his opening speech in the monarch's presence, Fidencio Kirchner, the secretary of the organising committee, noted that the Congress included representatives of normally opposed interests—working-class Spaniards, and capitalists involved in the housing market—not with the aim of airing differences but to 'consider the most appropriate solutions to achieve as quickly and practically as possible one of the great ideals of humanity ...: one man, one house'.<sup>140</sup> The combination of the king's presence and this expression of support for a corporatist policy-making process—bringing together representatives of opposed interests with the conceit of finding a technocratic and supposedly 'apolitical' solution—suggested state support for the cooperatives' goals and support from the cooperatives for the dictatorship. The king echoed corporatist ideological precepts in his speech, noting with satisfaction that 'both the working class and capital' were represented, which 'gives hope that, with good will, the Congress will produce excellent fruits for all social classes and we will set down another page in the history of the Spain's progress'.<sup>141</sup> The fact that these words were spoken by the head of the Spanish state

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<sup>137</sup> Mann, *The Sources of Social Power*, pp. 46-56.

<sup>138</sup> *Primer Congreso Nacional de Cooperativas de Casas Baratas*, p. 15 and unnumbered photo pages.

<sup>139</sup> *Primer Congreso Nacional de Cooperativas de Casas Baratas*, p. 109

<sup>140</sup> *Primer Congreso Nacional de Cooperativas de Casas Baratas*, p. 111.

<sup>141</sup> *Primer Congreso Nacional de Cooperativas de Casas Baratas*, p. 114.

suggested that the government's corporatist politics aimed to give all interests a place in Spain's political community and to represent them. Such a suggestion played on the capacity of regenerationist, anti-political rhetoric to make a wide variety of interests feel accommodated. The king's call for delegates to act with 'good will' established an expectation that they and the organisations they represented should not prioritise their own interests over achieving 'excellent fruits for all social classes'. Anti-political populism could attract a range of social sectors into the dictatorship's 'networks of power', but also required them to accept the government's assessment of 'the common good'. Simultaneously, it provided these groups with a language that they could deploy to present their private interests synonymous with the national interest, and thus worthy of government support.

The notion of an alliance between the state and the cooperatives was also put forward as Juan José Pou de Barros, in his capacity as President of the Catalonia and Balearics Federation, emphasised that building *casas baratas* created 'good and honourable citizens who are rooted in their locality and love their *Patria* and its institutions'. Comfortably housed citizens would be unlikely to 'abandon their homes to attend ... centres of perdition' such as 'taverns [and] gambling dens' and would instead spend time on improving their home. 'Such a citizen cannot be bad and, as a result, must necessarily become a good patriot'.<sup>142</sup> If cooperatives were asking for state support, it was in order to achieve the moral reform of poorer Spaniards necessary to transform them into the 'good citizens' and 'good patriots' the dictatorship desired. Reproducing these ideological concerns made these mobilisations a means of encouraging Spaniards to identify their interests with the conservative, hierarchical ideology of the dictatorship. These bottom-up movements

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<sup>142</sup> *Primer Congreso Nacional de Cooperativas de Casas Baratas*, p. 113.

thus became a medium for integrating these citizens into the structures of a right-wing state, even outside coercive, nationalising institutions.

The integration of the Congress into official regime ceremonial remained clear in the closing session, which was presided over by Primo de Rivera and during which the Federation requested that Pou de Barros be awarded the Silver Medal of Labour.<sup>143</sup> This decoration was awarded in October 1928, in the presence of numerous dignitaries from Barcelona province and representatives of *casas baratas* cooperatives, by none other than Eduardo Aunós.<sup>144</sup> Embracing Pou de Barros after presenting the medal, Aunós informed those present that it should be taken as an embrace to all *casas baratas* cooperatives. By expressing sympathy and support for civil society campaigns for affordable housing, the *primorriverista* state co-opted these interests and publicly insinuated that it fully supported these groups. Although the cooperatives' criticisms of current policy implementation could have reflected poorly on the dictatorship, this rendered them less threatening to the regime. At the very least, it constituted a performance of listening to and deciding to act upon citizens' complaints. In doing so, the regime integrated the cooperatives into official ceremonial and encouraged their members to see the military regime as one that would represent their interests. Co-opting pre-existing, bottom-up mobilisations based around their members' socio-economic position was thus another route to integration into state structures, complementing the more obviously authoritarian integration attempted through the coercive institutions associated with the 'nationalisation of the masses'.<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> *Primer Congreso Nacional de Cooperativas de Casas Baratas*, pp. 154, 158. The Medal of Labour was created by the dictatorship in 1926 to recognise 'services rendered for the benefit of the national wealth'; *Gaceta de Madrid*, 12/2/1926, pp. 802-804.

<sup>144</sup> *Primer Congreso Nacional de Cooperativas de Casas Baratas*, pp. 201-204.

<sup>145</sup> Quiroga, *Making Spaniards*.



The proceedings of the Congress demonstrated how co-opting civil society mobilisations could deflect criticism of the *primorriverista* state. During the closing session, Salvador Crespo, a senior lawyer employed by the Ministry of Labour, Commerce and Industry, was invited to speak. In contrast to the criticisms that had led to the Congress being called, he credited the Primo regime with having ensured the central government contributed with ‘insuperable generosity’ to the construction of affordable housing, thereby inspiring ‘absolute confidence in the state’. The dictatorship, he said, had ‘formed a current of public opinion, a national consciousness, a firm spirit of citizenship aiming to resolve the problem’.<sup>146</sup> This was a misrepresentation of how this ‘current of public opinion’ had been formed. As shown in this chapter, it had appeared in civil society organisations before the dictatorship. These organisations had petitioned the dictatorship through its early years for a solution to the housing crisis, and the Federation of *Casas Baratas* Cooperatives of Catalonia had organised the Congress before it was declared ‘official’. Moreover, the representatives of the cooperatives had insisted that state authorities could make greater material contributions to their work. They would therefore not have agreed with the assessment that the resources dedicated to *casas baratas* constituted ‘insuperable generosity’, yet interventions by state representatives encouraged them to look to the dictatorship for support. Especially during essentially ceremonial parts of the Congress such as the opening and closing sessions, the complaints that had inspired the event were played down and representatives of the state—whether the king or Crespo—were given the floor and rehearsed the regime’s conception of proper roles in policy-making: the authorities would channel public opinion in productive directions, and citizens would act with ‘absolute confidence in

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<sup>146</sup> *Primer Congreso Nacional de Cooperativas de Casas Baratas*, pp. 160-161.

the state'. The Congress delegates received an opportunity to present their complaints directly to those in a position to attempt to resolve them; Crespo and another Ministry of Labour functionary, Mariano Robledo, were present throughout, and responded substantively to some of the cooperatives' criticisms and suggestions.<sup>147</sup> However, in return for the access to regime figures that it granted to the cooperatives, the Primo dictatorship extracted a tribute of praise and a propaganda opportunity to present itself as the agent that would resolve the crisis.

Although it was impossible to claim that the housing crisis had been entirely resolved, and the activity of organisations like the Federation meant that these failures would be debated in the public sphere, the Primo regime continued to attempt to use these complaints to its advantage. First of all, granting the Congress official status could be taken to demonstrate the regime's commitment to supporting Spain's *fuerzas vivas* and self-identifying 'good citizens'. Second, being seen to support the cooperatives' grievances presented the dictatorship not as the *target* of those grievances, but as *sharing* them. By listening to these complaints, the dictatorship could suggest it was still working to resolve the shortcomings in the administration of the Spanish state. Finally, it allowed the regime to deflect blame onto others. Crespo blamed the cooperatives' 'very deficient' functioning not just on a lack of economic resources' but also on Spain's allegedly insufficient spirit of 'human solidarity ... sacrifice, renunciation of individualism to think only of the collective good, to consider that the more altruistic and disinterested one's actions, the more universal the benefits obtained'. He associated these values with the cooperative movement, thus strengthening the integration of the cooperatives into the

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<sup>147</sup> See e.g. *Primer Congreso Nacional de Cooperativas de Casas Baratas*, pp. 118-119.

*primorriverista* state's networks of ideological power through mutual praise.<sup>148</sup> However, by pointing to supposed moral deficiencies in the Spanish population at large, Crespo engaged the regenerationist sense that Spain required spiritual reform from above to overcome its national problems: precisely the programme implied in Primo de Rivera's self-presentation as 'the iron surgeon'. Moreover, by emphasising the need for 'disinterested' action and the 'renunciation of individualism', Crespo implied the existence of an objective shared national interest that all relevant parties should accept. This was an exhortation to endorse the decisions of the government. Civil society mobilisations could attempt to influence the dictatorship, but were expected to also perform support for its actions and refrain from outright criticism of it. It was impossible to claim that Spain's housing crisis had been resolved, but co-opting civil society campaigns for particular solutions allowed the Primo de Rivera dictatorship to encourage citizens to identify its rule as a necessary part of the eventual solution. This co-option was a route to integrating Spaniards into the state's governing structures that co-existed with attempts to 'nationalise the masses' in coercive institutions.<sup>149</sup>

### **The frustrated progress of a municipal affordable housing project: The case of Zaragoza**

One *ayuntamiento* that made significant efforts to build new affordable housing on a large scale during the Primo de Rivera dictatorship was that of Zaragoza. It was notable in having its project approved by national government legislation, a Royal Decree of 9 November 1925.<sup>150</sup> The progress of the *ayuntamiento*'s attempts to resolve the shortage of affordable housing in Zaragoza demonstrates some of the

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<sup>148</sup> *Primer Congreso Nacional de Cooperativas de Casas Baratas*, p. 162.

<sup>149</sup> Quiroga, *Making Spaniards*.

<sup>150</sup> *Gaceta de Madrid*, 10/11/1925, p. 762.

social, political and administrative dynamics that both frustrated the construction of new housing, and made the issue an important aspect of how citizens conceptualised their relationship with state authorities.

The municipality entrusted the project's execution to private companies, but their need to produce a profit created an obstacle to building low-cost homes.

Furthermore, financial difficulties within one of these companies threatened the success of the project; its bankruptcy led to municipal plans being delayed for years.

While the municipality invoked notions of 'social cooperation', the debate around housing provision could not escape from the fundamentally opposed class interests at stake.<sup>151</sup> Working-class and lower-middle-class *zaragozanos* would benefit from the provision of more affordable housing, whereas the city's landowners would obtain greater profits by building more expensive accommodation on the plots they owned, or at least avoiding compulsory purchases of their property. The *Ley de casas baratas* included provisions that made the latter possible, causing further delays. Subsequent legal disputes between the landowners and the municipality revealed both a continued sense that state institutions were characterised by inertia and inefficiency, and a lack of good will between the different parties involved, all of whom attempted to secure their own interests while speaking the languages of justice or the common good. The fall of the Restoration system did not fundamentally alter the 'pork-barrel' approach to politics and public policy that had dominated prior to 1923. Meanwhile, apparent municipal support for the construction company established by local landowners and the slow progress of house-building caused *casas baratas* cooperatives in the city to feel excluded from decision-making. Citizens who hoped to benefit from affordable housing denounced municipal

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<sup>151</sup> Pérez Herrero, *Casas baratas*, p. 3.

collaboration with class interests opposed to theirs. Although Primo's initial appeal to the country had rested on a denunciation of corrupt systems from which many citizens felt excluded, by 1930 *zaragozanos* who desired the rapid construction of new affordable housing still had good reason to feel that state institutions were failing to listen to them.

In response to the housing crisis and the obligation created by the 1921 *Ley de casas baratas* for municipalities to undertake construction projects, the *ayuntamiento* of Zaragoza decided on 19 January 1923 to open a call for tenders to plan and execute such a project.<sup>152</sup> Two tenders were presented. One was backed by a number of local institutions—the Provincial Deputation, the Chamber of Commerce, the Labourers' Association, the Chamber of Agriculture, the Chamber of Urban Property, and several local and regional banks—and the relevant plans were to be drafted by the prominent local engineer Manuel Lorenzo Pardo.<sup>153</sup> The other was submitted by a private company, Construcciones Rapid Cem Fer (CRCF), to which the *ayuntamiento* chose to award the contract on 9 March.<sup>154</sup> The municipal council had been reluctant during early 1923 to take direct control of housing construction, and it is possible that this informed the decision not to award the contract to a consortium including the provincial authorities and local institutions.<sup>155</sup> However, in choosing a private company over a project backed by a coalition of civil society organisations, the municipality—probably unwittingly—created a perception that it supported private capital over cooperation between Zaragoza's *fuerzas vivas*. This perception

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<sup>152</sup> Pérez Herrero, *Casas baratas*, p. 4.

<sup>153</sup> Pérez Herrero, *Casas baratas*, p. 4. Lorenzo Pardo would subsequently gain further eminence as the Technical Director of the Syndical Hydrographic Confederation of the Ebro, from June 1926. Chapter Three of this thesis contains further discussion of his biography. See also José Ramón Marcuello, *Manuel Lorenzo Pardo* (Madrid, 1990).

<sup>154</sup> Pérez Herrero, *Casas baratas*, p. 4.

<sup>155</sup> Sociedad Zaragozana de Urbanización y Construcción [hereafter SZUC], *La "Sociedad Zaragozana de Urbanización y Construcción" y el problema de viviendas protegidas* (Zaragoza, 1930), p. 4.

would continue to inform debates over housing construction in the city over the next seven years.

Moreover, the decision did not accord with the increasing desire in the early 1920s for greater direct state involvement in affordable housing provision, noted earlier in this chapter. Indeed, in 1921, a city councillor and local lawyer, José María Sánchez Ventura, had proposed the formation of an ‘organisation of mixed character’—combining public authorities, private capital, and civil society associations—that would lend money for the construction of homes, as well as building them itself.<sup>156</sup> He recommended that the *ayuntamiento* should ‘present the problem to the city and try to encourage social and private action to harmonise themselves, so that both produce realistic solutions’.<sup>157</sup> Ideas circulating in Zaragoza in the early twentieth century were in favour of models of mixed social action outside the market economy and under the guidance of the *ayuntamiento*, but the decisions taken in early 1923 showed that state institutions were unable or unwilling to respond to desires for them to establish such structures, and instead preferred to continue using private companies.

The plans drawn up by CRCF were approved by the Ministry of Labour on 9 November 1925.<sup>158</sup> However, by this time the company had ‘ceased to exist as a result of financial difficulties’.<sup>159</sup> This left the *ayuntamiento* with an approved plan but with no organisation in a position to implement it. The call for tenders had stipulated that 300 *casas baratas* should be completed each year in the first two

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<sup>156</sup> José María Sánchez Ventura, *El problema de la vivienda: Ponencia para la comisión municipal de Hacienda, informando la moción de D. Antonio Mompeón Motos, con un apéndice sobre la obra económica realizada por el Ayuntamiento interino de Zaragoza* (Zaragoza, 1921), pp. 7-10.

<sup>157</sup> Sánchez Ventura, *El problema de la vivienda*, p. 12.

<sup>158</sup> *Gaceta de Madrid*, 10/11/1925, p. 762; Pérez Herrero, *Casas baratas*, p. 8; SZUC, *La “Sociedad Zaragozana de Urbanización y Construcción”*, p. 6.

<sup>159</sup> Pérez Herrero, *Casas baratas*, pp. 7-8.

years of the contract, but over two years after the contract had been awarded to CRCF not a single home had been built.<sup>160</sup> The need to submit the plans for ministerial approval held up progress, but the episode also exposed a weakness of relying on third parties to build new affordable housing: financial difficulties for these organisations could result in state-supported projects failing to meet expectations. Such incidents highlighted how the continuation of prior mechanisms of administering housing construction prevented hopes engendered by Primo's coup from being realised, and also suggest reasons for citizens' desire that state organisations should take a more active role in implementing policy in this area.

Discussion of affordable housing policy in Zaragoza during the early years of the Primo dictatorship continued in similar ways to the rest of Spain. On 21 March 1924, Emilio Laguna Azorín, a member of the *Sociedad Económica Aragonesa de Amigos del País* (Aragonese Economic Society of Friends of the Country) and former mayor of the city, delivered a speech to the Society entitled 'Can the problem of housing be solved in Zaragoza?'<sup>161</sup> The Society had attempted to organise a series of lectures on the issue during 1920, but found that the social disorder that Zaragoza was experiencing at the time made this impossible.<sup>162</sup> Laguna Azorín lamented that, four years later, the topic continued to excite 'constant preoccupation in the press and public life'.<sup>163</sup> The speaker suggested that the particularly severe disorder that Zaragoza had experienced during the later years of the Restoration had complicated attempts to build new housing in the city. However, like other middle-class

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<sup>160</sup> Pérez Herrero, *Casas baratas*, pp. 6-7.

<sup>161</sup> Emilio Laguna Azorín, *¿Puede solucionarse, en Zaragoza, el problema de la vivienda? Conferencia leída por el socio D. Emilio Laguna Azorín en la sesión ordinaria del día 21 de marzo de 1924* (Zaragoza, 1924).

<sup>162</sup> Laguna Azorín, *¿Puede solucionarse?*, pp. 5-6; appendix 1, p. I. On social unrest in Zaragoza during the crisis of the Restoration, see José Ramón Marcuello, *Manuel Lorenzo Pardo* (Madrid, 1990), pp. 134-135.

<sup>163</sup> Laguna Azorín, *¿Puede solucionarse?*, pp. 5-6.

Spaniards during this period, he saw the dictatorship as offering hope for measures to resolve the crisis, precisely because its public order policy meant that ‘today in our *Patria* we enjoy an atmosphere of confidence and personal security that we previously lacked’.<sup>164</sup>

As might be expected while addressing an association that existed to promote economic prosperity in Aragon, Laguna Azorín criticised the *ayuntamiento*’s decision to award the house-building contract to a company from outside Zaragoza, when the work could have been completed by *zaragozanos*. He hoped that the collapse of CRCF would ‘serve as a lesson’ to municipal policy-makers, and called on the *ayuntamiento* to formulate a new plan based on consultation with the local organisations that had backed the rival bid in the 1923 call for tenders. He recommended that the *ayuntamiento* should act as a ‘regulator’ in the area of housing provision, stopping short of suggesting it should take direct responsibility for implementing the project.<sup>165</sup> This was, however, a call for Zaragoza’s civil society organisations to be involved in developing and executing a solution to the problem to a greater extent than the 1923 decision had allowed. This assertion of the right of organisations representing citizens based on their economic interests was in keeping with both Primo’s corporatist politics, and a sense that such organisations should be treated as legitimate mediators between citizens and state bodies.

Following Laguna Azorín’s speech, the Society wrote letters to both Primo de Rivera and the Mayor of Zaragoza offering its recommendations regarding the crisis.<sup>166</sup> It hoped that Primo would welcome its letter given ‘its noble aim, that of putting forward [the Society’s] ideas in order to contribute ... to the resolution of this

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<sup>164</sup> Laguna Azorín, *¿Puede solucionarse?*, pp. 16-17.

<sup>165</sup> Laguna Azorín, *¿Puede solucionarse?*, pp. 34-40.

<sup>166</sup> Laguna Azorín, *¿Puede solucionarse?*, appendices 1-2.



problem, which preoccupies not only men of government but all citizens, and especially the middle classes'. The Society wished the government to adjust the calculation of property taxes and to expand the provisions of the *Ley de casas baratas* to cover more expensive rents, thus including more middle-class citizens under the provisions.<sup>167</sup> Moreover, by stating that its members shared the same preoccupations as 'men of government', the Society discursively established a political alliance between itself and the social classes it represented on the one hand, and the dictatorship on the other, and expressed a desire to collaborate with the government in policy-making. This alliance was mediated through Primo de Rivera's person, in line with the 'charismatic construction' of Primo as head of state that would have been familiar to citizens after half a year of dictatorship.<sup>168</sup> The Society 'dare[d] to call Your Excellency's attention' to the issues it highlighted so the general might personally order technical staff to consider them in any revision of *casas baratas* legislation.<sup>169</sup> The dictator's stated wish for 'good citizens' to 'collaborate' in the government of Spain encouraged these organisations to present themselves as proper interlocutors with the regime on behalf of citizens in a mutually beneficial relationship.<sup>170</sup> While organisations like the Aragonese Economic Society relied on the dictatorship to transform their proposals into policy action, they also saw themselves as interpreting the desires of Spanish society for the general, and took responsibility for informing the central government of local conditions.<sup>171</sup> As seen in other petitions directed to the regime, middle-class Spaniards expected that Primo's

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<sup>167</sup> Laguna Azorín, *¿Puede solucionarse?*, appendix 1, pp. II-IX.

<sup>168</sup> Quiroga, 'Construcción carismática'.

<sup>169</sup> Laguna Azorín, *¿Puede solucionarse?*, appendix 1, p. VII

<sup>170</sup> Álvarez Rey (ed.), *Bajo el fuero militar*, p. 57.

<sup>171</sup> The Royal Aragonese Society explained to Primo that Zaragoza did not possess the 'great fortunes' of other Spanish cities, making state action through the municipality all the more necessary. Laguna Azorín, *¿Puede solucionarse?*, appendix 1, pp. VII-VIII.

dictatorship would defend their class interests and imagined organisations of which they were members to enjoy a mutually supportive relationship with the government. Furthermore, *primorriverista* legislation gave the Society a language it could invoke in order to put pressure on the municipal authorities to engage with its policy proposals. Its letter to the *ayuntamiento*, it pointed out that the Municipal Statute created a duty on municipalities to ‘take care of the defence, prosperity and wellbeing of residents’ moral and material interests’.<sup>172</sup> However, the Society’s aim was not to be antagonistic towards the municipal authorities. Its letter offered ‘applause’ for the *ayuntamiento*’s attempts to resolve the crisis in Zaragoza, and promised that it would ‘at all moments have our decided support’. Its principal request, in line with the substance of Laguna Azorín’s speech, was that ‘Aragonese capital and organisations’ should complete the project if CRCF proved incapable of doing so.<sup>173</sup> In Zaragoza, as nationally, petitioning allowed civil society organisations—in this case, one representing bourgeois regional *fuerzas vivas*—to demand a greater role for themselves and their ideas in solving the housing crisis, and to discursively construct a closer relationship with Spain’s national government, based on aspects of Primo’s programme that invited such offers of collaboration.

By 1925 it was obvious that CRCF would be in no position to meet its contractual obligations, and the *ayuntamiento* intended to press ahead with the project by other means. The uncertainty around how this should be achieved continued to fuel debate around the proper means of proceeding. In a joint intervention, local employers’ and

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<sup>172</sup> Laguna Azorín, *¿Puede solucionarse?*, appendix 2, p. I. On the Municipal Statute, see González Calleja, *Modernización autoritaria*, pp. 129-138; Tamames, *Ni Mussolini ni Franco*, 231-233; Alejandro Quiroga, *Making Spaniards: Primo de Rivera and the Nationalization of the Masses, 1923-1930* (Basingstoke, 2007), pp. 46-47; Tusell, *Historia de España en el siglo XX*, 1, pp. 460-461; María Teresa González Calbet, *La dictadura de Primo de Rivera. El Directorio Militar* (Madrid, 1987), pp. 240-242; Ben-Ami, *Fascism from Above*, p. 94.

<sup>173</sup> Laguna Azorín, *¿Puede solucionarse?*, appendix 2, pp. II, IV.

labour organisations urged the *ayuntamiento* to take direct control of the project, trusting that this would ‘stimulate, by all means available, cooperation in constructive activities between landowners, future residents, cooperative members, organisations and Chambers that ... can build *casas baratas*’.<sup>174</sup> In line with corporatist political thought, they conceived more active state involvement in the area as a means to secure balanced cooperation between different interests. However, other contributions to this debate tended to highlight the extent to which it was class interests more than inter-class cooperation that informed citizens’ attitudes and actions regarding affordable housing. In 1927, a group of *casas baratas* cooperatives based in the city wrote to the municipal authorities suggesting that the homes to be built should be divided between Zaragoza’s cooperatives.<sup>175</sup> This demand, although it drew on the familiar desire for local organisations to have a greater role than private companies, aimed to secure benefits for the cooperatives’ members.

Yet it was the landowners in the area in which the new homes were to be constructed who most effectively defended their class interests during this period. Following a visit to Zaragoza by Ministry of Labour functionaries in the summer of 1927, during which they noted that work still had not commenced, the city’s mayor announced the municipality’s intention to begin expropriating and urbanising land in the area allocated for affordable housing construction.<sup>176</sup> Meetings to this end were held between the municipality, employers’ and workers’ representatives, and landowners.<sup>177</sup> Ultimately, however, the expropriation could not go ahead. The *Ley de casas baratas* stipulated that landowners could avoid compulsory purchases by

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<sup>174</sup> Pérez Herrero, *Casas baratas*, pp. 9-10.

<sup>175</sup> Pérez Herrero, *Casas baratas*, pp. 9-10.

<sup>176</sup> SZUC, *La “Sociedad Zaragozana de Urbanización y Construcción”*, pp. 10-11.

<sup>177</sup> Pérez Herrero, *Casas baratas*, p. 11.

undertaking to construct affordable housing on their property.<sup>178</sup> When the affected landowners in Zaragoza found it would be financially advantageous to form a company with this aim rather than to accept the compulsory purchases, the municipality was forced to suspend expropriation proceedings and enter negotiations with the new *Sociedad Zaragozana de Urbanización y Construcción* (SZUC; Zaragoza Urbanisation and Construction Company).<sup>179</sup> The Company's statutes were drafted during the autumn of 1927, and in December the municipality approved them and subrogated all of its rights and obligations regarding the construction project to the SZUC.<sup>180</sup> The property owners themselves approved the agreements made with the *ayuntamiento* in a meeting of 2 January 1928.<sup>181</sup>

By this time, only a limited—indeed, a merely symbolic—amount of construction work had taken place. The original authorisation for the project had required work to commence by 12 November 1927; in order to avoid this authorisation lapsing, one landowner temporarily transferred ownership of part of his property to the *ayuntamiento* on 22 October. Urbanisation works commenced on 26 October, allowing the Ministry of Labour to certify two days that work had indeed begun.<sup>182</sup> Ordinary *zaragozanos* could not yet see any material improvement to their housing conditions as a result of the municipal project, even though the original contract had been awarded over four years previously with expectations that 600 homes would be completed within the first two years. In contrast, the owners of land that had been earmarked for urban expansion had made effective use of the provisions of Spain's

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<sup>178</sup> *Gaceta de Madrid*, 15/10/1924, p. 263.

<sup>179</sup> SZUC, *La "Sociedad Zaragozana de Urbanización y Construcción"*, pp. 8-12.

<sup>180</sup> SZUC, *La "Sociedad Zaragozana de Urbanización y Construcción"*, p. 17; Archivo Municipal de Zaragoza [hereafter AMZ], F-13/10, *Escritura de subrogación de derechos, emisión de obligaciones, hipoteca y fianza otorgada por el Ayuntamiento de Zaragoza a favor de la Sociedad Zaragozana de Urbanización y Construcción* (Zaragoza, 1930).

<sup>181</sup> SZUC, *La "Sociedad Zaragozana de Urbanización y Construcción"*, p. 21.

<sup>182</sup> SZUC, *La "Sociedad Zaragozana de Urbanización y Construcción"*, p. 16

affordable housing legislation to defend their class interests, at the expense of incurring further delays to the project. It would be December 1928 before the Ministry of Labour certified that the project plans, as revised following the subrogation to the SZUC, complied with affordable housing legislation.<sup>183</sup> This situation revealed how the desire expressed by a number of interested parties for policy solutions based on inter-class cooperation were far from being reflected in the reality of affordable housing policy. The anti-political rhetoric of the common or national good was just that: rhetoric. In reality, citizens continued to defend their private interests, sometimes conflating these with the general interest. Moreover, hopes for a rapid solution to the housing crisis engendered by Primo's coup were disappointed, reducing the ability of the dictator's 'anti-political' populism to secure *zaragozanos*' support in the long term.

Adjustments to the project following the subrogation also lost the potential support of the city's *casas baratas* cooperatives. The *ayuntamiento* had required sixty percent of the land earmarked for construction to be used for *casas baratas*, with the remainder available for slightly more expensive *casas económicas* to be occupied by lower-middle-class citizens.<sup>184</sup> This requirement was revised in the face of the SZUC's objection that Zaragoza population required more *casas económicas*, and that the 'free zone' where the homes to be built did not have to meet the conditions of *casas baratas* or *económicas* should be enlarged, in order to guarantee that the SZUC would profit from the project.<sup>185</sup> Although these revisions were approved, they precipitated a letter of protest from the city's Federation of *Casas Baratas* Cooperatives on 25 October 1928, which complained that only thirty percent of the

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<sup>183</sup> SZUC, *La "Sociedad Zaragozana de Urbanización y Construcción"*, p. 58.

<sup>184</sup> Pérez Herrero, *Casas baratas*, p. 14.

<sup>185</sup> SZUC, *La "Sociedad Zaragozana de Urbanización y Construcción"*, p. 66.

land available would now be assigned to *casas baratas*.<sup>186</sup> However justified this alteration may have been, the result was that the interests of the less wealthy *zaragozanos* who would be eligible for *casas baratas* appeared to be treated as less important than those of property owners and citizens who would be eligible for *casas económicas*, again suggesting that Spain's lower middle classes and property-owners could expect greater support from the *primorriverista* authorities than could workers.

Between the December 1928 ministerial approval of the new project and November 1929, the SZUC succeeded in building the 300 required in the first year of the work.<sup>187</sup> Although these homes had originally been intended to be ready before the end of 1924, it could seem that progress was now being made in resolving Zaragoza's deficit of affordable housing. However, these homes were not yet inhabitable, as they lacked a proper water supply and sewerage infrastructure. Whatever progress the SZUC had made was thus inadequate in mitigating *zaragozanos'* experience of the crisis.

This lack of utilities infrastructure for the new homes formed part of a broader dispute between the SZUC and the *ayuntamiento* that brought construction work once again to a halt from November 1929. The agreement between the municipality and the SZUC, under which the latter had been awarded the contract to complete the building project, stipulated that the *ayuntamiento* would be responsible for the urbanisation works necessary to link the new homes to the city's water, sewerage and street-lighting infrastructure.<sup>188</sup> In order to facilitate the completion of these works by avoiding any need for the municipality to find funds immediately available for the

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<sup>186</sup> SZUC, *La "Sociedad Zaragozana de Urbanización y Construcción"*, pp. 51-52.

<sup>187</sup> SZUC, *La "Sociedad Zaragozana de Urbanización y Construcción"*, p. 88.

<sup>188</sup> AMZ, F-13/10, *Escritura de subrogación*, p. 15.

works, it was agreed that the SZUC would complete the work, in exchange for which the municipality would pay the company a portion of the taxes it raised on such services for a number of years to be determined at a later date. The *ayuntamiento* established a committee to decide on the ‘financial formula’ to achieve this on 6 October 1928. However, the SZUC was worried to find that time was passing without the *ayuntamiento* instructing its technicians to draw up the necessary plans for these works or determining the means by which it would be paid for completing them. Concerned that a large number of homes could be completed without the services necessary to render them habitable, it chose to commission the municipal planners to draft the plans at its own expense.<sup>189</sup>

On 22 November 1929, ‘seeing the passivity with which the municipality was acting in regard to this topic’, the SZUC submitted a formal letter of protest (*instancia*) demanding that the form of payment for the work it had completed thus far and the next phase of the project should be established, and the plans for the water supply and sewerage infrastructure approved.<sup>190</sup> The municipality formed a committee to consider the letter, but with no new details forthcoming, the SZUC reiterated its complaints in a new *instancia* dated 16 January 1930, four days after the original letter had been published in the local press. The company denied all responsibility for any delays to the construction project, saying blame must lie with the *ayuntamiento*.<sup>191</sup>

Although the SZUC’s pursuit of profit for its shareholders—the landowners—had delayed progress in efforts to resolve Zaragoza’s housing shortage, shortcomings on

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<sup>189</sup> SZUC, *La “Sociedad Zaragozana de Urbanización y Construcción”*, pp. 79-80.

<sup>190</sup> SZUC, *La “Sociedad Zaragozana de Urbanización y Construcción”*, pp. 81-82; Pérez Herrero, *Casas baratas*, pp. 31-38.

<sup>191</sup> SZUC, *La “Sociedad Zaragozana de Urbanización y Construcción”*, pp. 82-85.

the part of the city's municipal authorities thus also contributed to further delays. More than six years of rule by a regime that decried 'inertia' in state administration did not prevent inefficiencies continuing to obstruct the progress of infrastructure projects widely felt to be necessary.<sup>192</sup> The fact that the SZUC could overtly blame the municipality for these delays demonstrated that the image of public administration as being characterised by inefficiency remained a feature of citizens' perceptions of the Spanish state. To complicate matters, however, the SZUC also noted that some *zaragozanos* had interpreted its *instancias* of 22 November 1928 and 16 January 1930 demands for immediate payment for work already completed, although it considered this characterisation inaccurate. The company's protestations that it merely wished to find a means for work to continue certainly obscured the fact that its purpose was not merely to build affordable housing, but also *to make a profit* for landowners from doing so.<sup>193</sup> Yet the fact that such accusations of impropriety so readily appeared in January 1930 demonstrates that Primo de Rivera's regime had failed to convince Spaniards that public administration was no longer corrupt, and a private company holding a significant municipal contract was an understandable target of such suspicion. That this suspicion was attached to the SZUC also indicated the extent to which many *zaragozanos* felt that their interests had been dismissed and left unrepresented in the decision to award the contract to the landowners' company. The more efficient state for which numerous petitioners had hoped in 1923 and 1924 had not materialised, and the resentments that this state of affairs

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<sup>192</sup> Pérez Herrero, *Casas baratas*, pp. 2-4; *Heraldo de Aragón*, 23/7/1925, p. 1; 24/7/1925, p. 1; 31/7/1925, p. 1; 6/8/1925, p. 1; 11/11/1925, pp. 1, 3; 19/11/1925, p. 2; 24/12/1925, p. 1; 18/12/1926, p. 1; 20/2/1927, p. 2; 17/3/1927, p. 3; 25/3/1927, p. 1; 10/6/1927, p. 1; 24/6/1927, p. 2; 28/7/1927, p. 1; 2/9/1927, p. 1; 30/9/1927, p. 1; 9/9/1928, p. 10; 19/10/1928, p. 1; 25/11/1928, p. 1; 2/5/1929, p. 1.

<sup>193</sup> SZUC, *La "Sociedad Zaragozana de Urbanización y Construcción"*, p. 82.



generated would be voiced especially clearly in Zaragoza during the opening months of 1930.

The municipal council held an extraordinary plenary meeting on 27 January 1930 to receive the conclusions of the committee charged with examining the SZUC's *instancias* and deciding how to respond. However, the meeting was also presented with a petition from a group of *zaragozanos* who, 'understanding that the meeting was to take an important decision related to the SZUC's application, asked that a public consultation be opened so that the city's most relevant organisations could offer their opinion and elucidate such an important and complex issue'.<sup>194</sup> Although some councillors objected that such a petition should have been made much earlier and that it was no longer appropriate to discuss issues beyond finding the best way to meet the *ayuntamiento's* obligations, the Mayor suggested that a very short consultation would not fundamentally alter the course of relevant decision-making, and a fifteen-day period for interested parties to submit their contributions was approved by acclamation.<sup>195</sup> The SZUC, in a subsequent publication, pointedly declined to comment on the 'legality or illegality of this decision', but pointed out that

A petition from an exiguous number of residents has sufficed to call into question agreements approved unanimously [in previous municipal council meetings], despite the fact that they did not make these petitions in due time ... and after the contract has been approved by the Ministry of Labour ... All of which is, at the very least, anomalous, if not based on a desire to cause serious harm to the Company by suspending or paralyzing

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<sup>194</sup> SZUC, *La "Sociedad Zaragozana de Urbanización y Construcción"*, pp. 86-87.

<sup>195</sup> SZUC, *La "Sociedad Zaragozana de Urbanización y Construcción"*, pp. 87-88.

indispensable works that the *ayuntamiento* has the unavoidable obligation to complete.<sup>196</sup>

Indeed, the decision to hold a public consultation merely provided a forum for residents of and organisations based in Zaragoza to relitigate issues decided in previous years, possibly encouraged by Primo's resignation on 28 January 1930 and consequently a sense that it might be possible to revise recent political decisions. The city's Chamber of Commerce, Chamber of Urban Property and Chamber of Rural Property made a joint submission to the consultation, complaining that the municipality's contract with the SZUC had been insufficiently debated in the local press, and that there had not been adequate attempts to keep citizens informed on the subject. The Aragonese Economic Society of Friends of the Country echoed these criticisms in its submission. The city's Employers' Federation also supported this position, and expressed its 'profound amazement' (*profunda extrañeza*) that the municipality had failed to provide *zaragozanos* with thorough information about the contract with the SZUC, and argued that the *ayuntamiento* should have made greater efforts to work closely with employers' and workers' representatives. The view that political decisions were taken away from scrutiny and to the private benefit of certain citizens and classes persisted in Spaniards' perceptions of state institutions. The Aragonese Federation of *Casas Baratas* Cooperatives (*Federación Aragonesa de Cooperativas de Casas Baratas*) suggested that because the city's cooperatives had been so little involved in these policy discussions, their members had lost confidence in the prospect of a solution to the crisis and membership had 'declined considerably'.<sup>197</sup>

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<sup>196</sup> SZUC, *La "Sociedad Zaragozana de Urbanización y Construcción"*, p. 88.

<sup>197</sup> Pérez Herrero, *Casas baratas*, pp. 49-56.

These complaints reflected a continued desire on the part of such organisations to be more closely involved in policy-making, even if such involvement would be largely performative, as in the case of information campaigns. This desire persisted seven years after the *ayuntamiento* had rejected the city's civic organisations' tender for the house-building contract in January 1923. Despite seeing themselves as legitimate representatives of public opinion, these organisations felt that they had been sidelined in municipal decision-making during the dictatorship, and that their interests were not represented by the local state administration.

The Chambers of Commerce, of Urban Property, and of Rural Property suggested in their submission that the issue of affordable housing in the city ought to be 'studied' by a committee including Zaragozan civil society organisations and backed by a 'mandate' from the members' fellow citizens, a step that they considered necessary at least until democratic municipal elections could be organised.<sup>198</sup> This suggested remedy would inevitably delay delivery of the affordable housing project further. While the idea that Zaragoza required additional affordable housing was broadly accepted, citizens—both the landowners represented by the SZUC and their opponents—refused to countenance solutions that did not accord with their class interests or their desire to be closely involved in policy-making, and instead used the tools provided by petitioning, administrative law and public consultations to frustrate other attempts to solve the crisis. Although state bodies under Primo remained prone to inefficiency, this was also sometimes the result of citizens attempting to defend their class interests.

The case of Zaragoza demonstrates a number of key dynamics in affordable housing policy under the Primo de Rivera dictatorship. Attempts to construct new affordable

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<sup>198</sup> Pérez Herrero, *Casas baratas*, pp. 55-56.

homes were not sufficiently successful to alleviate the sense of crisis among citizens; the municipal project in Zaragoza resulted in the completion of a mere three hundred homes over the course of seven years. State administrative processes were sometimes to blame for these delays, as when the Ministry of Labour took most of 1928 to approve the contract between the *ayuntamiento* and the SZUC. Although *casas baratas* cooperatives felt that state administration affected them in a particularly inequitable manner, municipalities and private companies also suffered as a result of drawn-out administrative processes in the central government.

The fact that groups with opposed interests assumed that they should be represented by the municipal authorities revealed the notion of harmonious cooperation between citizens in pursuit of general prosperity to be flawed, however often petitioners invoked this tenet of anti-political populism in correspondence with the regime.

While all parties in Zaragoza agreed on the need to build more affordable housing, they also defended their own proposed solutions and class interests using any tool available in Spanish administrative law, delaying progress. This was not a uniquely Spanish phenomenon. For instance, James Smyth and Douglas Robertson identify similar patterns of self-interest on the part of local councillors and private landlords that affected the implementation of affordable housing policy in the Scottish city of Stirling during the inter-war period.<sup>199</sup> In Nottingham, too, property owners resisted the construction of new affordable housing, although a more self-consciously interventionist city council was better able to overcome this opposition.<sup>200</sup> While Zaragoza was therefore not unique in experiencing these dynamics, this did not prevent them from generating resentment among the city's residents, nor would it

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<sup>199</sup> Smyth and Robertson, 'Local Elites and Social Control'.

<sup>200</sup> Smith and Whysall, 'The Addison Act and the Local Authority Response'.

have been a comforting thought for *zaragozanos* who had hoped to access new affordable housing.

Furthermore, a prominent feature of the debate around affordable housing in Zaragoza—as in the rest of Spain—during the period covered by the case study was the desire of civil society organisations to play a greater role in state policy-making. These mobilisations represented currents of opinion that felt themselves underrepresented in the Restoration system and, in a context where electoral politics offered little genuine democratic control of government, it made sense to campaign for policy change through these economically defined organisations instead of political parties. These embedded modes of political action continued to operate throughout the dictatorship. However, hopes engendered by the 1923 coup that these constituencies would find state bodies more willing to heed their interests were not always borne out in practice. Just as the constitutional *ayuntamiento* had chosen CRCF to complete its affordable housing project in early 1923, so the *primorriverista* council appeared—even if it had no real choice in the matter—to ignore Zaragozaan civic organisations when the affected landowners invoked their right to build affordable homes themselves. The resentments that this provoked appeared forcefully in submissions to the 1930 public consultation. Yet failures by the *ayuntamiento* also created such resentments on the part of the SZUC itself, which claimed that municipal inaction had made progress impossible.<sup>201</sup> Although Primo de Rivera’s adoption of the language of regenerationism led citizens to express hopes for both more effective and more representative administration of affordable housing policy, by 1930 the citizens of Zaragoza had reason to feel that their *ayuntamiento* had failed to represent their interests or to govern efficiently.

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<sup>201</sup> SZUC, *La “Sociedad Zaragozana de Urbanización y Construcción”*, pp. 94-100.

## Conclusion

Like other European countries, Spain suffered a significant housing crisis during the early twentieth century, leading to a shortage of affordable housing for working-class and lower-middle-class citizens. This shortage predated the First World War, but was aggravated by the inflationary consequences of the conflict. Although the governments of the *turno pacífico* attempted to resolve the crisis with measures to stimulate the construction of affordable homes, these were insufficient, as shown by the repeated renewal of rent controls. Furthermore, cooperatives and other organisations engaged in building new affordable homes found that success depended to some degree on access to political influence, and that projects could be delayed by apparent inefficiencies in the Ministry of Labour bureaucracy. This situation both diminished the effectiveness of these policies and made housing policy a crucible for resentment towards the exclusionary, clientelistic politics of the Restoration. These resentments underlay the development of civil society movements that campaigned for solutions that they felt would make state action in the area of affordable housing both more effective and more representative of their interests. Such movements sometimes self-consciously located themselves within transnational debates about how states could improve the provision of affordable housing for their least well-off citizens, sometimes citing measures taken in other countries in Europe and the Americas and often suggesting these as models that could be usefully adopted in Spain.<sup>202</sup>

These resentments initially led citizens who desired policy change in the area of affordable housing to welcome the Primo de Rivera dictatorship and expect that it

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<sup>202</sup> See, for example, Ministerio de Trabajo, *Conferencia Nacional de la Edificación: Memoria*, pp. 19-32; 506-523; 675-702.

would be receptive to their policy suggestions, as demonstrated by the repurposing of *primorriverista* ideological language in petitions on the subject addressed to the central government. The general's promises of 'rapid and radical remedies' to Spain's multiple crises and of greater 'morality' in public administration were so lacking in specificity that many citizens and civic organisations could see their interests reflected in them.<sup>203</sup> Indeed, this often included organisations or movements with opposing interests. Representatives of both sides of the debate over rent controls, for example, found reason to expect that the new dictatorship would support them, and engaged with the regime on this basis. Non-specific, populist condemnation of the Restoration was effective in attracting civil society mobilisations into the regime's 'networks of ideological power'.<sup>204</sup> However, actually passing legislation would inevitably alienate one side of the debate.

