

Unit 3: Spanish Civil War 1936-1939



What will we cover in this unit

- Long-term causes of the Spanish civil war
- Short-term causes of the Spanish civil war
- What occurred during the Spanish Civil War
- The effects of the Spanish Civil war.



The long-term causes of the Spanish Civil War

Key Question:

To what extent was the Spanish Civil War caused by long-term social divisions within Spanish Society?



Background

- The Spanish Civil War began on 17 July 1936 when significant numbers of military garrisons throughout Spain and Spanish Morocco, led by senior army officers, revolted against the left-wing Republican government
- The conspirators were joined by various groups hostile to the Republican government including monarchists, conservatives and fascist paramilitaries.
- The rebels also received assistance from the right-wing governments of Germany and Italy.



The background features a stylized, wavy representation of the Spanish flag in shades of yellow and orange. In the bottom-left corner, there is a faint watermark of the Spanish coat of arms, which includes a crown, a shield with three stripes, and a sword.

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL PROBLEMS 1900-1931

Rural Poverty

- There existed extreme polarization of wealth in many rural areas of Spain between the landlords and the landless laborers. This was particularly so in Southern Spain where the agricultural system consisted of huge estates, called latifundia, which were owned by a few wealthy landlords and worked by laborers hired by the day.
- This system kept the laborers poor because:
 - The hiring of labor by the day gave no financial security and unemployment was common
 - The operation of one-crop farming meant that the availability of work was highly seasonal, often representing only 200 days' work per year.
 - Wages were low

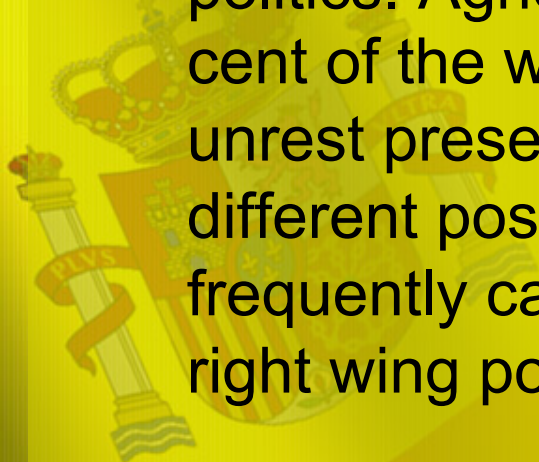


Rural Poverty

- Most rural unrest took place in southern Spain where rural hardships were most severe. Left-wing unions, which organized strikes and demonstrations against exploitative landlords, appealed to the laborers.
- Particularly popular was the socialist union, the Union General de Trabajadores(UGT) and the anarcho-syndicalist Confederacion Nacional del Trabajo(CNT), the latter of which, by 1918, had over 700,00 members.
- *Union General de Trabajadores(UGT) – General Union of Laborers, the main union of The Socialist Party.
- *Anarcho-syndicalist – An anarchic belief in which proponents desire the central authority of the state to be replaced by the operation of control by trade unions.

Rural Poverty

- *Confederacion Nacional Del Trabajo(CNT) – National Labor Confederation, an anarcho-syndicalist trade union.
- Attempts to improve conditions through strike action, however, were rarely successful, not least because landlords frequently brought in alternative laborers from outside the region to do the farm work instead.
- Agricultural issues had a significant impact on national politics. Agricultural employment constituted 45.5 per cent of the workforce by 1930 and the growth in rural unrest presented a problem for central government. The different possible solutions to the agrarian problems frequently caused serious divisions between left and right wing politicians.



Urban Poverty

- The percentage of the workforce employed in industry increased in the early twentieth century, from 21.9 percent in 1923, to 25.6 percent in 1930. Urban centers grew as a consequence, with over a million people migrating to the cities in this period. By 1930, 42 percent of Spain's population lived in towns of over 10,000 inhabitants. Spain's main industrial regions were:
 - The Basque country, for iron and steel
 - The Asturias, for coal mining
 - Catalonia, for textile industries



Urban Poverty

- Industrial workers were frequently housed in inner-city slums where rents were high and living conditions overcrowded and insanitary.
- There was no social legislation, so there was no minimum wage, no maximum working hours or protection from dangerous working conditions.
- The concentration of dissatisfied workers in Spain's cities led to the growth of trade unions and strikes.
- For the more privileged, the increase in unrest was frequently seen as evidence of the growing threat of social revolution following the successful Bolshevik Revolution in Russia.
- Urban issues, as with agrarian problems, therefore contributed to political polarization in Spain.

