The 1930s were the decade of depression in Europe. Millions were plunged into poverty, and the political and economic structures of liberal democracy seemed powerless to relieve. Many looked to the authoritarian regimes, which, as it appeared from the outside, were enjoying greater success in the Soviet Union, and in Italy under fascism. In different ways, communism and fascism were both international movements, and both strove to undermine other democratic regimes by propaganda and by the street violence of their paramilitary gangs. Germany was especially affected, and in 1933 its conservatives attempted to forestall the threat from the Left by taking German fascism into government. Hitler and his Nazis exploited this foothold to establish their own dictatorship, eliminating democratic institutions and cracking down ruthlessly on political opponents. His rise confirmed the Left's suspicions not just of fascism but of the monarchical Right, particularly given that conservatives close to the Catholic Church had imposed their own brand of authoritarian regime in Austria. By 1936 Soviet leader Stalin was sufficiently worried to issue communists worldwide to change tack and co-operate with socialists and middle-class liberals in an all-but-bid to halt fascism.

A troubled democracy (1931–1936)

Even before King Alfonso left the country, Spain's Second Republic had been declared by popular acclaim. The country's first attempt at genuine democracy was born in very difficult circumstances, in the midst of world depression and with democracy under growing pressure throughout Europe. Insofar as it shielded Spain from the worst effects of depression, economic backwardness was now, ironically, an asset. But it could not prevent the political tension round about from seeping into Spanish affairs, especially when it resonated so strongly with internal events. For, after a period when its fate lay in the hands of its truest supporters, the Republic's politics were dominated increasingly by two aggressive and antagonistic forces whose commitment to it was questionable at best: a resurgent Right and a newly reunited Left.

The reforming years

In the confusion following the King's departure, a Provisional Government was formed. It was composed mainly of the Republicans who had plotted the monarchy's fall, a heterogeneous group who now became the decisive factor in determining the character of the new Republic. They were also the main driving force behind the many and wide-ranging changes of the 'two reforming years' (años de reformas) that followed.
The Provisional Government's composition was based on the Pact agreed at San Sebastian in 1930 (p.63). Even the, crucial addition – the Socialist PSOE (p.45) – had been represented there by two of its leading figures. All the parties involved in the Pact itself were relatively new, with the exception of the Radical Republicans (p.48) – now known merely as Radicals. Their leader, Alejandro Lerroux, had been an important secondary player in Spanish democratic politics before 1923 and it showed, in corruption and in opportunistic attempts to exploit changes in public mood (p.72). So, while his party theoretically formed the centre of the Republican bloc, it differed fundamentally from both wings, each of which was genuinely concerned with meaningful reform.

The 'Republican Right' was a party recently formed by ex-members of the old 'dynamic parties' (p.26) who had recently converted to Republicanism. Their main interest was political reform, and they had only limited support. The party's main value to its allies was to reassure the middle classes that the Republic would not damage their interests – hence the choice of its leader, Niceto Alcalá Zamora (p.63), to head the new government.

The real core of Republicanism was therefore what, in ideological terms, constituted its left wing. The leader, and archetype, of these Left Republicans was Manuel Azaña. As much an intellectual as a politician, he had close links to the '1927 generation' – the new wave of literary and artistic talent whose leading figure was Federico García Lorca. For Azaña and his colleagues, cultural considerations were of prime importance. They believed strongly in the fundamental importance of education as the basis of social change, and were almost fanatically opposed to the social influence of the Church, which they regarded as the main reason for Spain's intellectual and cultural stagnation.

The first task facing the Provisional Government was to draw up a constitution for the Republic. It was assigned to the constituent parliament (Cortes constituyentes) elected in June, in which the PSOE and the Radicals led the left and the government parties in conjunction won an overwhelming victory. As a result, most major issues were settled without great dispute. Spain was formally declared a Republic, its citizens were constitutionally assured of a long list of rights and freedoms, and sovereignty was placed in the hands of their representatives: a single-chamber parliament to be elected by universal adult suffrage, both male and female. This house would, in turn, elect the president, whose mainly ceremonial powers would include that of formally appointing a prime minister – now assumed, wrongly as it turned out (p.72), to be a formality.

Where compromise proved impossible was over the religious issue, since the Left Republicans, the third largest grouping in Parliament, joined the Socialists in taking a hard anticlerical line. Consequently Article 26 of the new Constitution not only decreed freedom of worship for all creeds, but also broke all links between Church and state, including government funding of clerical salaries (p.13). The Catholic Church's position became that of a voluntary association, subject to the law and to taxation but also to certain special restrictions, including a ban on involvement in education.

Article 26 was to become the focus of widespread conservative opposition to the government (p.71). For the moment, however, its main impact was within the government itself, whose more right-wing members, including Alcalá Zamora, resigned in protest at its provisions. Yet the differences were patched up and, once the Constitution had been approved in December, Alcalá Zamora was elected the Republic's first president. He was replaced as Prime Minister by Azaña, under whom the government set about implementing a series of ambitious reforms.