Moreover, improving the implementation of affordable housing policy was more difficult in practice than Primo's promise of rapid change implied. Although the pace of affordable housing construction did increase under the dictatorship, it remained insufficient to make up Spain's housing deficit. *Casas baratas* cooperatives continued to complain throughout the dictatorship of the same problems that they had experienced under the Restoration: a lack of financial resources and inefficient state administration. Although the dictatorship was able to co-opt these organisations to some extent, providing them with a degree of political access in exchange for a propaganda platform, gaining support by condemning the administration of the Restoration state in 1923 was far simpler than maintaining this support in subsequent years by improving policy implementation.

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<sup>203</sup> Álvarez Rey (ed.), *Bajo el fuero militar*, p. 57.

<sup>204</sup> Mann, *The Sources of Social Power*, pp. 46-56.

Following the course of policy debates under the Primo de Rivera regime, as well as examining sources that shed light on their implementation at local level, makes it possible to better understand some of the sources of initial support for or acceptance of the dictatorship, as well as suggesting the reasons that this support proved unstable. This highlights the importance of looking beyond official regime mobilisations, coercive institutions and explicitly political organisations when examining the socio-political dynamics of the Primo de Rivera regime. Civil society mobilisations were an important mechanism by which citizens negotiated their relationship with the Spanish state in this period, and a logical choice as a means of attempting to influence the government, given the ineffectiveness of electoral politics. These organisations provided a means by which citizens could hope to secure favourable policy change, but also provided the dictatorship with the means to organise performances of support (even if this was conditional support), as it did during the National Congress of *Casas Baratas* Cooperatives in October and November 1927. These organisations co-existed with regime-sponsored mobilisations, and became spaces in which citizens identified and engaged with the Spanish state. They adopted and reproduced anti-political and nationalist ideas outside the coercive institutions set up by the dictatorship to impose a ‘negative integration’ of Spaniards into the country’s governing structures, thus creating an alternative means of nationalising the masses in Spain.<sup>205</sup> However, the functioning of these organisations also points to continuities between the political community of the Restoration and Primo’s regime. Primo’s 1923 ‘manifesto’ promised a rupture with Restoration politics, and the dictatorship’s initial purge removed many *caciques* from their positions of influence. Despite no longer relying on the same networks of

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<sup>205</sup> Quiroga, *Making Spaniards*.



*caciquismo*, Spanish citizens continued to engage with the state using embedded modes of political action: mobilisations and organisations through which they had attempted to influence policy during the Restoration. These organisations continued to rely on attempting to secure favourable political contacts, showing that citizens continued to conceptualise the Spanish state in similar ways to those that had been current under the previous regime, even if the target of such petitioning was now primarily the central government, rather than local notables. The dictatorship spoke the language of regenerationism, but struggled fundamentally to reshape administrative processes or Spain's underlying political culture.

The examination of the debate around affordable housing policy in *primorriverista* Spain offers productive insights for the study of populist politics. Resentment against socio-political elites could be mobilised to create a broad coalition of support for policies that appeared to eject these elites from power—to 'throw the ministers out of the window', in Primo's formulation.<sup>206</sup> However, a shared desire for different rulers did not imply that all members of this coalition also desired the same *policies*, and the populist assumption that ejecting former elites would lead to policy changes that satisfy all citizens was excessively simplistic. The desire to eject the ruling elite did not account for the complexity of actually governing and legislating, and Primo's regime, despite drawing on such currents of thought, found that this support was not sustainable when it was required to face the same challenges as its maligned predecessors.

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<sup>206</sup> Quoted in Ben-Ami, *Fascism from Above*, p. 64.

## Chapter Two

# **Transport infrastructure under Primo de Rivera: Regenerationist policy agendas and the problem of private interests**

As Javier Tusell argues, the Primo de Rivera regime's investment and reforms in transport infrastructure were characteristic of the influence of regenerationist and nationalist thought on its economic policy.<sup>1</sup> By linking transport infrastructure policy explicitly to regenerationist thought—a body of ideas that he recognises as characteristic of how Primo portrayed his regime to Spanish citizens—Tusell indicates the possibility of approaching this topic as a broader policy agenda rather than through an adding-up of kilometres of rails laid and of roads built. This chapter builds from this observation towards a more detailed line of enquiry. It examines transport infrastructure not primarily through construction projects, but through public debate and administrative developments within this policy area. Focusing on debate and discussion around transport infrastructure reveals the political, economic and cultural significance of such projects during the 1920s, and makes it possible to understand them as terrain on which citizens developed varied and sometimes contradictory policy agendas. Drawing on municipal and provincial records, national government archives including petitions from Spanish citizens, transport companies' records and press sources, the chapter demonstrates how engagement with transport infrastructure policy allowed citizens and private companies to negotiate their relationship with the Spanish state.

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<sup>1</sup> Tusell, *Historia de España en el siglo XX*, 1, pp. 501-502.

Studying this engagement reveals political dynamics that contribute to an enhanced understanding of how the Primo de Rivera dictatorship related to Spanish society beyond authoritarianism, nationalism and venality. During the initial stages of Primo's dictatorship, citizens with particular aspirations or proposals in the area of transport infrastructure or administration wrote a large body of letters and petitions to the government. As in the case of housing, these often reproduced the language of the dictatorship in a variety of ways, and suggested a popular perception that the new regime would represent the desires of citizens who had felt themselves excluded from political favour under the Restoration monarchy. The language of anti-politics encouraged such regenerationist movements to identify the new regime as potentially supportive of their desires, and provided an idiom in which to campaign for such support. These campaigns were not limited to letter-writing. Regional civil society movements in favour of given projects or proposals were a notable feature of the period, and through regional newspapers contributed to the articulation of regional identities and solidarities that were bound up with the infrastructure projects in question. As in the case of housing, such interests were not necessarily mutually compatible, nor did the Spanish state always possess the capacity to satisfy them. Thus, the support of all citizens who identified the new regime as a possible representative of their interests in 1923 was not sustainable in the longer term.

This did not prevent the dictatorship from using transport policy for propaganda purposes, however. The completion or opening of roads and railways could be easily integrated into official ceremonial, co-opting civil society movements—from formal associations to looser coalitions of interests—that had campaigned for them. Public works conceived under earlier governments could also be used in this way, and improved infrastructure was viewed as enhancing Spain's international prestige.

Transport infrastructure policy provided a backdrop against which citizens negotiated their relationship with the state not only as members of civil society mobilisations, but also as representatives of private companies. The Spanish state's relationship with private companies was particularly instructive in terms of the limitations of an anti-political conception of infrastructure development. While official regime discourse presented Spanish citizens as united in a shared enterprise of national reconstruction that would prioritise the collective good of the *Patria*, private companies were naturally more concerned with returning a profit to their investors. Their actions in pursuit of this objective often conflicted with other citizens' understandings of 'the common good'. Instead of coordinating a more or less uniform desire for particular forms of 'progress', state authorities were forced to mediate sometimes incompatible interests. This would become particularly obvious in the case of attempts at railway reform, as well as in the construction of local transport infrastructure such as the Barcelona metro.

Transport infrastructure policy under Primo de Rivera thus demonstrates a key contradiction of the dictator's 'anti-political' programme. Private actors—whether individual citizens, private companies, or looser coalitions—used the anti-political notion of a common, national good to obscure their pursuit of private or local interests. Anti-politics provided a language in which a wide range of interest groups could put their claims to the state, but such a vague and malleable idiom was not a robust principle on which to base policy-making. Although using this language to request government support for private or local interests was not unethical as such, it reflected a continued perception that defending one's interests could require the patronage of 'a political friend'. In some cases—as in the dealings of Spain's largest railway companies with the dictatorship's attempts to reform the network—the use of

anti-political language to obscure the pursuit of private profits could shade into a lack of integrity in how these actors engaged with the public authorities.

### **Civil society campaigns for transport infrastructure development**

From the very formation of the Military Directorate, the new government received hundreds of letters, telegrams and petitions from around Spain relating to transport infrastructure, in a manner comparable to petitions relating to housing policy. The sheer scale of this correspondence demonstrated the extent to which citizens considered insufficient transport infrastructure to be one of the serious shortcomings of Spain under the Restoration, and how Primo's promises of 'rapid and radical remedies' to Spain's multiple crises appealed to these citizens.<sup>2</sup>

A particularly common complaint during the first months of the dictatorship was that railway companies were failing to provide rural localities with adequate rolling stock for freight transport. These shortages were largely the result of a structural, nationwide crisis in the finances of Spain's railway companies, which had impeded adequate investment in new rolling stock for a number of years.<sup>3</sup> However,

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<sup>2</sup> See AHN, FFCC, Presidencia del Gobierno, Primo de Rivera, cajas 115-130. This series of archival holdings includes petitions transferred by Primo de Rivera's own office to the *ponencia* of General Luis Hermosa Kith, which had responsibility for public works and transport infrastructure, and its analogous departments under the Civil Directorate over the course of the entire dictatorship. It is possible that further similar correspondence was received directly by the Ministry of Development (*Ministerio de Fomento*). Together, these boxes contain well in excess of 9,000 files. The majority of the files have had the original documents to which they relate removed since the 1920s, leaving government forms stating date of receipt, the subject of the correspondence, and sometimes details of any action taken. Although not all of this correspondence directly concerns the kinds of public works considered in this chapter—some refer to water management works or the employment conditions of civil servants with responsibilities relevant to such projects, for example—, the majority of it does.

<sup>3</sup> On the 'railway problem' (*problema ferroviario*), see Miguel Artola, Ramón Cordero, Diego Mateo and Fernando Menéndez, *Los ferrocarriles en España, 1844-1943. I. El Estado y los ferrocarriles* (Madrid, 1978), pp. 409-445; Juan García Pérez, *Régimen jurídico del transporte por ferrocarril* (Madrid, 1996), p. 46; Francisco Comín Comín, Pablo Martín Aceña, Miguel Muñoz Rubio and Javier Vidal Olivares, *150 años de historia de los ferrocarriles españoles*, vol. 1: la era de las concesiones a las compañías privadas (Madrid, 1998), pp. 281-308, 317-403; Pedro Pablo Ortúñez Goicolea, 'Cambio político, instituciones y empresas ferroviarias en España, 1913-1936', *IV Congreso de Historia Ferroviaria* (Malaga, 2006); 'El proceso de nacionalización de los ferrocarriles en España. Historia de las grandes compañías ferroviarias, 1913-1943' (PhD thesis, Universidad de Valladolid, 2000), pp. 54-138.

petitioners experienced this shortage primarily through the damage it did to their incomes and localities, most obviously rural areas that relied for their income on exporting agricultural products. Farmers in towns and villages as distant from each other as Guadalcázar in Cordoba province, Dueñas (Palencia province), Mérida (Badajoz), Santa María de Nieva (Almería), Llerena (Badajoz), San Martín de Rubiales (Burgos) and Roa del Duero (Burgos) wrote with complaints that their stations were under-supplied with trucks and wagons.<sup>4</sup>

Such protests were occasionally made by private citizens, but more often they were the work of professional or corporate organisations aiming to protect their members against what they viewed as the negligence of the railway companies. During the first two months of the dictatorship, the presidents of the Albacete Chamber of Commerce, Chamber of Agriculture, Guild of Flour Producers and Guild of Exporters and Merchants ‘protested against the conduct’ of the Madrid to Zaragoza and Alicante railway company (MZA), one of Spain’s two largest railway concerns, and the ‘damage’ that a paucity of freight services was doing to their members.<sup>5</sup> By presenting this as a case of poor conduct on the part of the company, the petitioners framed improving transport provision as a moral need, as well as an economic benefit and technical challenge; their denunciation resonated with Primo de Rivera’s assertions that the new regime would re-establish morality in Spanish public life. A reply from the dictatorship on 1 December 1923 stated that the company had been ordered to ‘increase the stock at Albacete station in sufficient proportion to attend to its traffic and avoid complaints of this nature’.

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<sup>4</sup> AHN, FFCC, Presidencia del Gobierno, Primo de Rivera, caja 115, expedientes 20, 21, 78, 122, 159, 599, 602.

<sup>5</sup> AHN, FFCC, Presidencia del Gobierno, Primo de Rivera, caja 115, expediente 515.

Similar replies from the government were received by other parties complaining about insufficient railway freight facilities. The petitioner from Guadalcázar's complaint, sent in mid-October 1923, led to a telegram being sent to the Andalusia Railway Company ordering that sufficient rolling stock should be sent to the station to give satisfaction to the petition.<sup>6</sup> MZA was ordered to increase transport provision to all stations in Badajoz province so that cereals could be exported 'with the greatest possible intensity'.<sup>7</sup> Other responses were sometimes more realistic; an official dealing with the case of the Catholic Agrarian Federation of Lleida, which had complained about bottlenecks in the supply of fertiliser in the province, was satisfied with the railway companies' explanation that they were deploying 'all stock that is possible to divert from other traffic necessities'.<sup>8</sup> However, the immediate tendency towards 'ordering' companies to send more freight units to the localities in question shows a degree of naïvety on the part of the Military Directorate in its early stages. This may have reflected both a genuine belief in the effectiveness of entrusting the nation's government to a self-styled 'iron surgeon', and a familiarity among military officers with issuing orders as a means of discharging their duty. Furthermore, this belief in a dictatorship speaking the language of regenerationism to resolve structural issues was apparently shared by rural citizens across Spain, who saw the new regime as a possible ally in securing access to the necessary freight services for their economic wellbeing.

Unfortunately for Spain's agriculturalists, hopes of robust state action proved unfounded over the course of the dictatorship. A disposition published in early

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<sup>6</sup> AHN, FFCC, Presidencia del Gobierno, Primo de Rivera, caja 115, expediente 20, note dated 3/11/1923.

<sup>7</sup> AHN, FFCC, Presidencia del Gobierno, Primo de Rivera, caja 115, expediente 33, note dated 4/11/1923.

<sup>8</sup> AHN, FFCC, Presidencia del Gobierno, Primo de Rivera, caja 115, expediente 26, note dated 28/11/1923.

November 1923 aimed to establish procedures to resolve the shortage of rolling stock.<sup>9</sup> It observed that complaints on the subject were ‘received every day’ by the government and asserted that ‘long experience’ showed that the railway companies lacked sufficient capacity to meet the needs of Spanish agriculture. It authorised state railway engineers to determine where wagons should be sent and to impose fines where railway companies defied these decisions, reflecting a belief in the capacity of technocratic policy-making to objectively determine the common good, and in the authority of the state to impose this interpretation on private actors. Along with additional investment that aimed to allow companies to invest in new rolling stock, such measures did lead to a degree of modernisation and expansion of Spain’s available rolling stock.<sup>10</sup>

However, this was not sufficient fully to overcome the shortage, or eliminate complaints from rural citizens who felt their interests were being harmed by what they perceived as railway companies’ negligence. The government continued to receive such petitions in subsequent years. In November 1925, the Civil Governor of Oviedo province and several village mayors from the district (*partido*) of Peñafiel (Valladolid province) wrote to the government complaining of continued shortages of trucks and wagons in the areas under their charge.<sup>11</sup> Two years later, on 15 November 1927, the Community of Agricultural Labourers (*Comunidad de Labradores*), Fruit-Growers’ Union (*Unión Frutera*), *Unión Patriótica* and the mayor of Carcagente (Valencia province) sent telegrams to Primo de Rivera personally asking him ‘to intercede with the railway companies’ to secure rolling stock to transport that year’s

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<sup>9</sup> Archivo Histórico Ferroviario [hereafter AHF], P/113/255, ‘Circular a los Ingenieros Jefes de las cuatro Divisiones técnicas y administrativas de ferrocarriles’. Cutting from *Gaceta de Madrid*, 4/11/1923, p. 535.

<sup>10</sup> See Ben-Ami, *Fascism from Above*, p. 255; Carr, *Spain 1808-1975*, p. 581; Rial, *Revolution from Above*, pp. 156-158; Tamames, *Ni Mussolini ni Franco*, p. 319.

<sup>11</sup> AHN, FFCC, Presidencia del Gobierno, Primo de Rivera, caja 121, expediente 5609.



orange crop to market.<sup>12</sup> The labourers' organisation and the UP complained that the station was 'neglected', causing 'great damage to this district's only [source of] wealth, which is threatened by a sudden spell of intense cold'. In this instance the UP acted as a channel for the transmission of local concerns to the national state, supporting Jesús María Palomares Ibáñez's contention that its structures constituted a 'new *caciquismo*'.<sup>13</sup> The *Unión Frutera* 'protest[ed] against the conduct of the companies' and requesting that Primo should 'order' them to supply sufficient wagons, in order to avoid 'irreparable damages' to a crop currently in 'perfect condition' for which there were 'numerous orders from abroad'.<sup>14</sup> These orders linked the campaign directly to national prosperity; oranges were Spain's principal foreign currency earner, and the country was the world's largest exporter of the fruit.<sup>15</sup>

Despite the apparent urgency of the request, it was 19 December before the government replied to the town's mayor informing him that, after discussion with the General Directorate of Railways (*Dirección General de Ferrocarriles*) and the Valencia Orange Board (*Delegación de Naranja de Valencia*), Carcagente would continue to receive the same number of railway wagons for export as previously determined: thirty-five for Cerbère, and ten for Hendaye. Rural Spaniards continued to find freight services insufficient and although a perception that orders from central government might resolve this persisted, such faith in the 'iron surgeon' was

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<sup>12</sup> AHN, FFCC, Presidencia del Gobierno, Primo de Rivera, caja 126, expediente 7294, telegram from *Comunidad de Labradores de Carcagente* to Primo de Rivera, 15/11/1927; telegram from *Unión Patriótica de Carcagente* to Primo de Rivera, 15/11/1927.

<sup>13</sup> Jesús María Palomares Ibáñez, *Nuevos políticos para un nuevo caciquismo: La dictadura de Primo de Rivera en Valladolid* (Valladolid, 1993).

<sup>14</sup> AHN, FFCC, Presidencia del Gobierno, Primo de Rivera, caja 126, expediente 7294, telegram from President of *Unión Frutera de Carcagente* to Primo de Rivera, 15/11/1927.

<sup>15</sup> Vicente Pinilla and María-Isabel Ayuda, 'Taking advantage of globalization? Spain and the building of the international market in Mediterranean horticultural products, 1850–1935', *European Review of Economic History* 14 (2010), pp. 239–274; Aurora Bosch, 'Collectivisations: The Spanish Revolution Revisited, 1936–39', *International Journal of Iberian Studies* 14.1 (2001), p. 11.

misplaced. The challenges of limited capacity could not simply be willed away; as the Ministry of Development informed the mayor of Carcagente, the number of wagons available was ‘subordinated to the global distribution of orange production throughout all the months of the harvest’.<sup>16</sup>

Petitions regarding other aspects of transport infrastructure policy were, at times, even more explicit in their adoption of regenerationist and *primorriverista* ideological language and worldviews. One month after Primo’s coup, on 14 October 1923, the Mercantile and Industrial Circle (*Círculo Mercantil e Industrial*) of La Unión (a mining town in Murcia province) wrote to Primo de Rivera’s office asking the Military Directorate to intervene to ensure repairs to the highway between La Unión and Cartagena, a ‘key artery’ for their town and nearby villages.<sup>17</sup> The organisation ‘second[ed] the healthy movement of lively reaction [*vivísima reacción*] that can be seen throughout Spain’, and referred with particular satisfaction to the ‘welcome umbrella of sincerity and decision formed by the just intentions of the Directorate’. They wished Primo to know that local organisations had made ‘repeated’ attempts ‘of all kinds’ to secure these repairs, but had ‘never managed to succeed in such legitimate aspirations’. They recounted local speculation that interference by the Cartagena and Herrerias Steam Tramways Company Ltd., a British concern that operated a narrow-gauge railway running parallel to the highway, had been an ‘insurmountable obstacle’ to the project. Although the Circle understood that the Works Department (*Junta de Obras*) of Cartagena port had now taken over responsibility for the repairs from the municipal authorities, it insisted that ‘because cases of this type usually suffer delays, and this would cause very

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<sup>16</sup> AHN, FFCC, Presidencia del Gobierno, Primo de Rivera, caja 126, expediente 7294, government reply to mayor of Carcagente, 19/12/1927.

<sup>17</sup> AHN, FFCC, Presidencia del Gobierno, Primo de Rivera, caja 115, expediente 96, *Círculo Mercantil e Industrial de La Unión* to Primo de Rivera.

serious harm to our town, this organisation requests Your Excellency to investigate in detail and order a rapid solution'. The petition did not merely state support for Primo's coup, but also deployed concepts familiar from the brand of anti-*caciquil*, anti-political regenerationism on which the general drew. It identified as enemies of Spanish citizens' 'legitimate aspirations' both dishonest influence on public policy—moreover, by a foreign-owned company—and inefficient state administration. The solution, in keeping with the trope of the 'iron surgeon' and its power within regenerationist circles, was for the new dictator to become acquainted with the facts of the case, and issue the appropriate order to resolve the problem.

Similar praise for the new regime's goals appeared in a letter of 15 November 1923 from the managing director of a marble-quarrying company based in Chercos (Almería province).<sup>18</sup> It linked its petition in part to the start of negotiations on a new trade treaty between Spain and Italy, and invoked the 'patriotic desire' of the Military Directorate 'to attend to the legitimate aspirations of national industry' to establish its right to ask for support from the dictatorship. The company boasted in some detail of having one of the most modern operations of its type in Europe.

Regenerationist thought may have considered Spain to be backward in contrast to other European countries, but Mármoles de Chercos positioned itself as part of the solution to 'the problem of Spain' in this way, presenting itself as part of the modernising, regenerationist policy agenda associated with the dictatorship. The company described contracts on which it had worked in ways that aligned itself with the Spanish state and symbols of national prestige; in addition to supplying paving for several public squares, it had also provided materials for the Palace of Justice and

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<sup>18</sup> AHN, FFCC, Presidencia del Gobierno, Primo de Rivera, caja 117, expediente 2022, Managing Director of Mármoles de Chercos, S.A. to Primo de Rivera, 15/11/1923.

the Royal House of the Post Office in Madrid, as well as the planned 1929 Ibero-American Exposition in Seville.<sup>19</sup>

The principal challenge facing the company was the transport of its goods to market. Its primary competitors, Italian marble quarries around Carrara, were located less than ten kilometres from the nearest seaport, whereas the journey from the Chercos quarries to Almería's port was closer to one hundred kilometres.<sup>20</sup> The nearest railway was twenty-five kilometres away, 'and this twenty-five kilometres traverses gullies and ravines, for there are no highways [*carreteras*] or roads [*caminos vecinales*] in this region, although one has been proposed and approved, and its construction would be highly beneficial ... for this abandoned district'. The course of the road—from Chercos to Albanchez via Líjar—had not yet been staked out. In requesting the dictator's intervention to ensure prompt progress on this work, the company emphasised that it was not motivated by a desire to increase its profits unduly but simply to 'survive' and to 'facilitate the Military Directorate's work', understood here to include the rapid construction of new infrastructure to support national industry. The managing director's insistence that the company did not wish unduly to profit rhetorically dissociated him from the pork-barrel politics of the Restoration system, even as he requested direct government intervention to improve the competitiveness of his company. His reference, in signing off, to the dictator's 'recognised rectitude' again aligned the company with the Primo regime's pretension to be cutting immorality from Spanish public life. However, the fact that companies

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<sup>19</sup> AHN, FFCC, Presidencia del Gobierno, Primo de Rivera, caja 117, expediente 2022, Managing Director of Mármoles de Chercos, S.A. to Primo de Rivera, 15/11/1923. On the Ibero-American Exhibition, especially its importance in articulating a Pan-Hispanism linked to conservative, unitary Spanish nationalism, see González Calleja, *Modernización autoritaria*, pp. 314-315; Mary Vincent, *Spain 1833-2002: People and State* (Oxford, 2007), p. 110. On Primo's Hispano-Americanism more broadly, see Ben-Ami, *Fascism from Above*, pp. 202-205.

<sup>20</sup> AHN, FFCC, Presidencia del Gobierno, Primo de Rivera, caja 117, expediente 2022, Managing Director of Mármoles de Chercos, S.A. to Primo de Rivera, 15/11/1923.

and citizens directed such correspondence to the new government suggested a more mercenary reality: having seen their interests served poorly by previous governments, they hoped that the new dictatorship might be more willing to invest the necessary funds.

This approach worked successfully for Mármoles de Chercos. The *ponencia* headed by General Luis Hermosa Kith referred the petition to the Almería Provincial Public Works Authority (*Jefatura de Obras Públicas*) but, given that the *Jefatura* had not responded by 10 March 1924, sent a telegram in pursuit of information and a letter updating the company on the progress of the case.<sup>21</sup> The central government could thus be used by citizens as a mechanism to put pressure on local and provincial authorities to act more rapidly than they otherwise might. They approached the dictatorship as if it were on the side of citizens, against the inefficiencies of other parts of the state administration. On 12 March, the company wrote again to the government ‘insisting’ on the need for ‘a prompt decision on such a vital issue for this district’.<sup>22</sup> As in previous years, spring rains had made tracks in the area impassable, forcing the company to spend several thousand pesetas to repair them. The company continued to ‘trust to Your Excellency’s patriotic zeal for a prompt solution in harmony with the justice and necessity of the project’. Patriotism was a semantically flexible concept that was widely recognised as a key tenet of *primorriverismo* and could be made to include supporting the interests of petitioners who desired the construction of new transport infrastructure. Eventually, the expenditure of 2,695.50 pesetas for staking out the new road was authorised on 21 May, and this was

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<sup>21</sup> AHN, FFCC, Presidencia del Gobierno, Primo de Rivera, caja 117, expediente 2022, note dated 10/3/1924.

<sup>22</sup> AHN, FFCC, Presidencia del Gobierno, Primo de Rivera, caja 117, expediente 2022, Mármoles de Chercos, S.A. to Primo de Rivera, 12/3/1924. It is unclear whether the company had received the government’s reply at the time of writing this letter, although it seems unlikely.

communicated to the company on 3 June.<sup>23</sup> Mármoles de Chercos responded with an expression of its 'gratitude, shared by all the villages interested in the construction of [the road]' for the 'speed' with which the case had been handled, commenting that this was 'a sure indication that the new regime will, in short order, complete a brilliant and patriotic labour that will make it worthy to appear in the annals of History as distinguished in its service of the *Patria*'.<sup>24</sup> From the start of the case to its conclusion, the quarrying company had successfully deployed the notion that supporting transport infrastructure development was a patriotic act, and therefore should be an integral part of Primo's programme. Although it could have been unseemly to request government support to increase its profits, framing these requests in terms of national prestige and the protection of national industry linked the company to a wider policy agenda of modernisation and 'national reconstitution', and elided the fact that they were fundamentally self-interested, protecting the company from accusations of impropriety.

The identification of Primo de Rivera as a political actor capable of opposing *caciquil* interests and of instigating rapid state action to improve the lives of citizens, as seen in the petitions from Chercos and La Unión, closely resembled expectations of Costa's 'iron surgeon' on which the regime's 'charismatic construction' of the dictator played, and may have informed many petitioners' decision to write to Primo de Rivera personally.<sup>25</sup> While it is excessively simplistic to attempt to explain the nature of the regime simply by reference to the dictator's personality, as Raymond Carr suggests, Primo appears to have been a figure whom citizens identified as a possible

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<sup>23</sup> AHN, FFCC, Presidencia del Gobierno, Primo de Rivera, caja 117, expediente 2022, copy of letter to Mármoles de Chercos, S.A., 3/6/1924.

<sup>24</sup> AHN, FFCC, Presidencia del Gobierno, Primo de Rivera, caja 117, expediente 2022, Mármoles de Chercos, S.A. to Primo de Rivera, 10/6/1924.

<sup>25</sup> Quiroga, 'Construcción carismática'.

point of access to the structures of the Spanish state, an individual who would take their concerns seriously and ensure that other state institutions worked as citizens felt they ought to.<sup>26</sup> This phenomenon bears some resemblance to the ‘naïve monarchism’ familiar in Russian historiography. In this schema, peasants framed petitions and protests in terms that cast the Tsar—or later, the central Soviet government—as a benevolent figure, and attributed problems in their daily life to the ineptitude or malice of courtiers or officials.<sup>27</sup> As Daniel Field and James C. Scott argue, ‘naïve monarchism’ was likely not genuinely naïve.<sup>28</sup> Rather, ‘the good Tsar’ was a flexible trope that functioned as ‘an invitation to resist any or all of the czar’s supposed agents’.<sup>29</sup> Peasants ‘professed their faith in the Tsar in forms, *and only in those forms*, that corresponded to their interests’, meaning the trope did not promote passivity but rather facilitated protest and protected participants in it.<sup>30</sup> In *primorriverista* Spain, a modernising and regenerationist policy agenda served a

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<sup>26</sup> Carr, *Spain 1808-1975*, pp. 564-567. See also Tusell, *España en el siglo XX*, 1., pp. 451-452. In a similar manner, Italian citizens who wrote to Mussolini addressed the Fascist dictator as a providential figure who could correct deficiencies in the functioning of Italian state authorities, if apprised of the facts; Christopher Duggan, *Fascist Voices*. Antonio Cazorla Sánchez notes a belief among Spaniards during early years of the Franco dictatorship that the *Caudillo* “‘did not know” about the abuses, corruption and violence that his regime, and in particular local authorities, practised’, and was ignorant of the extent of impoverishment and starvation in the country; Cazorla Sánchez, *Franco: The Biography of the Myth* (Abingdon, 2014), pp. 100-101. See also Cazorla Sánchez, *Cartas a Franco de los españoles de a pie (1936-1945)* (Barcelona, 2014).

<sup>27</sup> Daniel Field, *Rebels in the Name of the Tsar* (Boston, MA / London, 1989); Valerie A. Kivelson, ‘The Devil Stole His Mind: The Tsar and the 1648 Moscow Uprising’, *The American Historical Review* 98.3 (1993), pp. 733-756; Maureen Perrie, *Pretenders and Popular Monarchism in Early Modern Russia: The False Tsars of the Time and Troubles* (Cambridge, 1995); Cynthia H. Whittaker, ‘The Reforming Tsar: The Redefinition of Autocratic Duty in Eighteenth-Century Russia’, *Slavic Review* 51.1 (1992), pp. 77-98; Evgenii Trefilov, ‘Proof of Sincere Love for the Tsar: Popular Monarchism in the Age of Peter The Great’, *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 18.3 (2017), pp. 461-485; Sarah Davies, ‘The Cult of the Vozhd: Representations in Letters, 1934–1941’, *Russian History* 24.1/2 (1997), pp. 131-147; Madhavan K. Palat ‘Regulating Conflict Through the Petition’ in Madhavan K. Palat (ed.), *Social Identities in Revolutionary Russia* (Basingstoke / New York, 2001), pp. 86-112; Vladimir A. Kozlov, ‘Denunciation and Its Functions in Soviet Governance: A Study of Denunciations and Their Bureaucratic Handling from Soviet Police Archives, 1944–1953’, *The Journal of Modern History* 68.4 (1996), pp. 867-898. Indeed, Natalia Mamonova argues that this trend persists in patterns of rural protest and resistance under Vladimir Putin; ‘Naive Monarchism and Rural Resistance in Contemporary Russia’, *Rural Sociology* 81.3 (2016), pp. 316-342.

<sup>28</sup> Field, *Rebels*; James. C Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven, 1990), pp. 96-103.

<sup>29</sup> Scott, *Hidden Transcripts*, p. 97.

<sup>30</sup> Field, *Rebels*, p. 209; Scott, *Hidden Transcripts*, pp. 97-100.

similar function. Blaming ineptitude or corruption in local government, while professing conviction that the new regime would understand and share one's desire to 'contribute to national prosperity', elided the self-interested nature of such petitions and presented correspondents' complaints against the Spanish state as collaboration in Primo's programme of government.

The tendency of petitioners to approach Primo personally was particularly clear during a series of tours of the country that the dictator made during 1929. During a visit to Valencia in January, 'a numerous commission, with representatives from various interested villages', handed Primo a letter requesting his intervention to secure 'urgent' status for a projected railway between Muro de Alcoy and Denia via Pego (Alicante province), for which plans dated back to 1908.<sup>31</sup> Primo de Rivera 'offered to study these aspirations in the greatest detail', and his office passed the note to the Ministry of Development for further investigation. The Ministry in turn replied to the *Presidencia del Gobierno* stating that the project had been delayed as state engineers had found 'various omissions' in the original project; the company requesting the concession had failed to make the necessary modifications since being ordered to do so in August 1925.<sup>32</sup> It concluded that the delays were not the state administration's fault, that the petitioners' claim to have been 'struggling for a resolution to the project' for ten years was 'exaggerated', and that the Ministry would 'do all it [could] to resolve the issue with the rapidity the interested parties demand'. Although this petition did not secure the outcome that the citizens involved desired, by approaching Primo de Rivera in person they did cause the Ministry to investigate and explain its conduct to the dictator. The general was approached in his capacity as

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<sup>31</sup> AHN, FFCC, Presidencia del Gobierno, Primo de Rivera, caja 128, expediente 8259, Cuervo to Guadalhorce, 25/1/1929.

<sup>32</sup> AHN, FFCC, Presidencia del Gobierno, Primo de Rivera, caja 128, expediente 8259, Guadalhorce to Cuervo, 19/2/1929.



head of government, but as though he were to some extent separate from the rest of the state administration and would act to make it function in accordance with the interests of citizens complaining about administrative delays.<sup>33</sup>

This episode was not isolated, suggesting that Spaniards reliance on such petitions in engaging with the *primorriverista* state outlasted the 'short period' at the start of the dictatorship during which Gow suggest that this method of campaigning was used.<sup>34</sup> During a visit to Galicia, Primo de Rivera received a letter dated 16 August 1929 from the President of the Agricultural Syndicate of Agar (Pontevedra province) offering the organisation's 'cooperation according to its capacity with the great labour Your Excellency is carrying out' and informing him that local residents 'live ... completely isolated from all means of communication, without even a single *camino vecinal* that can easily be traversed', and pleading for his 'intervention'.<sup>35</sup> The Ministry of Development responded that the proper procedure for requesting the construction of a *camino vecinal* was to apply to the provincial authorities.<sup>36</sup> In December 1929, Primo received a letter signed by eighty residents of Girazga de Beariz (Orense province) complaining about the poor state of repair of the highway from Brués, which impeded the delivery of mail in several nearby villages.<sup>37</sup> The road had last been repaired in early 1923, and was now 'in such a state that you cannot even call it a poor local road'. A provincial engineer had inspected the road on several occasions. Despite this, and campaigns in the local press, and the residents' threat to write to the central government, nothing had been done to satisfy their demands. They

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<sup>33</sup> See Duggan, *Fascist Voices*; Cazorla Sánchez, *Franco*, pp. 100-101; *Cartas a Franco*.

<sup>34</sup> Gow, 'Patria and Citizenship', p. 149.

<sup>35</sup> AHN, FFCC, Presidencia del Gobierno, Primo de Rivera, caja 130, expediente 8887, President of Sindicato Agrícola de Agar to Primo de Rivera, 16/8/1929.

<sup>36</sup> AHN, FFCC, Presidencia del Gobierno, Primo de Rivera, caja 130, expediente 8887, Cuervo de Primo de Rivera, 28/10/1929.

<sup>37</sup> AHN, FFCC, Presidencia del Gobierno, Primo de Rivera, caja 130, expediente 9034, eighty residents of Girazga de Beariz to Primo de Rivera, December 1929.

'begged' Primo to intervene 'to put an end to this state of things which, as well as being shameful, means we receive post not at seven p.m. but around midnight or even the following morning ... and travellers are exposed to all kinds of accidents, which could cost their lives'. They were confident of receiving 'justice' from the general. Using the rhetoric of unjust harms, they approached Primo's national government as a potential ally against local or regional authorities that had failed to address the issue.

While approaching Primo de Rivera personally in this way did not always lead to the desired outcome, the fact that citizens wrote to him directly throughout the period suggests that the figure of the dictator represented a point of access to the Spanish state. The pattern of 'denouncing' poor infrastructure in the provinces was analogous to the denunciations of *caciques* that the dictatorship encouraged in its first few months.<sup>38</sup> The general's brand of populism allowed citizens to engage with the central government not necessarily as a distant and indifferent body, but as a means of ensuring lower tiers of the state administration paid attention to citizens' 'aspirations'. Carr has described Primo's journeys around the country's provinces as producing a species of 'political tourism', allowing citizens who attended the associated speeches and assemblies to come into first-hand contact with the central government.<sup>39</sup> Although these tours were conceived by the dictatorship as another manifestation of the official ceremonial that underlay the controlled mobilisation of citizens, using them as an opportunity to present complaints about the local functioning of the state also allowed Spaniards to engage with the regime in a more active manner than simply attending speeches. Citizens used them in this way even

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<sup>38</sup> Quiroga, *Making Spaniards* (Basingstoke, 2007), pp. 45-46.

<sup>39</sup> Carr, *Spain 1808-1975*, p. 565.

until very late in Primo's tenure, apparently confident that that a regenerationist dictatorship might protect their interests, even though much the same complaints persisted throughout the dictatorship.

Other petitioners, though still addressing Primo de Rivera personally, took a more indirect route and sent their letters via intermediaries. On 30 November 1923, the Duke of Arión acted as a figurehead for a petition complaining about delays to several road-building projects in Cáceres province.<sup>40</sup> One of the stretches of road in question, highway maintenance workers (*peones camineros*) had been employed but 'their services are of no public utility', as the road they were required to maintain was incomplete. The petition emphasised that the request was based not only on 'the private interests' of the signatories, but also on 'the real need for communications in the villages of Extremadura' that currently lacked adequate means of transporting their products to the nearest railway stations and thence to markets outside their immediate locale. Similarly, the Catholic Agrarian Syndicate of Fabara, instead of writing to Primo de Rivera directly, had the Civil Governor of Zaragoza province forward a letter to the dictator, in which they requested government support to complete a bridge crossing the river Matarraña that would facilitate access from the village to the nearby railway station.<sup>41</sup> This could have been motivated by a desire to show due respect for political hierarchies, but intermediaries did not always have official roles in the administrative apparatus of the Spanish state. In another instance, numerous residents of Canalejas (Valladolid province) presented their *instancia* via Guillermo Gil de Reboleño, a lawyer based in the provincial capital who

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<sup>40</sup> AHN, FFCC, Presidencia del Gobierno, Primo de Rivera, caja 116, expediente 612, Duke of Arión and others to Primo de Rivera, 30/11/1923.

<sup>41</sup> AHN, FFCC, Presidencia del Gobierno, Primo de Rivera, caja 116, expediente 614, Catholic Agrarian Syndicate of Fabara to Primo de Rivera, forwarded by Civil Governor of Zaragoza 4/12/1923.

would go on to join the Valladolid *Unión Patriótica* in 1924.<sup>42</sup> Gil de Reboleño informed that general that ‘it would have been my desire and intention not to divert Your Excellency’s attention even for a few short minutes, as it must currently be completely occupied with higher concerns for the good of the Nation’.<sup>43</sup> However, he was ‘obliged’ to break with this intention by ‘the relationship of my wife’s family with the village of Canalejas, and the justice of the petition contained in the attached document’ in order to ‘deliver into Your Excellency’s hand the desires of a village whose only and essential need for communication has never been satisfied by the State’. Such formulations were typical of the tendency that Gow identifies for petitioners to deny the fundamentally political nature of their requests.<sup>44</sup> In keeping with the notion that Primo acted as a benevolent father of the nation, he stated that the village awaited Primo’s decision ‘with confidence’ that it would ‘rectify [Canalejas’s] systematic abandonment by previous governments’.<sup>45</sup>

On the one hand, such use of intermediaries may have been a means of enhancing the apparent ‘respectability’ of the petitions. Communicating with the state through members of the nobility, local functionaries or conservative professionals reflected embedded notions of proper social order. It also made good sense under a hierarchical and conservative regime. The tone of Gil de Reboleño’s covering letter bears this out. He reproduced the trope of Primo de Rivera working indefatigably for the good of the nation, excused his ‘distracting’ the general by reference to family obligation, and emphasised the ‘justice’ of the petition, which implicitly cast the

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<sup>42</sup> AHN, FFCC, Presidencia del Gobierno, Primo de Rivera, caja 115, expediente 166, Gil de Reboleño to Primo de Rivera, 24/10/1923; Jesús María Palomares Ibáñez, *Nuevos políticos para un nuevo caciquismo: La dictadura de Primo de Rivera en Valladolid* (Valladolid, 1993), p. 159.

<sup>43</sup> AHN, FFCC, Presidencia del Gobierno, Primo de Rivera, caja 115, expediente 166, Gil de Reboleño to Primo de Rivera, 24/10/1923.

<sup>44</sup> Gow, ‘*Patria and Citizenship*’, pp. 163-164.

<sup>45</sup> AHN, FFCC, Presidencia del Gobierno, Primo de Rivera, caja 115, expediente 166, Gil de Reboleño to Primo de Rivera, 24/10/1923; Gow, ‘*Patria and Citizenship*’, pp. 166-168.

previous regime's failure as injustice. However, this pattern also the continued grip of *caciquil* modes of political action on some Spaniards' conception of the *primorriverista* state. Writing via intermediaries implied a continued conception of citizens' relationship with the state as being based on who could secure privileged access, and on clientelistic or family relationships with suitable local interlocutors with the state authorities.

### **Campaigning for transport infrastructure and the significance of regional identities**

Petitioning the central government was only one part of civil society campaigns around transport infrastructure development in 1920s Spain. These campaigns were also conducted through publicity in the press—especially regional newspapers—and public assemblies. A common notion was that improved transport infrastructure was necessary in order for Spain to enjoy the fruits of 'modernity' and to complete the task of 'national reconstitution' central to much regenerationist thought. Citizens understood such discourses through the benefit they could bring to their local area, a tendency that was especially noticeable in regions with remote areas served by very poor communications, or areas where citizens had long hoped for a particular project to be completed and were disappointed with delays. The modernising, regenerationist policy agenda could draw on and articulate regional identities in ways that accorded with the ideological imperatives of *primorriverismo*. Concerns based in regional identities could be deployed in arguing for local and provincial benefits if these were seen to lead to greater *national* unity or to contribute to national 'progress'. Such campaigns demonstrate the capacity of concerns around transport infrastructure to provide the basis for supposedly 'apolitical' civil society

movements, and the capacity of regenerationist ideals to allow such movement to identify the Primo regime as a means to fulfilling their interests.

Similarly to the issue of affordable housing, concerns around transport infrastructure policy could lead citizens to campaign using a range of ideological idioms. In Burgos province, the *Comisión burgalesa de iniciativas ferroviarias* (Burgos Railway Initiatives Commission) published its contribution to a public consultation regarding a set of planned projects drawn up by the Plans and Projects Section of the Railway Oversight Council (*Consejo Superior de Ferrocarriles*; CSFC).<sup>46</sup> It desired to see railways that were classified as ‘of national importance’ given higher priority than the plan suggested, and framed these desires in *national* terms. The Commission especially emphasised the place of railways in any plan for further economic development; nationally important railways would ‘open up enormous tracts of our country for [economic] exploitation, whose economic development is currently delayed by the lack of transport’. Reflecting a common concern of the period, they suggested that such conditions could lead to the ‘depopulation’ of these rural areas.<sup>47</sup> The whole country, according to the Burgos Commission, had invested its ‘greatest hopes’ in the construction of railways to reduce unemployment in blue-collar and white-collar jobs, to ‘establish new industries, add value to agricultural products ... and balance the national budget’.<sup>48</sup> Just as Costa had preached the gospel of *política hidráulica* as a socio-political panacea, the Burgos Commission subscribed to a modernising and regenerationist policy agenda that viewed infrastructure development as capable of ameliorating a wide range of social ills.

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<sup>46</sup> Comisión Burgalesa de Iniciativas Ferroviarias, *Dictamen presentado en la información pública sobre el anteproyecto de ferrocarriles, redactado por la Sección de Planes y Proyectos del Consejo Superior Ferroviario* (Burgos, 1925).