POLITICAL INSTABILITY



Separatism in Spain 1900-1931

- Spain was a unified country, but there was a strong tradition of separatism in Catalonia and the Basque country. Both regions prized their distinctive culture, language and history, and sought a significant degree of political autonomy.
- This separatism was centuries old, but its popularity increased with the growth in the economic importance of Catalonia and the Basque country in the twentieth century.
- Separatists argued that the significant economic contributions made by their regions were not sufficiently valued by the central government; separatists in Catalonia pointed out that only one-twentieth of Catalan contributions to state revenue were returned in public spending in the region.

Separatism in Spain 1900-1931

- Separatist parties like the Catalan **Lliga Regionalista** and the Basque **Partido Nacionalist Vasco(PNV)** grew in popularity.
- The separatist agenda proved to be another decisive issue in Spanish politics with leftist groups prepared to concede some degree of autonomy and rightists determined to preserve the unity of Spain.
- ***Lliga Regionalista** – Regionalist League, a separatist Catalan Political party.
- ***Partido Nacionalist Vasco(PNV)** – Basque Nationalist Party, a Basque Separatist political party.



The collapse of the monarchy

- Instability characterized Spanish politics in the early twentieth century. Until 1923, Spain was governed by a constitutional monarchy, although matters of government were largely carried out by the elected cortes or parliament.
- Despite the operation of universal male suffrage the system was not really democratic since elections were strongly influenced by local caciques.
- ***Cortes** – elected parliament
- ***Universal male suffrage** – when all adult males are entitled to vote in elections.
- ***Caciques** – influential local ‘bosses’, usually wealthy landlords or industrialists.

The collapse of the monarchy

- This political system was unpopular with ordinary people, not least because it failed to introduce reforms to improve their lives.
- As protest increased, those on the political right, alarmed by the prospect of left-wing government, turned to Miguel Primo de Rivera, a military official who promised to end the unrest in Spain.



The dictatorship of Primo de Rivera, September 1923 to January 1930

- Miguel Primo de Rivera came to power as the result of a military coup. He established himself as a dictator, although a virtually powerless monarch, King Alfonso XII, remained the head of state.
- Primo de Rivera was unable to heal the deep divisions in Spanish society despite introducing a number of reforms. In fact, the reforms themselves proved divisive; they were simultaneously too much for the right and too little for the left.



The dictatorship of Primo de Rivera, September 1923 to January 1930

- These reforms included:
 - Arbitration committees to manage disputes between industrial workers and their employers.
 - Government investment in programme of public works to increase job opportunities. These included the construction of the first trans-Pyrenees rail link between Spain and France.
 - Proposals to reform the army and a reduction of the army budget.
- The reforms fell far short of what was necessary to resolve Spain's serious socioeconomic problems, but were also costly, alienating both reformers and the conservative elites who resented the increased financial burden. Rivera became increasingly unpopular, prompting King Alfonso XIII to request his retirement. Rivera stepped down on 28 January 1930.



The end of the monarchy, April 1931

- After the end of Primo de Rivera's dictatorship, King Alfonso XIII hoped to gain popular support for a continuation of monarchical rule. He arranged for an election to be held on the issue.
- Contrary to his expectations, the results were an endorsement for a democratic republic. Although he refused to abdicate, he did leave Spain.



End of Section Notes

Found these on the internet that could help
you study for exams



Introduction:

- Spanish Civil War broke out in 1936
- Causes mainly deep-seated political divisions within Spanish society, although the failed reforms of the later republic government further polarized the country.
- ‘Trigger’ was assassination of Jose Soleto which catalyzed and hastened preparations for a military coup by right-wing elements of the army in Morocco.