In some areas the government built on measures introduced by Primo de Rivera, whose system of joint industrial relations boards (p.59) was retained and extended, albeit under a new name (jurados mixtos). Similarly, the Socialist Prieto continued Primo's programme of infrastructure investment (p.60), to good effect. He could do so thanks to an overhaul of public finances that massively increased government income by tightening up tax collection and administration – and incidentally showed how inefficient they had been previously. Taxes themselves remained very low, with the top rate on income under eight per cent. This approach had the benefit of avoiding offence to the better-off, but also meant that funds for reform were restricted.

In other respects, such as social policy, the Republic made a sharp break with the past, notably in the legalisation of divorce. The most significant initiatives, though, came in the education field. A large-scale school-building programme was begun, aimed at bringing education to the masses for the first time. Teacher training was also greatly expanded. In line with Left Republican ideas, too, was the attempt to bring cultural experience to impoverished rural areas, through such initiatives as the establishment of libraries, and the provision of subsidies for Lorca's travelling theatre company, 'La Barraca'.

Another innovation was the government's policy towards the regions, or more precisely Catalonia, where the regionalist leader Múria (p.51) had declared an independent republic on Alfonso's departure, and had to be persuaded to back down by the Provisional Government. His payoff came in 1932, when a regional government (Generalitat) was established with much wider powers than its predecessor (p.42). Regional autonomy was now undermined by a Catalan parliament, and at the first election Múria's new party, Catalan Republican Left, won an easy victory. While this sealed Catalonia's support for the Republic, at the same time it awakened concerns among Spanish conservatives that their country was starting to break up.

Right-wing concern was also aroused by Azaña's military reforms. These were designed to create a modern Army, which inevitably meant reducing the excessive
number of officers and making promotion more dependent on ability. They were also supposed to involve modernising outdated equipment, but in the absence of a true tax reform there was no money for that. Inevitably, this aggravated the dissatisfaction caused by the other changes, and by rumours that promotion was now dependent on pro-Republican views. In August 1932 a group of right-wing officers led by General Sanjurjo attempted a coup, but it was quickly suppressed by loyal troops. The coup attempt came while the government was struggling to pass legislation not only on Catalan devolution but also on an even more controversial issue. Although the need for land reform was recognised in principle by all the government parties, its details were another matter. In the summer of 1932 discussions had reached deadlock, but the coup attempt gave them renewed impetus, and measures were agreed soon after. Unfortunately they were badly flawed.

Part of the problem was that Socialist support had to be bought by allowing estates owned by the aristocracy to be expropriated. As a vindictive reaction against the coup’s suspected supporters, the move set an unhappy precedent. It was also a meaningless gesture since, while estate owners were eligible for compensation, the government had no funds with which to pay them. In addition, the understandable emphasis on the plight of landless labourers in the south meant that the problems of northern smallholders were largely ignored. Most important of all, the extent of reform was modest in the extreme.

The land reform fiasco turned discontent on the left of the political spectrum into a major problem for the government. Throughout 1932 it repeatedly had to dispatch the security forces to deal with those who attempted, in a long-standing anarchist tradition, to take land redistribution into their own hands (p. 46). The clashes reached a tragic climax in January 1933 at the Andalusian hamlet of Casas Viejas, when 25 villagers were shot dead after they had killed several Civil Guards.

Azanía’s coalition was fatally weakened, and the Socialists increasingly distanced themselves from it under pressure from their left (p. 75). With utter hypocrisy, the Right - which previously had criticised it for being too mild in dealing with such outbreaks – also used the incident to berate the government as authoritarian. Lerroux, sensing he was aboard a sinking ship, joined in their attacks. In November, unable to command a majority in Parliament, Azanía resigned and a general election was called. Abandoned by the Republican Right, the Socialists and the Radicals, the Left Republicans also fell victim to the electoral system, which effectively ensured that only the two largest groupings in each provincial constituency could win seats. They were decimated, Azanía’s own party obtaining just five seats. The reforming years were over.

The rise of the Right

The main feature of the 1933 election was a strong swing to the Right. This reflected the extent to which the government’s various reforms, and above all its religious legislation, had provoked a fierce backlash among the more traditionalist sections of Spanish society. As a result, the parties that now took over the Republic’s government were concerned to undo the work of their predecessors. Indeed, there was widespread suspicion that the largest of them wished to overthrow the democratic regime itself.

In 1931, the Spanish Right barely existed as a political force. Primo de Rivera’s single party (p. 61-2) had melted away with its creator. The old ‘dynastic’ parties had withered under his rule, a process completed by the discredit of their raison d’être, the monarchy. Nor was the Church the bulwark it had been. The Papacy’s depression-inspired concern with social issues sat uneasily with the reactionary views of the Spanish Right. Within the country many parish priests, finding that their own financial circumstances were precarious, were sympathetic to social reform. When the head of Spain’s Church, Cardinal Segura, viciously attacked the newly proclaimed Republic, and was banned from the country as a result, the support he received from Catholics was lukewarm.

This decline in the Right’s fortunes was abruptly reversed by the adoption of the new Constitution, whose strongly anticlerical provisions (p. 69) alienated all shades of Catholic opinion and gave a target against which conservatives could campaign. Further steps in the same direction, including a ban on the Jesuits, only increased their indignation and resolve. For the first time, the Right was able to mobilise supporters en masse at rallies over large areas of the country, something which only the workers’ parties had previously managed, and then only in particular urban areas.