<sup>47</sup> Comisión Burgalesa de Iniciativas Ferroviarias, *Dictamen*, pp. 16-17.

<sup>48</sup> Comisión Burgalesa de Iniciativas Ferroviarias, *Dictamen*, p. 23.

However, for all that the Commission framed its desires for increasing Spain's railway capacity in terms of the national economy, the interests of Burgos and neighbouring provinces were foremost in its thinking. It focused on the construction of a direct line between Madrid and Burgos, which could create a fast and direct route between the capital and Irun, on the French border.<sup>49</sup> The province was 'almost entirely lacking [in railway infrastructure]', they claimed, but despite this 'shows a clear tendency towards economic progress ... the Castilian and Leonese steppes are industrialising faster than expected'.<sup>50</sup> As wishful as their thinking may have been in this regard, the Commission's focus on national economic development provided an apparently selfless framing for the more pressing concern that such development should take place in its own region. If, as Raymond Carr argues the case of Primo's trade and customs policy, 'what the regime called a "national" policy concealed support for "interests" its members chose to favour by an inflated budget', then citizens were equally prone to deploy the rhetoric of the national interest to secure their place in the dictatorship's 'pool of administrative patronage'.<sup>51</sup> This use of economic arguments also marked a contrast from the Commission's argument in 1919, supported by a military engineer, Juan Casado, that this railway line was necessary for national defence in the event of a general European war involving Spain, an argument that must have been influenced by the fact that the First World War had ended less than a year earlier.<sup>52</sup> While the national interest was in both cases invoked to defend regional interests, such campaigns existed to secure

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<sup>49</sup> Comisión Burgalesa de Iniciativas Ferroviarias, *Dictamen*, pp. 19-56.

<sup>50</sup> Comisión Burgalesa de Iniciativas Ferroviarias, *Dictamen*, pp. 43-44.

<sup>51</sup> Carr, *Spain, 1808-1975*, p. 580.

<sup>52</sup> See Archivo Regional de la Comunidad de Madrid, Diputación Provincial de Madrid, caja 835, legajo 4, Juan Casado, *El ferrocarril directo París-Algeciras en relación con la defensa nacional* (Burgos, 1919).

infrastructure developments for their region, and when approaching the central government used the most convenient arguments at the national level to do so.

The Commission also drew on bodies of anti-political thought in making its argument. It asserted that ‘the current generation strongly desires to enjoy [the railways’] benefits’, and suggested that this created an obligation on the state to act quickly, lest citizens prefer to entrust infrastructure development to private companies.<sup>53</sup> The state administration would ‘prove its redemption if it were to abandon its traditional lethargy, and skip the infinite processes and interventions which are demanded to an increasing extent by the bureaucracy’.<sup>54</sup> Primo de Rivera and his allies had complained of the same tendencies in Spain’s state administration during the 1923 coup; by repeating such complaints in 1925, organisations like the Burgos Commission made clear that making genuine progress on infrastructure development would be a criterion on which the dictatorship’s success would be judged. The Commission went so far as to express doubt that such a change in the country’s administration could be successfully carried out.<sup>55</sup> In combination with its assertion that all that was really needed was ‘*will, will and will*’ (‘*voluntad, voluntad y voluntad*’), this challenged Primo to prove his credentials as the iron surgeon.<sup>56</sup> The concerns of regenerationism and ‘anti-politics’ gave civil society mobilisations a language in which to address the *primorriverista* state at the same time as creating expectations to which they could hold the regime. The public and private reproduction of these concerns by citizens with interests in transport infrastructure increased to cultural power of this policy agenda.

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<sup>53</sup> Comisión Burgalesa de Iniciativas Ferroviarias, *Dictamen*, p. 14.

<sup>54</sup> Comisión Burgalesa de Iniciativas Ferroviarias, *Dictamen*, p. 55.

<sup>55</sup> Comisión Burgalesa de Iniciativas Ferroviarias, *Dictamen*, pp. 55-56.

<sup>56</sup> Comisión Burgalesa de Iniciativas Ferroviarias, *Dictamen*, p. 23.



The ‘aspirations’ of communities that desired new transport infrastructure to improve their economic and social situation were a constant feature of the Primo de Rivera years. They gave rise to bottom-up mobilisations that complemented the top-down institutions associated with the nationalisation of the masses.<sup>57</sup> Especially in regions characterised by inhospitable terrain, such campaigns brought citizens together in public assemblies on a regular basis.<sup>58</sup> The Primo de Rivera regime certainly used coercive institutions to mobilise large groups of citizens around national symbols, but shared desires for infrastructure development and modernisation also publicly mobilised Spaniards in ways that made it possible for citizens to locate themselves within state structures, but over which the coercive institutions of the dictatorship had less obvious control.

On 26 April 1925, for instance, an assembly was held in Oliete (Teruel province), with representatives from seven other nearby villages.<sup>59</sup> Their goal was ‘to interest the public authorities in the construction of a railway’ that would originate at Montalbán and link several mining villages in the vicinity to the mainline run by the MZA railway company by creating a junction at Samper de Calanda or Puebla de Híjar. The assembly endorsed a proposal (*anteproyecto*) for the line and agreed to request that the *ayuntamientos* of all affected villages should ‘cede, free of charge’, all necessary land. The report pointed out that developing the Teruel coal industry would be ‘a source of national wealth’, in addition to developing local industry.

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<sup>57</sup> See Quiroga, *Making Spaniards*.

<sup>58</sup> It is not surprising that many of the petitions analysed previously in this chapter came from villages in mountainous or sparsely populated regions such as Galicia, Extremadura, and the Andalusian interior.

<sup>59</sup> *Heraldo de Aragón*, 1/5/1925, p. 2.

Reports of similar assemblies and petitions sent to public authorities frequently featured in the Aragonese regional press throughout the dictatorship.<sup>60</sup> Only a few days after the report on the Otiel assembly, for instance, an announcement appeared in the *Heraldo de Aragón* ahead of an assembly to be held in Sangüesa on 7 May, to demonstrate support for the construction of a ‘strategic railway’ between that town and Jaca.<sup>61</sup> The report noted the ‘high national interest’ as well as local interests that would be served by the railway, and hoped for ‘enthusiastic cooperation’ on the part of citizens. It stated that ‘the voice of the people will be heeded, carried by the mayor of Jaca’, who had written to the affected villages emphasising the importance of the assembly. The report pointed out the support of the Ministry of War for the project, which would create a more direct transport link between the garrison towns of Jaca and Pamplona, and stated that Jaca was confident of nearby villages’ support.

The place of the local state administration—in the form of the mayor—in this episode was multi-faceted and encapsulated a complex relationship between the *primorriverista* state and its citizens. The mayor was portrayed as representing ‘the voice of the people’—unsurprising, for a representative of a regime that based its claim to legitimacy on ejecting from power dynastic politicians accused of ignoring the good of the country. Similarly, the report stated plainly that this ‘voice of the people’ would be heeded—presumably by the central government—, further reinforcing this understanding of the relationship between the dictatorship and the

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<sup>60</sup> See, for example, *Herldo de Aragón*, 3/1/1925, p. 1; 26/2/1925, p. 1; 20/3/1925, p. 2; 15/4/1925, p. 2; 19/4/1925, p. 1; 8/5/1925, p. 3; 12/5/1925, p. 3; 13/5/1925, p. 3; 26/11/1925, p. 1; 27/11/1925, p. 3; 27/3/1926, p. 2; 2/4/1926, p. 1; 4/5/1926, p. 11; 5/11/1926, p. 1; 7/11/1926, p. 2; 10/11/1926, p. 3; 16/3/1927, p. 5; 27/11/1928, p. 4; 11/12/1928, p. 1; *Diario de Huesca*, 8/4/1926, p. 1; 6/7/1926, p. 1; 11/7/1926, p. 1; 30/7/1927 p. 1; 6/8/1927, p. 1; 27/9/1927, p. 1; 22/1/1929, p. 1; 6/2/1929, p. 1; 21/3/1929, p. 1. This sample of reports includes only those assemblies and public petitions that related to transport infrastructure. Numerous others related to hydrological works (including irrigation, sewerage and domestic water supply infrastructure), affordable housing, and agricultural policy (especially protection for the sugar beet industry).

<sup>61</sup> *Heraldo de Aragón*, 6/5/1925, p. 2.

Spanish people. The notion that one person could ‘carry the voice of the people’ suggested that the citizens involved held a singular, uncontested will; presenting support for the new railway in this light made it clear that the authorities considered the project to represent the interests of the district, and therefore that supporting it would be publicly virtuous.<sup>62</sup> Indeed, the mayor of Jaca’s intervention did not only aim to represent the ‘voice of the people’; it also made clear attempts to *shape* these desires by publicly calling on villages around Jaca to also support the proposed project. The sense that this was an important civic duty for the representatives of these villages was increased by the reference to central government support for the scheme. Thus, while claiming to represent the views of local citizens to the central government, the Jaca *ayuntamiento* also represented the opinion of ministries to these citizens and conducted propaganda for the central government. Assemblies mobilised citizens to petition the central state and strengthened the cultural grip of the modernising, regenerationist policy agenda, but orchestrating support for infrastructure development projects also offered an opportunity for the dictatorship to control these mobilisations.<sup>63</sup> This could be achieved outside coercive and explicitly nationalistic institutions such as the army, the *Somatén*, or the *Unión Patriótica*. The discourse of modernisation, drawn from regenerationist ideas of ‘national reconstruction’, provided a *socio-economic* means of defining acceptable

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<sup>62</sup> *Heraldo de Aragón*, 6/5/1925, p. 2. See also López Iñíguez, ‘Populismo municipal y nacionalcatolicismo’. López Iñíguez argues that *primorriverista* municipal authorities in Valencia established a discourse that suggested Valencians must support public works and urban redevelopment and modernisations schemes if they wished to be considered ‘good citizens’.

<sup>63</sup> Ben-Ami considers the Primo de Rivera regime to have been largely a means of controlling the increasing political mobilisation of Spanish society; *Fascism from Above*, pp. 394-395. This notion has also informed, in different ways, the work of José Luis Gómez Navarro and, altogether more convincingly, Alejandro Quiroga. Gómez Navarro; *El régimen de Primo de Rivera*; Quiroga, *Making Spainards*. Cf. Vincent, *People and State*, pp. 112-116.

topics for civil society organisation that functioned alongside the regime's 'nationalisation of the masses'.<sup>64</sup>

This episode also demonstrates a role for the press in these campaigns that went beyond merely reporting on assemblies. Regional newspapers also gathered support for infrastructure projects. On 15 April 1925, the *Heraldo de Aragón* published a note written by one Placentino Cobos on plans for 'a railway of interest to the district of Cariñena', that would link the town to the existing network, and the necessity for an assembly to demonstrate support for it.<sup>65</sup> Cobos lamented, however, that 'despite the significant improvement this would mean for the *comarca*, there is little apparent enthusiasm in the villages concerned', and stated that he had therefore considered it necessary to publish the note as an attempt to 'awaken [public] opinion'. He encouraged his fellow citizens 'not to neglect for one moment such an important issue', arguing that 'working with enthusiasm will always achieve the desired ends'. By publishing such pieces, the regional press not only campaigned for the state to invest in transport infrastructure development, but also brought pressure to bear on citizens to join such campaigns. They thus not only reflected the concerns of civil society movements, but were also an essential constitutive part of them. Promoting the ideas of individuals like Cobos, they contributed to establishing transport infrastructure development as a widely discussed policy agenda in *primorriverista* Spain, and the notion that supporting such projects was an important component of virtuous citizenship.

Increasing levels of support for new railways and roads in Aragon were portrayed in the regional press as a symptom of the region's 'awakening from its century-long

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<sup>64</sup> Quiroga, *Making Spaniards*.

<sup>65</sup> *Heraldo de Aragón*, 15/4/1925, p. 2.

lethargy', aligning such campaigns explicitly with currents of regenerationist thought that called for economic development and modernisation to reverse 'national decline'.<sup>66</sup> The *Heraldo de Aragón* commented on the contrast between a past marked by suspicion of new infrastructure, and the present in which 'villages large and small feel the imperious necessity to communicate with the world and easily to transport their surpluses to market'. The newspaper propagated an image of the region no longer content with the inertia associated with previous regimes; this desire for economic development underlay 'a vigorous movement of opinion' in favour of new railways, which was 'a symptom of clear orientation towards the future'. This shared clear commonalities a view that improving communication infrastructure was a key aspect of 'the future task' of 'reconstituting the state', that had started on 13 September 1923.<sup>67</sup> While thus an important part of a *national* political agenda, the needs of the region and a regenerationist regional identity were paramount in such commentary.

Mobilising a regional community also provided a microcosm in which to theorise the relationships between civic leaders and ordinary citizens that would be necessary to achieve such economic and infrastructure development.<sup>68</sup> It was not enough for 'the directing classes of regional life' to 'listen attentively to this energetic current of opinion'.<sup>69</sup> They must also 'channel, orientate and order the abundant and legitimate aspirations', as 'popular agitation' could 'stagnate and be lost' without such direction. Regional newspapers understood themselves to be a part of these 'directing classes',

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<sup>66</sup> *Heraldo de Aragón*, 6/5/1925, p. 1.

<sup>67</sup> *Heraldo de Aragón*, 17/4/1925 p. 1

<sup>68</sup> Xosé-Manoel Núñez argues that conservative Spanish nationalism approached the country's regions as the repositories of the *essence* of a wider national identity; Núñez, 'The Region as *Essence* of the Fatherland: Regionalist Variants of Spanish Nationalism (1840-1936)', *European History Quarterly* 31.4 (2001), pp. 483-518. In this sense, the organisation of regional life along these lines is significant, as it could be interpreted as a microcosm for social relations in Spain more broadly.

<sup>69</sup> *Heraldo de Aragón*, 6/5/1925, p. 1.

both providing an outlet for such ‘currents of opinion’ and fulfilling an ‘ordering’ function by encouraging citizens to support them.<sup>70</sup> This formulation also reflected a broader conception of ideal relations between the state, social elites and ordinary citizens. While the moral authority of calls for economic modernisation was seen as deriving primarily from ‘popular agitation’—from the aspirations of citizens who had felt neglected by the previous regimes and deserved the support of an explicitly regenerationist state—, the self-appointed leaders of campaigns for infrastructure development also displayed an ambivalence about such agitation. Social and political elites ought to respond to it, but they were also obliged to control and direct it in order to make it sustainable, and to secure positive outcomes. This was an argument for the importance of a region’s or locality’s *fuerzas vivas* as intermediaries between citizens’ aspirations and the decision-making structures of the state.<sup>71</sup> These processes bore similarities with the politics of *caciquismo*, but the portrayal of the intermediary figures involved as patriotic, concerned about the good of ordinary citizens, and attempting to provide the best for whole communities made them acceptable in regenerationist thought, in contrast to the image of the venal *cacique*. Desires for infrastructure development fitted neatly into such means of controlling popular agitation. Regenerationist discourses and their concern with economic

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<sup>70</sup> As Mary Vincent has shown in the case of Salamanca’s *Gaceta Regional* under the Second Republic, regional newspapers could function as important agents for political mobilisation. Where the *Gaceta Regional* mobilised its conservative readers in activism against the Republic’s constitution, against local liberal Republican politicians, and against agrarian reform, the Aragonese regional press—especially but not only the *Heraldo de Aragón*—adopted and propagated a modernising, regenerationist policy agenda during the 1920s. Vincent, *Catholicism and the Second Spanish Republic*, pp. 120-123, 181-184, 192-194, 200-210. Regional newspapers elsewhere in Spain also adopted this policy agenda and attempted to mobilise local citizens around it; see e.g. Pedro Martínez Gómez, *La dictadura de Primo de Rivera en Almería (1923-1930). Entre el continuismo y la modernización* (Almería, 2007), pp. 12, 28-29, 48-68; Francisco Alía Miranda, *Ciudad Real durante la Dictadura de Primo de Rivera* (Ciudad Real, 1986), pp. 68-83.

<sup>71</sup> This idea resonated with theories around the role of social elites in guiding citizens’ collective efforts that were influential in Catholic circles in this period. The formation of the *Asociación Católica Nacional de Propagandistas* (ACNP; National Catholic Association of Propagandists) is perhaps the best-known and clearest example of these theories’ application in practice. See Vincent, *Catholicism and the Second Spanish Republic*, pp. 116-126.

modernisation thus formed an ideological framework that could accommodate and direct popular desires for change. Being based around socio-economic concerns, this could co-exist with other ideological frameworks such as unitary Spanish nationalism, but also related more directly to citizens' everyday lives than the ceremonies and symbols associated with the nationalisation of the masses. These means of integrating citizens into the structures of the Spanish state thus complemented nationalistic 'negative integration'.<sup>72</sup>

While arguing for such structures and policy processes thus had national relevance, discussing the mobilisation of a regional community also allowed the leaders of campaigns for new transport infrastructure to expound conceptions of regional interests that were entwined with regenerationism and economic modernisation. In January 1925, the *Heraldo de Aragón* reported on the 'inconceivable isolation' of the village of Piedratajada (Zaragoza province), which 'request[ed] a bridge and a *camino vecinal*', a desire that the newspaper judged 'must be met with urgency'.<sup>73</sup> The report covered familiar themes, noting that better transport infrastructure was important for the purposes of transporting goods to market and that the existing roads into the villages resembled 'goat tracks' liable to being washed out in winter. The campaign for better infrastructure had now entered a 'period of activity'; according to the report, this 'offered some hope' and was attributed to the work of the local Government Delegate, Rafael del Castillo. The newspaper thus emphasised the importance of civil society mobilisations, and of local 'vital forces'—in this case, a representative of the dictatorship—orchestrating these. The campaign located the road in question firmly within the good of the wider region and the nation. It could

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<sup>72</sup> Quiroga, *Making Spaniards*.

<sup>73</sup> *Heraldo de Aragón*, 11/1/1925, p. 1.

later be upgraded to become a road of regional significance, and lines of communication were taken to ‘reinforce civic spirit, increasing national power and strengthening the *Patria*’. Local and regional aspirations for improved infrastructure could be made to serve not only regenerationist concerns with modernisation, but also nationalist concerns about Spain’s international prestige and internal unity.

The idea of the isolated village as a common experience of rural Aragonese citizens was powerful, recurring frequently in the regional press.<sup>74</sup> This trope sometimes coincided with a didactic relationship in which local citizens explained to outsiders—whether urban Aragonese citizens or state institutions—the conditions of such villages. This attitude was clear in a letter written to the newspaper by one Pedro Gil Peire, a resident of Piedratajada, in response to the report discussed above. He repeated the *Heraldo*’s praise of Del Castillo, a ‘most worthy Government Delegate’, and emphasised the ‘good and honourable’ nature of the village’s workers, who wanted to ‘redeem [Piedratajada] by their own labour’. He also claimed authority as ‘one who knows these villages’ to tell the newspaper’s readership of the richness and fertility of the surrounding land, but also to ‘censure those who ignored the innumerable demands they [have] made related to transport’, thus causing economic decline in the district. This rhetoric relied on the sense of someone with direct experience of the conditions in question ‘reflect[ing] the feelings of these villages’ for the benefit of outsiders.<sup>75</sup> It reinforced the newspaper’s campaign in favour of better infrastructure in the area and encouraged readers from outside the district to identify with their fellow Aragonese citizens. Similarly, during late 1925 the *Heraldo* published an article under the strapline ‘What my village needs’ (*Lo que necesita mi*

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<sup>74</sup> *Diario de Huesca*, 30/6/1927, p. 1; 3/8/1927, p.1; *Heraldo de Aragón*, 21/2/1925, p. 5; 18/9/1925, p. 1; 19/9/1925, p. 9;

<sup>75</sup> *Heraldo de Aragón*, 15/1/1925, p. 1.



*pueblo*), in which a writer from Jaca, alongside explanations of the town's history for interested outsiders, opined that some of its most fundamental necessities related to the completion of several large railway projects in the area.<sup>76</sup> Writing in this way constructed regional identities by 'teaching' readers about the histories and traditions of other Aragonese towns and villages, and associated this identity with a desire in the present for economic 'progress' in the shape of new transport infrastructure.<sup>77</sup>

The articulation of an Aragonese identity intertwined with aspirations for improved infrastructure focused heavily on the mountainous provinces of Teruel and Huesca. A particular problem for writers who presented themselves as custodians of Aragonese regional identity was the fact that Teruel possessed better communications with the Valencian seaboard than with the rest of Aragon, and 'look[ed] to the east as the promised land', whereas the north should fulfil that role.<sup>78</sup> A 'reconquest of Teruel for the Aragonese cause' was required. As well as demanding the strengthening of cultural links between Teruel and the rest of the region, this was seen to require the improvement of transport infrastructure. Reporting on efforts to secure support for a railway line from Lleida to Teruel via Caspe (Zaragoza province), the *Heraldo de Aragón* commented that Aragon's southernmost province was 'isolated' (*huérfana*; literally 'orphaned') from all railway infrastructure.<sup>79</sup> Although this line clearly supported Aragonese regional interests, it framed the benefits in *national* terms,

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<sup>76</sup> *Heraldo de Aragón*, 19/12/1925, p. 1.

<sup>77</sup> For instance, the magazine of the Aragonese *Sindicato de Iniciativas y de Propaganda*, an organisation dedicated to stimulating tourism in the region, presented a variety of articles discussing Aragonese history, culture and geography, and others insisting on the need for infrastructural improvement as part of a broader economic modernisation policy; *Aragón* 1.1-5.30 (October 1925–November 1929).

<sup>78</sup> *Heraldo de Aragón*, 14/4/1925, p. 1.

<sup>79</sup> *Heraldo de Aragón*, 8/5/1925, p. 1.

claiming—perhaps somewhat implausibly—that opening up access to Teruel’s mining districts would reduce Spain’s reliance on British coal and iron.

The newspaper continued to support transport infrastructure development in Teruel, predicting in the autumn of 1926 that its readers would soon witness the province’s ‘resurgence’ with ‘inconceivable riches, wellbeing and greatness [*engrandecimiento*].’<sup>80</sup> It played on regional pride, stating that ‘those aged 50 years or more will recall’ ‘the actions of tenacity and exceptional energy’ that had been required to secure the construction of the Central Aragon (Calatayud to Valencia) line, and that the line had still only been completed with ‘a delay of twenty years’. However, the writer rejected the notion that the line was ‘an Aragonese railway’, and in fact admitted to a temptation to state that it was ‘created against Aragon, or at least against Zaragoza ... [It] is an exclusively Valencian railway’. To travel from Teruel to Valencia was straightforward, whereas travelling to Zaragoza was more complicated and required at least a change of trains in Calatayud. As a result, Zaragoza and Teruel were ‘sisters who do not get along’ (*hermanas que no se entienden*); the poor state of communication between them was ‘a problem of Aragonese spirituality’.<sup>81</sup> The *Heraldo* hoped that developing Teruel’s industry with the line from Lleida via Caspe and Alcañiz might have ‘spiritual benefits’ by making the province less dependent on Valencia.<sup>82</sup>

In September 1926, as the project progressed towards the tendering stage, its author used the pages of the regional press to call on *zaragozanos* to act with a ‘tutelary fraternity’ by supporting it.<sup>83</sup> While the basis of support for the line was principally

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<sup>80</sup> *Heraldo de Aragón*, 2/9/1926, p. 3.

<sup>81</sup> *Heraldo de Aragón*, 4/9/1926, p. 3.

<sup>82</sup> *Heraldo de Aragón*, 8/9/1926, p. 5.

<sup>83</sup> *Heraldo de Aragón*, 8/9/1926, p. 5.

economic, the notion that the line would correct a historic wrong was also powerful, and resonated with regenerationist denunciations of the previous order as having compromised the moral integrity of Spain. Two years later, a correspondent for the *Heraldo*, José María Rivera continued to berate the Zaragoza provincial authorities for their failure to act to improve communications with Teruel earlier, but declared himself ‘satisfied’ with the ‘tendency to greater proximity, initiated in the last few years’.<sup>84</sup> Improving communications with Teruel simultaneously restored Aragon’s regional integrity, while contributing to national economic progress.<sup>85</sup> The discourses of regionalism, national prestige, and economic progress all intersected under the umbrella of regenerationism, contributing to the establishment of transport infrastructure development as a widely discussed policy agenda in *primorriverista* Spain.

‘Economic progress’ in Teruel was treated as being inextricably linked with the development of transport infrastructure, and as being representative of future prosperity for the whole of Aragon. The front page of a 1928 special issue of the *Heraldo de Aragón* dedicated to ‘Teruel’s progress’ featured an image of the Fernando Hué viaduct—intended to allow the expansion of the city of Teruel—under construction.<sup>86</sup> ‘Progress’ was thus visually equated with new transport infrastructure and technology as well as urban expansion. The newspaper described the bridge as a ‘daring work of engineering’ and boasted that, at 184 metres, its arch was the third highest in Europe. Communication infrastructure was key to regional development, but locating it in an international context in this manner also strengthened the

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<sup>84</sup> *Heraldo de Aragón*, 31/5/1928, p. 14.

<sup>85</sup> As Núñez observes, Spanish nationalist thought in this period viewed regional identities as constitutive of Spanish national identity, where they did not encourage ‘separatism’. Regional ‘reconstitution’ could thus be seen to contribute to national regeneration; Núñez, ‘The Region as Essence’ pp. 483-518.

<sup>86</sup> *Heraldo de Aragón*, 31/5/1928, p. 1.

notion that one region's 'progress' made an important contribution to the Spain's international prestige.

The *Heraldo* argued that 'railways and mines' would be important characteristics of 'the future Teruel', without requiring the province to compromise its history and traditions.<sup>87</sup> Another writer, one Marcial Buj, who regularly contributed to the *Heraldo's* reporting on *turolese* affairs, saw the province as representative of Aragon as a whole—declaring that 'Whoever wishes to know Aragon should go to Teruel'—, with a society of 'humble, poor' villages, but a citizenry characterised by 'honour and hard work ... immovable faith and solid patriotism' and a prosperous future thanks to new or projected railways.<sup>88</sup> Buj also saw economic development based on mining and rail transport as an opportunity for rupture with a dishonourable past. He repeated the suggestion that Zaragoza province had failed to meet its 'duties' to protect Teruel as an 'older sister', but concluded that the predicted improvement of infrastructure and resulting economic development in the region would allow any resulting bitterness to be consigned fully to the past. 'So much dirty laundry ... ought not to be washed in public or at home. That laundry is scandalously old and we can throw it into the [rivers] Ebro and Turia with no great loss'. Economic modernisation under the Primo dictatorship was taken to right historic wrongs, allowing citizens to look optimistically to the future in a spirit of regional and national unity.

Both the spiritual and material aspects of regenerationist dissatisfaction with the past contributed to the establishment of transport infrastructure development as a key policy agenda of many civil society movements in *primorriverista* Spain.

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<sup>87</sup> *Heraldo de Aragón*, 31/5/1928, p. 11.

<sup>88</sup> *Heraldo de Aragón*, 31/5/1928, p. 11.

Moreover, the dictatorship was associated with bringing about changes that would resolve these dissatisfactions; in May 1928, ‘the last few years’ referred to the period since Primo’s coup, and Rivera considered this period to have improved Aragon’s economic prospects and reconstituted its regional identity.<sup>89</sup> Supporters of Aragon’s material wellbeing and regional integrity were thus encouraged to lend their support to the conservative military dictatorship credited with improving the region’s situation, making transport infrastructure policy into a setting for controlled political mobilisation.

Although Buj highlighted and expressed satisfaction with the ‘good will’ with which Aragonese *fuerzas vivas* worked towards regional economic development, infrastructure projects also led to conflict between different towns and villages.<sup>90</sup> On 19 February 1927, for example, the *Heraldo de Aragón* published a letter from Manuel Gil, the mayor of Daroca (Zaragoza province), in which he responded angrily to suggestions in a letter published nine days previously that his town had ‘abused’ its position as a market centre for several nearby villages and thereby ‘impoverished’ them.<sup>91</sup> The previous correspondent, José María Castillo, had criticised representatives of Daroca for arguing that the projected direct railway between Zaragoza and Valencia should pass through the village, an idea that he had described as ‘hare-brained’ (*descabellado*). Gil asserted that it was ‘very noble, very honourable’ for each town and village to defend its own interests as long as it did not violate fraternal bonds with others, and trusted that ‘justice will be done’. This position contradicted the typical image of a province or region working together to

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<sup>89</sup> *Heraldo de Aragón*, 31/5/1928, p. 15.

<sup>90</sup> *Heraldo de Aragón*, 31/5/1928, p. 11.

<sup>91</sup> *Heraldo de Aragón*, 19/2/1927, p. 1.

secure economic development, and instead placed trust in national state institutions to 'do justice' and decide upon an equitable balance between different local interests.

Gil's missive provoked further correspondence as letters from the villages of Val de San Martín and Cubel, to the south-west and west of Daroca respectively, argued that the mayor's position was sensible, given that the town was already a transport hub for the area.<sup>92</sup> In contrast, another writer claimed to speak as a 'faithful interpreter' of the feelings of the village of Romanos, to the east of Daroca, and stated that 'It is impossible for the aspirations of Daroca to triumph, as this would represent an injustice and the total ruin' of other nearby villages. He exclaimed 'How much better it would be if Daroca stood side by side with us, with the district ... not to ask to amend the planned route, which would be absurd, but to secure the redeeming benefits of having this railway communication completed as soon as possible!' Similarly to Gil, this writer trusted that his interests would be supported by government decision-makers, who were not affected by 'the passion and blindness' of supporters of the Daroca cause. Similarly, a writer from Villadoz 'trust[ed] in those who guide the destinies of Spain, in the certainty that they will do justice in this most crucial of issues'.<sup>93</sup> As in the case of rent controls, desires for transport infrastructure development could coincide with citizens' perceptions of what was 'just'. Such conceptions of justice and morality were malleable, and both sides of such debates could imagine a dictatorship speaking the language of regenerationism, anti-politics and anti-*caciquismo* would support their cause.

The heated debates in the Daroca district were not an isolated incident. A year earlier, Primo's government had issued a *nota oficiosa* noting that since it had

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<sup>92</sup> *Heraldo de Aragón*, 24/3/1927, p. 11.

<sup>93</sup> *Heraldo de Aragón*, 24/3/1927, p. 11.

announced its intention to stimulate the construction of new railways and roads, 'local interests, which are of course understandable and legitimate, but not always compatible with the general advantages to which the government aims to attend, have put themselves in motion, requesting amendments to routes in accordance with their desires and interests'.<sup>94</sup> These 'risk[ed] obstructing and delaying' plans, as examining possible alterations and the impact these would have on a project's overall budget could lead to plans returning to the drawing board, where construction could otherwise commence. In an argument that demonstrated its faith in hierarchical and technocratic policy-making, the government requested citizens to accept plans set out by the central state so that 'this labour of such national interest' should not be 'deferred' again. 'The best is frequently the enemy of the good', the dictatorship reminded citizens, as pursuing it blocked or delayed projects and consumed the time of functionaries who needed to consider other 'urgent issues'. National interests could not be sacrificed to 'people who, with laudable but excessive zeal', attempted to alter projects that had been approved after 'meticulous and thoughtful consideration'. Cooperation between different provinces and population centres, highly valued by commentators on relations between Zaragoza and Teruel, would be logical where economic development in a region was considered to contribute to Spain's *national* 'progress' and 'regeneration', especially where concrete plans had already been approved by the technocratic state agencies charged with deciding how best to serve these shared interests. Yet citizens naturally understood such discourses in terms of how modernisation and infrastructure development and might improve their daily lives. This widely discussed policy agenda thus became a subject of

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<sup>94</sup> *Heraldo de Aragón*, 13/3/1926, p. 4.

discord, attracting the ire of the central government and frustrating the progress of construction projects.

### **The disappointment of regenerationist hopes**

The importance of economic modernisation in regenerationist discourse firmly established transport infrastructure development as a desire of civil society mobilisations during the Primo de Rivera dictatorship, but these movements were not always successful in securing the improvements they desired. For instance, the 1924 General Railway Plan proposed five different railway lines that would serve areas of Ciudad Real province, provoking much satisfaction in the region. However, following a period of public consultation the scope of the projects under consideration was reduced in 1925.<sup>95</sup> By the time the Plan for Urgent Railway Construction (*Plan de Ferrocarriles de Urgente Construcción*) was signed into law in March 1926, the only railway in Ciudad Real to be included was thirty kilometres of the Córdoba to Puertollano line.<sup>96</sup> The necessary process of prioritising projects could thus lead to disappointment among groups concerned with modernisation in the provinces. For example, when a call for tenders for the construction of a railway line between Soria and Castejón (Navarre) between July and November 1923 failed to attract any bids, the Provincial Deputation and *ayuntamientos* of affected

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<sup>95</sup> Alía Miranda, *Ciudad Real* pp. 118-119.

<sup>96</sup> Alía Miranda, *Ciudad Real* pp. 118-119. In the event, the planned line was diverted via Marmolejo to avoid excessive inclines, causing disillusionment in towns and villages such as Fuencaliente, Mestanza, Solana del Pino, and Villanueva de Córdoba that it would no longer serve. Despite petitions and protests from these population centres, which insinuated that the change of route was orchestrated by 'hidden interests' keen to protect areas used by prominent personalities for hunting and similar pursuits, the new route was granted final approval in 1928. Work started in 1929, but progress was slow and construction was suspended in 1935. In 1965, the project was definitively abandoned. It would be 1992 before a direct line opened between Puertollano and Córdoba. Carlos Fernández-Pacheco Sánchez-Gil, *El ferrocarril en Puertollano durante la Dictadura de Primo de Rivera (1923-1930)* (Puertollano, 2007), pp. 12-25.



localities attempted to support the scheme.<sup>97</sup> However, the 1925 plan proposed that the line should instead run between Castejón and Almazán, a town with which the provincial capital had a well-established rivalry. This decision prompted a group of *sorianos* to write to Primo de Rivera demanding to know ‘what crime has Soria committed?’ and stating that the plan represented an ‘unjust and unwarranted punishment’ that would ‘rob’ the city of the primacy in the province that it ‘deserved’.<sup>98</sup> Administrative difficulties could delay other projects. For example, three ‘interprovincial’ roads from Almería province into Granada and Murcia failed to gain approval in 1926 due to delays on the part of the latter two Provincial Deputations.<sup>99</sup>

Similarly, by 1929 campaigners for improved transport infrastructure in Aragon did not feel that all of their aims had been fulfilled. In January, the *Diario de Huesca* continued to complain that the provincial capital’s ‘communications with Barbastro are poor and slow, whereas they could be good and fast’.<sup>100</sup> The newspaper complained of the apparent marginalisation of smaller centres, asking ‘what does it matter if villages are small, when they offer the same proportional tribute to the *Patria*?’<sup>101</sup> The kinds of projects envisaged by the *Diario* would bring economic development to localities, but such requests were justified by referring to villages’ contribution to *national* prosperity. The newspaper continued to call for the improvement of transport for ‘isolated villages’, protesting against the situation in which some had ‘not even a poor *camino vecinal*’ and complaining that this left some

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<sup>97</sup> Emilio Pérez Romero, *La Provincia de Soria durante la dictadura de Primo de Rivera (1923-1930)* (Soria, 1983), p. 111. See also pp. 99-108.

<sup>98</sup> Pérez Romero, *La Provincia de Soria*, pp. 112-113.

<sup>99</sup> Martínez Gómez, *La dictadura de Primo de Rivera en Almería*, p. 134.

<sup>100</sup> *Diario de Huesca*, 2/1/1929, p. 1. An article later in the spring decried the ‘abandonment’ of the Huesca–Barbastro line by the *Compañía de Caminos de Hierro del Norte*. *Diario de Huesca*, 21/3/1929, p. 1.

<sup>101</sup> *Diario de Huesca*, 8/1/1929, p. 1.

Spanish citizens living ‘in the Stone Age’.<sup>102</sup> Even a regime that spoke the language of regenerationist development did not possess the capacity to respond to these demands in a way that satisfied such mobilisations in the medium term.

One frequent reason for such disappointments was the continued need for relevant administrative processes to be completed. With cumbersome state bureaucracy blamed for the state’s failing to meet citizens’ desires for improved infrastructure, and with the dictatorship rhetorically committed to improving the efficiency of state bodies, this could appear to betray the promise of Primo de Rivera’s 1923 manifesto. Administrative processes relating to transport infrastructure could not necessarily be altered in short order. Provincial authorities continued to follow the same, centrally mandated processes using the same forms when constructing or repairing roads, for instance.<sup>103</sup> Even where citizens directly petitioned the central government, hoping that it would defend their interests, state functionaries might investigate and conclude that there was little the national government could do, as the correct processes needed to be pursued at the local and provincial levels. This could be seen in the cases discussed above of the agrarian syndicate from Agar (Pontevedra province), which was told to apply to the provincial authorities regarding improvements to local roads, or the supporters of the Muro de Alcoy to Denia railway, whose petition could not alter the fact that revised plans need to be submitted before the project could be approved.<sup>104</sup> Similarly, a petition by the mayor of Cigudosa (Soria province) requesting the variation of the planned and approved

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<sup>102</sup> *Diario de Huesca*, 22/2/1929, p. 1; 23/2/1929, p. 1; 2/3/1929, p. 1; 7/3/1929, p. 1.

<sup>103</sup> See, for example, ARCM, Diputación Provincial de Madrid, caja 833, legajo 1, Carretera de Cienmpozuelos a Griñon [a project started in early 1923], to ARCM, Diputación Provincial de Madrid, caja 838, legajo 2, Carreteras de Colmenar Viejo a Guadalix y de Colmenar Viejo a Torreldones [ongoing in 1926], among numerous other records of works on roads in Madrid province in the period; ARCM, Diputación Provincial de Madrid, cajas 833-838.

<sup>104</sup> AHN, FFCC, Presidencia del Gobierno, Primo de Rivera, caja 130, expediente 8887, President of Sindicato Agrícola de Agar to Primo de Rivera, 16/8/1929; AHN, FFCC, Presidencia del Gobierno, Primo de Rivera, caja 128, expediente 8259, Cuervo to Guadalhorce, 25/1/1929.

route of a *camino vecinal* was rejected out of hand when central government civil servants discovered that the road's route had been approved on 25 September 1923 with the rejection of twenty-two objections requesting the same alteration, and the villages concerned being informed that further petitions would not be considered.<sup>105</sup> In February 1927, the mayor of Guarromán (Jaén province) telephoned the offices of the dictatorship requesting the provision of credit for the repair of a road to Linares, by which means he hoped to alleviate local unemployment, but was also informed that the maintenance of local roads was an issue for the Provincial Deputation.<sup>106</sup>

Primo de Rivera spoke the language of root-and-branch state reform or 'reconstitution', but his coup was directed more at ending constitutional parliamentarism and replacing the personnel of local and national government than it was at revolutionising the Spanish state's bureaucracy. Resentment at the experience of poor progress in infrastructure development fed ill feeling towards Restoration politicians, but this did not mean that ejecting them from power would remove all administrative obstacles and complications. Regenerationist desires for development formed a policy agenda upon which the dictatorship could draw for support or acceptance in its early stages, but attending to all such aspirations was more complicated than simply replacing a government, and the state's capacity for action remained limited. Citizens understandably engaged with the notion of a shared national good insofar as pursuing the national interest made it possible to argue for interventions that would benefit them. Adopting Primo's vague and populist appeals to patriotism did not, however, mean that these citizens would support policy decisions that went against their interests. For all that it could be an

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<sup>105</sup> AHN, FFCC, Presidencia del Gobierno, Primo de Rivera, caja 115, expediente 423.

<sup>106</sup> AHN, FFCC, Presidencia del Gobierno, Primo de Rivera, caja 124, expediente 6619, note of 14 February 1927.

arena for the reproduction of anti-political ideas, transport infrastructure development remained inherently political.

### **Transport infrastructure and propaganda: The Barcelona metro and competing private interests**

The difficulties and delays suffered by some projects do not mean that transport infrastructure development under Primo de Rivera was an unmitigated failure. Instead, it suggests that citizens' experiences of transport infrastructure construction varied according to their location and particular 'aspirations'. The political significance of the regenerationist modernising policy agenda was more complex than suggested by weighing the construction of new infrastructure against the financial consequences for the Spanish state of funding much of this expansion through government borrowing. Conversely, although citizens in some towns and villages were unable to secure the completion of public works that they considered essential to their future prosperity, other projects were successfully completed during the Primo regime, and the fact that infrastructure development was widely established as a pressing policy objective for citizens across Spain allowed the dictatorship to use these successes for propaganda purposes.

Public opening ceremonies for new transport infrastructure explicitly positioned the *primorriverista* state and an agent and supporter of such 'progress'. On 31 December 1924, the first line operated by the *Gran Metropolitano de Barcelona*—one of the two metro companies that operated in Barcelona during the 1920s—was opened with a ceremony presided over by the *Infante* Fernando of Bavaria, King Alfonso XIII's

brother-in-law.<sup>107</sup> Fernando was welcomed at Barcelona's Estació de França by General Emilio Barrera, Captain-General of Catalonia; Eduardo Aunós, then Undersecretary of the Ministry of Labour, Commerce and Industry; Francisco Vidal y Barraquer, Cardinal-Archbishop of Tarragona; the mayor of Barcelona; and other representatives of the city's religious, municipal, military and academic elite.<sup>108</sup> On arriving at the Plaça de Catalunya metro station, he reviewed a company of infantry before descending the station's stairs to meet the board of directors of the *Gran Metropolitano*. The *Infante* was conducted on a tour of the station, before Vidal y Barraquer performed a blessing of the new line. The opening of new transport infrastructure here provided an opportunity to publicly demonstrate unity between the different branches of Barcelona's *fuerzas vivas*—religious, academic, military and commercial—under the umbrella of the crown and the national government. The opening of the metro was framed as a major civic success for the city and the nation, reinforcing the place of improved transport infrastructure as a widely desired public good supported fully by the Spanish state, and integrating local *fuerzas vivas* more closely into the state's networks of power.

Indeed, the opening of the metro also allowed the dignitaries present to address the place of Catalonia within Spain, emphasising national unity. The Chair of the Board of the *Gran Metropolitano* raised a toast to *Infante* Fernando and requested him to pass on the company's thanks to the king for having honoured the opening with a representative.<sup>109</sup> Fernando replied that he would do so with pleasure, and that Alfonso XIII 'took great interest in all Catalan affairs', before raising his own toast 'to

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<sup>107</sup> *Diario de Barcelona*, 31/12/1924, pp. 5-7; 1/1/1925, p. 1. On the construction of subterranean metropolitan railways in Madrid and Barcelona during the late 1910s and 1920s, see Comín Comín *et al.*, *150 años de ... ferrocarriles españoles*, vol. 1, pp. 379-382.

<sup>108</sup> *Diario de Barcelona*, 31/12/1924, p. 5.

<sup>109</sup> *Diario de Barcelona*, 31/12/1924, p. 5.

Spain, to Catalonia, to Barcelona and to the new Metro'. Such ceremonies addressed citizens' desires for improved transport infrastructure and provided a rhetorical space in which to direct these towards fulfilling other ideological imperatives of the *primorriverista* state, including furthering cordial relations between the national government and conservative *fuerzas vivas*, and promoting Spanish national unity by framing local successes as achievements of the whole nation.<sup>110</sup> The press also covered the technological achievements of new transport infrastructure in such a way as to contribute to the regenerationist goal of overcoming national 'backwardness' relative to other European nations. Reports on the 1926 opening of another metro line in Barcelona—this one operated by a different company, *Metro Transversal*—, highlighted the dimensions and 'magnificence' of the stations, pointing out that the dome of the Plaça d'Espanya station was the largest in the world and comparing others stations on the line favourably with others across Europe.<sup>111</sup> Special emphasis was placed on the fact that all the construction materials had been produced in Spain.<sup>112</sup> Where regenerationist thought considered Spain to have declined when compared to other world powers, improved transport infrastructure could be used as a sign of a nation regaining lost prestige.