Long-term causes

- Economic and social problems 1930-31
 - Rural poverty:
 - Extreme polarization of wealth in rural areas between landlords and landless labourers.
 - Particularly so in Southern Spain: agricultural system consisted of large estates, 'latifundia', owned by a few wealthy landlords, worked by laborers by day. System kept laborers poor:
 - Hiring of labour by day gave no financial security, unemployment common
 - Work was highly seasonal, depending on crop
 - Wages were low



Long-term causes

- Economic and social problems 1930-31
 - Rural poverty:
 - Left-wing unions appealed to laborers – Union General de Trabajadores (UGT) and anarcho-syndicalist Confederacion de Nacional de Trabajo (CNT)
 - Attempts to improve conditions through strikes were unsuccessful.



Long-term causes

- Economic and social problems 1930-31
 - Rural poverty:
 - Analysis:
 - Agricultural issues had serious impact on national politics.
 - Agricultural employment constituted 45.5% of workforce by 1930.
 - Growth in rural unrest presented problem for central government; solutions to agrarian problems frequently caused serious divisions between left and right-wing politicians. This polarized politics and laid the foundations for a future conflict.



Long-term causes

- Economic and social problems 1930-31
 - Urban poverty:
 - Percentage of workforce in industry increased in early twentieth century, 21.9% 1923 to 25.6% 1930.
 - Urban centers grew as consequence, over a million people migrating to cities.
 - Spain's main industrial areas:
 - Basque country for iron and steel
 - Asturias for coal mining
 - Catalonia for textile industries



Long-term causes

- Economic and social problems 1930-31
 - Urban poverty:
 - Industrial workers housed in inner-city slums; rents high, living conditions poor.
 - No social legislation = no minimum wage, no max working hours, no protection from dangerous working conditions.
 - Analysis:
 - Concentration of dissatisfied workers in cities led to growth of trade unions and strikes.
 - For privileged and élites, increase in unrest frequently seen as evidence for growing threat of social revolution following successful Bolshevik Revolution in Russia.



Long-term causes

- Economic and social problems 1930-31
 - Urban poverty:
 - Analysis:
 - Urban issues, like agrarian issues, therefore contributed to political polarization in Spain. This created deep-seated divisions, fears and suspicions, lay the foundations for a future conflict between opposing groups and ideals.



Long-term causes

- Political instability
 - Separatism in Spain 1930-31
 - Spain was unified country but strong tradition of separatism in Basque country and Catalonia.
 - Both regions sought significant degree of political autonomy.
 - Separatism was centuries old, but popularity increased with economic importance of Catalonia and Basque country in 20th century.
 - Separatists argued the significant economic contributions made by their regions were not sufficiently valued by the central government.



Long-term causes

- Political instability
 - Separatism in Spain 1930-31
 - Separatist parties like Lliga Regionalista grew in popularity.
 - Analysis:
 - Separatist agenda proved to be another divisive force in Spanish politics with leftist groups prepared to concede some degree of autonomy and rightists determined to preserve unity of Spain. Separatism further polarized politics within Spain and created great divisions between opposing groups. Conflict seemed likely by separatists in order to achieve autonomy.



Long-term causes

- Political instability
 - Collapse of monarchy
 - Despite operation of universal male suffrage, system was not really democratic.
 - System was unpopular with ordinary people: failed to deliver reforms to improve their lives.
 - Political right alarmed at protests and prospect of left-wing government so turned to General Primo de Rivera.
 - However, Rivera unable to heal deep divisions in Spanish society despite reforms introduced – in fact, reforms proved divisive: too much for right and too little left.



Long-term causes

- Political instability
 - Collapse of monarchy
 - Reforms fell well short of what was necessary to resolve socioeconomic problems but also costly and alienated conservative elites and reformers who resented increased financial burden.
 - Rivera became increasingly unpopular and stepped down in 1930.
 - This allowed an election to take place, resulting in a Spanish republic.
 - Analysis:
 - Led to civil war because it led to the introduction of republic governments which later failed to deliver reforms that solved Spain's problems.