However, the pomp, ceremony and triumphalism associated with the opening of the Barcelona metro lines obscured a more troubled relationship between the companies involved in constructing it and other residents of the city. The construction works

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<sup>110</sup> On relations between the Primo de Rivera dictatorship and Catalan conservatives, see Angel Smith, 'The Catalan Counter-revolutionary Coalition and the Primo de Rivera Coup, 1917-1923', *European History Quarterly* 37.1 (2007), pp. 7-34; 'The Lliga Regionalista, the Catalan Right and the Making of the Primo de Rivera Dictatorship, 1916-23' in Romero Salvadó and Smith (eds), *The Agony of Spanish Liberalism*, pp. 145-174.

<sup>111</sup> *Diario de Barcelona*, 11/6/1926, p. 7.

<sup>112</sup> *Diario de Barcelona*, 11/6/1926, p. 7. See also *Diario de Huesca*, 5/6/1926, p. 1. On Primo de Rivera's commitment to stimulating 'national production', see González Calleja, *Modernización autoritaria*, pp. 213-216, 219-234; Ben-Ami, *Fascism from Above*, pp. 259-266; Tamames, *Ni Mussolini ni Franco*, pp. 294-301; Tusell, *Historia de España en el siglo XX*, pp. 501-502.

had caused considerable inconvenience to Barcelona's citizens since before Primo de Rivera's coup. In November 1922, the satirical weekly magazine *L'Esquella de la Torratxa* published a cartoon associating the metro construction works with a chaotic streetscape.<sup>113</sup> With most of the carriageway cordoned off by the *Gran Metropolitano* company, pedestrians, cars, buses, vans and trams are forced into an unrealistically limited space, causing collisions, overturned carts, overcrowded public transport and several physical altercations; the police officers in attendance are overwhelmed by the scene. Meanwhile, in the space supposedly occupied by the metro construction works, only two workers can be seen. One rests, lying on his back with his pickaxe abandoned on the ground, while the other sits beside him and drinks from what appears to be a wine bottle.

During 1925 and 1926, the *ayuntamiento* of Barcelona was required to adjudicate on a dispute between the *Metropolitano Transversal* and the Hotel Colón, relating to work on the Plaça de Catalunya station.<sup>114</sup> On 7 December 1925, the Hotel's Administrator, Juan Minguell, wrote to the municipality stating that it had, for more than a year, 'been suffering patiently a series of inconveniences and vexations' from the company, but that the slow progress of the work 'in addition to the harm it is causing to [the Hotel Colón], casts scorn on the city and is a mark against those who tolerate' the company's infractions. The part of the central square connected to the Passeig de Gràcia 'appear[ed] to be land abandoned to the mercy of a single company', a state of affairs that defied the comprehension of 'the citizens of Barcelona ... and all those who visit our city'. The Hotel argued that the company was failing to make reasonable efforts to secure the progress of construction, stating that

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<sup>113</sup> *L'Esquella de la Torratxa*, 17/11/1922. Cartoon reproduced at the Museu d'Història de Catalunya (Barcelona), permanent exhibition, section 31i, 'Una capital moderna'.

<sup>114</sup> Arxiu Municipal Contemporani (Barcelona) [hereafter AMC], P111 Ordenació i Gestió Transport, caixa 46593, expediente 418, document numbered 39, Minguell to mayor of Barcelona, 7/12/1925.

‘It is unjust that traffic is paralysed in the nerve-centre of the city for the convenience of a company that has, *de facto*, abandoned the work, to the detriment of collective interests’. The Hotel demanded that the municipality take the necessary measures to ensure that the square was promptly ‘returned to the city in the state in which the company received it, putting an end to an intolerable abuse that cannot last a day longer’.<sup>115</sup> This petition was successful, and on 1 February 1926 the municipality resolved to order the metro company to complete urbanisation works by the twentieth of that month, imposing a 100-peseta fine for every additional day that the work lasted.<sup>116</sup>

Although transport infrastructure development was a well-established policy agenda in 1920s Spain, the mechanisms by which this was carried out—in this case, concessions to private companies—sometimes meant that the process of achieving such development brought different private interests into conflict. Comparable disputes occurred throughout the period of the dictatorship relating to the poor state of repair of city-centre streets and squares following work on the metro.<sup>117</sup> In January 1924, a number of tenants in the calle Salmerón (now the Carrer Gran de Gràcia) had to be evacuated from their homes after cracks appeared in the buildings’ fabric, presumably as a result of subsidence caused by subterranean construction works.<sup>118</sup> The idea of ‘anti-political’ and regenerationist policy-making leading to national unity was endorsed by the Primo dictatorship, but different citizens with different interests held varied conceptions of what constituted the common good, requiring

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<sup>115</sup> AMC, P111 Ordenació i Gestió Transport, caixa 46593, expediente 418, document numbered 39, Minguell to mayor of Barcelona, 7/12/1925.

<sup>116</sup> AMC, P111 Ordenació i Gestió Transport, caixa 46593, expediente 418, notes from lead engineer (*ingeniero encargado*), Director General of Technical Services, and Deputy Mayor for Public Works, 1/2/1926, 3/2/1926 and 12/2/1926 respectively.

<sup>117</sup> AMC, P111 Ordenació i Gestió Transport, caixa 46592, expediente 416; caixa 46596, expediente 433; expediente 434; expediente 436

<sup>118</sup> AMC, P111 Ordenació i Gestió Transport, caixa 46596, expediente 436.



state institutions to continue the *political* business of adjudicating on these conflicts. Indeed, the interests of transport companies sometimes directly contradicted the central government's understanding of Spain's national interests. On 16 April 1929, the Barcelona *ayuntamiento* denied the *Gran Metropolitano* company permission to carry out works in the Via Laietana, as these would disrupt traffic during the International Exposition (20 May 1929-15 January 1930), an event through which the dictatorship hoped to showcase Spain's material and economic progress, communicate its vision of national identity and unity, and encourage tourism to the country.<sup>119</sup> Regardless of this, the company commenced the works on 26 April, until the Director General of the Municipal Technical Services attended the scene and ordered the street returned to its original state.<sup>120</sup> Such incidents placed private companies in an ambivalent position with regard to the state-sponsored modernisation of Spain's transport infrastructure. While they were often the chosen means of completing such work, their interests were not necessarily compatible with those of the government, nor those of ordinary citizens, even when they supported infrastructure development in principle.

Even when operational, infrastructure such as the Barcelona metro did not necessarily live up to the promise of its propaganda use. The system's high initial fares were an object of criticism. In one newspaper cartoon published less than two weeks after the *Gran Metropolitano* opened, a Barcelona resident opines that 'metro fares are daylight robbery'. His interlocutor reminds him that 'one can travel from

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<sup>119</sup> AMC, C101 Proc. Judiciais, caixa 74469, expediente 47, copy of statement signed by Antonio Par, 27/4/1929; copy of letter from Gran Metropolitano de Barcelona, S.A. to Ingeniero jefe de la inspección técnica y administrativa de ferrocarriles, 2ª División. On the political importance of the 1929 International Exposition to the Primo regime, especially in terms of securing national prestige, see Ben-Ami, *Fascism from Above*, p. 309; Tamames, *Ni Mussolini ni Franco*, pp. 363-364; Mary Vincent, *Spain 1833-2002: People and State* (Oxford, 2007), pp. 110-111; González Calleja, *Modernización autoritaria*, pp. 311-316.

<sup>120</sup> AMC, C101 Proc. Judiciais, caixa 74469, expediente 47, copy of statement signed by Antonio Par, 27/4/1929.

Sol to Ventas for 25 *céntimos*’, drawing the response ‘That’s in Madrid!’<sup>121</sup> In another cartoon, a man in working clothes asks a municipal policeman for directions to the metro station, only to be told ‘Buzz off, that’s not for manual workers [*menestrales*]’.<sup>122</sup> In October 1926, four months after the opening of the *Metro Transversal*, the Marquis of Cortina, a senior employee of the *Banco Español de Crédito*, commented on the ‘terrifying solitude’ of travelling on the system, claiming to have been one of only three people on the train when he used it.<sup>123</sup> By 1928, the *Transversal* was negotiating with the municipality for financial support.<sup>124</sup> This again suggested that the triumphalism of propaganda associated with new infrastructure construction was misplaced, and that the policy mechanisms inherited from the Restoration—specifically, the construction of transport infrastructure through concessions to private companies—were limited in their effectiveness whether Spain was run by ‘politicians’ or military authoritarians. The propaganda use of such projects suggested that improving the country’s transport infrastructure was both a priority for the dictatorship and a measure by which its success might be judged, making such difficulties a political challenge for the regime.

### **Transport infrastructure and propaganda: The Canfranc railway and the co-option of regional mobilisations**

Completing transport infrastructure commenced but delayed under the Restoration was also a source of self-legitimation for the dictatorship outside major cities. In regions where citizens strongly identified improving transport infrastructure as contributing to their future economic prosperity, this regenerationist policy agenda

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<sup>121</sup> *La Prensa* (Barcelona), 9/1/1925, p. 1.

<sup>122</sup> *La Prensa* (Barcelona), 18/1/1925, p. 1.

<sup>123</sup> AHF, P/212/455, Marquis of Cortina to Marquis of Argentera, 19/10/1926.

<sup>124</sup> AMC, Governació Seria GM, caixa 39643, expediente 25.

meant that the celebration of any success by pre-existing civil society mobilisations would necessarily reflect well on the government of the day. An especially illustrative case of this dynamic was the 1928 opening of the Pau–Canfranc railway (usually referred to as ‘the Canfranc’ in contemporary Spanish usage), which crossed the Franco-Spanish border via the Somport railway tunnel. An agreement signed in 1904 setting out the obligations of the French and Spanish railway companies involved had envisioned its opening in 1917.<sup>125</sup> This was inevitably delayed by the First World War, but by 1925 Aragonese citizens campaigning for the railway and stations to be completed and opened felt that the French Midi railway company was failing to meet its duties with regard to the construction. They appealed to Primo’s government, describing the situation as ‘a wound’ not only for Aragon but for the whole of Spain, and suggesting that the Spanish parties to the agreement had fulfilled their obligations.<sup>126</sup> They ‘put their trust in the [Military] Directorate’ to secure a return on their investment through negotiations with the French government and companies. Although they did not consider the Spanish state to be at fault, the protection of the *primorriverista* state was again taken to be crucial to securing regional prosperity, which was framed in terms of national prosperity, interests and prestige.

Given the identification of the Canfranc railway as an important factor in Aragon’s future prosperity, it is unsurprising that the first train to run through the tunnel in June 1927 was taken a moment for self-congratulation among those organisations and press outlets that had supported its construction. The *Heraldo de Aragón* commented that ‘great improvements must be worked for with great effort, even if their supporters will not [live to] see their completion. They are a fortunate legacy

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<sup>125</sup> *Heraldo de Aragón*, 20/11/1925, p. 1; 26/11/1925, p. 1.

<sup>126</sup> *Heraldo de Aragón*, 26/11/1925, p. 1.

left to their descendants'.<sup>127</sup> Although the region's 'battle' to secure the railway's completion was 'bloodless', it 'was no less heroic than wartime deeds'. Citizens committed to transport infrastructure development and modernisation again presented support for his policy agenda as the mark of a good and patriotic Spaniard. The celebrations of the railway's official opening of the railway in 1928 suggested that the 'great effort' of Aragonese civil society organisations was not only a matter of pride for the region, but for the whole nation. In May 1928, Primo de Rivera told the mayor of Zaragoza that he hoped the official opening would take place 'as soon as possible'.<sup>128</sup> He joked that he should take up residence in Aragon, 'as hardly three months go by without some interesting occurrence obliging me to visit'. He confirmed that the government desired the opening to take place with 'all possible splendour', and that the Ministry of Development would do all it could to ensure a delegation from the French province of Béarn, which held a comparable interest in the railway, could travel to Spain for the ceremony. However, this was not merely a question of the dictatorship desiring to use public ceremonial to take credit for the completion of an infrastructure project that had long been underway. Primo's flattery of Aragon also suggested and strengthened an ideological alliance with the regenerationist and modernising elements of the region's civil society. Such commitments to modernisation constituted a policy agenda around which these mobilisations cohered, and Primo made it very publicly known that his dictatorship supported this policy agenda. Such declarations by the head of government constituted a means—indeed, a more concrete one than the symbols and ideas associated with the 'nationalisation of the masses'—by which citizens who subscribed

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<sup>127</sup> *Heraldo de Aragón*, 28/6/1927, p. 1.

<sup>128</sup> *Heraldo de Aragón*, 26/5/1928, p. 1.

to this agenda could identify their interests with the Spanish state and the dictatorship.

As the official opening neared, the Aragonese region press continued to draw attention to the topic; the identities of those who would represent the region at the ceremony were front-page news.<sup>129</sup> In a familiar pattern, these included senior military figures from the region, city mayors, representatives of the provincial authority, bodies such as the Chamber of Commerce, and representatives of civil society organisations concerned with regional economic development, including the prominent hydrological engineer Manuel Lorenzo Pardo.<sup>130</sup> On 18 July 1928, the day of the ceremony, the tone of press coverage was triumphal, but also emphasised the long period it had taken for construction to be completed—the project had initially been given legislative approval in 1882, work had started in 1908, and the line was to open twenty years later.<sup>131</sup> However important the campaigning of citizens from Aragon and Béarn had been, the completion of a project that had been in progress for so many years was an opportunity for the governments of the day to associate themselves with the success. As well as Primo de Rivera, both King Alfonso XIII and President Gaston Doumergue of France attended the ceremony.<sup>132</sup> Like other events of the same type, the ceremony demonstrated the close association of Spain's political, religious, military and economic elites. With numerous railway engineers and administrators in attendance, the bishop of Jaca blessed one of the line's locomotives, and Alfonso and Doumergue reviewed two companies of light infantry.<sup>133</sup> A military parade preceded a lunch banquet, and speeches by the two

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<sup>129</sup> *Heraldo de Aragón*, 3/7/1928, p. 1; 11/7/1928, p. 1.

<sup>130</sup> *Heraldo de Aragón*, 11/7/1928, p. 1.

<sup>131</sup> *Heraldo de Aragón*, 18/7/1928, pp. 1-6.

<sup>132</sup> *Heraldo de Aragón*, 18/7/1928 p. 3; 19/7/1928, pp. 1-2.

<sup>133</sup> *Heraldo de Aragón*, 19/7/1928, pp. 1-2.

heads of state. Both Alfonso and Doumergue placed the themes of peace, prosperity, and cooperation between the two countries at the centre of their speeches, and presented the railway as an achievement of the two *nations* rather than the regions most directly affected; the ceremony included shouts of acclamation for Spain and France, but not for Aragon or Béarn. The event provided a backdrop for even more explicit propaganda for *primorriverismo*. Alfonso contrasted France's parliamentary and constitutional system with the situation in Spain, where 'these principles are suspended' as Spain sought 'a modality to re-establish them, purged of the errors and defects that long and bitter experience has exposed among us'.<sup>134</sup>

The reality of the Canfranc's first months of operation would suggest that both its supporters in the regions affected and the French and Spanish governments had set their hopes too high. Despite the *Heraldo de Aragón* reporting that the railway was 'functioning normally' in March 1929, later reporting showed that traffic was more limited than had been hoped or expected.<sup>135</sup> However, the completion of a project of such great national importance—adding a third rail connection between Spain and France—and involving impressive feats of engineering, was a locus for self-congratulatory regime ceremonial. In this case, the national interest aligned clearly with regional aspirations. The government's associating itself explicitly with the opening of the line constituted a public performance of an alliance between the dictatorship and the regenerationist regional civil society mobilisations that had agitated for progress on the Canfranc.

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<sup>134</sup> *Heraldo de Aragón*, 19/7/1928, p. 2.

<sup>135</sup> *Heraldo de Aragón*, 17/11/1928, p. 3; 5/3/1929, p. 1; 12/5/1929, p. 1; 16/5/1929, p. 1.

## **Railway reform under Primo de Rivera: Private ownership and the problem of defining the common good**

As the case of the Barcelona metro demonstrated, a perception that a given infrastructure development project served private, profit-making interests while harming other citizens could require the institutions of the Spanish state to become involved in the clearly political business of arbitrating on which interests should prevail, despite the oft-repeated notion that infrastructure modernisations served the collective, national good. The suspicion of private profit that accompanied some facets of anti-political thought meant that reforming Spain's railway administration would be one of the greatest challenges for *primorriverista* infrastructure policy-making.<sup>136</sup> While Spanish citizens might be ambivalent about or even hostile to private control of public infrastructure, the dictatorship found itself in the position of having to attempt to provide for 'the common good' without fundamentally challenging the principles of private property or the interests of big business, integral parts of the social order that it supported.

Histories of the period frequently mention the expansion of the country's physical railway infrastructure under Primo de Rivera as part of wider discussion of the regime's public-works policies. Some scholars offer a cursory examination of the dictatorship's attempts at financial and administrative reform of the railway sector, but other than James H. Rial's brief argument that additional funding for railway companies constituted 'regressive transfer payments', they rarely delve deeper into the question of what these reforms reveal about the nature of the Primo de Rivera

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<sup>136</sup> It will be recalled, for instance, that critics of Restoration housing policy also showed a suspicion of private financial interests, especially of landowners whom they accused of speculation. See p. 78 of this thesis.

regime.<sup>137</sup> Although the extensive analysis of the dictatorship's attempts to resolve 'the railway problem' is beyond the scope of this chapter, an examination of these attempted administrative and financial reforms is illuminating in terms of the political and ideological dynamics of the Primo regime.<sup>138</sup> Part of the appeal of *primorrriverista* 'anti-politics' was the notion that, freed from the corruption of *caciquismo*, the Spanish state would be able to resolve the crises faced by the country based on shared national interests. However, the dictatorship's dealings with railway companies and other stakeholders in the question of railway reform revealed that the rhetoric of shared national interests obscured the wide range of contradictory interests that Spanish citizens might hold, while also failing to resolve the tension between them.

In September 1923, Spanish railway companies had been suffering a growing crisis for a number of years. While concession holders had already struggled to turn a significant profit during the final decades of the nineteenth century, the early twentieth century saw their costs increase rapidly, while the terms of their concessions prevented them from increasing fares sufficiently to offset this.<sup>139</sup> The First World War and, from 1921, protectionist requirements to source the majority of their fuel from Spain, reduced the supply of good-quality British coal; relying on poorer-quality Asturian coal caused companies' net spending on fuel to increase.<sup>140</sup> Rolling stock and other materials also became more expensive, and the widespread

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<sup>137</sup> Rial, *Revolution from Above*, pp. 155-159; Tamames, *Ni Mussloini ni Franco*, pp. 319-321; Ben-Ami, *Fascism from Above*, pp. 254-256; Tusell, *Historia de España en el siglo XX*, 1, pp. 505-506.

<sup>138</sup> For more specialised literature on the *problema ferroviario*, see for example see Artola *et al.*, *Los ferrocarriles en España, 1844-1943. I.*, pp. 409-445; García Pérez, *Régimen jurídico del transporte por ferrocarril*, p. 46; Comín Comín *et al.*, *150 años de ... ferrocarriles españoles*, vol. 1, pp. 281-308, 317-403; Ortúñez Goicolea, 'Cambio político, instituciones y empresas ferroviarias', *IV*; 'El proceso de nacionalización de los ferrocarriles', pp. 54-138.

<sup>139</sup> Comín Comín *et al.*, *150 años de ... ferrocarriles españoles*, vol. 1, pp. 203-211, 281-289.

<sup>140</sup> Ortúñez Goicolea, 'Cambio político, instituciones y empresas ferroviarias', pp. 66-97; Artola *et al.*, *Los ferrocarriles en España, 1844-1943. I.*, pp. 409-411; Comín Comín *et al.*, *150 años de ... ferrocarriles españoles*, vol. 1, pp. 281-292.



increase in the cost of living and the introduction of the eight-hour workday obliged companies to increase spending on wages.<sup>141</sup> Restoration governments refused to countenance fare increases on the scale that the companies requested, but did attempt to introduce reforms to relieve the financial difficulties that these combined pressures caused. These would provide additional state spending on rail infrastructure in exchange for greater government oversight of railway companies' finances, an approach to which the companies were opposed.<sup>142</sup> However, political instability meant that these failed to prosper, and in 1920 the government began paying 'advances' (*anticipos*) on future profits to secure companies' liquidity while allowing them to pay their wage bills and to invest in new rolling stock.<sup>143</sup> Between 1920 and 1923 the government lent 224.5 million pesetas to companies on this basis, of which only 221,000 pesetas were repaid in the same period.<sup>144</sup> During 1921, the *anticipos* constituted eight percent of the gross income of the country's two largest railway companies, MZA and *Caminos de Hierro del Norte de España*, and twelve percent for the Andalusian Railway Company.<sup>145</sup> Despite this aid, as discussed above, rural communities found that railway transport provision, despite being defined as a public service in the relevant legislation, was inadequate to meet the needs of agricultural exporters.<sup>146</sup> The railways were becoming a drain on state resources without achieving a financially stable or practically adequate rail network.

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<sup>141</sup> Ortúñez Goicolea, 'Cambio político, instituciones y empresas ferroviarias', pp. 97-113; Artola *et al.*, *Los ferrocarriles en España, 1844-1943. I.*, p. 410; Comín Comín *et al.*, *150 años de ... ferrocarriles españoles*, vol. 1, pp. 287-289.

<sup>142</sup> Ortúñez Goicolea, 'Cambio político, instituciones y empresas ferroviarias', pp. 121-137; Artola *et al.*, *Los ferrocarriles en España, 1844-1943. I.*, pp. 413-422; Comín Comín *et al.*, *150 años de ... ferrocarriles españoles*, vol. 1, pp. 281-292.

<sup>143</sup> Artola *et al.*, *Los ferrocarriles en España, 1844-1943. I.*, pp. 416-422.

<sup>144</sup> AHF, P/144/313, Consejo Superior de Ferrocarriles, *Origen, transformaciones y actuación del Consejo hasta 31 diciembre 1926: Memoria y anejos* (Madrid, 1927), pp. 60-61.

<sup>145</sup> Comín Comín *et al.*, *150 años de ... ferrocarriles españoles*, vol. 1, p. 291.

<sup>146</sup> See also AHF, P/113/254, 'El problema ferroviario: A la Ponencia de Ferrocarriles del Directorio Militar', *Gaceta de la Asociación de Agricultores de España* 165 (September-October 1923), pp. 365-369; Comín Comín *et al.*, *150 años de ... ferrocarriles españoles*, vol. 1, pp. 282, 287-288.

In a similar way to the improvement of rolling stock provision or the construction of new transport infrastructure, the need to resolve this crisis and end the system of *anticipos* was a well-established policy agenda by the time of Primo's coup.<sup>147</sup> The large sums of money involved, and the fact that they were paid to profit-making organisations, made this topic particularly susceptible to agitation against the corruption of the previous regime. The socialist movement's national newspaper argued that the financial and economic climate had changed since the *anticipos* were approved, that they were no longer necessary and that continuing to support the companies was 'ruining the public purse'.<sup>148</sup> It suggested that Restoration governments, liberal and conservative, had failed to resolve the crisis 'because of the pressure the companies use their great influence to put on the public authorities', as a result of which the state had instead continued to pay the railway companies large sums of money. The newspaper demanded that the payments should be ended, asking rhetorically 'Is it not necessary to regenerate and moralise the country?' This mission required the government to 'oblige the companies to respect and serve the public, as they ought to, for they are currently abusing it scandalously'. Railway reform was thus demanded not only by civil society mobilisations in favour of economic development, but also by the very public, anti-*caciquil* drive of Primo's early days in power to restore probity and integrity in Spanish public life. The hopes for such change may have been misplaced, as revealed by Primo's own corruption, but in September 1923 this rhetoric appealed to a current of thought in Spanish society that desired to see a railway policy that served broader interests than those of the railway companies.

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<sup>147</sup> See extensive press coverage of the issue during 1918-1923; AHF, P/112/247, 'Campana periodística organizada contra las compañías ferroviarias...'

<sup>148</sup> AHF, P/112/247\_1, 'Un gran problema', cutting from *El Socialista*, 21/9/1923.

This populist approach to the policy area reached beyond the socialist movement. Soon after Primo's coup, the traditionalist Carlist ideologue Víctor Pradera denounced the use of *anticipos* to increase the wages of senior railway employees, exclaiming to reporters 'And this has been going on all this time, without anyone protesting, without a single man of government opposing such an abuse!'<sup>149</sup> Although taking a less antagonistic tone towards the companies themselves, the Madrid Chambers of Industry wrote to the dictatorship suggesting that companies were 'financially incapable' of resolving the crisis' and that state intervention was required, but that 'incomprehension', 'apathy' and 'indecision' among previous governments had only made the situation worse; it urged the new regime to propose 'a definitive arrangement'.<sup>150</sup>

Against the background of such agitation among Spanish citizens of diverse backgrounds, the Military Directorate identified resolving the railway crisis as one of its key objectives very soon after coming to power. On 10 October 1923, the dictatorship opened a public consultation to which interested parties were invited to respond.<sup>151</sup> In this sense, the formulae it chose to develop a solution were heavily influenced by a corporatist inflection of 'anti-political' thought, taking control of Spain's future from 'political professionals' by putting it into the hands of the country's *fuerzas vivas*, mediated by the structures of the military regime. A Royal Decree of January 1924 formed a *Consejo Superior de Ferrocarriles* (CSFC).<sup>152</sup> The decree praised the 'illuminating and substantive report' drawing together the findings of the public consultation, saying that it would underpin 'thorough

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<sup>149</sup> AHF, P/112/247\_1, cutting from *La Prensa* (San Sebastián), 24/9/1923.

<sup>150</sup> AHF, P/112/247\_2, 'Exposición al Presidente del Directorio Militar de la Cámara Oficial de Industria de Madrid sobre la solución del problema ferroviario', 5/10/1923.

<sup>151</sup> *Gaceta de Madrid*, 11/10/1923, p. 133.

<sup>152</sup> *Gaceta de Madrid*, 31/1/1924, pp. 530-532.

solutions' that would 'harmonise the diverse relevant interests' involved in the 'railway problem'. However, emphasising the complexity of the issue, 'which affects such important sectors of the national interest', the dictatorship concluded that before adopting these findings, it would be prudent to establish the CSFC to 'offer greater certainty of success as a result of being formed by all the elements with interests linked to the railway problem', including employees' representatives.<sup>153</sup>

The formation of the CSFC, and the public consultation that preceded it, constituted an attempt by the Primo dictatorship to integrate Spaniards into state structures based on their economic position, complementing its attempts at such integration elsewhere through indoctrination in a conservative national identity.<sup>154</sup> This corporatist approach would involve citizens with interests in the policy area and who viewed the railways primarily as a means to develop other sectors of Spain's economy more closely in policy-making, and the regime asserted that it would lead to more effective outcomes for being based on their experience. It placed the aim of 'harmonising all interests' at the heart of *primorriverista* railway policy. By adopting the views of citizens who approached the railway network primarily as a utility and defining these as the common good around which 'all interests' were to be 'harmonised', the dictatorship created a conception of the national interest that contradicted those of railway companies, but failed to acknowledge that not all interests could prevail. The tension produced by professing to accommodate all stakeholders within the railway sector while pursuing policy objectives that shareholders in Spain's railways considered harmful to their interests would

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<sup>153</sup> *Gaceta de Madrid*, 31/1/1924, p. 530.

<sup>154</sup> Quiroga, *Making Spaniards*.

characterise the dictatorship's relations with the country's railway companies until its fall in January 1930.

Despite this, railway companies and their investors attempted to present themselves as partners of the Spanish state in attempting to resolve the crisis. On 23 January 1924, representatives of banks in Bilbao, Barcelona and Madrid with significant shareholdings in railway companies published an open letter in the national press offering their 'patriotic and disinterested collaboration in the very important work of national reconstitution'.<sup>155</sup> Investors in railway companies could deploy the *primorriverista* language of collaboration between all interested parties to present themselves as collaborators in the aims of the news authorities. By exploiting this opening into the Spanish state's networks of ideological power, these banks were able to present their positions in the debate around railway policy with a veneer of neutrality. They objected to suggestions that the state could take over the operation of railways 'as citizens' rather than in their professional capacity; private companies should, they said, continue operating the railways to protect Spain's public finances.<sup>156</sup> Such arguments demonstrate again how notions of 'national reconstitution' provided a language that a variety of actors could attach to their interests. This obscured the contradictions between the views of different stakeholders who professed a desire to see the 'railway problem' resolved 'in the national interest', but identified 'the national interest' with their own class interests.

The remainder of this chapter will examine public debate and the interactions of large railway companies with the government around railway reforms during the rest

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<sup>155</sup> AHF, P/126/260, 'El problema ferroviario: La opinión de los bancos nacionales', cutting from *El Pueblo Vasco*, 23/1/1924.

<sup>156</sup> AHF, P/126/260, 'El problema ferroviario: La opinión de los bancos nacionales', cutting from *El Pueblo Vasco*, 23/1/1924.

of the dictatorship, and will focus on a number of points at which this debate ran particularly high or where particular milestones in the process were reached. This is not to suggest that it was only at these moments that railway reform was a locus for negotiating citizens' and companies' relationship with the dictatorship. However, at these times the place of the state in Spanish society—especially the relationship between the dictatorship, citizens who desired greater state intervention in the railway industry, and the railway companies—was most obviously a subject of debate. Tracing these 'high points' of public debate more than day-to-day administrative relations between the government and companies makes the overall development of this discourse during the Primo dictatorship clearer and allows an examination of a range of perspectives across Spanish society.

The CSCF published a project for the 'new railway regime' in May 1924 which, following a process in which the representatives of different stakeholders were invited to propose amendments to the original draft, was approved in July.<sup>157</sup> The CSFC was granted powers to set fares for companies that signed up to the new regime, 'to audit and intervene in the technical, administrative and financial management' of companies, and to authorise or reject new contracts into which they entered.<sup>158</sup> The Council would determine the fares each company should charge, and the percentage of these to be paid to the new State Railway Fund (*Caja Ferroviaria del Estado*; CFE), which would provide subsidies for the improvement and construction of railways and the acquisition of new rolling stock.<sup>159</sup> The dictatorship explicitly acknowledged that the new framework aimed to help citizens who used the railways for transport, and not investors. The preamble to the decree stated that

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<sup>157</sup> See AHF, P/136/296-P/136/303; *Gaceta de Madrid*, 13/7/1924, pp. 298-317.

<sup>158</sup> *Gaceta de Madrid*, 13/7/1924, p. 305.

<sup>159</sup> *Gaceta de Madrid*, 13/7/1924, p. 305. See also Comín Comín *et al.*, *150 años de ... ferrocarriles españoles*, vol. 1, p. 294.

‘Clearly, the new railway regime cannot turn a ruinous business into a good one; all that can be hoped for is that state intervention will improve services and arrange operations and construction works that concession holders cannot undertake by themselves’.<sup>160</sup> The ‘shared’ interests for which the dictatorship was working with these reforms were those of the regenerationist civil society mobilisations that underpinned agitation for transport infrastructure development through petitions, public assemblies and press campaigns. Although companies’ rhetoric presented them as falling under the umbrella of these shared interests, the actual application of this concept excluded their desires.

The legislation established transitional arrangements for the enforcement of this new regime. Companies would be given a ‘transitional phase’ lasting around three months, in which they would have to decide whether to apply for inclusion in the new framework, and supply information about the state of their finances to the CSFC.<sup>161</sup> They would then enter a ‘provisional phase’, supposed to last around two years, during which the CSFC would continue to gather data before proposing its formulae for setting fares for each company in the ‘definitive phase’, to ensure companies’ costs were covered without excessive profits being accrued.<sup>162</sup> In the event, the dictatorship delayed the imposition of the definitive phase from late 1926 until early 1929. This measure was designed to resist pressure from companies to raise fares, and instead promised increased support from the CFE. Come 1929, negotiations between the government and the railway companies had still not borne

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<sup>160</sup> *Gaceta de Madrid*, 13/7/1924, p. 298.

<sup>161</sup> *Gaceta de Madrid*, 13/7/1924, pp. 307-309; Comín Comín *et al.*, *150 años de ... ferrocarriles españoles*, vol. 1, p. 298.

<sup>162</sup> *Gaceta de Madrid*, 13/7/1924, pp. 307-309; Comín Comín *et al.*, *150 años de ... ferrocarriles españoles*, vol. 1, p. 299.

fruit. Although talks continued throughout the year, the ‘definitive’ form of the CSFC’s fare-setting powers did not come into force under Primo de Rivera.<sup>163</sup>

Despite the CSFC’s taking submissions from all parties concerned, the companies’ representatives declared their lack of confidence in ‘the general principles’ of the plan, alleging that state auditing of companies’ finances and new regulations on how these could be organised provided insufficient guarantees for funds previously invested in Spain’s railways. Furthermore, the railway companies and their backers argued that taking control of the industry’s finances in this way was an excessive risk at a time when the state’s income was lower than its expenditure.<sup>164</sup> Despite the opportunity to contribute to policy-making through the CSFC, the companies were unable to secure the outcome they desired: continued autonomy and the ability to raise fares as they saw fit.<sup>165</sup> Having failed achieve this goal, the companies continued to view the ‘new regime’ as ill-advised and as having been imposed despite their objections, setting the tone for relations between companies and the government for the rest of the decade.<sup>166</sup>

While joining the new framework was optional, companies outside it would no longer have access to state support.<sup>167</sup> Government aid for the purchase of new rolling stock, for example, would henceforth be provided through the CFE only to those companies signed up to the new framework.<sup>168</sup> Companies outside the framework would not be

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<sup>163</sup> Comín Comín *et al.*, *150 años de ... ferrocarriles españoles*, vol. 1, p. 299.

<sup>164</sup> AHF, P/144/304, ‘El nuevo régimen ferroviario juzgado por las empresas’, cutting from *La Época*, 21/6/1924.

<sup>165</sup> See e.g. AHF, P/126/260 ‘Solicitudes dirigidas por los bancos de Madrid, Barcelona y Bilbao y la Asociación de bancos y banqueros del Norte de España, al Presidente del DM para que no se priva a las compañías Ferrovias de los recursos económicos precisos’; P/136/294 ‘Notas sobre el plan que debe seguirse por la Delegación Ferroviaria en el Consejo, con motivo de la discusión del proyecto del nuevo Régimen Ferroviario (March 1924)

<sup>166</sup> See e.g. AHF, P/144/312\_1, ‘Informe sobre el consejo de administración...’; P/144/304, ‘El nuevo régimen ferroviario juzgado por las empresas’, cutting from *La Época*, 21/6/1924.

<sup>167</sup> AHF, P/196/349\_5, ‘Índice de asuntos a tratar en el Consejo del día 21 de julio de 1924’, pp. 1-2.

<sup>168</sup> *Gaceta de Madrid*, 13/7/1924, p. 195.



permitted to increase their fares, while increases of up to fifteen percent per year could be permitted to companies within it.<sup>169</sup> Within MZA, the idea of joining the new framework caused considerable concern, principally because of the loss of financial autonomy that this implied.<sup>170</sup> The company's senior management expressed frustration with the fact that MZA would 'lose the exclusive right to fare revenue [and] the freedom to do as it will with surplus funds', would not be able freely to set its fares, and would be audited by the government. However, MZA's managers concluded that signing up for the new rules would be necessary as the company could not survive without state aid.<sup>171</sup> They considered it 'a dream' to think that it could support itself with only the maximum legal fare increases for companies outside the new framework, let alone afford planned upgrades to the permanent way. As Comín Comín *et al.* observe, the dictatorship 'left the companies with very little option'.<sup>172</sup>

Tellingly, another reason offered for doing so was that 'we cannot expect that the Decree will change in its essence when the Directorate disappears'.<sup>173</sup> The company observed that the new framework imposed by the Primo dictatorship was 'no more than a variation on the plans proposed by [Antonio] Maura and [Manuel] Argüelles' earlier in the 1920s, meaning it seemed improbable that a future constitutional government would develop a substantively different solution.<sup>174</sup> The solution was to accept the conditions offered in 1924, and hope they would be modified 'if the

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<sup>169</sup> Comín Comín *et al.*, *150 años de ... ferrocarriles españoles*, vol. 1, p. 298.

<sup>170</sup> AHF, P/196/349\_5, 'Índice de asuntos a tratar en el Consejo del día 21 de julio de 1924', pp. 1-2.

<sup>171</sup> AHF, P/196/349\_5, 'Índice de asuntos a tratar en el Consejo del día 21 de julio de 1924', p. 2.

<sup>172</sup> Comín Comín *et al.*, *150 años de ... ferrocarriles españoles*, vol. 1, p. 298.

<sup>173</sup> AHF, P/196/349\_5, 'Índice de asuntos a tratar en el Consejo del día 21 de julio de 1924', p. 2.

<sup>174</sup> AHF, P/196/349\_5, 'Índice de asuntos a tratar en el Consejo del día 21 de julio de 1924', p. 2. See also Artola *et al.*, *Los ferrocarriles en España, 1844-1943. I.*, pp. 413-422.

consequences are very bad'.<sup>175</sup> This attitude conflicted with the 'public transcript' that the corporatist and regenerationist policy agenda favoured by the dictatorship forced stakeholders in the 'railway problem' adopt.<sup>176</sup> Whereas this agenda emphasised cooperation between the various *fuerzas vivas* of Spanish society, MZA decided to accept solutions proposed on this basis only in bad faith, hoping they would fail and lead to amendments more compatible with the company's interests. Although not corrupt in the strictest sense, this attitude does suggest the kind of lack of integrity that Rose and Heywood argue can lead to poorer policy outcomes and damage citizens' trust in policy processes.<sup>177</sup>

The railway companies' reaction to this imposition of policy solutions that had previously been proposed but that had failed to prosper also demonstrates the difference between the companies' view of the new regime and that of citizens who *used* the railways. In contrast to investors and company directors, citizens who approached transport infrastructure primarily as a utility could understand their interests to be served by the new government's taking greater control of companies' finances. Even if this approach was not fundamentally different from proposals that had appeared under the Restoration, the Military Directorate had successfully turned them into statute. The Spanish state could now control the railway network's finances in accordance with 'the national interest', which these citizens understood to coincide with their own. Thus, the continuity between the Primo regime and Restoration-era policy proposals did not always represent a failure of 'anti-politics';

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<sup>175</sup> AHF, P/196/349\_5, 'Índice de asuntos a tratar en el Consejo del día 21 de julio de 1924', p. 2. On previous attempts by the Spanish state to exert greater control over railway companies' finances, see Comín Comín *et al.*, *150 años de ... ferrocarriles españoles*, vol. 1, pp. 281-292.

<sup>176</sup> A 'public transcript' refers to the openly acknowledged discourses and practices of power relations in a given society, that different actors are expected to reproduce. See Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*.

<sup>177</sup> Rose and Heywood, 'Political Science Approaches to Integrity and Corruption'.

sometimes, where the new regime managed to pass legislation that had not progressed under previous governments, this could appear to be a success.

Companies, on the other hand, engaged in a longer-term strategy of appearing to accept the reforms while hoping for subsequent changes. Despite the MZA's private deliberations showing that its investors' private interests did not align with a *primorriverista* conception of national interests, the company continued to restate its commitment to 'patriotism and harmony' in pursuing a solution to the crisis.<sup>178</sup>

The ideological context of the dictatorship required companies to speak the language of patriotism, eliding the fact that their primary obligation was to produce a return on their shareholders' investments, and not to serve the national good as defined by the government. Although senior figures in the companies were candid about this in private, their public pronouncements emphasised cooperation with the dictatorship and thus strengthened the cultural and ideological grip of a corporatist, regenerationist solutions to national ailments.

That the companies' interests differed from other CSFC members' view of 'the national good' was confirmed over the course of the 'provisional period' of the new framework. The legal status of railway companies' financial reserves was a point of particular disagreement.<sup>179</sup> While companies argued they should be free to access and use reserves built up prior to the start of the 'new railway regime' as they saw fit, the representatives of rural railway users believed these reserves should form part of the 'consortium' now established between the companies and the state.<sup>180</sup>

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<sup>178</sup> AHF, P/197/359, 'Instancia de ingreso en el nuevo régimen ferroviario', p. 3.

<sup>179</sup> See AHF, P/203/387, P/203/389, P/203/390.

<sup>180</sup> AHF, P/203/389\_6, MZA, Caminos de Hierro del Norte and Ferrocarriles Andaluces to Primo de Rivera, 'Instancia elevada al Directorio'; P/203/389\_9, Mariano Matesanz and Andrés Garrido, *Las "reservas" ferroviarias* (Madrid, 1925).

Two CSFC representatives of agricultural railway users, Mariano Matesanz and Andrés Garrido, published a pamphlet on the subject in 1925 in which they commenced their argument by suggesting that ‘agricultural interests’ were ‘the primary interests of the nation’, and ‘the foundation on which the national economy rests’. In doing so, they exemplified the tendency for the imprecise concept of ‘the national interest’ to be interpreted as the interests of the person speaking. Having established themselves as qualified to speak for the ‘national interest’, they denounced ‘financiers’ defending ‘what they call “their reserves”’, arguing that these ought to belong to the nation in repayment of *anticipos* received prior to 1923.<sup>181</sup> According to a petition directed by the authors to Primo de Rivera, the ‘dreadful service’ that MZA and *Caminos de Hierro del Norte* (the two largest railway companies in the country) had provided during the previous decade was a violation of their concessions that could have been remedied using any surplus funds, making the existence of reserves illegitimate and opposed to the national interest.<sup>182</sup> They argued, therefore, that the state should take control of the companies’ financial reserves if a company choosing to sign up to the new framework was to be at all meaningful.<sup>183</sup>

The railway companies, on the other hand, protested that to interpret the new framework in such a way as to take away their ability to use as they saw fit the reserves that they had accumulated prior to 1924 would be to alter the conditions under which they had agreed to be subject to these rules.<sup>184</sup> They also pointed out that the existence of financial reserves was necessary in order to guarantee the

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<sup>181</sup> AHF, P/203/389\_9, Matesanz and Garrido, *Las “reservas” ferroviarias*, pp. 3-5.

<sup>182</sup> AHF, P/203/389\_9, Matesanz and Garrido, *Las “reservas” ferroviarias*, p. 12.

<sup>183</sup> AHF, P/203/389\_9, Matesanz and Garrido, *Las “reservas” ferroviarias*, p. 17.

<sup>184</sup> AHF, P/203/389\_6, MZA, Caminos de Hierro del Norte and Ferrocarriles Andaluces to Primo de Rivera, ‘Instancia elevada al Directorio’; AHF, P/203/389\_6, Norte to Primo de Rivera, 18/3/1925.

normal functioning of their services in the case of poor financial results in any given year, and that they thus protected the railways' customers.<sup>185</sup> The question of reserves was thus a proxy for debates about the relative importance of rights to private property when set against the 'national interest'. Moreover, it highlighted how notions of 'the national interest' and 'rectitude', on which Primo based his initial appeal to the nation, were so nebulous that they could be adopted and deployed by those defending fundamentally contradictory interests.

In contrast to the rhetoric of collaboration in the national interest, the debate around companies' reserves was bitterly fought. Matesanz and Garrido's pamphlet was provocatively titled *Railway 'Reserves'*, suggesting that the very existence of the companies' financial reserves was laughable.<sup>186</sup> Meanwhile, supporters of the railway companies engaged in personal attacks on Matesanz. The Madrid-based newspaper *El Tiempo* suggested that Matesanz might realise he was in the wrong, but was nonetheless holding fast to 'the selfish obstinacy of his private ends'.<sup>187</sup> The CSFC agricultural representatives were, it suggested, working against 'the interests of the nation' by distracting attention from more pressing matters.

Eventually, the CSFC determined that the companies should continue to enjoy access to their reserves, but without the option of using them to pay dividends to shareholders; that the state could intervene in their administration; and that they should be held in such a way as to be easily liquidated.<sup>188</sup> Two years later, the dictatorship passed new legislation allowing the railway companies to constitute new reserves that *could* be used to pay dividends.<sup>189</sup> The significance of this dispute here

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<sup>185</sup> AHF, P/203/389\_3, 'Las reservas económicas de las compañías de ferrocarriles', p. 8.

<sup>186</sup> AHF, P/203/389\_9, Matesanz and Garrido, *Las "reservas" ferroviarias*.

<sup>187</sup> AHF, P/203/387, *El Tiempo*, 9/5/1925, p. 1.

<sup>188</sup> AHF, P/203/390, document 4, 'Resolución sobre las reservas'; Comín Comín *et al.*, *150 años de ... ferrocarriles españoles*, vol. 1, p. 299.

<sup>189</sup> Comín Comín *et al.*, *150 años de ... ferrocarriles españoles*, vol. 1, p. 299.

lies not in this solution—which satisfied neither party—but in the bitterness with which the details of the regenerationist policy agenda of modernising and reforming Spain’s transport infrastructure were contested, for all the pretensions of promoting shared national interests. Primo de Rivera’s dictatorship embraced this policy agenda and attempted to build coalitions of supposedly apolitical support around it. However, a failure meaningfully to engage with the contradictions between the interests of private capital on the one hand, and the public good as defined by this policy agenda on the other, meant that attempts at reform could not result in the ‘harmony’ that the dictatorship claimed to pursue.

As the end of the ‘provisional’ phase of the new framework approached at the end of 1928, the tensions between large railway companies and the government around reform reached a new crescendo. MZA and Norte undertook intense action to avoid the imposition of the ‘definitive phase’.<sup>190</sup> A report prepared for MZA’s board of directors in May suggested that companies could do nothing but ‘await and fear the definitive period’, given that the dictatorship appeared determined to further reduce the funds provided to railway companies, to demand higher repayments of government loans, and to continue to oppose further increases in fares.<sup>191</sup> The dictatorship’s programme of improving Spain’s transport infrastructure from the point of view of the citizens using it, and supporting ‘the national interest’ by attempting to reduce the quantity of government funding required to keep the railways solvent, continued to threaten the interests of large railway companies’ shareholders. Although they had previously declared themselves willing to work in harmony with other stakeholders, the companies never made peace with the

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<sup>190</sup> See AHF, P/214/511; P/214/527-P/214/529; P/214/531-P/214/533; P/214/537; P/214/539; P/217/541-P/217/543; Comín Comín *et al.*, *150 años de ... ferrocarriles españoles*, vol. 1, p. 299.

<sup>191</sup> AHF, P/214/511, R. Coderech, ‘Estudio sobre lo que es de esperar y temer al implantarse el período definitivo (liquidación de ejercicios, reservas, etc.) del Estatuto Ferroviario’, May 1928, pp. 1-2.

solutions adopted by a dictatorship following a regenerationist policy agenda for Spain's transport infrastructure.

Following the government's decision to delay the imposition of the 'definitive phase', January 1929 saw senior representatives of several large railway companies called to meetings at the Ministry of Development, where they were informed that the government wished to establish new regulations that would further reduce state funds for the railways, and provide the government with additional 'return on its investment'. The railway administrators present said that would 'study the proposals with the attention they deserve', emphasising their 'good will' and desire to 'reach a solution that conciliates the interests of the companies and those of the government'.<sup>192</sup> However, disagreements remained over the status of the companies' financial reserves built up prior to 1924. While the directors believed that the interest on these should be used to provide dividends to their shareholders, the Ministry argued that part of the interest should be paid into the CFE. After all, it argued, the state would not have to support construction to the same extent had the companies spent the money on improving the country's rail infrastructure.<sup>193</sup> The tension between the rights and interests of private capital on the one hand, and the government's desire to reform the railway sector in a way that supported the broader national economy on the other, could not be spirited away by the language of 'harmony' and 'good will'.

Throughout 1929, MZA and Norte made contingency plans based on a number of permutations of possible government actions, and drafted proposed regulations of

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<sup>192</sup> AHF, P/214/532, 'Reunión celebrada con el Sr. Ministro de Fomento por los Sres. Bauer, Marqués de Alonso Martínez, Marqués de Urquijo, Valenciano, Maristany y Boix el 28 de enero de 1929 a las 11<sup>h</sup> de la mañana', pp. 1-3.

<sup>193</sup> AHF, P/214/532, 'Reunión celebrada con el Sr. Ministro de Fomento por los Sres. Bauer, Marqués de Alonso Martínez, Marqués de Urquijo, Valenciano, Maristany y Boix el 28 de enero de 1929 a las 11<sup>h</sup> de la mañana', pp. 4-5.

their own.<sup>194</sup> During the autumn, as the imposition of the ‘definitive period’ again approached, shareholders in the companies coordinated a press, petitioning and lobbying campaign against further state intervention in the companies’ finances.<sup>195</sup> In a letter to Alfredo Bauer, chair of MZA’s board of directors, a group of shareholders stated their intention to send a petition to Primo de Rivera with the aim of ending ‘the disastrous and demoralising effect that various official notes regarding the legal framework [proposed by the government] is having on railway share prices’, and to hold assemblies in Madrid, Bilbao and ‘other first-rate financial centres’ to support this petition.<sup>196</sup> They presented their position as primarily concerned with maintaining the legislation of the Military Directorate, passed in 1924, despite the companies’ reticence about that framework at the time. In petitions to Primo de Rivera, numerous shareholders argued that the new framework constituted ‘a solemn contract’ that could not be altered unilaterally.<sup>197</sup> The shareholders implied that a government conducting itself with integrity would not press on with the proposals they opposed. They thus used the ideal of integrity in government to defend their private, class-based interests, thus undermining the dictatorship’s claims to have transcended ‘politics’. The capacious language of anti-politics and patriotism could easily be adopted by a range of groups to defend their own class-based interests, and it should not be surprising if the elite interests represented by shareholders believed that the reactionary Primo regime could be persuaded to support them.

Just like assemblies of regenerationist-minded citizens calling for transport infrastructure development, the gatherings organised by shareholders in Bilbao,

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<sup>194</sup> AHF, P/214/527-P/214/529; P/214/531; P/214/537; P/214/539.

<sup>195</sup> AHF, P/217/541.

<sup>196</sup> AHF, P/217/541, ‘Instancia que los accionistas de Bilbao de Norte y M.Z.A. elevan al Ministro de Fomento’, letter from various shareholders to chair of the board of directors of MZA, 28/10/1929.

<sup>197</sup> AHF, P/217/541, ‘Instancia que los accionistas del M.Z.A. hicieron al Presidente de la Compañía [sic] sobre el proyecto de gobierno’, various petitions from shareholders to Primo de Rivera.



Madrid and Barcelona attracted the attention of the national press.<sup>198</sup> By holding these meetings, they secured the diffusion of their views in newspapers including *El Debate*, normally a vocal supporter of the regime.<sup>199</sup> *La Vanguardia* accused the government of denying shareholders their rights and committing the very kinds of abuses against which it was supposed to protect them.<sup>200</sup> Forms of mobilisation outside political parties such as petitioning and assemblies were thus used by citizens who desired greater government intervention in transport infrastructure, and those whose interests were better served by the government failing to carry out its plans. Both claimed to want the best for Spain as a whole and used similar, allegedly apolitical, methods and messages in this pursuit. However, such mobilisation clearly responded to the private interests of those involved, and continued political disputes outside the structures of the former political parties. The extensive use of such means of engaging with government policy shows its familiarity to civil society mobilisations of different persuasions in Spain during this period, and that these embedded modes of political action remained useful throughout the dictatorship.

The dispute culminated in a series of high-stakes meetings between company executives and the Count of Guadalhorce during January 1930, during which MZA and Norte presented proposals for a special framework to apply specifically to them, as the largest railway companies in the country.<sup>201</sup> In a thinly veiled threat to the national economy, they declared themselves confident that the Minister of *Fomento*, ‘whose preoccupation is not to harm interests and to procure for the railway

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<sup>198</sup> AHF, P/217/541, ‘Recortes de prensa sobre la campaña de los accionistas y obligacionistas contra el proyecto de gobierno’.

<sup>199</sup> AHF, P/217/541, ‘Recortes de prensa’, cutting from *El Debate*.

<sup>200</sup> AHF, P/217/541, ‘Recortes de prensa’, cutting from *La Vanguardia*, 31/12/1929.

<sup>201</sup> AHF, P/217/539; P/217/543, ‘Proyecto de régimen especial para las compañías del Norte y M.Z.A.’ and varied correspondence relating to meetings with Guadalhorce and Ministry of *Fomento* functionaries.

companies all the means and credit necessary for the better completion of their task, which is so intimately linked to the prosperity of the general interest', would accept their proposal.<sup>202</sup> Such a formulation only made it clearer that stakeholders in the 'railway problem' operated with a conception of 'the general interest' that was synonymous with their own class interests, even under a regime that claimed to desire the replacement of class politics with pure patriotism. Regenerationist and 'anti-political' policy agendas could not alter the fundamentally partial and political nature of such questions. Guadalhorce gave the companies little reason to expect that their desires would prevail—on 26 January 1930, the MZA's directors made apparently panicked, last-ditch plans to persuade the Minister of 'the absolute impossibility of applying the [government's] suggested framework'—, but the fall of the dictatorship on 28 January prevented the legislation from being introduced.<sup>203</sup> Responding with relief to this turn of events, Eduardo Maristany, General Director of MZA, commented in a letter the next day that 'unstable governments were the greatest guarantee for citizens'—here referring implicitly to the small number of citizens who held shares in railways and thus shared Maristany's set of class interests.<sup>204</sup> Primo's coup aimed, in part, to protect the interests of Spain's capitalist classes against left-wing agitation, and his regime's economic practice showed a marked tendency to protect its allies in big business.<sup>205</sup> Even so, the support of large business concerns could not be taken for granted, as demonstrated by the relief of railway executives at the fall of the dictatorship and the suspension of its mild railway reforms.

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<sup>202</sup> AHF, P/217/543, commentary on government and company proposals, pp. 12-13.

<sup>203</sup> AHF, P/217/543, varied correspondence, especially Maristany (?) to Lisle, 26/1/1930.

<sup>204</sup> AHF, P/217/543, Maristany to Lisle, 29/1/1930.

<sup>205</sup> Ben-Ami, *Fascism from Above*, pp. 240-250.

*Primorriverista* policy-making suggested that it was possible to create ‘harmony’ between different stakeholders in the ‘railway problem’, establishing solutions that would serve ‘the national interest’ and thus enjoy widespread support’. However, this approach to implementing transport infrastructure reform failed to acknowledge that the goal and obligation of the private companies involved was not to serve Spain’s national interest, but to serve the class interests of their shareholders, regardless of what the government considered to serve the good of the nation as a whole. Thus, while the September 1923 coup was made in part to protect capitalist interests against left-wing agitation, the regenerationist suspicion of companies relying on state funding for little appreciable benefit set the new regime against these interests in certain settings.

The capacious and malleable language of ‘harmony’, ‘concord’ and ‘the general interest’ was useful to the government, to the railways’ customers and to the companies. The imprecise values of patriotism and the national good could be used to engage in precisely the kind of class politics that Primo’s regime claimed to abhor, without actually deploying the language of class politics. Railway companies could use these discourses to legitimise their pursuing the private interests of shareholders, which agriculturalists could present measures that would increase their incomes as representing the good of the nation. For the government, pursuing corporatist solutions drew on and contributed to the cultural predominance of the conceit—usefully deployed by a range of class interests—that Spain’s multiple crises could be resolved by a ‘patriotic’ military regime, in contrast to the ineffectual and venal governments of the Restoration. Such notions were not unique to Spain, and indeed underlay ideological projects for new forms economic organisation in inter-war Europe that would—in theory if not in practice—pursue a ‘third way’ between

capitalism and socialism, perhaps most notably in Fascist Italy.<sup>206</sup> In the case of the Primo regime's dealing with Spanish railway companies, corporatist ideas also made it possible for the government to avoid engaging seriously with the fact that protecting private property sometimes ran counter to the interests of both state finances and the economic wellbeing of ordinary Spaniards, such as those rural citizens who wished to see railway services reformed, improved and made cheaper in order to export their produce. The notion of generally increasing prosperity for the benefit of all not only functioned as a notional compensation for the loss of political freedoms, but also obscured the continued pursuit of class interests in debates around how the accrual of national wealth should be organised and regulated. Primo's regime adopted the policy agenda of these developmentalist civil society mobilisations, meaning a commitment to stronger government intervention in the railway sector. As Maristany's response to Primo's resignation shows, however, this agenda was contested, and political instability could benefit the railway companies if it preserved their freedom of action. 'Harmony' between different stakeholders and a strong government may have sounded attractive, but railway reform remained subject to intense political, albeit not party-political, struggle.

## **Conclusion**

The modernising facet of regenerationist thought made economic development through the improvement of the country's transport infrastructure a well-established policy agenda in 1920s Spain. This policy agenda co-existed comfortably with the populist and anti-*caciquil* strains of regenerationism. If infrastructure improvement

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<sup>206</sup> See Blinkhorn, *Mussolini and Fascist Italy*, pp. 39-49; Whittam, *Fascist Italy*, pp. 60-66; Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism*, pp. 72-78; Duggan, *Fascist Voices*, pp. 238-240; Stolzi, 'Corporatism and Neo-Corporatism'; Salvati, 'The Long History of Corporatism'; Schmitter, 'Still the Century of Corporatism?'; Hawkins, 'Corporatism and Third Way Discourses'; Vinen, *A History in Fragments*, pp. 197-199; Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes*, pp. 113-115; Mazower, *Dark Continent*, pp. 28-31.

projects did not go ahead or existing infrastructure appeared to be poorly managed, it was possible to blame corrupt and ineffectual politicians, or profiteering railway companies that did not prioritise the needs of rural communities. Civil society mobilisations coalesced around the defence of certain projects, programmes and agendas that citizens felt would promote the economic interests of their town, district or region.

This modernising, regenerationist and often populist policy agenda was highly compatible with the ideological stance set out by Primo de Rivera at the start of his dictatorship. If the combination of venality and inefficiency associated with Restoration political elites were to blame for the continued poor state of transport infrastructure in some regions, or the lack of rolling stock available for some rural railway stations, then it stood to reason to hope that the iron surgeon would remove the obstacles to progress for such policy agendas. This hope was apparent in the extensive petitioning directed to the dictatorship. Local civil society mobilisations complained of having had their interests ignored by previous governments, and stated their trust that a government that claimed to have the interests of the nation at heart would implement their preferred programmes. Indeed, although the vast majority of projects in question aimed to support economic prosperity for a single locality or region, their supporters commonly emphasised the contribution they would make to national wealth, and sometimes to Spain's international prestige, thus obscuring the pursuit of class politics behind a rhetoric of patriotically attempting to secure a collective, national good. This also aligned comfortably with the *primorriverista* trope of 'national reconstitution'; economic development was a crucial aspect of reversing perceived national decline, and would be underpinned by improved infrastructure. Claiming to have the *national* interest at heart also gave the

appearance of subscribing to unitary Spanish nationalism and of having a higher concern than one's personal profit, thus distancing petitioners from *caciquil* corruption.

The internal dynamics of such mobilisations created relationships between citizens, the press and the government driven by the regenerationist policy agenda of transport infrastructure development. Newspapers that subscribed to this agenda both amplified citizens' campaigns for new roads and railways, while also inciting citizens to become more involved. Press campaigns for investment in transport infrastructure thus reproduced the class structures of policy-making implicit in petitions from middle-class professionals examined in Chapter One of this thesis. Borugeois regional *fuerzas vivas* could, through the columns of local newspapers, call loudly for government action to support the 'aspirations' of their communities and regions, though the papers also provided a space where the government's response could be reproduced and communicated to citizens. Technical and administrative difficulties and finite capacity for state action meant that petitions were not always successful, and many campaigns for improved transport infrastructure did not enjoy success during the period of the Primo dictatorship. Even so, the existence of mobilisations supporting infrastructure development provided the dictatorship with propaganda opportunities; indeed, the interest of regional press outlets in long-planned projects guaranteed high-profile coverage of official state ceremonial surrounding the opening of new infrastructure.

However, appeals to shared interests and national economic prosperity obscured the pursuit of particular class and local interests in citizens' dealings with the state.<sup>207</sup>

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<sup>207</sup> On the continuation of corrupt and clientelistic practices under Primo de Rivera, see Preston, *A People Betrayed*, pp. 157-225; Ben-Ami, *Fascism from Above*, pp. 245-248; Tamames, *Ni Mussolini ni Franco*, pp. 324-327; Pedro Martínez Gómez, *La dictadura de Primo de Rivera en Almería*, pp. 83-

The supporters of this policy agenda used national economic development as an argument for infrastructure works that they considered would benefit them, their businesses or their regions. This pattern suggests both a continued perception that securing a ‘political friend’ for these schemes would be an important factor in their success and a persistent lack of trust in provincial and local state bodies. Corporatist and ‘anti-political’ policy discussions in fact remained deeply political, as demonstrated by conflicts between different villages, districts and provinces over the construction of roads and railways, in which the dictatorship sometimes felt the need to intervene using *notas oficiosas* denouncing those pursuing their own ends to the detriment of collective progress.

The relationship between the state and private companies involved in infrastructure development or reform, especially but not only those that operated Spain’s railways, was particularly instructive in demonstrating the tension present in the declared desire of government and stakeholders to arrive at harmonious solutions that served the national interest. Private companies were motivated not by patriotism but by the requirement to protect the class and financial interests of their shareholders.<sup>208</sup>

These interests were inevitably directly opposed to the interests of other Spanish citizens, from residents of Barcelona who suffered disruption to their city centre and businesses during the construction of the metro, to agriculturalists who supported far greater state intervention in the finances of railway companies. Bitter disputes continued beneath the veneer of corporatist policy-making institutions, as all of these

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86, 145-146, 347. In his study of Valladolid under the dictatorship, Palomares Ibáñez argues that the institutions of the dictatorship, especially the *Somatén* and the UP, provided ‘new politicians for a new *caciquismo*’; Palomares Ibáñez, *Nuevos políticos para un nuevo caciquismo*. On the utility of thinking about potentially dishonest practices through the lens of a lack of integrity rather than outright corruption, see Rose and Heywood, ‘Political Science Approaches to Integrity and Corruption’.

<sup>208</sup> On a similar conflict between the notion of a Fascist ‘third way’ in Italy, and the fact that many of the Mussolini dictatorship’s interventions in the economy ultimately favoured big business over labour, see e.g. Blinkhorn, *Mussolini and Fascist Italy*, pp. 40-49.

groups defended their class interests, while the language of national prosperity obscured class divisions and served to legitimise the lack of political freedom under the dictatorship.

Despite the fact that the rhetoric of transport infrastructure in the national interest obscured a more conflictive and self-serving reality, still steeped in class politics, the Spanish state's engagement with this policy agenda under Primo de Rivera remains significant in understanding the political, cultural and social dynamics of the period. The constant reproduction by the government, private citizens, companies and regional *fuerzas vivas* of the idea that all interests could be accommodated under a supposedly shared national interest, mediated by state institutions, granted significant cultural power to corporatist and 'anti-political' approaches to economic development and infrastructure improvement. The policy agenda was consolidated as a common reference point in 1920s Spain, support for which was a significant component of good, 'patriotic' citizenship. This understanding of good citizenship co-existed with and complemented attempts to control political mobilisation by 'nationalising the masses', and provided reasons to support or accept an authoritarian state that were more tangible than indoctrination using national symbols. Moreover, the common ground between this policy agenda and the dictatorship's regenerationist and 'anti-political' rhetoric made the new regime appear to be one that would more effectively cater to the interests of regional, developmentalist *fuerzas vivas*, drawing citizens involved in mobilisations around these policy positions more closely into *primorriverista* networks of ideological power. As the final empirical chapter of this thesis will show, such interactions provided the dictatorship with a longer-term political project that it lacked in September 1923.



## Chapter Three

# Imagining a primorriverista utopia through rural development: The Confederación Sindical Hidrográfica del Ebro

One of the most ambitious and the longest-lived of Primo de Rivera's infrastructure reforms was the creation of the 'Syndical Hydrographic Confederations' (*Confederaciones Sindicales Hidrográficas*; CSHs). The powers and nature of these organisations was set out in a Royal Decree of 5 March 1926.<sup>1</sup> They were to be responsible for achieving 'the maximum, intense exploitation of hydrological resources' through 'rigorous, methodical and ordered processes that have not been followed before now'.<sup>2</sup> This included more than just making water available for year-round irrigation; it also required the development of rivers as a source of hydroelectric power and as navigable routes. Their areas of action included reforestation campaigns, public health services, and experimentation and education in novel agricultural techniques.<sup>3</sup>

The Confederations were to be funded with an annual subsidy from the central government budget and rates paid by users of irrigation infrastructure and river transport.<sup>4</sup> They would be self-governing, possessing an Assembly comprising representatives of the central government; members of regional chambers of commerce, agriculture, and industry; and members elected by the users of irrigation schemes 'confederated' in the organisation. The Assembly would elect a Governing

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<sup>1</sup> *Gaceta de Madrid*, 6/3/1926, pp. 1248-1253.

<sup>2</sup> *Gaceta de Madrid*, 6/3/1926, p. 1248.

<sup>3</sup> See *Confederación Sindical Hidrográfica del Ebro* [hereafter *CSHE*] 1.5 (November 1927), pp. 10-11; 1.6 (December 1927), pp. 1-4; 2.10 (April 1928), pp. 1-3; 2.14 (August 1928).

<sup>4</sup> *Gaceta de Madrid*, 6/3/1926, p. 1252.

Board, which in turn would appoint two Technical Committees: one for construction projects, and one for the management of schemes already completed.<sup>5</sup> A Technical Director, responsible for coordinating each Confederation's work, would be appointed directly by the Minister of Development.<sup>6</sup> The first CSH established, by a further Royal Decree of 5 March 1926, was to cover the basin of the river Ebro (the *Confederación Sindical Hidrográfica del Ebro*; CSHE).<sup>7</sup>

Over the following three years, CSHs were established in the Duero, Segura and Guadalquivir river basins, and another in the eastern Pyrenees.<sup>8</sup> The CSHE became the only Confederation to undertake noteworthy practical works prior to Primo's resignation.<sup>9</sup> In this short period, it enjoyed relative success in stimulating irrigation infrastructure construction.<sup>10</sup> Four dams already under construction—the Ardisa, Gallipuéen, Las Navas and Moneva dams—were completed during the dictatorship, while others were well advanced by January 1930 and were completed under the Second Republic, including the Pena, Cueva Foradada, Santa María de Belsué, Barasona and Santolea reservoirs.<sup>11</sup> Whereas the Spanish state spent 162 million pesetas between 1902 and 1926 on improving irrigation in Aragon and so brought

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<sup>5</sup> *Gaceta de Madrid*, 6/3/1926, p. 1251.

<sup>6</sup> *Gaceta de Madrid*, 6/3/1926, pp. 1251-1252.

<sup>7</sup> *Gaceta de Madrid*, 6/3/1926, pp. 1253-1255.

<sup>8</sup> *Gaceta de Madrid*, 23/6/1927, pp. 1722-1724; 25/9/1927, pp. 1693-1694; 3/1/1928, pp. 43-62; 7/1/1928, pp. 210-226; 23/3/1929, pp. 1101-1106; 19/10/1929, pp. 362-379; 8/11/1929, pp. 786-808;

<sup>9</sup> Vicente Pinilla, 'The Development of Irrigated Agriculture in Twentieth-Century Spain': A Case Study of the Ebro Basin, *The Agricultural History Review* 54.1 (2006), pp. 122-141; Swyngedouw, *Liquid Power*, pp. 88-93; González Calleja, *Modernización autoritaria*, pp. 222-223; Ben-Ami, *Fascism from Above*, pp. 253-254.

<sup>10</sup> See e.g. Fernández Clemente, *Gente de orden*, vol. 3: La economía, pp. 121-141; Mariano Barrera Giménez, *Confederación Hidrográfica del Ebro: 1926-2001. Apuntes para una historia* (Zaragoza, 2007), pp. 221-241.

<sup>11</sup> Fernández Clemente, *Gente de Orden*, vol. 3, pp. 127-128; Josefina Lerma Loscos, *La construcción de los pantanos de Ecuriza y Cueva Foradada: Ese frenesí de lo imposible* (Andorra, 2009), pp. 107-122.

16,000 hectares under irrigation for the first time, the CSHE spent 166 million pesetas between 1926 and 1930 and extended irrigation to 125,000 hectares.<sup>12</sup>

However, like the Mussolini regime's plans for the reclamation of the Pontine marshes (and, later and in a more extreme, genocidal form, Nazi colonisation projects in the Pripet marshes), the Hydrographic Confederations were shaped by a broader ideological project.<sup>13</sup> In addition to its economic importance, the CSHE is thus also significant in understanding the formation of the networks of power that underpinned Primo de Rivera's regime. The policy was adopted following the formation of the Civil Directorate in December 1925, and was based on proposals from civil society organisations in Aragon, demonstrating how the Primo regime allowed new social sectors to gain access to influence over policy-making. The ideological nexus between developmentalist civil society organisations and the military authoritarians of the central government also gave rise to a long-term vision for future social relations in the areas under the Confederations' supervision. This chapter shows how the *Confederaciones Hidrográficas* policy allowed the articulation of how an 'anti-political' Spanish society should work. It reveals the extent to which infrastructure development under Primo de Rivera was not merely an economic project, but also a profoundly political attempt to reshape Spain's national community along corporatist lines.

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<sup>12</sup> Fernández Clemente, *Gente de Orden*, vol. 3, p. 135.

<sup>13</sup> On reclamation projects in the Pontine marshes, see Caprotti, 'Destructive Creation'; 'Malaria and Technological Networks'; Frandsen, "The War that We Prefer"; Stewart-Steinberg, 'Grounds for Reclamation'; Whittam, *Fascist Italy*, pp. 62, 87; . On the genocidal colonisation of the Pripet marshes under the Nazi occupation of Poland, see David Blackbourn, *The Conquest of Nature: Water, Landscape, and the Making of Modern Germany* (London, 2006), pp. 239-296.

## Zaragoza civil society and the origins of the Hydrographic Confederations

The concept on which the Confederations were based—establishing regional bodies to oversee the ‘conquest’ and ‘integral exploitation’ of a river system—had its roots in Aragonese civil society organisations.<sup>14</sup> In the first of a series of lectures organised by the Zaragoza Academy of Sciences and published in 1921 on ‘initiatives for Aragon’s industrial future’, Academy member and agricultural engineer José Cruz Lapazarán observed that the increasing demand for foodstuffs in Spain would require an expansion of irrigated agriculture, echoing Joaquín Costa’s calls for a *política hidráulica* that would increase food production and improve the lives of rural Spanish citizens.<sup>15</sup> He argued that Aragon ‘should occupy pride of place in this aspiration’, given that the region produced high quantities of ‘produce of first-rate quality’. The expansion of irrigated areas was the ‘unanimous desire’ of Aragon, and he registered his dissatisfaction with the lack of a ‘permanent commission in favour of irrigation’ in the region. The mission of such a body would be ‘permanent activity to develop irrigation, through cultural action, so that [such projects] will not be

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<sup>14</sup> For instances of the language of ‘conquest’ and ‘integral exploitation’, both before and during Primo’s dictatorship, see e.g. *Aragón* II.9 (June 1926), pp. 137-139, 162-164; *CSHE* 1.1 (July 1927), pp. 1, 14-15; 1.2 (August 1927), p. 6; 1.6 (December 1927), p. 21; 2.11 (May 1928), p. 5; 2.13 (July 1928), pp. 3-4, 8; 2.14 (August 1928), p. 9; *Heraldo de Aragón*, 13/3/1926, p. 1; 20/3/1926, p. 1; Manuel Lorenzo Pardo, ‘Zaragoza y el Ebro: Horizonte de las posibilidades de Aragón’ in Academia de Ciencias Exactas, Físico-Químicas y Naturales de Zaragoza, *Conferencias sobre Iniciativas para el Porvenir Industrial de Aragón* (Zaragoza, 1921) *Aragón*, pp. 143-144, 177; ‘Zaragoza, la grande’ in Academia de Ciencias Exactas, *Curso de conferencias dedicado a la ciudad de Zaragoza* (Zaragoza, 1922), pp. 14-17; *La conquista del Ebro* (Zaragoza, 1931). Erik Swyngedouw notes that the notion of not allowing ‘a single drop of water’ to reach the sea without ‘rendering its obligatory tribute to the earth’ was already a powerful motivating idea in the worldview of Spanish engineers and technocrats in the nineteenth century; *Liquid Power*, pp. 1-18, 51.

<sup>15</sup> José Cruz Lapazarán, ‘Industrialización de las producciones agro-pecuarias características de la región’ in Academia de Ciencias Exactas, Físico-Químicas y Naturales de Zaragoza, *Conferencias sobre Iniciativas para el Porvenir Industrial de Aragón* (Zaragoza, 1921), p. 12. See also Joaquín Costa y Martínez, *Política hidráulica (Misión social de los riegos en España)* (Madrid, 1911), consulted online via Biblioteca Virtual Miguel de Cervantes, [http://www.cervantesvirtual.com/obra-visor/politica-hidraulica-mision-social-de-los-riegos-en-espana--0/html/fefa3e80-82b1-11df-acc7-002185ce6064\\_4.html#I\\_0\\_](http://www.cervantesvirtual.com/obra-visor/politica-hidraulica-mision-social-de-los-riegos-en-espana--0/html/fefa3e80-82b1-11df-acc7-002185ce6064_4.html#I_0_) [accessed 16/2/2021].

isolated facts lacking true efficacy'.<sup>16</sup> This was a call, influenced by Costa's legacy, for a body with the authority to coordinate irrigation projects in the region, based on a broad overview of its needs and—thanks to this overarching perspective—the most effective way to meet them.

Perhaps the most significant individual in developing this vision was Manuel Lorenzo Pardo, a civil engineer hailing from Madrid who had made his home in Zaragoza, and who also contributed this the lecture series.<sup>17</sup> Lorenzo Pardo had family ties to Aragon—his maternal grandfather had worked as a pharmacist in Gelsa (Zaragoza province)—and he was a well-known figure in the region, having developed the plans for the Ebro reservoir (*Pantano del Ebro*) at Reinos, which were approved in 1917.<sup>18</sup> In a lecture titled 'Zaragoza and the Ebro: The Horizons of Aragon's Opportunities' (*Zaragoza y el Ebro: Horizonte de las posibilidades de Aragón*), he rehearsed a vision of how the river Ebro and its tributaries could be exploited to the region's economic advantage.<sup>19</sup> The Ebro is the longest river flowing entirely within Spain, rising at Fontibre in Cantabria before passing through north-eastern Old Castile, Navarre, Aragon and southern Catalonia, flowing into the Mediterranean Sea near Tortosa (Tarragona province). For Lorenzo Pardo, more effective use of the river system's resources was key to developing Aragonese industry, and his aspirations for the basin were wide-ranging and comprehensive. He argued that

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<sup>16</sup> Cruz Lapazarán, 'Industrialización de las producciones agro-pecuarias', p. 12.

<sup>17</sup> José Ramón Marcuello, *Manuel Lorenzo Pardo* (Zaragoza, 1990), pp. 17-116; Lorenzo Pardo, 'Zaragoza y el Ebro'; 'Zaragoza, la grande'; Real Academia de la Historia, 'Manuel Lorenzo Pardo', *Diccionario Biográfico Español* [online], <http://dbe.rah.es/biografias/12382/manuel-lorenzo-pardo> [consulted 25/2/2021].

<sup>18</sup> Marcuello, *Manuel Lorenzo Pardo*, pp. 70-117; Lorenzo Pardo, *El Pantano del Ebro: Estudio técnico de sus obras hidráulicas* (Madrid, 1919); Real Academia de la Historia, 'Manuel Lorenzo Pardo', *Diccionario Biográfico Español* [online].

<sup>19</sup> Lorenzo Pardo, 'Zaragoza y el Ebro', pp. 142-177.

Dominating the Ebro means redeeming Aragon's soil, conquering energy for Aragon's industries, and creating a means of exporting its products in such a way that they can compete with similar ones. It means the creation of a new, rich, flourishing and expansive Aragon.<sup>20</sup>

It was therefore insufficient to consider only irrigation projects in developing water management schemes. In order truly to 'dominate' their rivers and gain the greatest benefit possible from them, the people of Aragon and the Ebro basin needed to develop their transport and hydroelectric capacities as well. Unsurprisingly, given his professional connection to the project, Lorenzo Pardo told his audience that taking full advantage of the Ebro's potential for irrigation, transport and power would require the river's flow to be regulated through projects like the dam at Reinoso.<sup>21</sup> His lecture expressed an implicit faith in the capacity of state action, incorporating the desires of organised groups of citizens, to wake Spain from what he called a 'sleeping and disorientated' state and transform regional economies.<sup>22</sup> This faith in the transformative capacity of state action, if combined with greater regional autonomy and the enthusiastic participation of citizens, would be central to the public presentation of the Hydrographic Confederations.

Lorenzo Pardo had defended such positions for some time. He had been involved in the Aragonese Regionalist Union (*Unión Regionalista Aragonesa*; URA), which experienced its high point in 1919-1920, publishing a 'Plan for Aragonese Action' and gaining some success in municipal elections. This Plan included calls to improve the

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<sup>20</sup> Lorenzo Pardo, 'Zaragoza y el Ebro', p. 144.

<sup>21</sup> Lorenzo Pardo, 'Zaragoza y el Ebro', pp. 161-163.

<sup>22</sup> Lorenzo Pardo, 'Zaragoza y el Ebro', p. 148.

Ebro's navigability and establish a 'sea port for Aragon', points that it is reasonable to ascribe, at least in part, to Lorenzo Pardo's influence.<sup>23</sup>

Besides this support for greater autonomy in the cause of regional economic development, the largely bourgeois members of the URA were also concerned at the breakdown of public order in the region during the final years of the Restoration. Whereas 1917 had seen 175,543 workdays lost to strike action in Zaragoza, the figure for 1918 was 419,830.<sup>24</sup> Partly in response to this social unrest, Antonio Lasierra Purroy's 1920 inaugural speech at the Zaragoza Academy of Sciences argued for an expansion of social spending, including on housing, hospitals and schools. Lorenzo Pardo delivered a response agreeing with this position, showing a desire among Zaragoza's bourgeoisie to put in place palliatives to prevent further left-wing mobilisation among workers. The need for measures that would improve the security situation only became more pressing when, on 4 June 1923, the Archbishop of Zaragoza, Cardinal Juan Soldevilla y Romero, was assassinated in an apparent reprisal for the killing of the anarchist activist Salvador Seguí in Barcelona.

In this context, it is unsurprising that the URA should have cautiously welcomed Primo de Rivera's coup on 13 September 1923. The following day, the *Heraldo de Aragón* declared that 'healthy public opinion demands not a change of government, but a complete change of system. Only with an absolute renovation of people and procedures will the country throw off the scepticism and disillusion through which it is so sadly living'.<sup>25</sup> This position also resonated with the URA's calls for reforms that would give regions greater autonomy in such a way as to promote economic

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<sup>23</sup> Marcuello, *Manuel Lorenzo Pardo*, pp. 133-134.

<sup>24</sup> Marcuello, *Manuel Lorenzo Pardo*, pp. 134-135.

<sup>25</sup> Cited in Eloy Fernández Clemente, 'Aragón durante la dictadura de Primo de Rivera' in Ángel Canellas López (ed.), *Aragón en su historia* (Zaragoza, 1980), p. 467.

development in Aragon. This formed the basis of the Union's 'conditional adhesion' addressed to Primo on 30 October 1923, co-signed by members including Lorenzo Pardo.<sup>26</sup>

Despite declaring itself 'conditional', this statement of support explicitly reproduced much of Primo de Rivera's analysis of the problems affecting Spain. The URA's members explained that they had been inspired to form the Union by their 'love of the *Patria* which was headed for ruin' and their desire to oppose this by 'strengthening regional bonds and conducting propaganda against *caciquismo*'. They wished to establish organisations like the URA as a precedent for the kind of politics promoted by the new regime, stating 'We are not nobodies or arrivistes; ... almost all the work you have been carrying out since coming to power was the premise and a necessary precondition of our political action'. Referring to Primo's initial purge of local administrations, they said that he had completed 'half of [their] programme, that of surgery and disinfection' and that they wished to contribute to 'the other half, that of reconstruction and the development of the vital organs of the region'.

The document also expressed the URA's conviction that the solution to Spain's multiple crises were to be found in greater autonomy for the regions, which would necessarily give greater power to regional elites such as those it represented. The organisations which would contribute to the country's 'national life' in its 'economic, cultural and political' aspects 'must be rooted in the region and be fed by its vitality, interests and ideals'. However, the URA made sure to emphasise that 'not a single Aragonese would consider breaking or even relaxing the bonds of national unity', aligning itself with the wider principles underlying Primo's approach to government. It made clear that a significant factor in its commitment to regional autonomy was a

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<sup>26</sup> Marcuello, *Manuel Lorenzo Pardo*, pp. 136-139.



particular sense of Aragonese regional identity, but one which was firmly rooted in Spanish national unity.<sup>27</sup> The document talked of the region's 'vigorous personality', based on a unique 'history, geography, psychology and economic structure' that would allow it to 'loyally meet its patriotic duties' under this system and 'increase the moral prestige that it has acquired through its noble conduct in all the critical moments through which Spain has passed'.<sup>28</sup>

The case of the URA is useful in understanding the relationship between the Primo dictatorship and regenerationist civil society organisations. After years of political instability, Primo's regime seemed to present the possibility of the kind of change that these groups sought: a reinvention of the Spanish state from within, strengthening the state and giving greater influence to social sectors pursuing a modernising political agenda. The general's focus on public order offered the possibility of making such system changes while preventing the left from carrying through a social revolution. As shown in the preceding chapters of this thesis, desires for this kind of change could accommodate and be leveraged by citizens with a range of ideological positions. The URA demonstrates this aptly. While its regionalism did not fit easily with the new dictator's commitment to national unity, its members saw Primo's regime as amenable to serious, regenerationist reforms. The URA's activism in favour of organisations like the Hydrographic Confederations demonstrates how the shared values of regenerationism allowed Primo's governments to draw on civil society to provide policy content for an initially limited programme of government.

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<sup>27</sup> On the contribution of regional identities to Spanish national identity in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, see Xosé-Manoel Núñez, 'The Region as *Essence* of the Fatherland: Regionalist Variants of Spanish Nationalism (1840-1936)', *European History Quarterly* 31.4 (2001), pp. 483-518.

<sup>28</sup> Marcuello, *Manuel Lorenzo Pardo*, p. 139.

## **The Civil Directorate: An opportunity for new ideas**

Despite the URA's hopes, the Military Directorate saw no moves towards greater regional autonomy. Such entreaties were ignored by Madrid, leading Lorenzo Pardo to refocus his energy on campaigning in favour of more modest reform limited to the administration of hydrological works.<sup>29</sup> However, Primo de Rivera's decision to form a civilian government in December 1925 would provide new opportunities for Lorenzo Pardo's agenda to influence government policy.

As part of the new Cabinet, Primo de Rivera appointed Rafael Benjumea y Burín, Count of Guadalhorce, as Minister of Development (*Fomento*). Guadalhorce was a civil engineer who hailed from Seville and had made his professional name working on water management projects in Malaga province.<sup>30</sup> Soon after the advent of the Civil Directory, he invited Lorenzo Pardo to his office and, in the latter's words, informed him that he

“was prepared to propose to Cabinet whatever we could ask in terms of the country's economic development” ... [H]e informed me that he wished me to present to him a collaboration mechanism which would coordinate all exploitable assets, irrigation users [*regantes*], industrialists, authorities, banks and technicians.<sup>31</sup>

On hearing this, Lorenzo Pardo abandoned a planned series of lectures on 'Aragon's contribution to Spain's wealth' and returned to Zaragoza to work on Guadalhorce's requested report, a decision that neatly encapsulates his *costista* belief in the transformative power of state action. On his return to Madrid, Lorenzo Pardo had

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<sup>29</sup> Marcuello, *Manuel Lorenzo Pardo*, pp. 139-141.

<sup>30</sup> Carmen Martín Gaité, *El Conde de Guadalhorce: Su época y su labor* (Madrid, 1984), pp. 39-48.

<sup>31</sup> Marcuello, *Manuel Lorenzo Pardo*, p. 153.

developed a legislative and technical project for what would become the *Confederación Sindical Hidrográfica del Ebro* (CSHE), ready to be presented to the Cabinet for approval. The proposals were altered at the last minute at Guadalhorce's insistence to establish CSHs as a generic type of organisation, with the CSHE as the first of its kind. In a manner reminiscent of the way petitions and mobilisations around transport used the discourse of national prosperity to campaign for economic development in their localities, the Minister desired to ensure that the Guadalquivir river basin—his native region—would enjoy the same benefits as the Ebro valley.<sup>32</sup> Two Royal Decrees of 5 March 1926 described the Hydrographic Confederations and authorised their formation, and established the CSHE, respectively.<sup>33</sup> The CSHE, encompassing the river Ebro and its tributaries, would cover parts of Navarre, Old Castile and Catalonia, and the vast majority of Aragon. The area for which it was responsible covered one seventh of the territory of mainland Spain, and accounted for half of the country's rainfall.<sup>34</sup>

The preamble to the Royal Decree establishing the CSHs set out the official rationale behind the new policy. This part of the text did not have a legal function, but presented the ideological justification for the subsequent legal dispositions. The text's propagandistic purpose became especially clear during the information campaign undertaken by the CSHE's organising committee immediately following the Royal Decree's publication, with Lorenzo Pardo choosing to read it out verbatim during at least one such meeting.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Marcuello, *Manuel Lorenzo Pardo*, pp. 153-154.

<sup>33</sup> *Gaceta de Madrid* 65, 6/3/1926, pp. 1248-1255.

<sup>34</sup> *CSHE* 1.2 (August 1927), p. 6; *Heraldo de Aragón*, 5/3/1926, p. 1.

<sup>35</sup> Confederación Sindical Hidrográfica del Ebro, *Publicaciones de la Confederación Sindical Hidrográfica del Ebro* II: Conferencia de don Manuel Lorenzo Pardo en el Círculo Mercantil de Zaragoza (Zaragoza, 1926), pp. 5-9.

The preamble expressed the Primo de Rivera dictatorship's self-conception as a regime that would fundamentally reform the workings of the Spanish state in order to achieve national regeneration.<sup>36</sup> While the state could act 'to defeat pernicious inertia, to awaken [the country] from lamentable lethargy, to placate fratricidal struggles', the Ministry suggested that this should only be considered necessary in 'primitive' societies or 'in moments of civil disturbance [*alteración ciudadana*]', a situation that the Military Directorate claimed to have ended in Spain. In contrast, 'When the desire for regeneration and progress pulses in the heart of a people; when one constantly encounters potent manifestations of its initiatives, conscientiousness and the reality of its desire to live and to grow', the state should fulfil an 'incentivising [*impulsora*]' and 'orienting' function. It was also required to act coercively to achieve 'concentration and harmony' in this work. Thus, the state's work 'must go hand in hand with cooperation among citizens [*cooperación ciudadana*], in combination with the organisations and individuals concerned [with public works], in order to secure the proper yield and the necessary degree of efficiency'. This formulation demonstrated the dictatorship's self-conception as a government working with and representing regenerationist currents of opinion. However, it also suggested that the state was required to rationalise the actions and campaigning of these groups; creating 'concentration and harmony' required state institutions to determine the common good around which these would be created. The idea of channelling the desires of a regenerationist society, while also arrogating the authority to define the shared, national good, was fundamental to the dictatorship's attempts to create the social power relations that might sustain an 'anti-political' society. Given the 'desire for regeneration and progress' that the

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<sup>36</sup> *Gaceta de Madrid*, 6/3/1926, pp. 1248-1249.

government claimed to detect in the ‘heart’ of the Spanish people, the state should ‘advance towards the social masses and invite them to activity, to work, to the struggle for progress and general wellbeing; its driving and tutelary mission must involve awakening those vital energies of the country, a large portion of which are latent and ignored’.<sup>37</sup> The notion of being ‘latent and ignored’ would resonate with social sectors that had felt themselves unable effectively to influence government policy under the Restoration, and the dictatorship’s claim that it aimed to mobilise these ‘energies’ drew them into its ideological orbit. The language of ‘progress and general wellbeing’ allowed the dictatorship to make alliances with groups that aimed to pursue a modernising and regenerationist vision for Spain’s future, not merely reactionary ‘solutions’ to social conflict. Moreover, it was state action to mobilise these energies that would make them meaningful. Although they had existed before, the Restoration system’s ‘inertia’ and ‘lethargy’ had kept such energies from making a difference to Spain’s material progress. In contrast, the dictatorship would pursue a course of action that would implement regenerationists’ goals. Like Fascist propaganda around drainage and colonisation projects in the Pontine marshes—also commenced in 1926—, this adoption of *costista* tropes framed rural development policy as evidence of national regeneration under an authoritarian state.<sup>38</sup>

Mobilising these energies required the creation of new organisations that would ‘develop and foster ... a collective and cooperative spirit among citizens [through which] these diffuse energies will take the direction that will lead us to prosperity and to national greatness’.<sup>39</sup> The dictatorship simultaneously held out a promise of state support for such groups, and made their ability to influence policy conditional

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<sup>37</sup> *Gaceta de Madrid*, 6/3/1926, p. 1248.

<sup>38</sup> Caprotti, ‘Destructive Creation’, pp. 651-654; Stewart-Steinberg, ‘Grounds for Reclamation’, pp. 98-103; Frandsen, “‘The War that We Prefer’”.

<sup>39</sup> *Gaceta de Madrid*, 6/3/1926, p. 1248.

upon their accepting state direction and authority. This reinforced both the notion that a common good shared by all citizens in a given region could be objectively determined, and that it was up to new state institutions to make this determination. This required state bodies to be more firmly embedded in local communities. The ‘new organisations’ needed to ‘sink their roots deeply into the very fabric of the country’.<sup>40</sup> Mobilising the energies of civil society organisations concerned with economic development required a state more closely familiar with local conditions in the communities in which it acted. Such an expansion of state power was in keeping with Costa’s prescriptions for the successful implementation of his *política hidráulica*, and could be secured through the regime’s co-option of and cooperation with regenerationist movements such as those represented by Lorenzo Pardo and his collaborators.

In the area of hydrological works, the government considered it particularly necessary to form state bodies that could achieve this ‘coordination’ of citizens’ efforts.<sup>41</sup> ‘The intense, maximum exploitation’ of watercourses required ‘a rigorous, methodical and ordered process that has not been followed before now, causing great damage to the principal sources of our wealth’. By avoiding the extremes of over-abundance and lack of water, the Confederations would enable rural regions to support more than their current ‘extremely scarce population’ and to yield more than ‘rudimentary agricultural produce’. Economic development and future prosperity thus required the establishment of a relationship between state and citizens based on the willing acceptance by the latter of the technical experts employed by the former. As James Ferguson observed in his study of ‘development discourse’ in Lesotho

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<sup>40</sup> *Gaceta de Madrid*, 6/3/1926, p. 1248.

<sup>41</sup> *Gaceta de Madrid*, 6/3/1926, p. 1248.

during the 1970s and 1980s, viewing rural development and modernisation as a technical challenge functioned as an important component of an ‘anti-politics machine’.<sup>42</sup> Technocratic decision-making structures obscured the fundamentally political nature of state action, the fact that it is ‘a device through which certain classes and interests control the behaviour and choices of others’.<sup>43</sup> Even projects that failed on economic criteria still have important ‘instrument effects’, especially the extension of state power, legitimised by these technocratic discourses.<sup>44</sup> The ideological underpinnings of the CSHs, and the long-term socio-political vision that the organisations rehearsed for the areas under their supervision, also displayed these tendencies. They relied on an extension of state power, adorned with the language of technocratic expertise, and as such professing to transcend politics. Such conceptions of the proper relationship between state and citizen, and the correct means of achieving development, accorded with the worldview of regenerationist engineers, regional elites and anti-parliamentary military authoritarians.

The regulation of watercourses that was necessary in order to achieve economic development needed to take account to a wide range of different interests, meaning that it had been impossible to secure under a ‘regime of solicitation and favours’ that was ill-suited to pursuing common rather than private goods. The creation of the Confederations was thus presented as marking a rupture from *caciquil* politics, suggesting that the technocratic power relations on which it was to be based also guaranteed probity. The idea of breaking free from the clientelistic politics of the former regime was closely linked to improving the actual effectiveness of public-works policy. Making this wide range of interests into ‘a coordinated, harmonious

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<sup>42</sup> Ferguson, *The Anti-Politics Machine*. See especially pp. 254-258.

<sup>43</sup> Ferguson, *The Anti-Politics Machine*, p. 225.

<sup>44</sup> Ferguson, *The Anti-Politics Machine*, pp. 251-277.

and efficient whole' would produce positive results and end 'artificial competition ... that fruitlessly consumes efforts and activities that could contribute to the public good'.<sup>45</sup> The self-defeating previous state of affairs was blamed on the public authorities' having previously 'lacked confidence in their own means of action'. The Spanish state had merely encouraged private initiatives, resulting in

the directionless [*invertebrada*] accumulation of projects without order or plan, projects that in many cases were incompatible [in the aims]; the precipitous commencement of works with insufficient funding, whose languid and uneconomical progress caused well-justified loss of prestige for ... the public authorities; a frequent failure by private parties to meet their contracted obligations ...; and the serious harm of significantly delaying the profits that the country awaits and the public coffers deserve.<sup>46</sup>

All of these harms could be avoided with a plan in which all local interests 'can and must participate', a formulation that suggested a coercive edge to these apparently enlightened, technocratic and 'anti-political' relations.<sup>47</sup> The legislation that created the CSHs presented an opportunity for the Civil Directorate to emphasise the contrast between its ways of doing politics and those of the parliamentary system that preceded the dictatorship. Technocracy also necessarily extended state power over rural locales and their inhabitants. Citizens in the areas under the supervision of them could expect to be subject to 'coordination' by these new state bodies, which

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<sup>45</sup> *Gaceta de Madrid*, 6/3/1926, p. 1248.

<sup>46</sup> *Gaceta de Madrid*, 6/3/1926, p. 1248-1249.

<sup>47</sup> *Gaceta de Madrid*, 6/3/1926, p. 1249.



would ‘encourage collective feeling’ and demand that the region be ordered in ways that would ‘increase its maximum value’.<sup>48</sup>

Importantly, this portrayal of the CSHs’ mission united the modernising, technocratic precepts of regenerationist civil society movements in Aragon, and the authoritarian, integrating instincts of the nationalist military officers who played key roles in the Primo dictatorship, even under the Civil Directorate. Being created as a result of the encounter between these parties, the CSHs were not straightforwardly the result of policy initiatives emanating from the government, but of the government inviting broadly ideologically aligned social sectors—such as the regenerationist intelligentsia to which Guadalhorce and Lorenzo Pardo both belonged—to provide policy input. These figures were easily drawn into the ‘networks of social power’ underpinning a regime that emphasised opposition to *caciquismo* and ‘politics’—each understood as a shorthand for Spain’s various ills—as a means of achieving economic transformation. As authoritarian as Primo’s government undoubtedly was, its policies were not merely imposed from Madrid. The regime mobilised networks of ideological support in Spanish society, and adopted certain ideas that animated these.

In this sense, the Confederations are a clear example of what Javier Tusell describes as Primo de Rivera taking ‘the topics of contemporary Spaniards’ conversations in cafés’ and making them a ‘principle of government’.<sup>49</sup> Organisations like the URA and the Zaragoza Academy of Sciences represented a coherent current of thought within Spanish society that expressed a regenerationist, *costista* policy agenda, and saw in the Primo de Rivera regime a means of securing government favour for this.

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<sup>48</sup> *Gaceta de Madrid*, 6/3/1926, p. 1249.

<sup>49</sup> Tusell, *Historia de España en el siglo XX*, 1, p. 453.

The Confederations were the result of civil society groups taking advantage of the networks of social and ideological commonalities that linked them to the dictatorship. By framing their campaign for new rural development policies in ideological terms acceptable to the regime, and taking advantage of Lorenzo Pardo's and Guadalhorce's shared professional and ideological background, they were able to secure state backing for their ideas in ways that had not previously been forthcoming. Recognising this also helps to explain the initial acceptance of Primo's government among certain groups in Aragon, as well as nationally. It was not, as one study of La Rioja in the period suggests, due to social elites' 'political ignorance [*incultura política*]', but stemmed from the fact that these groups found that the dictatorship addressed their interests and aims more effectively than the Restoration system.<sup>50</sup> Moreover, collaboration with these groups provided the dictatorship with a longer-term programme for government that it had lacked under the Military Directorate. From this mutually beneficial encounter between authoritarian army officers and the developmentalist *zaragozano* intelligentsia, a vision emerged—expressed through publications by, press coverage of and public events related to the CSHE—of how a society based on anti-political regenerationism might be expected to work. In this way, the CSHs imagined and articulated a *primorriverista* utopia.

### **The Hydrographic Confederations and new regional identities: A canvas for a *primorriverista* rural utopia**

The advent of the CSHs was also an opportunity to articulate a new kind of regional identity, defined by geography rather than political boundaries, based on the supposedly shared economic interests of all inhabitants of a given river basin. This

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<sup>50</sup> Carlos Navajas Zubeldia, '*Los cados y las comadreja*s': *La dictadura de Primo de Rivera en la Rioja* (Logroño, 1994), p. 250.

was located firmly within the bounds of *primorriverista* nationalism, which considered Spanish unity to be non-negotiable, and was underpinned by the mobilisation of the ‘respectable’, conservative *fuerzas vivas* of municipal and provincial life.<sup>51</sup> The Confederation of the Ebro held particular significance in this regard. Although centred on Aragon, it also covered significant parts of one region that had, since the second half of the nineteenth century, posed some of the greatest challenges to integrative Spanish nationalism: Catalonia. Visceral opposition to Catalan ‘separatism’ had been a significant mobilising factor among Spain’s authoritarian right for years, and Primo had justified his coup, in part, by reference to rising nationalist agitation in Barcelona.<sup>52</sup>

The Confederation associated the parts of Catalonia under its jurisdiction with Aragon, and publications such as the CSHE magazine could use this to develop an ‘imagined community’ that rendered them self-evidently Spanish and neutralised the challenge the region posed to centralist nationalism.<sup>53</sup> The union of the crowns of Aragon and Castile in the late fifteenth century had been key to the formation of the kingdom of Spain, meaning Aragon was strongly associated with Spanish national feeling. In a speech during Primo de Rivera’s August 1926 visit to the La Violada canal works in the Gállego valley, the CSHE’s Royal Delegate (*Delegado Regio*), Antonio de Gregorio Rocasolano, reminded his audience that the region was the ‘cradle of Spanish citizenry’.<sup>54</sup> In the summer of 1928, Lorenzo Pardo made a speech in Santander in which he argued—however dubious his reasoning—that ‘The

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<sup>51</sup> See Vincent, *People and State*, pp. 109-115.

<sup>52</sup> In his first week in office, Primo published a decree outlawing regional nationalist symbols and protests, restricting the use of regional and minority languages, and bringing these offences under the jurisdiction of the military courts. See Álvarez Rey (ed.), *Bajo el fuero militar*, pp. 65-66.

<sup>53</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Spread of Nationalism* (3<sup>rd</sup> edn, London, 2006).

<sup>54</sup> *CSHE* 1.3 (September 1927), p. 8.

movement [in favour of the Confederations] was born in Aragon, because Aragon is the heart of Spain'.<sup>55</sup> The Ebro itself could be used as a byword for Spanishness. The Latin names of the river—*Hiber* or *Iberus*—are the root of the modern Spanish 'Iberia'. Trading on this association, the CSHE's publications identified it as not only one of 'the great civilised rivers', but also 'the national river *par excellence*'.<sup>56</sup> They likened the river to a 'father', taken to 'incarnate and represent Spanish nationality'. The customs and traditions of the river basin's inhabitants were described as 'typically national'.<sup>57</sup>

This identification of the Ebro basin with Spain as a whole is typical of the tendency identified by Xosé-Manoel Núñez for Spanish nationalist thought in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to consider the 'region as the essence of the fatherland'.<sup>58</sup> The Hydrographic Confederation could be viewed as playing the role of "intermediate link" in the "spontaneous hierarchy of natural societies" that the conservative ideologue José María Pemán assigned to the country's regions.<sup>59</sup> By emphasising the symbolic nature of the Ebro not only for Aragon but also for the whole of Spain, CSHE publications suggested that developments in the Ebro basin demonstrated a bright future for rural regions across the country. The idea of Aragon lighting the way for the rest of Spain—especially through the writings of Costa or the ideas of Lorenzo Pardo—was commonplace.<sup>60</sup> Seeing the region's relationship with the nation in this way made clear that the same duties imposed on citizens and workers in the CSHE were also expected of their fellow citizens in other regions. As

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<sup>55</sup> CSHE 2.13 (July 1928), p. 3.

<sup>56</sup> CSHE 1.1 (July 1927), p. 9; 1.5 (November 1927), p. 19.

<sup>57</sup> CSHE 2.8 (February 1928), p. 4.

<sup>58</sup> Núñez, 'The Region as *Essence*'.

<sup>59</sup> José María Pemán, *El hecho y la idea de la Unión Patriótica* (Madrid, 1929), pp. 235-255, cited in Núñez, 'The Region as *Essence*', p. 505.

<sup>60</sup> CSHE 1.1 (July 1927), p. 9; 1.3 (September 1927) p. 2; 2.9 (March 1928), p. 1; 2.10 (April 1928), pp. 16-17. *Heraldo de Aragón*, 5/3/1926, p. 1; 13/3/1926, p. 1; 20/3/1926, pp. 1, 11; 21/3/1926, p. 1; 26/3/1926, p. 1; 1/6/1926, p. 1.

the magazine put it, the aim of the CSHs in encouraging development in their river basins was to ‘contribute to increasing the national wealth and the grandeur of the Spanish fatherland’.<sup>61</sup> Discussion of the policy developed a national interpretation of the work citizens would carry out under the auspices of the CSHs, contributing to the ideological goal of encouraging Spaniards to identify with the nation. This means of ‘nationalising the masses’ integrated citizens into state structures through mobilisation based on their economic interests and policies that affected their everyday lives. Nationalist discourses and symbols could be intertwined with these everyday interests of citizens to create an identification with state structures beyond contact with explicitly nationalising institutions such as those examined by Quiroga.<sup>62</sup>

One means by which the CSHE magazine imagined a regional community incorporating Aragon, the Basque Country, Catalonia, Navarre and parts of Castile was through its cover illustrations. Early issues featured illustrations of hydrological works on the Ebro and its tributaries. Yet the canals, dams and reservoirs are not the sole feature—the reader’s eye is drawn as much to the impressive scenery of the Ebro basin.<sup>63</sup> These landscapes functioned as ‘visual encapsulations’ of and naturalised the unity of the people who lived in the Ebro valley, and their engineering of the countryside through the CSHE. They presented what John Agnew, in connection with ‘typically’ English landscapes, has called ‘the “invented” ideal of a created and ordered landscape, with deep roots in a past in which everyone also knew their places’.<sup>64</sup> Later issues adopted anthropomorphised allegories of the different rivers

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<sup>61</sup> *CSHE* 1.1 (July 1927), p. 11.

<sup>62</sup> Quiroga, *Making Spaniards*.

<sup>63</sup> See e.g. *CSHE* 1.2 (August 1927); 1.3 (September 1927); 1.4 (October 1927).

<sup>64</sup> John Agnew, ‘European landscape and identity’ in Brian Graham (ed.), *Modern Europe: Place, culture, identity* (London, 1998), p. 214.

managed by the CSHE, sometimes represented in the style of classical deities, but more often as men and women in traditional peasant garb, going about their business as shepherds, fruit-pickers or wood-cutters.<sup>65</sup> The magazine expanded on these with (often poetic) descriptions of the river valleys and their population, the public works planned for them, and their scenery, explaining their place within the Ebro river system and the Confederation's plans.<sup>66</sup> In representing the different communities of the river basin in this way, the magazine created a sense of familiarity between them, emphasising what they had in common (the Ebro, the Confederation, and the national government) and allowing readers to locate themselves and their localities within this wider community. By presenting an idealised version of the population's everyday lives in this way, it created a sense within the *region* of the 'deep, horizontal comradeship' that Benedict Anderson identifies with nationalising discourses, as well as discouraging challenges to the traditional and hierarchical societies pictured.<sup>67</sup>

The use of geographic rather than political boundaries in defining the Confederation's area of responsibility meant that this community could be presented as more natural than the division of the Ebro basin between political regions. As the magazine's first issue put it, they would unite 'all the representatives of the basin for a common goal and a general harmonious interest'.<sup>68</sup> The Ebro river system created this common goal, overcoming artificial divisions between the regions involved. Moreover, using such apparently natural bases for delineating regions within Spain accorded with the view, associated with national-Catholic thinkers such as José

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<sup>65</sup> See e.g. *CSHE* 2.8 (February 1928); 2.11 (May 1928); 2.12 (June 1928); 2.14 (August 1928).

<sup>66</sup> *CSHE* 2.7 (January 1927), p. 4; 2.8 (February 1927), p. 4; 2.9 (March 1927), p. 5; 2.10 (April 1927), p. 4; 2.11 (May 1927), p. 5; 2.12 (June 1927), p. 9; 2.13 (July 1927), p. 5; 2.14 (August 1927), p. 8.

<sup>67</sup> Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p. 7.

<sup>68</sup> *CSHE* 1.1 (July 1927), p. 2.

Pemartín, of nations as ‘natural’ and ‘organic’ units.<sup>69</sup> Elsewhere, the Confederation was portrayed as an attempt to make Spain’s ‘economic and political constitutions’ ‘coincide’ for the first time in its history, the ‘economic constitution’ being embodied by rivers and watercourses.<sup>70</sup> The country’s future prosperity was thus connected to citizens’ accepting this new way of conceiving of themselves and their communities. The link created by water would be beneficial ‘on a moral level ... awakening in all those who cultivate the lands of or work in the Ebro basin a fraternal love, whether they are Basque, Castilian, Navarrese, Riojan, Aragonese or Catalan’.<sup>71</sup> Regional identities that challenged a unitary understanding of the Spanish nation were broken up and subsumed into new identities more in accordance with the dictatorship’s ideological imperatives. The spirit of cooperation between citizens that the Primo regime attempted to foster with regard to infrastructure development thus elevated identification with one’s ‘economic region’ above identification with a political region. Importantly, this was a novel basis for regional identity that *primorriverista* propagandists could colour with their own ideological content.

Over the course of the dictatorship, CSHE publicity material developed a vision of the society that would inhabit this new region. This society would be organised on technocratic, ‘anti-political’ lines, with the ability of Confederation functionaries to balance different interests creating a spirit of fraternity between citizens. Taking advantage of technical expertise required an extension of state power into rural communities, which would encourage citizens to identify more closely with the state and integrate them more closely into the state’s networks of power. Beneath the rhetoric of ‘national brotherhood’, however, lay a deeply hierarchical view of social

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<sup>69</sup> Alejandro Quiroga, *Los orígenes del nacionalcatolicismo*, pp. 36-38.

<sup>70</sup> *CSHE* 1.3 (September 1927), p. 3.

<sup>71</sup> *CSHE* 2.16 (October 1928), p. 14.

organisation. Greater integration of citizens into state networks of power facilitated the aims of senior Confederation technocrats to remake the society of the Ebro basin; if other citizens were supposed to act towards each other in a fraternal manner, the position imagined for technical staff was *paternal*. More than that, citizens were encouraged to view themselves as part of a collective project that required them to act with a discipline sometimes framed in martial terms; Spanish workers, almost as much as the region's rivers, were a resource to be shaped and directed by experts.

In developing this vision of Spain's future, the CSHE articulated a rural, anti-political, *primorriverista* utopia, combining the regime's commitments to social order and economic development to form a corporatist social project that integrated citizens into state structures on the basis of their economic position in society as well as identification with nationalist discourses. Although attempts to achieve this made little progress in the short time before Primo de Rivera's resignation in January 1930 or the proclamation of the Second Republic in April 1931, the conditions of the Civil Directorate made it possible for the regime's allies to develop a vision for a theoretical long-term future.

### **'Coordinating interests': The need for technocratic rule to secure an 'anti-political' future**

A fundamental tenet of the community that *primorriverista* planners intended to create in the Ebro basin was 'harmony' between and 'coordination' of different interests in the valley.<sup>72</sup> While recognising a range of interests, this recurring notion suggested that these could all be made mutually compatible, and this idea informed CSHE administrators' understanding of what would constitute good citizenship in

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<sup>72</sup> CSHE 1.1 (July 1927), pp. 14-15; 1.2 (August 1927), pp. 6, 9; 1.3 (September 1927), pp. 8, 14; 1.4 (October 1927), p. 9; 1.5 (November 1927), p. 19; 2.11 (May 1928), pp. 1-2; 2.14 (August 1928), pp. 11, 14-15, 17, 20; 3.22 (April 1929), p. 4.



this society. It created an expectation that citizens would focus on achieving goals set by Confederation experts, in a way that united both the distaste of *primorriverista* army officers for popular political agitation, and the belief of technical experts such as Lorenzo Pardo in the ability of their profession to reshape the region and its economy, if given citizens' cooperation. Both strands of thought contributed to the ideological universe of technocratic, regenerationist 'anti-politics' that was expressed in the CSHE's vision for the region's future, imagined as an apolitical utopia of 'national brotherhood'. In line with *costista* thought, achieving this state of affairs in the future required the creation of new prosperity, for which the cooperation of citizens with state authorities was necessary in the present.

This conception of a society based on the 'coordination' of interests required citizens to obey government authorities, an ideological tendency that was evident from the very start of the Confederation's activity. The members of the CSHE's Organising Committee, addressing the region on 13 March 1926, informed their fellow citizens that 'The government requires all users of the Ebro basin to collaborate, actively and directly, in the beautiful work of reconstruction'.<sup>73</sup> This work would tap 'so much energy which has lain dormant due to the abandonment of the country, which resulted from the incomprehension of its ruling classes.' This made the explicit claim that the attitude of previous political elites had led to the region's being less wealthy than it could be, and that the dictatorship's rejection of 'old politics' would transform its prospects. However, it also established a clear expectation for the power dynamics at play in hydrological policy: government bodies led by technical experts would issue orders and take decisions, and citizens would 'collaborate'. Similarly, the *Heraldo de Aragón* opined that the key to transforming 'enthusiasm' into success

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<sup>73</sup> CSHE, *Publicaciones IV: La campaña divulgadora*, p. 5.

would be ‘cohesion’, and called on Aragonese citizens to accept a greater degree of central direction than, in the newspaper’s view, the region’s inhabitants had done in the past.<sup>74</sup>

This vision of the society that would inhabit the new regions defined by the CSH policy was supposed to ‘rectify a state of affairs that was truly mistaken in the face of the realities of life and in which Spain lived for many years’.<sup>75</sup> Coverage of the Hydrographic Confederations argued for this view throughout the dictatorship. The Duero CSH’s magazine told its readers that previous administrative legislation was not ‘adapted ... to the circumstances of its time and place’, whereas the framework of the Hydrographic Confederations was ‘imperiously demanded by reality’.<sup>76</sup> While such coverage referred most explicitly to the greater technical and economic ambition of the CSHs compared to the structures inherited from the Restoration regime, this ambition was deeply entwined with the vision of a corporatist society. Developmentalism and corporatism could not be isolated from one another. Both new economic initiatives and new socio-political relations—with state bodies deciding on the correct way to achieve ‘harmony between different interests and citizens complying with these decisions—were changes that Primo’s ‘anti-political’ coalition considered ‘imperiously demanded’ by the times in which they lived.

One of the irrigation schemes in which the CSHE wished to exercise this ‘coordinating’ role was the *Riegos de Urgel*. Cultivators around Urgel (Lleida province) had been engaged in a long-running dispute with the private company that owned the Urgel canal. Although local people found that the water supplied by the canal was insufficient to meet their needs, the company insisted it did not have

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<sup>74</sup> *Heraldo de Aragón*, 1/4/1926, p. 3

<sup>75</sup> *CSHE* 1.1 (June 1927), p. 2.

<sup>76</sup> Reproduced in *CSHE* 3.20 (February 1929), p. 9.

sufficient funds to extend it.<sup>77</sup> In a speech on the subject in October 1928, Lorenzo Pardo admitted that the resulting ‘passions’ present in the region were one reason for making this project one of the CSHE’s initial priorities.<sup>78</sup> The controversy provided an opportunity to showcase the Confederation’s function as ‘a coordinating element, equally respectful of all rights, attentive to all opinions, legitimate desires, and realistic aspirations’; Urgel was a place where it could ‘realise a synthesis of its programme’.<sup>79</sup> Tellingly, Lorenzo Pardo stated that the different interests at stake were ‘*only apparently* opposed’, allowing the CSHE’s intervention to lead to a ‘definitive solution’.<sup>80</sup> The ‘coordination, the just, equitable and fraternal distribution of costs’ made possible by the CSHE was the ‘true secret’ of ensuring that ‘all parties consider themselves to have triumphed and all interests are satisfied’.<sup>81</sup> This established a limitation on what would be considered ‘legitimate interests’: only those that the CSHE could ‘coordinate’ within its technical staff’s understanding of how to resolve the issue were admissible.<sup>82</sup> Within this worldview, opposition to the CSHE’s plans was illegitimate; good citizens would understand that the

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<sup>77</sup> The Urgel canal was completed in 1865, following years of work during which labourers had been required to toil in extremely unpleasant and sometimes dangerous conditions. When complete, the canal provided water to irrigate only one third of the area projected. While this contributed to resentment among local agriculturalists, it also meant that the canal’s owners were unable to maintain financial liquidity based on the charges they could levy on the fewer-than-expected irrigation users. A proposal for further water-management infrastructure to improve the situation was put forward in 1897, but failed to progress through the necessary administrative processes. Lorenzo Pardo, *La conquista del Ebro*, pp. 167-178.

<sup>78</sup> Lorenzo Pardo, *Conquista*, p. 182. In fact, Lorenzo Pardo had (presumably deliberately) stoked these ‘passions’ earlier in his speech, comparing working conditions for labourers from the area who had constructed a tunnel for the canal at Montclar d’Urgell to scenes from Dante’s *Inferno*. Referring to the insufficiency of the water provided to irrigate the full area intended, he stated that ‘the dreamed-of cornucopia had turned into Pandora’s box’, deploying a betrayal narrative that could be used against the company and the previous regime. See Lorenzo Pardo, *Conquista*, pp. 171-173.

<sup>79</sup> Lorenzo Pardo, *Conquista*, p. 182.

<sup>80</sup> Lorenzo Pardo, *Conquista*, pp. 182, 195. Emphasis added.

<sup>81</sup> Lorenzo Pardo, *Conquista*, p. 206.

<sup>82</sup> The chosen solution saw the concession of the canal revert prematurely to the state. As a result, the CSHE would acquire a controlling proportion of shares in the canal. In return, the central government would subsidise 40% of the cost of a new reservoir on the river Segre. This reservoir aimed to provide sufficient irrigation for the farmers involved, who would pay the remaining 60% of the capital costs at 5% interest over the course of 33 years. The CSHE would retain responsibility for inspecting the works. See *Gaceta de Madrid*, 2/10/1928, pp. 25-29; Lorenzo Pardo, *Conquista*, pp. 182-200; *CSHE* 2.16 (October 1928), pp. 16-17.

Confederation's decisions were directed towards achieving shared goods, and therefore support them. Where citizens might use the anti-political language of a shared national good to obscure their private interests in petitions, technocratic policy-makers could use the same language to naturalise the exercise of power over citizens whose interests were incompatible with the shared national good as defined by state institutions. Just as María Luisa Rico Gómez finds that *primorriverista* reforms of the vocational education system in Spain aimed to produce citizens socialised in corporatist values, the ideological programme underlying the Hydrographic Confederations also aimed to habituate citizens to accepting social hierarchies.<sup>83</sup>

This definition of ideal social relations, based on expectations of citizens' behaviour defined by senior figures in the new Confederations, was a frequent feature of CSHE publications. The first issue of the Confederation's magazine included an article by Antonio de Gregorio Rocalano, CSHE Royal Delegate, entitled 'The collaboration of the country in the works of the Confederation'.<sup>84</sup> The article thanked citizens for the enthusiasm with which they had bought investment bonds in the CSHE over the previous year, and articulated a clear set of expectations held by the Confederation regarding the conduct of citizens in the Ebro basin. He presented participation in the election of the Confederation's Assembly as further evidence that the region was engaged with and supportive of the organisation's mission. More significantly, Rocalano held up the conduct of the Assembly members themselves as 'a model of hard work and a lively manifestation of love for the country', which was to be followed by everyone involved in the Confederations. The fact that Rocalano intended this as a model of conduct for all citizens in the society of the Ebro basin

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<sup>83</sup> Rico Gómez, *La formación profesional obrera*, pp. 18-21.

<sup>84</sup> *CSHE* 1.1 (July 1927), p. 2.

became clear through his use of the analogy of Don Quijote's reversion to 'the good Don Alonso de Quixano' at the end of Cervantes's novel. He exhorted the magazine's readers to

make sure that our glorious Don Quijote remains forever in in his sun-drenched home, retaining all his great moral stature, without sallying forth in search of new adventures. May he forever be Don Alonso de Quixano, *a model citizen* who does good and cultivates his garden [*cuida de su hacienda*]. It is essential that we apply our people's energy and great moral value to strengthening our inner life, cultivating our national wealth, elevating our moral values, taking care of our finances ...<sup>85</sup>

The 'model citizen', as Rocasolano put it, was therefore someone who would create new prosperity while also focusing on 'moral values'—defined during the Primo dictatorship as conservative and Catholic—and without undertaking any enterprise that might be so disturbing to a peaceful community as the 'adventures' of Don Quijote.<sup>86</sup> Rocasolano quoted De Quixano's statement from the final chapters of the novel, 'I was mad, and now I am sane', suggesting that it encapsulated Spain's situation in 1927.<sup>87</sup> The programme of the CSHs—the pursuit of economic wellbeing within a regenerationist conception of economic development, requiring citizens to follow the directions of state bodies and creating corporatist class relations—was emblematic of 'sanity'. Meanwhile, popular political agitation decried as 'disorder' by

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<sup>85</sup> *CSHE* 1.1 (July 1927), p. 2. Emphasis added. The possible double meaning of the Spanish 'cuidar de su hacienda' here—either 'to cultivate one's estate' or 'to look after one's finances'—is indicative of the extent to which rural development was taken to be the essential route to the degree of national prosperity necessary for the apolitical utopia imagined by Confederation experts to flourish.

<sup>86</sup> On the relationship between Catholic traditionalism and the Spanish nationalism of *primorriverista* ideologues, see e.g. Quiroga, *Los orígenes del nacionalcatholicismo*; *Making Spaniards*; Julio López Iñíguez, *El nacionalcatholicismo de José Pemartín en la dictadura de Primo de Rivera* (Barcelona, 2010).

<sup>87</sup> *CSHE* 1.1 (July 1927), p. 2. Translation of the novel taken from Cervantes, *The Ingenious Hidalgo Don Quixote de la Mancha*, trans. John Rutherford, Penguin Classics edn, (London, 2000), p. 979.

the Primo regime was associated with madness. More broadly, Rocasolano communicated that it was just as important in looking after Spain's finances that citizens listened to the prescriptions of this voice of 'sanity'. Senior CSHE figures considered the pursuit of prosperity to be synonymous and inextricably intertwined with the formation of a well-ordered and apolitical citizenry that would not feel it necessary to become involved in such 'disorder'.

### **Creating a new national spirit through prosperity**

'Legitimate interests' were not only restricted to projects approved in CSHE plans. They were also limited to interests concentrated on economic development, and the construction of national sentiment and corporatist class relations as desired by regime-employed technocrats. In discussing plans to apply the CSHE's programme elsewhere—for example in the planned works on the Segarra and Garrigues canals (Lleida province), 'from where pleading voices beg us to act'—Lorenzo Pardo stated that no 'useful work[s]' could be considered too expensive, because 'They create the economy in the first place, and then the spirit of a nation later'.<sup>88</sup> This notion that borrowed heavily from Costa's arguments in favour of his *política hidráulica*.<sup>89</sup> The 'spirit' created by the Hydrographic Confederations was to be one based on 'the strongest bonds of brotherhood', from which 'we dream that wealth will sprout and the spirit of a new Spain will be formed'.<sup>90</sup> This focus on creating a new national spirit through infrastructure and development policy echoed Lorenzo Pardo's insistence elsewhere that it was important for those managing a works programme to have an 'affective' as well as a material stake in it.<sup>91</sup> The anti-political agenda that the

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<sup>88</sup> Lorenzo Pardo, *Conquista*, p. 207

<sup>89</sup> Costa, *Política hidráulica*.

<sup>90</sup> Lorenzo Pardo, *Conquista*, pp. 208-209.

<sup>91</sup> CSHE 2.16 (October 1928), p. 16.

Primo regime and the Zaragozaan *costista* bourgeoisie defined between themselves did not merely aim to correct perceived ‘mismanagement’ under the Restoration, but to create new modes of social relations that appealed both to military authoritarians and to regenerationist technocrats.

Over the remaining course of the Primo regime, CSHE technocrats continued to advocate this vision of an apolitical utopia as the kind of society that should inhabit the Ebro basin. The November 1927 issue of the Confederation’s magazine editorialised on a speech that Guadalhorce had made in Madrid on the role citizens could play in public-works programmes.<sup>92</sup> The writer concluded that the year of work undertaken by the Confederation up until then showed that ‘the country is capable of influencing its destiny’. Yet this was only possible by ‘uniting interests, coordinating them while maintaining their peculiar physiognomies or needs, controlling the great and shielding the small, bringing enormous force to bear on a collective effort which will culminate in national prosperity’. ‘[P]erfect harmony between all elements of production and the government’ would ‘give birth to the common good’. It was precisely the intervention of state authorities and enlightened technocrats that would supposedly make this ‘coordination’ and ‘harmony’, and corporatist ‘brotherhood’ based on the wealth that they would generate, not only a theoretical possibility but a practical reality. As the CSHE’s writer commented, ‘we can be sure that the Count of Guadalhorce does not forget the weaknesses of men ... and he foresees the disorder of greed, the immoderate desire for profit, and that is why he recommends the cooperation of citizens with the public authorities and between themselves’. Securing the reward of an apolitical utopia in the future, following the creation of the prosperity that would make it possible, required the skill of state functionaries in

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<sup>92</sup> *CSHE* 1.5 (November 1927), pp. 19-20

securing the collaboration of citizens, and citizens' acceptance of their guidance, in the present.

### **The Confederation as a paternal figure**

'Cooperation with the public authorities' necessarily suggested that the 'coordination of interests' that underpinned the CSHE's vision of a new society required the subordination of citizens to state authorities as an essential component and prerequisite of 'brotherly' social relations. This cast the Confederation—the key state body in the utopia imagined and articulated by Lorenzo Pardo and his collaborators—in a paternal role in relation to citizens. Its authority rested on the claim that its technical staff possessed the wisdom, understanding and clear-sightedness to take account of citizens' wishes, decide which were realistic and should be pursued, and determine the best way to realise these plans in order to create 'modernity' and 'prosperity' in a way that benefited citizens. Citizens should therefore accept these judgements, and accept the direction of these new government bodies. In a special issue dedicated to the questions of reforestation in the Ebro basin, the CSHE magazine's writers noted that 'many voices are making demands and none are wrong to make themselves heard'. However, these voices required the mediation of a body that would weigh up and prioritise the different interests and demands, recognising the interests of 'those who cannot shout' and 'achieving order at every step, in order to attain the greatest yield'.<sup>93</sup> 'Transformation', 'modernity' and 'prosperity' were not the watchwords of a merely economic or even anti-*caciquil* project. The project they described was bound up with a particular understanding of the role of the state in Spanish society, which saw the Confederation's role as

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<sup>93</sup> *CSHE* 2.14 (August 1928), p. 4.



analogous to that of a father.<sup>94</sup> It required a shift away from the ‘weak but heavy’ state of the Restoration and towards one with which the populace identified more closely, with ‘networks of power’ composed of closer and stronger bonds between individual citizens and state institutions.<sup>95</sup> Citizens would, in this vision, readily defer to state institutions as if to a wise, benevolent and fair-minded father. This vision built on Costa’s argument that economic development and national regeneration required energetic state action, and subordination on the part of citizens, in the area of hydrological works.<sup>96</sup> However, where in *costista* thought this period of intensive action by the state would function as a transition to an enlightened society capable of ‘self-government’, the utopia imagined by CSHE functionaries required direct and coercive state intervention to be part of the long-term functioning of Spanish society. This conception of the role of the Confederation fulfilling a fatherly role required that the CSHE’s senior staff should be characterised by the qualities necessary to fulfilling this role. ‘Coordinating interests’ required wisdom, understood to mean technical expertise. Manuel Lorenzo Pardo frequently featured in writing that emphasised the expertise of those involved in directing the mission of the Hydrographic Confederations. The regional press described the engineer as ‘the man our region needed’, whose work on the Reinosá reservoir had inspired his vision for the ‘integral exploitation’ of the river.<sup>97</sup> While *primorriverista* propaganda presented the dictator explicitly as Costa’s ‘iron surgeon’, similar figures could exist in other state institutions. Lorenzo Pardo, through his expertise, regional knowledge and role in

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<sup>94</sup> It should be noted that all of the Confederation’s senior staff were men. See, for example, a list of senior functionaries and members of the Confederation’s assembly, CSHE, *Publicaciones VII: Constitución y crónica de la Asamblea* (Zaragoza, 1926), pp. 3-27.

<sup>95</sup> For discussion of Spain’s ‘weak but heavy’ state in the late nineteenth century, see Vincent, *People and State*, pp. 54-57, 73, 88.

<sup>96</sup> Costa, *Política hidráulica*, ch. 3. As the online version of the text is not paginated, I will refer to chapters and, where relevant, section.

<sup>97</sup> *El Heraldo de Aragón*, 13/3/1926, p. 1.

securing state support for the ‘integral exploitation’ of the Ebro, fitted this archetype. The CSHE’s magazine credited the CSHE Technical Director with a ‘healthy understanding of reality’ in the full range of subjects covered by the Confederation’s remit, from the construction of reservoirs, to reforestation efforts and an understanding of how best to introduce new breeds of cattle to the region.<sup>98</sup> According to the magazine, the only true threat to the CSHE would be a failure to find ‘the right man’ to lead it; the fact that someone with Lorenzo Pardo’s professional competence was its technical director was thus taken as a guarantee of success.<sup>99</sup> In addition to lauding Lorenzo Pardo’s expertise and suggesting that the legislative framework for the CSHs was beyond reproach—that all that was now necessary was the good will, hard work and competence of the technicians and workers responsible for implementing it—, this view set the Technical Director up as an example that other citizens should follow.<sup>100</sup> Similarly, when CSHE publicity admired the Count of Guadalhorce for his diligence and ‘disciplined independence’, it established this as an ideal for other inhabitants of the Ebro basin to emulate.<sup>101</sup> The tone of publications describing the actions and personalities of figures like Lorenzo Pardo and Gualhorce shows that the ‘charismatic construction of leadership was not limited to Primo de Rivera, but naturalised state hierarchies and defined correct modes of behaviour for citizens through organisations like the CSHE too.<sup>102</sup> Furthermore, the elevation of qualified professionals such as engineers to positions of power and influence presented the dictatorship as a meritocratic regime, drawing

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<sup>98</sup> *CSHE* 2.7 (January 1928), p. 5; 2.14 (August 1928) pp. 9-10.

<sup>99</sup> *CSHE* 2.13 (July 1928) p. 3.

<sup>100</sup> *CSHE* 2.13 (July 1928) p. 3.

<sup>101</sup> *CSHE* 1.3 (September 1927), p. 2. Elsewhere, the Confederation’s magazine implored the basin’s citizens to be ‘honourable and hard-working’; *CSHE* 2.12 (June 1928), p. 18.

<sup>102</sup> Quiroga, ‘Construcción carismática’.

a contrast (however inaccurate in reality) with the clientelism and patronage networks of *caciquismo*.

If this new society was to forge a new national spirit as well as create wealth, the father figures of the Confederation had to embody exemplary spiritual values as well as professional competence. One basic requirement for forging this new spirit was patriotism on the part of those involved. In a speech reproduced by the CSHE magazine, Minister of Labour Eduardo Aunós Pérez described the Confederations as an example of the government's 'redeeming work' (*obra redentora*), which he attributed to Primo de Rivera's own patriotism.<sup>103</sup> Another issue complimented Lorenzo Pardo on his 'patriotism' in continuing to work in his native country, despite the fact that he could have earned more money had he sought employment with a foreign company.<sup>104</sup>

In keeping with this focus on values that transcended the purely material, the preface to a reproduction of one of Lorenzo Pardo's speeches explicitly stated that the 'realisation of a professional dream' would be too 'exclusive' a motivation to be 'fertile' in results. Instead, it was precisely the goal of securing a 'spirit of intimate cooperation' in the basin that would help to secure *national* prosperity through the 'integral use' of 'all hydrological resources'.<sup>105</sup> Lorenzo Pardo was serving no selfish, careerist goals, but the higher good of the *Patria*. This provided a basis for

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<sup>103</sup> CSHE 2.16 (October 1928), p. 14. Reproductions of speeches by and interviews with regime functionaries were a common feature of the magazine; see CSHE 1.2 (August 1927), p. 6; 1.3 (September 1927), pp. 8-9; 1.5 (November 1927), p. 19; 2.11 (May 1928), pp. 1-2, 6; 2.13 July 1928, pp. 3-4; 2.14 (August 1928), p. 9; 2.15 (September 1928), p. 7; 3.28 (October 1929), pp. 12-13. Although its editors professed that 'politics' was not and should not be part of its remit [CSHE 1.5 (November 1927), p. 19], this fact demonstrates that it was engaged in rehearsing, systematising and communicating a particular inflection of *primorriverista* ideology. Public works, including hydrological works, were a fertile ground for articulating such ideas; as they aimed to 'transform' Spanish society, they presented an obvious opportunity to describe how the government considered that this post-transformation society ought to function.

<sup>104</sup> CSHE 2.18 (December 1928), p. 3.

<sup>105</sup> CSHE 2.14 (August 1928), p. 9.

comparing Lorenzo Pardo to Joaquín Costa, a recurring theme in coverage of the Hydrographic Confederations.<sup>106</sup> Invoking Costa's legacy strengthened the Confederation's anti-*caciquil* credentials, and reinforced the view inherited from his *política hidráulica* that national prosperity would lead to a moral renewal of Spanish society and politics. By associating the values of collaboration and selflessness with the exemplary figure of Lorenzo Pardo, CSHE writers established a set of motivations that citizens could internalise and follow. By establishing this spirit of cooperation and centring the common good rather than one's personal achievements as desirable in the *primorriverista* citizen, the magazine gave an indication of how Spaniards were expected to behave and conceive of their place in the 'transformed' society created by the Confederations.

Pursuing this moral as well as economic transformation also required an understanding of citizens in order to ensure they fulfilled their role within the Confederation's plans. An apolitical utopia could only follow the creation of prosperity based on the 'coordination of interests', a feat that would require the insight of figures such as Guadalhorce who, as mentioned above, was credited with understanding 'the weakness of men'.<sup>107</sup> The claim that CSH administrators possessed the far-sightedness and moral temperament to overcome this 'weakness' in themselves and others justified their place at the paternal apex of the new organisations through which the Spanish state would extend its role and draw citizens more closely into its networks of power. Their influence was not only a question of technocratic expertise, but also one of moral leadership and reform. This combination of technical expertise and exemplary moral values made them natural leaders. This had broader implications for how 'modernity' and 'development' were

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<sup>106</sup> *CSHE* 2.14 (August 1928), p. 9. See also 1.5 (November 1927), p. 19; 2.10 (April 1928), pp. 16-17.

<sup>107</sup> *CSHE* 1.5 (November 1927), p. 19.

understood by civil engineers in 1920s Spain. Creating the social conditions necessary for the technological advances of the CSHs to lead to an apolitical *primorriverista* utopia required citizens and rulers to overcome the self-serving politics of *caciquismo*. As David Blackbourn has argued with regard to hydrological schemes in Germany during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, ambitious public works programmes are often portrayed by their proponents as a ‘conquest of nature’.<sup>108</sup> In keeping with the *costista* tradition, hydrological policy under Primo de Rivera was conceived not only as ‘conquering’ nature in the sense of overcoming difficult topography or challenging rainfall patterns, but as conquering the selfish nature supposedly inherent in all citizens as humans and replacing it with ‘true patriotism and laudable abnegation’.<sup>109</sup>

### **Introducing new state organisations: The CSHE propaganda campaign**

The apolitical *primorriverista* utopia defined by the ideological encounter between the dictatorship and the social sectors represented by Lorenzo Pardo went beyond requiring citizens to treat each other in a fraternal manner and accept direction from state authorities. As might be expected from a paternalist worldview, citizens were to identify more closely with state agencies. Public assemblies provided a setting in which citizens could be brought together in large crowds and perform roles expected of them in relation to the state: absorbing and applauding information about CSHE policies, petitioning the state to take particular actions and endorsing proposed solutions, and thus locating themselves within the structures of the Spanish state. By this means, ordinary citizens were drawn more closely into the state’s networks of power. Although their position in these networks afforded them less power than

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<sup>108</sup> Blackbourn, *Conquest of Nature*.

<sup>109</sup> *CSHE* 1.5 (November 1927), p. 20.

technical and engineering staff, the *primorriverista* agricultural utopia nevertheless required this identification with the state to play a prominent role in citizens' lives, promoting an integration into state structures that would facilitate technicians' aims for reshaping Spanish society. In this sense, the *política hidráulica* of the Primo dictatorship went beyond Costa's prescriptions. The state, in Costa's view, was required to carry through a programme of economic modernisation that would break the power of *caciquil* oligarchies, improve citizens' living conditions and thus create a political elite capable of truly representing the nation.<sup>110</sup> In the *primorriverista* iteration, the action of the state was assumed already to have swept away *caciquismo*, and to understand what constituted the national good. Prosperity was conditional on citizens' accepting state authority and its determination of the nation's interests. The CSHs formed a basis for encouraging citizens to identify with the Spanish state that differed from but existed alongside identification with the national symbols and coercive institutions associated with the 'nationalisation of the masses'.<sup>111</sup> Rural development instead mobilised Spaniards along economic lines. It integrated them into national governing structures through their relationship with the CSHE, a state institution that, if less nakedly coercive than the military, was nonetheless deeply hierarchical.

These mobilisations were a feature of the CSHE from the very start of its functioning. The publication of the Royal Decree establishing the CSHE was followed by a large-scale propaganda campaign in the Ebro basin. The campaign aimed to inform citizens about the new organisation, but it also provided an opportunity for the dictatorship and its ideologues to create a spectacle of public support for the Confederations. Citizens who had not participated in the development of the

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<sup>110</sup> Costa, *Política hidráulica; Oligarquía y caciquismo*.

<sup>111</sup> See Quiroga, *Making Spaniards*; Mosse, *The Nationalization of the Masses*.

Hydrographic Confederations were now able to engage and identify with the policy, integrating them into the dictatorship's networks of social power. It continued the momentum of the campaigns in favour of reform in which Manuel Lorenzo Pardo had previously participated, with the difference that these campaigns' proposals were now government policy codified in legislation.

Recent circumstances in Aragon made the region an especially appropriate stage on which to demonstrate a public welcome for the Hydrographic Confederations. The region had suffered severe drought throughout 1925, threatening harvests and increasing unemployment.<sup>112</sup> In a region conscious of Costa's intellectual legacy, and suffering these short-term circumstances, the public interest in and potential propaganda value of rural development plans including the aim of bringing hundreds of thousands of hectares under irrigation were significant. The *Heraldo de Aragón* described the legislation as a 'transcendental decree' that would be of particular interest to Aragon.<sup>113</sup> The newspaper saw it as a particular triumph, describing the policy as 'the much-desired propulsion of the *política hidráulica* which we have supported since our first issue' and noting that 'the Ebro seems to be called ... to be in the vanguard of the agreeable transformation that these projects promise. That is to say, Aragon, the region of Spain where *política hidráulica* has put down its deepest roots.'<sup>114</sup> This set the tone for the coming propaganda campaign, which foregrounded the professed gratitude of Aragon and the whole Ebro basin towards the national government, and is indicative of how discussions of the CSHE conflated Aragon with the whole Ebro basin.<sup>115</sup> Zaragoza was indeed the geographic and administrative

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<sup>112</sup> *Heraldo de Aragón*, 11/2/1925, p. 2; 12/2/1925, p. 1; 1/5/1925, p. 1; 8/5/1925, pp. 1, 3; 10/5/1925, p. 1; 13/5/1925, p. 1; 6/8/1925, p. 3.

<sup>113</sup> *Heraldo de Aragón*, 4/3/1926, p. 1.

<sup>114</sup> *Heraldo de Aragón*, 5/3/1926, p. 1.

<sup>115</sup> CSHE 1.3 (September 1927), p. 9; 2.7 (January 1928), p. 19; 2.10 (April 1928), p. 16; 2.11 (May 1928), p. 6; 2.15 September 1928, p. 7; *Heraldo de Aragón*, 21/3/1926, p. 1.

centre of the newly delineated region, but this conflation is telling of the extent to which the regional identity defined for the Ebro basin was dominated by its association with Aragon.

The propaganda and information campaign started in earnest with a public speech by Lorenzo Pardo at the Zaragoza Commercial Centre (*Centro Mercantil*) on 14 March 1926.<sup>116</sup> He repeated *primorriverista* rhetoric of rupture with the Restoration, telling his audience that ‘a very short time ago, what is now reality would have seemed a chimera’.<sup>117</sup> He proceeded to read in full the preamble of the Royal Decree establishing the Confederations.<sup>118</sup> This both underlined the propagandistic value of this text in the regions involved, and brought his audience into direct contact with the legislation, reducing the emotional distance between the inhabitants of the Ebro basin and central government decisions.

Lorenzo Pardo’s speech did not only bring state institutions closer to citizens in the region. The Technical Director also promoted citizen engagement with the new institutions formed under the auspices of the Confederation, telling the assembled crowd that the CSHE’s Assembly would function as ‘an economic *Cortes* [parliament] of Aragon’.<sup>119</sup> This stood in contrast to the lack of representation that many Spanish citizens had experienced under the Restoration, emphasising the creation of new state institutions that would represent citizens’ interests *in the region itself*. While encouraging citizens to identify with institutions that would represent their interests, integrating them into state structures, the idea of an ‘economic parliament’ again made clear the limitation of ‘legitimate’ interests to those that would contribute to

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<sup>116</sup> Confederación Sindical Hidrográfica del Ebro, *Publicaciones de la Confederación Sindical Hidrográfica del Ebro* II: Conferencia de M. Lorenzo Pardo en el Casino Mercantil de Zaragoza (Zaragoza, 1926).

<sup>117</sup> CSHE, *Publicaciones* II: Conferencia, p. 3.

<sup>118</sup> CSHE, *Publicaciones* II: Conferencia, pp. 5-9.

<sup>119</sup> CSHE, *Publicaciones* II: Conferencia, p. 11.



developing the wealth that would generate a new, apolitical regional and national community. The Assembly was intended to serve the society that technicians hoped their rural development plans would create. Lorenzo Pardo expounded a vision according to which the Confederations would not only serve established if previously unrepresented interests, but also 'those which have not yet been created': those representing the wealth that new irrigation works would produce.<sup>120</sup> The new society would be shaped by rural prosperity created by citizens who identified with and were integrated into regional state structures.

The extent to which citizens' identification with new state structures was intended to serve the development of a supposedly apolitical society was further reflected in Lorenzo Pardo's comments that the Confederation would create 'harmony' between industrial and agricultural interests and put an end to the expression of 'fictitious rivalries' through 'profound, sincere and honourable scrutiny'.<sup>121</sup> The events of the propaganda campaign and the new institutions that they promoted encouraged Spanish citizens to identify with state institutions on the basis of the corporatist class relations that characterised the *primorriverista* vision of a future Spanish society, integrating them into the structures of the state. They also promoted the notion of an objective common national good, requiring citizens to abstain from defending interests opposed to those defined by state-employed technocrats.

Further public events took place throughout the Ebro basin in the following weeks. These often took place in public spaces like town and village squares, were attended by large crowds, and sometimes featured public processions.<sup>122</sup> Some included

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<sup>120</sup> CSHE, *Publicaciones II: Conferencia*, pp. 12-13.

<sup>121</sup> CSHE, *Publicaciones II: Conferencia*, p. 21.

<sup>122</sup> CSHE, *Publicaciones IV: La campaña divulgadora*, pp. 18-19, 24, 33, 39; *El Herald de Aragón*, 23/3/1926, pp. 1-3.

speeches by representatives of the central government, including Primo de Rivera and Guadalhorce.<sup>123</sup> As well as reflecting a significant degree of public engagement with the new policy and thus encouraging greater identification with the government and the new state structures it had created, these events demonstrate the regime's determination to associate itself with the adoption of these policies and use them as a basis on which to encourage citizens to build support. While scholars of the Primo regime have recognised how the dictatorship pursued the mobilisation of citizens along nationalistic lines in more or less obviously political or coercive organisations, the establishment of the CSHE suggests another side to *primorriverista* mobilisation.<sup>124</sup> It also took place along economic lines, inviting citizens to participate based on their socio-economic position and in pursuit of new prosperity. Integration of citizens into the *primorriverista* state's networks of power therefore took place on a corporatist and economic basis that co-existed with and reinforced attempts at 'negative integration' through the nationalisation of the masses.<sup>125</sup> Citizens in the imagined future society of the Ebro basin would form part of the Spanish state by fulfilling their economic roles in this society. All citizens of all social classes were part of a collective mission to increase national prosperity, directed by the state structures within which they were embedded.<sup>126</sup> They would have clear responsibilities towards one another, towards the nation and towards the state

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<sup>123</sup> CSHE, *Publicaciones IV: La campaña divulgadora*, pp. 27-32, 37-41

<sup>124</sup> Ben-Ami, *Fascism from Above*, pp. 126-173, 393-402; Quiroga, *Making Spaniards*; Vincent, *People and State*, pp. 112-116; González Calleja, *Modernización autoritaria*, pp. 164-211.

<sup>125</sup> Quiroga, *Making Spaniards*.

<sup>126</sup> This conception of economic relations closely resembled official 'corporativism' in Fascist Italy. See Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism*, pp. 72-78; Duggan, *Fascist Voices*, pp. 238-240; De Grazia, *Culture of Consent*. On the importance of corporatist politics to inter-war European fascist movements, including in Spain under Franco, see Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism*, pp. 116-145; Antonio Costa Pinto (ed.), *Corporatism and Fascism: The Corporatist Wave in Europe* (Abingdon, 2017). On attempts at a corporatist organisation of the Spanish economy under Primo de Rivera, see González Calleja, *La modernización autoritaria*, pp. 153-163; Ben-Ami, *Fascism from Above*, pp. 290-310; Tamames, *Ni Mussolini ni Franco*, pp. 281-313; Javier Tusell, *Historia de España en el siglo XX*, 1, pp. 508-513.

within this framework, and fulfilling these would be the foundation of ‘apolitical’ rural development.

## **Performing policy-making and defining state–citizen relationships:**

### **Public assemblies in the Ebro basin**

The CSHE continued to create public spaces in which citizens could be encouraged to identify with state bodies and perform their role in the vision of a new society proposed by the Confederation’s supporters. Public assemblies related to rural development policy were a common feature of the CSHE’s activity.<sup>127</sup> These events offered opportunities for citizens to feel engaged in the policy-making process. In early 1929, for instance, an assembly was held at Sarroca de Lleida to demonstrate support for the Segarra and Garrigues irrigation works that was typical of the ways in which such assemblies could be used to encourage citizens to identify with the state.<sup>128</sup> The assembly took place at the village’s theatre hall, and reports said it was ‘physically impossible’ to enter by the time the speakers took to the stage.

Delegations were sent from numerous villages in the *comarcas* of Segarra and Garrigues, in addition to officials including the mayor of Lleida, the Government Delegate to the Lleida provincial authority, leaders of the Lleida provincial branch of the *Unión Patriótica*, members of the CSHE Assembly and the President of the Tàrrrega Chambers of Commerce. Assemblies such as this brought Spanish citizens, representatives of civil society *fuerzas vivas* and the representatives of the *primorriverista* state into contact with each other in a public spectacle of the regional and national unity considered central to the new community that the

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<sup>127</sup> CSHE 1.3 (September 1927), pp. 8-9; 1.5 (November 1927), pp. 8-9; 1.6 (December 1927), pp. 1-4; 2.9 (March 1928), p. 4; 2.11 (May 1928), pp. 1-2; 2.12 (June 1928), pp. 10-13; 2.13 (July 1928), pp. 3-4, 6-7; 2.15 (September 1928), pp. 7-10; 2.16 (October 1928), p. 13; 3.22 (April 1929), p. 11; 3.29 November 1929, p. 24; *Heraldo de Aragón*, 10/3/1926, p. 4; 17/3/1926, p. 1; 18/3/1926, p. 2; 19/3/1926, p. 1; 21/3/1926, pp. 1-4; 30/3/1926, pp. 1-2; 13/4/1926, p. 1.

<sup>128</sup> CSHE 3.20 (February 1929), pp. 17-19.

Confederations aimed to build. The CSHE provided a contact point through which groups of citizens could address their concerns to the government safely within state structures, expressing support of rather than opposition to government policy.

Assemblies provided a means of expanding the reach of the state into local communities, tightening the bonds between citizens and the government within these networks of power and seeming to include citizens who had previously been excluded. As a policy and an institution, the CSHs not only responded to the desires of regenerationist mobilisations, but also offered a means of controlling future modernising movements by giving them a subordinate place within the state, instead of allowing them to develop in opposition to state structures.<sup>129</sup>

These CSHE-sponsored assemblies functioned as a microcosm for the performance of ideal state–citizen relations under Primo de Rivera. The assembly was chaired by Francisco Font, Mayor of Sarroca de Lleida, who opened the meeting by reading telegrams from villages that had been unable to send representatives, expressing their support for the assembly’s goals and—remarkably—for the decisions at which it would arrive.<sup>130</sup> By reading telegrams like this, Font reminded the audience that—as well attended as the assembly was—they were part of a larger whole, and this functioned as a performance of the unity that policy-makers said that the expansion of irrigation in the Ebro valley would require. Much official regime ceremonial (associated with the army, the *Somatén* and the *Unión Patriótica*, for example) also encouraged Spaniards to see themselves as part of a larger—usually national—collective, and to identify with this.<sup>131</sup> However, assemblies like the one in Sarroca de

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<sup>129</sup> On regenerationist thought as a current of opposition to Restoration political elites, see Swyngedouw, *Liquid Power*, pp. 39-66.

<sup>130</sup> *CSHE* 3.20 (February 1929), p. 17.

<sup>131</sup> On the importance of official public ceremonies within the regime’s attempts at ‘controlled mobilisation’ and imposition of a national identity, see e.g. Beadman, ‘Official nationalism’, pp. 69-75; Vincent, *People and State*, p. 113; Quiroga, *Making Spaniards*, pp. 77-188.

Lleida also rendered wider collectives familiar, being constituted by nearby communities. Moreover, adopting a form of mobilisation widely employed by regenerationist civil society movements—such as those discussed in the preceding chapters of this thesis—suggested that the CSHE was of the people whose economic futures it decided. The pre-emptive support of the assembly’s decisions was a demonstration of the extent to which the extension of, and integration of citizens into, the Spanish state through the CSHs meant accepting the determination of the common good by state bodies. By accepting in advance the decisions reached by attendees at the assembly, these villages showed the commitment to common purpose, the conformity, and the assumption that all interests could be ‘harmonised’ that characterised citizens’ integration into the state as part of the *primorriverista* rural utopia.

The first speaker after Font’s opening the assembly was Ignacio Vilaplana, a landowner from Sarroca de Lleida and member of the irrigation council (*comité de riegos*) for Segarra and Garrigues. He expressed the districts’ complaints: given the extraordinarily low rainfall they received, they were ‘sinking into greater misery every year’.<sup>132</sup> He expressed hope, however, that this would be reversed ‘now that the will of a handful of men in the Confederation of the Ebro is going to redeem it from this frightful situation’, a sentiment that received ‘great and prolonged applause’. Such sentiments reinforced a belief in the capacity of figures analogous to Costa’s ‘iron surgeon’ to transform Spain’s fortunes, and the duty of citizens to defer to these visionaries. Juan Gómez, President of the Tàrrrega Chambers of Commerce, followed him by delivering words of praise ‘for the Confederation and for Zaragoza’.

Vilaplana’s speech represented the initial articulation of the problem affecting the

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<sup>132</sup> *CSHE* 3.20 (February 1929), p. 17.

citizens in question, the starting point for the possibility of state action. Addressing these concerns to the ‘handful of men’ who directed the CSHE made these economic complaints a route to greater identification with the Spanish state for the citizens concerned. This identification with the state also implied a willing acceptance of the hierarchical order of the society it aimed to constitute, based on the paternal authority of regime technocrats. Gómez’s praise of Zaragoza—the location of the CSHE’s headquarters—also made these hierarchies explicit. Furthermore, it acted as a concrete manifestation of the new regional identities delineated by the structure of the CSHs, one that was more obviously linked to citizens’ everyday lived experience than abstract rhetoric about the ‘brotherhood’ of all users of the Ebro. The Catalan districts involved were asked to identify with Zaragoza as a source of economic wellbeing, and thus with a region that was not considered to pose a challenge to unitary Spanish nationalism.

The next two speeches continued to develop a model of citizen integration into the structures of the Spanish state and of the correct emotional response that citizens should display towards the CSHE. Ramón Felip Galicia, Director of the Urgel General Irrigation Syndicate (*Sindicato General de Riegos de Urgel*), offered support from his peers to their neighbours in Segarra and Garrigues, pointing out his district had suffered difficulties in the past, but through the work of the CSHE and Lorenzo Pardo had secured the expansion of irrigation it required.<sup>133</sup> Ramón Novell, Secretary of the Segarra and Garrigues irrigation council, said that the districts had not encountered setbacks but rather ‘facilities’ all along their path thanks to the support of the CSHE. These were not to be taken for granted, but he asserted that the Confederation’s ‘exact and complete conception of the problem’ meant ‘it had been easy’. Indeed, he

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<sup>133</sup> *CSHE* 3.20 (February 1929), pp. 17-18.

asserted that he had ‘such confidence in the CSHE that he could already hear the murmur of water in Sarroca de Lleida’. The expertise that made this possible justified a clear social hierarchy with which citizens should conform. Pursuit of their economic interests created an arena in which citizens were asked to identify with the state through the CSHs.

The event continued with a response from representatives of the relevant state authorities, during which Confederation office-holders continued to articulate the CSHE’s understanding of its relationship with citizens. Manuel Florensa Farre, a member of the CSHE Assembly and a representative of the Aragon and Catalonia Canal irrigation users, argued that agriculture would be ‘the source of the country’s wellbeing’, and that achieving this required not ‘ideas and politics’ but ‘a group of men who unite and defend their aspirations’.<sup>134</sup> The Confederation represented this unity; citizens who wished to ‘defend their aspirations’ should therefore put their trust in these new state bodies and thus contribute to the common cause of creating a new kind of society in the Ebro basin. However allegedly apolitical this society would be, forming a willing part of the Spanish state was an important aspect of citizens’ role in it. Indeed, uniting with others to pursue goals defined through state bodies as the common good was considered the opposite of ‘politics’, understood as a byword for *caciquil* venality.

Florensa Farre went on to eulogise the expertise and good judgement of Guadalhorce and Lorenzo Pardo, who, he said, would not have allowed his name to be spoken if he were present ‘due to his modesty’—‘but I will do so because he is not here, even if he is present in all of our hearts’.<sup>135</sup> He described the CSHE’s Technical Director as ‘all

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<sup>134</sup> *CSHE* 3.20 (February 1929), p. 18.

<sup>135</sup> *CSHE* 3.20 (February 1929), p. 18.

goodness, all love, all heart, possessed of an intelligence as great as his affection'. As well as justifying the executive position of technical staff at the head of the Confederation with reference to both their expertise and desirable moral qualities, Florensa Farre also asked the attendees to identify with figures in the CSHE hierarchy, holding them 'in [their] hearts', reciprocating their 'affection' and understanding themselves as being engaged in a shared task. This discursively incorporated citizens into a hierarchically organised common cause, which required exaltation of CSHE experts and prescribed certain affective responses to their work. Florensa Farre concluded by foretelling days of great prosperity for Lleida province, as long as its inhabitants kept 'fighting' for roads, schools and water.<sup>136</sup> In one sense framing this as an ongoing struggle could be taken as a statement of the obvious: constructing new irrigation infrastructure would require a long period of challenging physical and intellectual labour. However, the particular setting in which Florensa Farre offered this view—at an assembly called in support of state action to complete these policy objectives—also suggested that a legacy of distrust towards the central government remained in the public imagination. Public authorities could use this perception to garner support from citizens in areas such as Sarroca and Garrigues, by presenting themselves as the true representatives of regional opinion. While obviously reliant on the central government for its existence, the CSHE made it possible to bring the Spanish state closer to citizens and ask them to identify with this new institution, providing new routes to integration into the state's networks of social power.

The final speaker was José Pujol Cercós, mayor of Lleida and President of the current irrigation council in the two *comarcas* to which the assembly related. He extended

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<sup>136</sup> *CSHE* 3.20 (February 1929), p. 18.



‘an embrace’ on behalf of the provincial capital to Garrigues and Sarroca. He then proceeded to inform the attendees that ‘I have some news to give you. I have been told you will soon see engineers with their ranging rods around your fields, taking measurements to make your aspirations reality’.<sup>137</sup> This announcement produced a ‘copious ovation lasting several minutes’, after which the mayor confirmed that he had received this information through ‘authorised channels’, and could thus vouch for its veracity. The crowd at the theatre hall had thus witnessed, in a condensed space of time, an idealised cycle of *primorriverista* policy-making, from complaints of inadequate provision to the promise of state intervention. This brought state policy functions physically into a local community, allowing citizens to feel represented by and to identify with the Spanish state in the guise of the CSHE. It contributed to creating, tightening, and strengthening the bonds between citizens and government in the Spanish state’s networks of power, while defining correct modes of behaviour within these. The new society that CSHE technocrats imagined for the Ebro basin and Spain as a whole would be marked by this increased state presence, greater identification with the state by citizens and prescription of a certain emotional response to state bodies.

The assembly concluded by passing motions by acclamation to create a body that would represent the ‘common aspirations’ of the two districts regarding irrigation infrastructure, with representatives from all villages concerned to draw up the organisation’s regulations and call elections to its executive positions.<sup>138</sup> It was also agreed that the assembly’s organising committee should send telegrams to Guadalhorce, Rocasolano and Lorenzo Pardo. The telegram to Guadalhorce expressed the region’s ‘profound gratitude’ to the Minister for having created the

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<sup>137</sup> *CSHE* 3.20 (February 1929), p. 18.

<sup>138</sup> *CSHE* 3.20 (February 1929), p. 19.

CSHE, as well as its anticipation of the planned irrigation works. Similarly, the assembly expressed its 'profound gratitude to and confidence in' Rocasolano and sent Lorenzo Pardo a 'clamorous expression of gratitude ... and firm confidence in your works', remarking that 'the region awaits redemption by the Confederation of the Ebro'. Participating in these collective interactions allowed citizens to feel connected through their work to regime functionaries, pulling the links between citizens and their government closer within the state's 'networks of power'. Simultaneously, the assembly required citizens to perform or endorse characteristics expected within the utopia the CSHE set out to create: apoliticism, gratitude towards the government, and an identification with the collective labour of rural development.<sup>139</sup> Integration based on socio-economic status more than on indoctrination in a conservative national identity could also be used with the aim of imposing 'correct' modes of civic behaviour.

The assembly was also the public performance of policy-making in the sense that it had been planned and choreographed to arrive at a particular conclusion, while giving the observer an impression of dynamic and organic development. Establishing the organisation representing the districts' 'aspirations' was, it must be assumed, Pujol Cercós's intention throughout the process; it was not a plan suggested and adopted on the day. Yet even though these decisions had already been taken, this performance brought the process of policy-making closer to citizens, allowing them feel that they were actively involved or at the very least watching policy being formed before their eyes. Such mobilisations were important in how citizens experienced the Primo regime but, as Ben-Ami and Quiroga have argued with regard to other kinds of

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<sup>139</sup> This expectation of 'correct' affective responses sometimes also appeared in press coverage of hydrological works in the Ebro basin. In reporting on the funding of works to expand the Arguis reservoir in 1926, the editors of the *Diario de Huesca* told their readers that 'ingratitude is a crime'; *Diario de Huesca*, 13/3/1926, p. 1.

state-sponsored mobilisation, the regime used them to control and direct political change.<sup>140</sup> This controlling function of mobilisations overlapped with Primo's invocation of the discourses of 'anti-politics' and anti-*caciquismo*. By identifying certain policy objectives as having been frustrated by Restoration *caciques*, they allowed citizens to feel they were voicing and acting on their discontent with the old regime while playing an essentially passive role, removed from decision-making powers, in public performances of policy formation. By doing so, the *primorriverista* state could channel such frustrations to promote identification with new government bodies and involvement in sanctioned mobilisations.

### **Rural development as a common cause across classes: Identifying with the monarch**

Citizens were also encouraged to identify with the state through the person of King Alfonso XIII, who was portrayed as forming part of the same collective project as ordinary citizens in the Ebro basin. The front page of the very first issue of the CSHE magazine was dedicated to the monarch, and discursively created a strong association between him and the work of the Confederation. The king had, according to the magazine, 'welcomed the creation of these institutions with special affection', had given their leading figures 'encouragement and stimulation', and shown them 'how great an interest he took in the rapid multiplication of hydrological works'. Indeed, he '[understood] perfectly the needs of these thirsty regions: he [knew] perfectly well that the secret of increasing our production capacity lies in an ordered *política hidráulica*, and desire[d] to give full satisfaction to these legitimate aspirations'.<sup>141</sup> The magazine rehearsed a vision of how the monarchy related to the

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<sup>140</sup> Ben-Ami, *Fascism from Above*, pp. 126-173; 394-395; Quiroga, *Making Spaniards*.

<sup>141</sup> CSHE 1.1 (July 1927), p. 1.

lives of ordinary citizens. Emphasising that Alfonso had visited construction sites and ‘understands [the Confederations’] internal organisation, even in its finest detail’, the writer confidently predicted that

Our readers will understand that, when the Nation’s highest authority harbours these ideas and feels them with a passionate fervour, the path of those who work to realise such feats will necessarily be much simpler and more straightforward. Knowing that the highest levels of government will provide the stimulus that moves their will and the support that comforts them, they can dedicate themselves to their work with singular enthusiasm, overcoming every kind of obstacle which stands in the way of their well-intentioned aims.<sup>142</sup>

By emphasising the ‘encouragement’ that the king’s support should give to workers involved with the CSHE’s projects, the magazine’s writers encouraged readers to locate themselves within traditional state hierarchies. It presented a vision of Spanish society in which all classes, from the aristocracy to the working classes, had a role to play in this collective enterprise. This corporatist hierarchy, which typified the *primorriverista* utopia described as the goal of the CSHs, crucially assumed that all social actors were pursuing the same goal. Encouraging citizens to identify with the state as represented by Alfonso XIII thus allowed class hierarchies to be presented not only as natural but also as based on cooperation and mutual benefit. Creating such a vision of collective national will supported the regime’s rejection of the notion that political conflict could be legitimate. The Hydrographic Confederations were an essential component of attempts to discursively construct

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<sup>142</sup> *CSHE* 1.1 (July 1927), p. 1.

such a hierarchical yet harmonious national community, which was central to this *primorriverista* vision for the future of Spanish society.

### **‘A lesson’ in the need for a stronger state: Reforming the Urgel canal**

Lorenzo Pardo’s October 1928 speech on the CSHE’s plans for the Urgel canal, discussed above, demonstrated how economic development policy could promote the notion that Spain’s prosperity required an expansion of state power.<sup>143</sup> Lorenzo Pardo established the need for state involvement by arguing that this would defend the region’s moral ownership of the scheme, in contrast to the legal ownership enjoyed by the private company that operated the canal, *Sociedad Anónima Canal de Urgel*. The construction of hydrological works in the Segre valley had been a ‘difficult enterprise which had consumed ... the health, energy and hope of Urgel’s inhabitants’.<sup>144</sup> By expressing these resentments, Lorenzo Pardo suggested that citizens should see their interests represented in state action. Indeed, they should identify the CSHE as the principal medium through which to express their interests in the new society of the Ebro basin. This populism—claiming that new state structures would speak on behalf of ordinary citizens against vested interests—played on the suspicion of private companies expressed by some Spaniards inclined towards a modernising, regenerationist policy agenda, and also provided justification for demands that citizens should follow the directives of Confederation technicians and thus contribute to forming the apolitical utopia the latter imagined. Lending support to the CSHs was a mean of incorporating their aspirations into the framework of government, to paraphrase Tusell.<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> Lorenzo Pardo, *Conquista*, pp. 167-209.

<sup>144</sup> Lorenzo Pardo, *Conquista*, p. 171.

<sup>145</sup> Tusell, *Historia de España en el siglo XX*, 1, p. 453.

One of the major policy transformations in the CSHE's plans for Urgel's irrigation infrastructure was an expansion of the role of the state in comparison to private companies. As plans were drawn up for further infrastructure expansion, the CSHE was also negotiating to acquire the vast majority—12,895 out of 16,000, or 80.59 percent—of the shares in the *Sociedad Anónima Canal de Urgel*.<sup>146</sup> This made it possible for the government to terminate early the concession awarded to the company in 1895, something Lorenzo Pardo said that the region's inhabitants previously 'considered impossible'.<sup>147</sup> In turn, the opportunity to establish a new legal framework also made it possible to draw up new budgets that, with greater recourse to government funds and less need to ensure private profit, would deliver to local irrigation users greater infrastructure improvements and a 'considerable increase in production' for the same level of investment on their part.<sup>148</sup> Moreover, after a transitional period the shareholdings and executive functions of the CSHE would be passed to the local irrigation council. This would mean that 'the ownership of the water will be indissolubly linked to that of the land [and] the property owner ... will also hold a concession in perpetuity for the water with which they irrigate their lands'. Cultivators in the area thus had a stake in the new structures put in place by the CSHE, making the pursuit of prosperity in their locality a means to integrate them more closely into the Spanish state's networks of power. CSHE ownership of the scheme—even if only designed to be temporary—brought state organisations into citizens' daily economic life, while the aim of passing ownership to local organisations composed of local farmers demonstrated how citizens could be

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<sup>146</sup> Lorenzo Pardo, *Conquista*, pp. 198-199.

<sup>147</sup> Lorenzo Pardo, *Conquista*, p. 204.

<sup>148</sup> Lorenzo Pardo, *Conquista*, pp. 202-203.

encouraged to identify their interests with state agencies in the new society of the Ebro basin.

Lorenzo Pardo drew explicit contrasts between new state organisations with which he encouraged citizens to identify, and the previous primacy of private companies like Canal de Urgel. He said that the company's conduct towards the region had been 'similar to what a country might experience if submitted to the tenderness and justice of a conqueror', mobilising resentments against the company in a way that cast it as a direct enemy of citizens' interests and Spain's national community.<sup>149</sup> The spirit of brotherhood that was supposed to characterise the new society to be formed in the Ebro basin by the CSHE with citizen involvement would ensure better representation of ordinary Spaniards' interests. The company was identified as alien to citizens' real lives; in contrast, the Spanish state under Primo de Rivera was prepared to extend its reach into their lives through organisations, like the CSHs, that would represent their interests, or at least those economic aspirations that the dictatorship considered legitimate. Lorenzo Pardo insisted that the previous state of the Urgel works had 'served as a lesson' for the Spanish state, suggesting that state intervention would become more frequent and that citizens in the Ebro basin could expect to become more accustomed to working with the state, represented by the CSHE, towards common goals.<sup>150</sup>

### **'Autonomy' and the integration of citizens into a common cause**

The regional basis of the CSHs would also contribute to creating a society in which citizens could identify more closely with state institutions. While the CSHs were reliant on government funding, operational decisions were taken in the affected

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<sup>149</sup> Lorenzo Pardo, *Conquista*, p. 204.

<sup>150</sup> Lorenzo Pardo, *Conquista*, pp. 205-206.

region.<sup>151</sup> This brought executive functions of the state into the regional community with which citizens were encouraged to identify. Organisational autonomy contributed to imagining and creating the relationship between government and citizens in the new society of the Ebro basin. It would ensure, in Guadalhorce's words, that 'the government does not produce itself in them as a coercive entity. It collaborates with society, and society contributes considerable effort and energy'.<sup>152</sup> The notion of integrating citizens into a collaborative enterprise was key to creating a corporatist utopia through rural development. Yet, in contrast with Guadalhorce's denial of a coercive edge to this integration, this idea also required citizens to follow the directions of the state bodies with which they were encouraged to identify; to do otherwise would endanger the collaborative nature of this imagined society. Primo de Rivera's infrastructure policies could be claimed to make government more representative of citizens' interests, but the social and political relations that regime technocrats sought to implement required compliance from the citizens thus integrated into closer relationships with state bodies. While not representing 'negative integration' in the sense used by Wehler and Quiroga, the CSHE did mobilise citizens in a controlled manner under the auspices of a hierarchical state organisation.<sup>153</sup>

In a document approved by the Confederation's Assembly on 30 May 1927 with the objective of presenting the CSHs to the Fourth National Irrigation Conference held in Barcelona the following month, the CSHE argued strongly in favour of 'decentralisation of services'.<sup>154</sup> Creating 'broad autonomies' like the Confederations, comprising 'within their extensive field of action more limited autonomies', would

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<sup>151</sup> *Gaceta de Madrid*, 6/3/1926, pp. 1248-1253.

<sup>152</sup> *CSHE* 3.29 (November 1929), p. 25.

<sup>153</sup> Wehler, *The German Empire*, pp. 100-137; Quiroga, *Making Spaniards*.

<sup>154</sup> *CSHE* 1.1 (July 1927), pp. 14-15.



contribute to ‘the good functioning of the state’. An important part of ensuring this good functioning was ‘accustoming citizens to looking after themselves and not putting too much faith in [the state as] a providential power, which can only come from heaven’. This conception of the closer integration of citizens into state networks of power highlighted that citizens were, in fact, considered part of the state and responsible for discharging certain duties within it; the state was not a semi-mystical force outside society but required action on the part of citizens, providing a vehicle through which they could improve their lives. This autonomy reflected a belief in the capacity of state institutions to awaken citizens from the lethargy and passivity associated in regenerationist thought with the politics of *caciquil* society. It was by the mechanism of autonomous regional organisations that the state would encourage citizens to act in unity to resolve shared problems. The requirement to ‘look after themselves’ would be the encouragement for Spaniards to form an ‘army of wealth’, willingly locating themselves within a collective effort directed by state organisations for the benefit of all.<sup>155</sup> Although the rhetorical focus on regional autonomy was an important difference, the *primorriverista* corporatist rural utopia conceived of the integration of the citizen into state networks of power in similar ways to the fascist conception of economic organisation.<sup>156</sup> Citizens were to identify with the state not only in their individual capacity but from a self-conception as part of a collective enterprise, following the directives of state bodies in order to make this successful. Although this would take place within regions, it would also help to integrate citizens into the *nation*, as regional wealth helped to create ‘national grandeur’.<sup>157</sup> The CSHs

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<sup>155</sup> *CSHE* 1.1 (July 1927), p. 15.

<sup>156</sup> See Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism*, pp. 72-78; Duggan, *Fascist Voices*, pp. 238-240; De Grazia, *The Culture of Consent*.

<sup>157</sup> *CSHE* 1.1 (July 1927), p. 11; 1.3 (September 1927), p. 9; 2.15 (September 1928), p. 7; 3.22 (April 1929), p. 15. This view of regional action contributing not only to ‘national grandeur’ but ultimately to citizens’ being able to identify with the nation-state illustrate how understandings of the state–citizen relationship within institutions like the CSHE corresponded to Núñez’s observation that regional

provided a setting within which citizens' everyday economic concerns could intersect with a broader attempt by the Primo de Rivera regime to nationalise the masses.

The understanding of autonomy and active citizen involvement as fundamental characteristics of the CSHs was a recurring theme in the CSHE's publicity campaigns. As an early article in the Confederation's magazine put it, 'The Confederation is all those of us who use—or could use—river water drawn from the Ebro basin; [it is] a vast, autonomous nucleus of men of good will who will surely help to further strengthen this useful, potent and vigorous organisation'.<sup>158</sup> Lorenzo Pardo himself predicted that the CSHE's 'apolitical and supralocal condition' would bring about 'the birth and origin of a new spirit of citizenship'.<sup>159</sup> Autonomy could be considered a technical benefit, with decisions being made by experts closer to local conditions.<sup>160</sup> Yet integrating citizens more closely into state networks of power through 'apolitical and supralocal' organisations was also a means of forging the new spirit that *primorriverista* rural development aimed to achieve. It was not sufficient that citizens should only accept the direction of paternal Confederation figures; to achieve this 'spirit', they should also identify as part of a collective represented by state organisations. In Guadalhorce's words, 'A joint labour requires water to go where it is needed without harming others. The state will provide the impulse and orientation', overcoming the potential for infrastructure development to be disrupted by 'villages with no spirit of cooperation' agitating for irrigation works without considering the interests of their neighbours.<sup>161</sup> Creating a sense of regional community in the Ebro

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identities were considered 'the essence of the nation' in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Spanish nationalist thought. In this sense, the new social relations imagined for geographic regions through the CSHs should be viewed as a programme to be applied at a national scale. See Núñez, 'Region as *Essence*'.

<sup>158</sup> *CSHE* 1.2 (August 1928), p. 22.

<sup>159</sup> *CSHE* 2.13 (July 1928), p. 3.

<sup>160</sup> As Lorenzo Pardo put it, 'integral' rural development required 'an autonomy that makes it possible to get straight to the heart of these problems'; *CSHE* 2.15 (September 1928), p. 7.

<sup>161</sup> *CSHE* 1.2 (August 1927), p. 6.

basin established that ‘good citizenship’ could not include the kinds of conflicts between neighbouring villages that surrounded railway construction near Daroca, as discussed in the preceding chapter. Instead, citizens should accept the direction of the Confederation, trusting to technocratic decision-making to secure their interests.

### **Extending state power and knowledge: CSHE services, modernity and paternalism**

The CSHE extended the reach of the Spanish state into local communities in other ways. As noted, the Confederations’ remit was not limited to the construction of dams and canals, and the CSHE magazine regularly discussed the formation of new services under its auspices: a meteorological service, a cartography service, an agricultural credit service, a public health service, a forestry service and an agronomic service.<sup>162</sup> These services also created new and more extensive mechanisms for the Spanish state to gather information about its citizens and their communities. The new cartography service, for instance, aimed to produce maps of 300,000 hectares of land in the Ebro basin within the first year of its functioning, based on the work of twenty engineers and one hundred topographers of the Geographical and Cadastral Institute (*Instituto Geográfico-Cadastral*). This represented an ambition to significantly increase the Spanish state’s knowledge of more remote rural regions, an ambition necessarily born of the need for accurate information about a larger territorial area if agricultural and hydrological engineers were to work effectively towards the ‘integral exploitation’ of the river basin.<sup>163</sup> A self-conscious modernity was prominent in the portrayal of this service; the article

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<sup>162</sup> *CSHE* 1.1 (July 1927), pp. 3, 18-21; 1.2 (August 1927), p. 8; 1.6 (December 1927), p. 12; 2.7 (January 1928), p. 2; 2.8 (February 1928), pp. 7, 10; 2.12 June 1928, p. 10; 2.10 (April 1928), pp. 1-3; 2.12 (June 1928) pp. 10-11; 2.17 (November 1928), p. 14; 3.19 (January 1929) p. 21; 3.29 (November 1929), pp. 1-7.

<sup>163</sup> *CSHE* 1.1 (July 1927), pp. 18-19.

introducing it focused on the role that the new technology of aerial photography would play in developing maps quickly and economically, at least for purposes which did not require a highly precise representation of local topography. The article included examples of aerial photographs, as well as images of the cameras and other apparatus used and explanations of how they worked.<sup>164</sup> In the imagined new society described by CSHE ideologues, the ideas of prosperity and modernity were intimately linked to the development of a more powerful and knowledgeable state that was a more obvious presence in citizens' lives. The 'transformation' of the Ebro basin necessary to create new prosperity for its inhabitants could not be achieved without creating new and more comprehensive means for the state to gather and represent information about citizens, and developing these required the deployment of new, modern technologies. The relationship to be formed between state and citizens in the utopia that the CSHE imagined for the Ebro basin relied on these modern technologies to create the prosperity that would be the basis for 'apolitical' social relations. These relations could only be constituted, however, through the extension of state power into rural communities.<sup>165</sup>

This extension of state power went hand in hand with creating state institutions that would be more representative of the region's 'legitimate interests', making it possible to argue that this imagined *primorriverista* rural society did not aim to strengthen

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<sup>164</sup> CSHE 1.1 (July 1927), pp. 18-21.

<sup>165</sup> For explorations of the relationship between expanding state knowledge and expanding state power, see e.g. Edward Higgs, *The Information State in England: The Central Collection of Information on Citizens, 1500-2000* (London, 2004); Kerstin Brückweh, Dirk Schumann, Richard Wetzell and Benjamin Ziemann (eds), *Engineering Society. The Role of the Human and Social Sciences in Modern Societies, 1880-1980* (Basingstoke, 2012); Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, especially pp. 9-83; Christophe Bonneuil, 'Development as Experiment: Science and State Building in Late Colonial and Postcolonial Africa, 1930-1970', *Osiris* 15 (2000), pp. 258-281; Bernard Cohn, *Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge: the British in India* (Princeton, 1996); Tom Crook and Glen O'Hara (eds.), *Statistics and the Public Sphere. Numbers and the People in Modern Britain, c. 1800-2000* (London, 2011); Sarah Igo, *The Averaged American: Surveys, Citizens and the Making of a Mass Public* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2006); Jason D. Hansen, *Mapping the Germans: Statistical Science, Cartography, and the Visualization of the German Nation, 1848-1914* (Oxford, 2015).

the position of the government against that of citizens or vice versa so much as it strengthened and tightened the links between them in these networks. However, this was the case only insofar as this society was inhabited by citizens who accepted the 'harmonisation' of their interests within state hierarchies. Interactions between citizens and state institutions in this imagined society might become denser and closer without citizens gaining greater power over government bodies or suffering greater open coercion. Yet in reality, constituting these social relations increased state power and the capacity of government bodies to order societies along allegedly 'apolitical' lines.

### **A society remade to a technocratic vision: Creating new hierarchies by extending the reach of the state**

Practical reasons for establishing new Confederation services could also serve ideological ends. The CSHE established a public health service under Dr Gustavo Pittaluga, noting that new reservoirs and canals could increase the risk of outbreaks of malaria and other mosquito-borne diseases.<sup>166</sup> Indeed, such illnesses had been endemic among construction labourers and the rural population around the Urgel canal and the irrigation works in Upper Aragon in previous decades.<sup>167</sup> Establishing the service accorded with the same portrayal of technical experts as almost omniscient beings, possessed of superior capabilities and wielding the tools of modern knowledge. Pittaluga, a former advisor to the League of Nations, would 'contribute the most modern and effective methods', according to Manuel Lorenzo Pardo, and 'foresee all dangerous and avoidable morbidities'.<sup>168</sup>

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<sup>166</sup> *CSHE* 2.8 (February 1928), p. 10.

<sup>167</sup> *CSHE* 2.10 (April 1928), p. 1.

<sup>168</sup> *CSHE* 2.10 (April 1928), p. 1. Although the nationalist content of many inter-war European authoritarianisms might seem to oppose the premise of international organisations like the League of Nations, communities of technical experts, especially in fields related to public health, did develop

However, the purpose of ensuring public health in the new irrigated regions revealed deeper ideological motivations. In Lorenzo Pardo's view, possibly the greatest obstacle to the Confederation's plans was that of 'a scarce population which we must retain, in the first instance, and then increase using all of the means that technology, economics and policy put at our disposal'.<sup>169</sup> The ultimate goal of 'offering safe sanitary conditions' was to 'retain the rural population for now, and in the future reintegrate into the countryside those who left for the cities, attracted by their bright lights, comforts and pleasures, by the devious phantom of an uncertain and rarely realised wellbeing'.<sup>170</sup> The extension of state power was a means of pursuing specific policy ends shared by the military authoritarians and civilian technocrats who supported Primo de Rivera, in this case that of repopulating the countryside. This preoccupation aligned with a wider suspicion of cities among right-wing thinkers in early twentieth-century Spain, which was a recurring theme in the Confederation's attempts to attract workers back to the countryside.<sup>171</sup> The CSHE's Board for Reintegration into the Countryside (*Junta de Reintegración al Campo*) stated its concern about 'the moral and material conditions of those congesting our cities', especially Barcelona, and the 'precarious condition of unemployed workers crowding

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international links between supporters of such regimes. David Brydan has argued that the relationship between Francoist and Nazi health experts helped to constitute a species of 'Axis internationalism' during the Second World War; 'Axis Internationalism: Spanish Health Experts and the Nazi "New Europe", 1939-1945', *Contemporary European History* 25.2 (2016), pp. 291-311. Under the Primo regime, Spanish technical experts developed links with international communities of experts, for example through the CSHs' involvement in the 1929 World Power Conference, held in Barcelona. See *CSHE* 3.21 (March 1929), pp. 19-20.

<sup>169</sup> *CSHE* 2.10 (April 1928), p. 1.

<sup>170</sup> *CSHE* 2.10 (April 1928), p. 1.

<sup>171</sup> Núñez, 'Region as *Essence*', pp. 508-509. As Michael Richards puts it in reference to the period of the Civil War, Spanish conservative thought saw the peasantry as the 'mass embodiment of immortal religious and racial virtues'; *A Time of Silence: Civil War and the Culture of Repression in Franco's Spain, 1936-1945* (Cambridge, 1998), p. 16; *CSHE* 2.7 (January 1928), pp. 11-12; 2.10 (April 1928), pp. 22-23; 2.11 (May 1928), p. 23; 2.13 (July 1928), pp. 16-17; 3.19 January 1929, p. 16; 3.26 (August 1929), pp. 4-5. See also, for example, *Siglo Futuro*, 20/1/1928, p. 1; the Catholic newspaper's editors lamented the fact that industrial employment was more lucrative than agricultural labour, hollowing out rural communities that had previously been characterised by 'religious spirit and the morality of Christ'.

the cities'.<sup>172</sup> The specific mention of Barcelona, the centre of Spain's anarchist movement and the scene of much of the public disorder that Primo had condemned in 1923, indicates the ideological concerns at stake in warning workers away from urban life. Cities were understood to be so corrosive as to threaten even natural forces, as well as the moral fibre of rural Spaniards. An article about the river Huerva referred to its past as a place of beauty where the inhabitants of Zaragoza would relax during the summer, but lamented that 'Modern urban expansion has destroyed this ... without being able to replace it. Poor river Huerva, how dearly you have paid for daring to become part of the city, forgetting your simple and rustic origins [*sencillez y rusticidad primitivas*]!<sup>173</sup>

However, this idealisation of country living did not prevent the Public Health Service from concluding that, in reality, strong social intervention was necessary in the living conditions of rural people. Thus, achieving one set of policy aims by extending the presence and power of state authorities in rural communities in turn required their further extension and reinforcement. In an article introducing his approach to his new position, Pittaluga questioned the 'myth' of 'paradisiacal rural life'. Although leaving to one side the 'moral order of life in a rural environment', he argued for a more rigorous examination of the material and hygienic conditions of rural life. While noting that fresh air and sunlight 'contribute greatly to strengthening the human body and increasing its resistance to the causes of disease, especially infection', he found that these were 'more than offset by the dire living conditions' of the countryside, citing overcrowding, living in proximity to animals, poor sanitation, insalubrious housing and 'constant contact with the soil'.<sup>174</sup> An initiative like the

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<sup>172</sup> *CSHE* 2.10 (April 1928), p. 22; 2.12 (June 1928), p. 21.

<sup>173</sup> *CSHE* 2.13 (July 1928), p. 5.

<sup>174</sup> *CSHE* 2.10 (April 1928), p. 2.

CSHE, ‘which mobilises and directs the energies of an extensive region, pushing them towards a magnificent future’, necessarily had to grapple with questions of rural housing. It was up to the CSHE to ‘exercise an exemplary influence in terms of overhauling hygiene habits in the rural regions of all of Spain’. It was not only prosperity that would create the new *primorriverista* rural utopia. The greater integration of citizens into state bodies created new power relations that would allow technocrats to reshape rural society in order to make this utopia possible; senior Confederation figures considered a great increase in state power over citizens’ lives to be necessary. This intervention was necessary in order to ‘guarantee ... the human labour which is the foundation of collective wealth’.<sup>175</sup> Paying attention to public health was thus a means of ensuring citizens fulfilled their expected roles in the ‘transformed’ society of the Ebro basin; state services would act on the lives of citizens in the same way as on the rivers, hills and forests of the Ebro basin.<sup>176</sup>

In order to achieve this, the public health service would need to conduct ‘a thorough study of *rural human dwellings*’. Pittaluga said this would be conducted through a census based on inspections with the purpose of completing a standardised form.<sup>177</sup> This would, he said, be the first study of its kind not only in Spain but also in Europe, and would mean that ‘Within a year or two—or maybe only after ten—we will have a direct, real, effective and photographic knowledge of rural dwellings’, allowing

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<sup>175</sup> *CSHE* 2.10 (April 1928), p. 3.

<sup>176</sup> Coverage of the CSHE’s public health service referred to workers as ‘the human factor’ in the economy (*el factor hombre*; the gendered terminology in Spanish informs the gendered translation that follows) and as ‘an element of production’. ‘It is necessary to protect his life and health so that he does not cease to contribute, so that he acts intensively with the full range of his faculties in maintaining and improving the economic organisation of the country’; *CSHE* 2.12 (June 1928), p. 12. Elsewhere, the Confederation used mechanical metaphors to define the ‘correct’ relationship between citizens and the government. It criticised the ‘indifference’ of citizens who had railed against previous governments but ‘refused to understand that while the government might be the motor, they are the fuel’; *CSHE* 1.4 (October 1927), pp. 19-20. This view established the citizens of the Ebro basin as another of the ‘elements of production’ that the CSHE aimed to ‘coordinate’; *CSHE* 1.4 (October 1927), pp. 9, 14; 1.5 (November 1927), p. 19.

<sup>177</sup> *CSHE* 2.10 (April 1928), p. 3. Emphasis in original.



necessary changes to be introduced in new homes and retrofitted in old ones. This vision fundamentally diminished the agency of rural citizens, requiring them instead to be inspected, documented and cared for by state-employed experts, not only for their own health but also with the goal of ‘raising the tone of national life’.<sup>178</sup>

This paternalism was also evident in justifications for the work of other Confederation services. In late 1927, the CSHE magazine lamented the migration of rural workers to Spanish cities or abroad; ‘the progress of our countryside’ required a greater labour force, commercial farming in irrigated zones being more labour-intensive than subsistence farming on unirrigated land and requiring the digging of new drainage ditches and levelling of fields.<sup>179</sup> Recognising that the rural population was not likely to increase dramatically in short order, the CSHE recommended more intensive use of agricultural machinery in the region, and charged its agronomic service with organising a competition to discover and advertise the most effective machines of various types.<sup>180</sup> According to its director, José Cruz Lapazarán, this service recognised that the Confederation was ‘a new mode of activity in Spanish customs, given that it employs novel methods in all its aspects’. The role of the service was therefore to educate rural workers through actions including the establishment of ‘agronomic action centres’, a ‘highly detailed agro-social study of area around the Aragon and Catalonia Canal’ and a travelling education service (*cátedra ambulante*).<sup>181</sup>

Such measures were especially necessary, for example, in the area around the Upper Aragon irrigation works (*Riegos del Alto Aragón*), the first phase of which would be

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<sup>178</sup> CSHE 2.10 (April 1928), p. 3

<sup>179</sup> CSHE 1.5 (November 1927), p. 10.

<sup>180</sup> CSHE 1.5 (November 1927), pp. 10-11. See also CSHE 1.6 (December 1927), pp. 1-4.

<sup>181</sup> CSHE 2.12 (June 1928), p. 10.

brought into service in the spring of 1929. According to Lapazarán, the area had ‘not achieved anything by its own impulse ... but the moment [when it must] is coming and the Confederation must generously expand its tutelary action’ to avoid failure.<sup>182</sup> The CSHE was also prepared for such paternalistic action to necessitate coercion; it was suggested in early 1929 that failure to use the new resources and means of farming now at the region’s disposal should be punishable with fines.<sup>183</sup> The adoption of modern methods in the CSHE’s utopia required experts to be able to inspect, record and intervene in the lives of citizens. The corporatist utopia that the CSHE’s planners imagined, and which constituted a long-term goal for a *primorriverista* model of society, could be argued to make state action more representative of (a limited conception of) citizens’ interests. However, the tighter integration of citizens into state networks of power would place them in a position in which state representatives would relate to them as another resource to be disciplined in order to shape the region’s future and pursue a specific ideal of social relations.

The identification of such services with ‘modernity’ was significant. The new society that reforms to infrastructure and agricultural policy would help into being implied that the Spanish state would become more deeply involved in citizens’ lives, and more inclined towards intervention in communities. ‘Modernity’ meant an interventionist state guided by technocratic expertise. The paternal role ascribed to engineers and planners may have been considered a means of improving citizens’ material conditions in this *primorriverista* utopia, but to do so effectively required a significant extension of state power. This increased involvement of state organisations in local communities is often associated with policies implemented under the Second Republic, such as the ‘pedagogic missions’ (*misiones pedagógicas*)

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<sup>182</sup> *CSHE* 2.12 (June 1928), pp. 10-11.

<sup>183</sup> *CSHE* 3.19 (January 1929), p. 3.

that sent cultural educators to remote villages in an educational programme aiming to propagate the benefits of modernity.<sup>184</sup> Similar modes of social interventionism—using the education system both to spread literacy and to foster national feeling—have been highlighted in some more recent literature on the Primo de Rivera dictatorship.<sup>185</sup> These policies, implemented by two very different regimes, responded to the same underlying changes in perception around the role of the state in Spanish society. They tightened the links between citizens and government organisations in the networks of power underlying the state. As well as an institutional and constitutional rupture with the Restoration monarchy, *primorriverismo* and the Republic both aimed—in their different ways—to construct a new society, and viewed extending the role of the state and encouraging citizens to identify with it as a means to this end. Both relied on notions of rupture with the old order to develop this vision for the future, with their specific conception of modernity providing a route to identification with state bodies and integration into state networks of power.

The paternalism embedded in the CSHE's approach to its social services underscores the extent to which the imagined society that would result from the 'transformation' of the Ebro basin, although couched in the language of autonomy and regional self-organisation, was based on the direction of citizens' energy into ideologically acceptable activities. To a greater extent than housing or transport policy, agricultural development policy allowed thinkers allied to the Primo regime to develop a utopian vision of the society that the dictatorship's public works

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<sup>184</sup> Vincent, *People and State*, pp. 122-123; Eugenia Afinoguénova, 'Leisure and Agrarian Reform: Liberal Governance in the Traveling Museums Of Spanish Misiones Pedagógicas (1931-1933)', *Hispanic Review* 79.2 (2011), pp. 261-290; Eugenio Otero Urtaza, *Las misiones pedagógicas: 1931-1936* (Madrid, 2016).

<sup>185</sup> Quiroga, *Making Spaniards*, pp. 110-145; 'Maestros, espías y lentejas'; González Calleja, *Modernización autoritaria*, pp. 83-94.

programme could build. Technocratic developmentalism and a regenerationist, modernising policy agenda, allied with Primo de Rivera's populist, 'anti-political' authoritarianism, thus developed a vision for a long-term political programme. Public works under Primo de Rivera were not merely a technocratic exercise in achieving economic growth, or a nationalistic one in instituting protectionism.<sup>186</sup> They were an area of policy action in which citizens could be encouraged to identify with the state and certain ideological values not through the abstract symbols and rituals of right-wing nationalism, but through material improvements to their everyday circumstances in a utopian future. This means of integration into state structures co-existed with and reinforced 'negative integration' based on indoctrination into a conservative national identity.<sup>187</sup>

### **Conquering the Ebro: Martial conceptions of rural development**

That remaking the society of the Ebro basin would be based on a strict hierarchy was also clear in the conception of the relationship between people and their environment that informed the long-term social and political project of the CSHs. From the very start of its existence, the CSHE framed its work in martial terms. The first issue of the Confederation's magazine argued that 'The country desired to be directed to the sources of its wealth, ... conquering ... our own land, which we will raise up with our work and defend, even at the cost of our own lives'.<sup>188</sup> The magazine's editors thus linked a hierarchical relationship between government and citizens—it was government institutions that would 'direct the country to the sources of its wealth'—to a broader conception of 'modernity' and economic development as

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<sup>186</sup> On Primo's economic nationalism, see Ben-Ami, *Fascism from Above*, pp. 240-266; Tamames, *Ni Mussolini ni Franco*, pp. 296-310; González Calleja, *Modernización autoritaria*, pp. 213-258; Tusell, *Historia de España en el siglo XX*, 1, pp. 500-508.

<sup>187</sup> Quiroga, *Making Spaniards*.

<sup>188</sup> *CSHE* 1.1 (July 1927), p. 2.

requiring humans to pursue ‘the conquest of nature’, to use David Blackbourn’s formulation.<sup>189</sup> This notion that the new society of the Ebro basin would be based on human will dominating and disciplining nature appeared regularly in CSHE publicity. In an interview in the summer of 1927, Guadalhorce stated baldly that ‘an unregulated river is an army without discipline’.<sup>190</sup> The result was that ‘sometimes water is destructive, other times it is scarce, occasionally it is entirely absent’. Drought and flood were understood not as natural phenomena that humans had to manage; they were examples of ill-discipline on the part of nature, appearing as a result of humans’ insufficiently imposing their will on it. Imposing discipline on the region’s river systems would end ‘agricultural backwardness, ignorance [*incultura*] and hunger’ and bring ‘wealth, redemption and resurgence’. These ideas were part of an ideological framework which held that nature was a lesser force than, and could unquestionably be contained, controlled and directed by, human will armed with modern technological understanding.<sup>191</sup> In a speech in late 1928, for instance, the agricultural engineer José Cruz Lapazarán referred to the river Gállego being managed by ‘dictatorial human will’.<sup>192</sup> Indeed, Lorenzo Pardo’s fundamental vision for the development of the Ebro basin—that not a single drop of water should pass through the river system to the sea without contributing to the region’s prosperity—

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<sup>189</sup> Blackbourn, *Conquest of Nature*.

<sup>190</sup> CSHE 1.2 (August 1928), p. 6.

<sup>191</sup> Erik Swyngedouw notes the long-standing desire among developmentalist Spanish thinkers and politicians to remake the country’s river systems so thoroughly that ‘not a single drop of water’ would flow into the sea without having been exploited for agricultural or industrial purposes, referring to this as a ‘cyborg water world’; *Liquid Power*, pp. 1-38. For studies of different national contexts in the same period that highlight, similar beliefs in the ability of technological intervention to remake, rationalise and conquer the unruly natural forces of river basins, see Blackbourn, *Conquest of Nature*, pp. 179-296; Mark Cioc, *The Rhine: An Eco-Biography, 1815-2000* (Seattle, 2002), pp. 54-75; Worster, *Rivers of Empire*, pp. 127-256; White, *The Organic*.

<sup>192</sup> CSHE 2.18 (December 1928), p. 7.

was itself an articulation of this underlying belief, which had animated Spanish hydrological engineers since the end of the nineteenth century.<sup>193</sup>

The notion of internal conquest was a recurring theme. A project for a reservoir on the Montsant river in Tarragona province was, according to the CSHE magazine, another step in the organisation's mission of 'conquering, little by little, unproductive lands'. This 'conquest' was linked to familiar ideological concerns with 'national reconstruction', and would turn the surrounding area into 'another corner of the country that will bless the regenerative work' of the CSHE.<sup>194</sup> Agricultural development was described as a 'crusade'.<sup>195</sup> Framing reconstruction and regeneration in martial terms was, perhaps, unsurprising under a military dictatorship. The previous political order was inimical to a healthy, modern and prosperous nation; the *primorriverista* utopia imagined by senior CSHE figures would resolve this with a militarised conception of economic development. The extension of state power through the CSHE aimed not just to reform rural society but to *defeat* forms of social organisation that did not comply with the ideological imperatives of *primorriverismo*. By encouraging citizens to identify with these new state bodies, rural development policy asked them to locate themselves within hierarchical structures and identify these as an ideal form of social relations.

The hierarchical conception of the state that underpinned an understanding of economic development as 'conquest' also presented the relationship between the CSHE and citizens of the Ebro basin as if the latter were subject to military discipline. Contemplating what the completion of the Confederation's works programme would mean for the region's pastoral farmers, the CSHE magazine asked

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<sup>193</sup> Swyngedouw, *Liquid Power*, pp. 1-38.

<sup>194</sup> *CSHE* 2.7 (January 1928), p. 7.

<sup>195</sup> *CSHE* 1.2 (August 1927), p. 22.

What greater or more ... victorious conquest [can there be] than that achieved by intelligence and labour, dominating rivers, correcting torrents, reforesting *montes*, making productive and hospitable land where it is currently uncultivated and depopulated ... bringing tranquillity to thousands of agrarian homes ... and [winning] citizens for the *Patria*?<sup>196</sup>

With their ‘intelligence and labour’ presented as the tools of conquest, those involved in executing the Confederation’s plans were understood in terms analogous to that of military personnel—an ‘army of wealth’, as the very first issue of the CSHE’s magazine put it.<sup>197</sup> The new society that Confederation planners aimed to develop in the Ebro basin might be based on increased material prosperity, but achieving this required citizens to understand their relationship with state authorities as one demanding obedience. In this way, citizens and their labour would become another component of development policy, to be used and shaped according to the will of CSHE technocrats. To paraphrase Ferguson’s discussion of development initiatives in Lesotho, one instrument effect of the CSHE policy would be an increase in the reach and power of state bodies, while the discourse of material prosperity—and, in the Spanish case, anti-political regenerationism—obscured the fundamentally political nature of this project.<sup>198</sup>

In common with military service, this understanding of rural development as ‘conquest’ requiring military-like discipline made it a means of ‘nationalising’ citizens, of ‘making Spaniards’.<sup>199</sup> As seen above, the ‘tranquility’ that would come with economic development was assumed to be a means of encouraging citizens to

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<sup>196</sup> *CSHE* 2.8 (February 1928), p. 5. Emphasis added.

<sup>197</sup> *CSHE* 1.1 (July 1927), p. 15.

<sup>198</sup> Ferguson, *The Anti-Politics Machine*, pp. 194-227; 249-277.

<sup>199</sup> Quiroga, *Making Spaniards*. On military service, see pp. 77-109.

identify with the Spanish nation. Reviewing the Confederation's plans in early 1929, the CSHE magazine told its readers that 'the region of assured irrigation conquered for production and for national life, which are currently almost entirely absent from these steppe-like and inhospitable regions, will total between 700,000 and 750,000 hectares'.<sup>200</sup> The wealth of agrarian areas was not only important in terms of material prosperity; it would also allow these regions to be more fully part of the Spanish national community. As discussed above, the worldview of CSHE planners and regime ideologues tended to view rural society as morally preferable to life in the cities.<sup>201</sup> This provided a clear ideological imperative to use public works to integrate rural regions more fully into national life in the long-term project for Spanish society articulated by the CSHs. Their greater integration would aid the moral reform of the rest of the Spanish nation. Rural society, following its transformation through the action of the CSHs, would provide a model of hierarchical, corporatist relations that could provide a basis for transforming Spanish society more broadly, integrating citizens into the structures of the nation state.

## **Conclusion**

The Primo de Rivera dictatorship's reorganisation of the administration of hydrological works and agricultural development policy is the reform of 1923-1930 that has enjoyed the longest longevity. Although the Confederations have undergone numerous transformations in the meantime (notably, the first government of the Second Republic briefly renamed them *Mancomunidades Hidrográficas* and significantly curtailed their powers and budgets in 1931), the territorial organisation

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<sup>200</sup> CSHE 3.19 (January 1929), p. 10.

<sup>201</sup> CSHE 2.10 (April 1928), p. 22; 2.12 (June 1928), p. 21; Richards, *Time of Silence*, p. 16; Núñez, 'Region as *Essence*', pp. 508-509.



of Hydrographic Confederations based on geographic units of the major rivers' basins remains in force today.<sup>202</sup> The dams, reservoirs and canals started or completed under the dictatorship constitute a lasting physical legacy.<sup>203</sup>

However, the significance of the Confederations went beyond infrastructure built, pesetas borrowed and spent, and hectares brought under irrigation.<sup>204</sup> Tusell argues that one of the most significant aspects of the Primo de Rivera regime was the way in which its ill-defined regenerationism inserted the desires, aspirations and ideas of a wider cross-section of Spanish society into government action.<sup>205</sup> The advent of the Civil Directorate established that the regime was not merely a temporary pause from constitutional normality. As the government turned its attention away from its immediate concerns about public order and the Moroccan campaign, groups such as the Zaragoza developmentalist intelligentsia gained opportunities to influence policy. Manuel Lorenzo Pardo's shared professional background with the Count of Guadalhorce and the regenerationist, modernising ideas of the *Unión Regional Aragonesa* allowed the group access to government policy-makers that resulted in their being able to argue for the formation of the *Confederaciones Hidrográficas*. To some extent, this could be taken to demonstrate that networks of acquaintance and patronage continued to underlie the governance of Spain under Primo de Rivera. However, where the networks of *caciquismo* depended on clientelistic relations at local and provincial level, the success of the Aragonese technocratic intelligentsia

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<sup>202</sup> Swyngedouw, *Liquid Power*, pp. 93-98.

<sup>203</sup> Indeed, works that were started under Primo de Rivera but completed following the Civil War took on new political significance, as they were used by the Franco regime for propaganda purposes, and political prisoners were sentenced to forced labour on the construction of canals and dams; Swyngedouw, *Liquid Power*, pp. 99-161.

<sup>204</sup> For an example of such an enumerative approach, see Barrera Giménez, *Confederación Hidrográfica del Ebro*.

<sup>205</sup> Javier Tusell, *Historia de España en el siglo XX, 1*, p. 453.

depended on the ability to develop good working relationships with the central government.

The Confederations created new understandings of the region. The novel, geographically defined regions on which they were based had little fixed political meaning, presenting an opportunity for the supporters of the policy and of the Primo regime to use them as a canvas on which to project a *primorriverista* utopia. The Confederations functioned as a means to articulate a vision for the future of Spanish society, based on the encounter between social sectors represented by the likes of Lorenzo Pardo on the one hand, and the authoritarianism of Primo and his supporters in the army officer corps on the other. This encounter provided a long-term ideological project that the government would have lacked had it relied solely on the support of reactionary elites.

On the surface, the CSHs' proponents claimed this society would lead to greater material wealth, based on the 'coordination' of interests and creating a new spirit of 'national fraternity'. However, the relative equality between citizens implied by this formulation obscured the extent to which this utopia rested on a hierarchical, corporatist worldview. If citizens were to treat each other as brothers, this cast Confederation technical staff in a paternal role. Citizens were to adopt the supposedly apolitical position of accepting their judgements of what constituted the common good. This was a fundamentally political project of extending state power over citizens and communities, and encouraging the latter to identify with state authorities.<sup>206</sup> Presenting this as a purely technical exercise in securing prosperity naturalised this extension of power and, alongside the 'anti-political' language of rupture with the Restoration system, denied its political nature. The very notion of

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<sup>206</sup> Ferguson, *The Anti-Politics Machine*.

political conflict or dissenting to state-backed decisions was rendered illegitimate by a focus on the 'harmony' these mechanisms of government would supposedly create.

Moreover, the structures of the CSHE extended the Spanish state into rural communities, and through public spectacle and paternalistic service provision encouraged citizens to identify more closely with the state. These economic mobilisations brought the state into the everyday lives of citizens in ways that complemented attempts to encourage identification with the state with the use of national symbols. They also continued to develop a hierarchical conception of society. Citizens may be encouraged to act in a 'fraternal' manner, but they were to act as subjects of state direction and inspection. This extension of state power was also evident in a conception of rural development as constituting the 'conquest' of the regions in question, incorporating them 'into national life'. Hierarchical relationships in rural development policy did not stop at relationships between humans; watercourses and forests could also be 'disciplined', 'directed' and 'transformed' by the Confederation's 'army of wealth'. Such 'transformation' required discipline and respect for hierarchy from citizens, and the directing vision of a state with which citizens were encouraged to identify by a variety of means. The CSHE under Primo de Rivera thus developed a vision of Spanish society in which social hierarchy, state power, modernity and wealth were tightly interwoven and mutually dependent.

## Conclusion

Historians of the Primo de Rivera dictatorship have commonly interpreted the regime in terms of imposition. The dictatorship was, in this view, a last resort of social and economic elites seeking to suppress or control mass political mobilisation and avoid democratisation.<sup>1</sup> It was a repressive reaction to left-wing ‘disorder’ and Catalan ‘separatism’, that aimed to restore public order through authoritarian methods.<sup>2</sup> The regime attempted to integrate citizens into the structures of the state by force-feeding them a right-wing, Catholic traditionalist, militarist and unitary nationalism in coercive institutions.<sup>3</sup> It was a period during which rightist intellectuals essayed national-Catholic discourses that would influence the subsequent radicalisation of the Spanish right, informing the brutal ideology and practices of the insurrectionary zone during the Civil War and of the Franco dictatorship.<sup>4</sup> While anti-*caciquil* measures officially aimed to stamp out corruption in Spain’s public life, elite actors continued to use the regime as a means to engage in dishonest practices and accrue considerable fortunes.<sup>5</sup> Such interpretations present political and social elites as the main political agents in 1920s Spain, and understand the nature of the dictatorship primarily through its relationship with these groups. They see the regime as constructed mainly in state institutions. The state’s interactions with Spanish citizens and civil society are thus largely presented as unidirectional, with the dictatorship variously repressing political opponents; providing labour reform from above; enforcing a national identity; or controlling

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<sup>1</sup> Ben-Ami, *Fascism from Above*; José Luis Gómez-Navarro, *El régimen de Primo de Rivera*.

<sup>2</sup> Eduardo González Calleja, *El máuser y el sufragio: Orden público, subversión y violencia política en la crisis de la Restauración (1917-1931)* (Madrid, 1999).

<sup>3</sup> Quiroga, *Haciendo españoles; Making Spaniards*; ‘Maestros, espías y lentejas’.

<sup>4</sup> Quiroga, *Haciendo españoles; Making Spaniards; Los orígenes del Nacionalcatolicismo*; Alfonso Botti, *Cielo y dinero: El nacionalcatolicismo en España (1881-1975)* (Madrid, 1992); Saz, *España contra España*.

<sup>5</sup> Preston, *A People Betrayed*; Ben-Ami, *Fascism from Above*, pp. 246-250.

mobilisation in the *Somatén* or the *Unión Patriótica*. Without denying the undoubtedly repressive nature of the dictatorship, examining the *social* construction of the Primo regime through debates around the infrastructure policies closely associated with it reveals that citizens found ways to engage with it actively and as agents in their own right, often defending their own class interests using the same ideological idioms deployed in *primorriverista* claims to have replaced ‘politics’ with patriotism. Understanding these two-way interactions casts new light on the nature and political dynamics of the dictatorship, as well as providing new insights with which to approach the social, political and intellectual history of 1920s Spain.

Citizens’ engagement with Primo dictatorship was, naturally, shaped by the political and ideological context in which it appeared. Since at least the country’s defeat in the 1898 Spanish-American War, citizens and ideologues subscribing to various currents of regenerationist thought had attempted to diagnose the ‘problem of Spain’ and propose solutions, ranging from the institution of a conservative, Catholic theocracy, to liberal and democratising reforms, to economic modernisation under the guidance of an authoritarian ‘iron surgeon’. The fraudulent and corrupt practices of *caciquismo*, as well as a serious instability of governments, brought the country’s political classes into disrepute, and established politicians as a particular target of regenerationist derision. Meanwhile, the impact of the First World War brought economic distress for many. Primo de Rivera’s coup was a product of this regenerationist and ‘anti-political’ context. As Alejandro Quiroga notes, the general’s rhetoric was ‘vague and populist’.<sup>6</sup> Primo invoked regenerationist desires for economic development and populist distaste for political elites, blaming Spain’s constitutional governments for national decline and the ‘immorality’ of public life

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<sup>6</sup> Quiroga, *Making Spaniards*, p. 183.

under the *turno pacífico*, while also promising ‘good days’ ahead under military rule.<sup>7</sup> The prosperity associated with these ‘good days’ was taken to compensate for the lack of political freedom under the dictatorship, and delegitimised the pursuit of explicitly class-based political analyses, even if many groups continued to pursue their class interests under the guise of patriotism. Primo did not invent these discourses; they were recognised by Spanish citizens who had been involved in civil society mobilisations concerned with modernisation and infrastructure development under the Restoration. Their repetition by the new military dictator both encouraged these citizens to identify with the new regime as a means to achieve their goals, and to engage actively with the state to this end.

The shared ideological language of regenerationism and anti-politics shaped the nature of citizens’ engagement with the Spanish state in ways that become clearer by moving away from an analysis focused on political parties, explicitly political organisations such as trade unions, or encounters within coercive state institutions. During the Restoration period, Spanish citizens concerned with infrastructure and housing development pursued their aims through civil society mobilisations focused on particular projects they wished to see completed, or based around their socio-economic status (for example, as potential recipients of state support for the construction of affordable homes). For such citizens, the dishonest and clientelistic politics of the period made this a more effective means of engaging with the country’s governments than hoping for genuine representation through political parties engaging in electoral politics. These civil society mobilisations continued to form a more obvious means of engagement with state authorities than political parties after Primo’s coup ended even the pretence of representative parliamentary politics. Such

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<sup>7</sup> Álvarez Rey (ed.), *Bajo el fuero militar*, p. 57.

mobilisations could take the form of structured associations—such as cooperatives dedicated to affordable housing construction, Chambers of Urban Property or movements like the *Unión Regionalista Aragonesa*—or looser coalitions of interests, such as groups of residents of a village uniting to campaign for the construction of a given particular road, railway or irrigation canal, or the range of different institutions, private citizens and press outlets that pushed for regional economic development across Spain. The methods they used—directly petitioning the head of government or other state authorities, and organising public assemblies and press campaigns—also responded to the limited options for influencing policy through electoral politics, both before and after Primo’s coup. These embedded modes of political action, and assumptions about the need to secure political preferment, proved more resilient than the outward forms of the 1876 constitutional settlement, even as Primo’s destruction of the constitutional system required them to focus their efforts on engaging with the central government and the dictator himself, rather than on clientelistic networks of local *caciques*.

Citizens involved in these mobilisations deployed discursive techniques that responded to the anti-political populism current in 1920s Spain and expressed by the Primo dictatorship. Affordable housing cooperatives criticised the previous regime for having failed properly to support the interests of less well-off Spaniards, just as citizens who believed that local economic development depended on the construction of a road might complain of having been abandoned or neglected by Restoration governments. In both situations, citizens might deploy the general’s denunciation of *caciquil* corruption by suggesting that their desires had not been heeded as they conflicted with the private interests of politicians or profiteering companies. They wrote to Primo de Rivera requesting not only economic benefits, but ‘justice’. Those

members of the Aragonese intelligentsia who formed the URA, in appealing for Primo's support for their programmes of regional development, identified *caciques* as their enemies, repeated the common assertion that the previous political order was 'driving the country to ruin', and stated that 'honourable Spaniards' should avoid 'silence and inertia' and instead 'organise themselves to carry on, complete and consolidate [the dictator's] work'.<sup>8</sup>

While the new regime's condemnation of previous political elites made the use of such rhetoric expedient, the readiness with which citizens and civil society movements adopted it demonstrates the currency of this body of ideas in early twentieth-century Spain. These ideas informed how citizens responded to the advent of the Primo de Rivera dictatorship. If the regime enjoyed broad acceptance in its early stages, we should not patronisingly and anachronistically ascribe this to 'political ignorance [*incultura política*]'.<sup>9</sup> Instead, by considering the experience of the *turno pacífico*, we can conclude that citizens did not necessarily see any benefit to defending the constitutional order, that they recognised and agreed with Primo de Rivera's criticisms of the previous order, and that they felt that the coup might make state structures more representative of or responsive to their interests. Primo's invocation of regenerationist populism appeared to describe the kinds of responses to Spain's multiple political and economic crises that a significant number of citizens considered necessary or desirable.

This regenerationist and modernising policy agenda continued to animate civil society engagement with the dictatorship over its whole course. As well as seeking to address the perceived moral inadequacies of Spain's constitutional settlement, much

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<sup>8</sup> Cited in Marcuello, *Manuel Lorenzo Pardo*, pp. 136-138.

<sup>9</sup> Navajas Zubeldia, *Los cados y las comadreja*s', p. 250.



regenerationist thought was also developmentalist. Indeed, Joaquín Costa had argued at the turn of the century that *caciquismo* was inextricably linked with Spain's agrarian, oligarchic social structures, and that rural development was necessary to create a new class system less susceptible to *caciquil* clientelism.<sup>10</sup> During Primo's rule, a wide range of civil society mobilisations found that their desires could be framed in anti-political, anti-*caciquil* and populist terms, but often their fundamental requests were for economic development or measures that would support future prosperity: affordable homes, roads and railways that would facilitate exports, administrative reforms that would benefit particular groups, or the institution of large-scale rural development programmes. Julio López Iñíguez has observed that in Valencia, the *primorriverista* municipal authorities discursively established support for municipal modernisation and slum-clearing programmes as an essential criterion for 'good citizenship'.<sup>11</sup> The power of the modernising policy agenda in 1920s Spain meant that this definition of good citizenship was, in fact, a *national* phenomenon. Moreover, it was not only the state authorities—whether national, provincial or local—that peddled this conception of what it meant to be a good citizen. Regenerationist civil society organisations and the press outlets that supported them also contributed to a discourse that associated civic virtue with supporting such movements, petitioning the authorities, and performing support for any government plans that followed. Both the government and regenerationist-minded citizens contributed to the considerable cultural power of this policy agenda. As might be expected under an authoritarian regime committed to unitary Spanish nationalism, citizens pursuing this modernising policy agenda often framed their

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<sup>10</sup> Costa, *Oligarquía y caciquismo; Política hidráulica*.

<sup>11</sup> López Iñíguez, 'Populismo municipal y nacionalcatolicismo'.

desires in terms of *national* economic progress. However, records of their campaigns, assemblies and petitions show that they generally pursued particular interests—whether private, local or regional—more than fundamentally national objectives. These attempts to secure benefits for one’s locality is evident in villages’ petitioning for the course of already-planned roads to be altered to benefit different localities; in provinces’ petitions for changes to plans for new railway construction; and in the focus on the Ebro watershed displayed by citizens who developed the idea of the Hydrographic Confederations, as well as the Count of Guadalhorce’s determination that his native Guadalquivir basin should enjoy the benefits of this type of organisation. Compared to the widespread language of anti-politics, the actual objectives of citizens’ engagement with government in the area of infrastructure development suggest a more complex picture. The Primo regime reshaped the Spanish state, changing its personnel and centralising power, but a degree of reliance on political patronage persisted in how citizens related to the government. They hoped to secure private or local gain through direct contact with the powerful, using similar organisations to those that had acted as interlocutors prior to 1923. This is not to suggest that attempting to secure improvements for one’s locality should be considered unethical, but it does highlight an important point in conceptualising citizens’ relationship with the Spanish state during the 1920s. Some citizens felt that their interests were not adequately served by the Restoration system, whether due to incompetence or corruption. It was, in numerous instances, this lack of access rather than low integrity *per se* that was experienced as problematic and fed ‘anti-political’ sentiment. A change of government to a regime that condemned the previous order gave such citizens and organisations hope that they might be able to use new state structures to secure their interests, drawing them into Primo’s networks of ideological power.

Engagement with the Spanish state was productive for citizens and civil society movements influenced by ‘anti-political’, regenerationist and modernising ideas. Petitions and campaigns could secure access to government policy-makers, and sometimes aid the progress of particular projects these citizens supported. However, this interaction was also productive for the dictatorship itself. The cultural strength of the regenerationist, developmentalist policy agenda allowed the regime to use infrastructure development projects for propaganda purposes, especially where it could claim to be responsible for the completion of projects begun but delayed under the Restoration. Furthermore, citizens concerned with Spain’s economic development provided something of a long-term socio-political programme for a dictatorship that initially lacked this. This was particularly clear in the case of the encounter between the Aragonese regenerationist intelligentsia and the military authoritarians of Primo’s government that led to the formation of the Syndical Hydrographic Confederations. A discourse developed around these organisations that set out a long-term vision for an ‘anti-political’ national community, in which ordinary citizens would be inspected, instructed and their labour and habits optimised by engineering, medical and agricultural experts. These experts would ‘coordinate’ all interests in a river basin, creating prosperity that would replace political strife with apolitical industriousness on the part of citizens. While middle- and upper-middle-class citizens enhanced their social, economic and political position by gaining influence with policy-makers and power in new, technocratic structure, working-class Spaniards were expected to accept the loss of political freedoms in exchange for promises of greater national prosperity. Although this vision was most elaborated in relation to the CSHs, the more generalised pursuit of ‘national reconstitution’ (or rather, local development framed in national terms) and an end to social conflict through economic prosperity under an authoritarian regime

also supported such a vision for Spain's future. The notion that ordinary citizens should 'apolitically' follow the directions of state-appointed experts could also be used to promote, in an apparently benign manner, the acceptance of controlled mobilisation. This route to integrating citizens into the structures of the Spanish state co-existed with the nationalist discourses, symbols and ceremonies and coercive institutions associated with the nationalisation of the masses.

Finally, the dictatorship was able publicly to co-opt civil society movements that had organised themselves around objectives related to infrastructure development, as it did by granting 'official' status to the 1927 congress of affordable housing cooperatives. Such movements could be integrated into and their members mobilised as part of official regime ceremonial. Although performing a comparable function to the *Somatén* or the *Unión Patriótica* in this sense, such movements were constituted in the first instance from below, by citizens outside official state structures. These movements mobilised citizens not through a 'negative integration' into state structures through the imposition of a conservative national identity, but through campaigning around concrete issues linked to their material prosperity, generally in their locality or region. Such issues may well have been more meaningful to individual Spaniards than the abstract symbols through which coercive institutions attempted to 'nationalise the masses'. These movements existed alongside such institutions and provided apparent public support for the regime, although their objectives did not necessarily require a right-wing military dictatorship and their support was therefore more conditional on adequate progress towards infrastructure development.

Infrastructure and development policy under the Primo de Rivera dictatorship was thus not merely a tool of top-down statecraft, but a dynamic policy area in which

state and citizens—whether the latter were organised or acting as individuals—encountered each other in two-way interactions that were potentially productive for both. The relationship between state and citizens that these interactions formed was heavily influenced by the legacy of the Restoration, in both the ‘anti-political’ discourse and in the practices of petitioning and mobilisation that defined it. This relationship simultaneously drew on and reinforced the cultural power of regenerationism, especially in its developmentalist and authoritarian aspects. Importantly, these interactions and dynamics come into view as a result of taking ‘anti-political’ populism seriously on its own terms, and examining evidence relating to citizens’ actions outside formally political organisations.

This project demonstrates the usefulness of considering ‘anti-political’ populism and Spaniards’ interactions with the state outside political and coercive institutions in this period. As well as offering new perspectives on the nature and the social construction of Primo’s regime, this study also reveals dynamics that contribute to our understanding of the dictatorship’s place in Spain’s troubled political trajectory during the twentieth century. The fact that the political elites of the Restoration had brought themselves into thorough disrepute, along with regenerationist criticism of these elites, made Spanish society receptive to Primo’s ‘anti-political’ populism. This in turn helps to explain the initial acceptance of the military coup. However, this acceptance was not based entirely on a negative programme of ‘throw[ing] the ministers out of the window’.<sup>12</sup> Citizens also hoped that ejecting the politicians of the *turno pacífico* and installing a military regime might be conducive to making a positive difference to Spain’s fortunes, and to their own. Primo de Rivera came to power with a promise to ‘prepare good days for the *Patria*’ at a time when Spain was

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<sup>12</sup> Quoted in Ben-Ami, *Fascism from Above*, p. 64.

in the midst of multiple political, economic and military crises.<sup>13</sup> In this vague, populist promise of greater wellbeing, citizens disillusioned with the previous order could imagine that the change of government would create state structures more responsive to their desires for affordable housing, well-functioning railways, new roads or rural development. The nebulous rhetoric of *primorrriverismo* gave citizens with a wide range of sometimes mutually exclusive interests the hope that they would prevail.

However, reality could not match these hopes. The simplistic expedient of ejecting the dynastic parties from power did not lead to a thorough reform of the functioning of the Spanish state, meaning that broadly similar administrative processes continued under the dictatorship, and continued to be experienced as cumbersome impositions by civil society groups hoping for new affordable housing or transport infrastructure. The state's capacity for action remained limited, especially compared to the scale of the projects that citizens desired. An increased rate of affordable-home construction, for example, could not alleviate the sense of crisis given the already serious housing deficit and continued urban growth. Not all of the country's isolated communities could rapidly receive good-quality transport links, and continued complaints about such isolation throughout the decade tarnished any initial optimism following the 1923 coup. While the dictatorship was much taken with the supposed capacity of corporatist policy-making to 'harmonise all interests', this was impossible in cases where citizens held incompatible goals. Landlords and tenants might each see the possibility of their desires being accommodated in vague rhetoric, but black-and-white legislation was bound to disillusion one side or the other. In other cases, stakeholders could publicly speak the language of cooperating in the

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<sup>13</sup> Álvarez Rey (ed.), *Bajo el fuero militar*, p. 57.

national interest, while in reality working to secure their private interests and hoping for the failure of government reforms, as Spain's major railway companies did.

Finally, the benefits that were secured through public-works investment backed by heavy borrowing became untenable following the Wall Street Crash and the collapse of the peseta's value in 1929. All of these factors combined meant that the regime struggled to build a long-term basis of support among citizens initially attracted by its promises of 'rapid and radical remedies' to the country's multiple crises.<sup>14</sup> Primo de Rivera's anti-political populism could not deliver on its promises. It thus contributed to the further destabilisation of the monarchy and Spain's political system, paving the way for the polarising experience of the Second Republic.

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<sup>14</sup> Álvarez Rey (ed.), *Bajo el fuero militar*, p. 57.

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