The catalyst for this transformation was a new political organisation, the CEDA, intended by its leader, José María Gil-Robles, to become a mass party capable of defeating the Left in a free election. Its philosophy was also new to the Spanish Right, reflecting as it did the Christian Social ideas now in favour with the Vatican, which emphasised the state’s role in providing for the less well-off. However, the CEDA had
other features that made it the object of deep distrust among its opponents.

Part of the problem was Gil-Robles's refusal to make clear his attitude to the Republican form of government. His own fervent nationalism, and the fact that he had rich backers hostile to the Republic, was well-known. Yet he refused to say whether he wanted to restore the monarchy, declaring his policy to be one of adapting to circumstances (accidentalismo). Even more worryingly, he displayed open sympathy with developments in Austria, where his fellow Christian Socials had imposed a virtual dictatorship. The government's alarm at the CEDA's rise is thus understandable. But attempting to have the party banned and its meetings broken up represented a clumsy over-reaction that only increased the CEDA's appeal to the swelling ranks of those unhappy with the course of reform.

By 1933 these included employers resentful at the extension of labour regulation (p.69), and much of the middle class, concerned that even limited land reform (p.70) might herald a threat to their own property. By no means all were particularly conservative; many were convinced Republicans, and suspicious of the Church. Their unease, along with the antagonism evoked in Castile by Catalan devolution, was picked up by the sensitive antennae of Lerroux, who swiftly positioned his Radicals to exploit it by ratting on his government colleagues (p.74).

For the 1933 election the Radicals and CEDA formed an alliance which also included smaller right-wing groups, notably the Agrarians, who enjoyed strong support among the smallerholders of Old Castile. With the help of the electoral system (p.71) the allies won a solid parliamentary majority. The CEDA was the biggest winner of all, and became the largest single party. However, President Alcalá Zamora shared the widespread suspicions of its intentions, and declined to appoint Gil-Robles as Prime Minister. As a result, during its second phase the Republic was run mainly by weak coalitions of centre parties, Radical-led but dependent on the CEDA's parliamentary support.

Known to the Left as the 'two black years' (bienio negro), from the colour associated with the Church, this period saw a concerted attempt to reverse the Azaña government's policies, in particular its anticlerical legislation. Thus, as well as repealing some social measures, such as wage regulation, and some aspects of land reform, the Radicals also reintroduced government support for the clergy's salaries - ironically, given that the Church was one of their traditional bogeys (p.48).

Another, regionalism, was anathema also to the CEDA's fierce Spanish nationalism, and became a further target for the programme of counter-reform. In the Basque Country, that involved blocking proposals put forward by the Basque Nationalist Party (PNV), previously a firm supporter of the Right. In fact, on many issues the PNV's ideas were very similar to those of the CEDA (p.43), but now, on the promise of devolution from a future government of the Left, it began campaigning alongside its traditional Socialist enemies against the central government. And in Catalonia, too, the Right was driven onto the defensive.

There, the old Regionalist League (p.42) had recovered some of its former strength in 1933, but at the subsequent regional election it was again crushed by the more radical ERC (p.70), this time for good. Emboldened by its triumph, the regional government moved to help one of its key constituents, the small tenant farmers who had been hit by the effects of economic depression. The Smallholdings Act (Ley de Cultivos) was designed to give them greater security by bolstering their rights vis-à-vis landowners, but its implications for property rights in general alarmed both the Catalan bourgeoisie and the Madrid government, which referred the Act to the Constitutional Court. By doing so it turned a class issue into something much more emotive, a national conflict between Spain and Catalonia. When the Court threw out the Act in autumn 1934, the ERC reacted in correspondingly heated terms.

The ERC's anger was directed chiefly at the Radicals, who had already been weakened by the defection of a faction, led by deputy leader Martínez Barrio, which objected to the party's U-turn on religious policy. Sensing an opportunity, Gil-Robles brought down the government, and made the CEDA's entry into its successor the price of his continuing support. It was a fateful decision, being used by the Left to justify an attempted revolution (p.76). That in turn set off a spiral of increasingly undemocratic behaviour on both sides of the political spectrum, which ended in war.

Already Lerroux had set the bad example. Pallid former Primo supporters banned from politics by the Azaña government could be interpreted as a gesture of reconciliation; his amnesty for those involved in the 1932 coup attempt could not (p.70). But the new, CEDA-dominated administration's reaction to the 1934 'revolution' plunged new depths of vindictiveness and bias. Thousands of ordinary workers were put on trial, many for relatively minor offences, while the left-wing press was censored and Catalan autonomy suspended. Efforts were even made to implicate Azaña in the rising, when in fact he had tried to calm the situation. Yet the many, and manifestly well-founded claims of Army brutality were not even investigated.

The CEDA's performance in other areas of government was initially less partisan. In some - public works, the status of leaseholders, provision of low-cost rented housing - its Christian Social ideas inspired policies that were little different from those of the Azaña era. However, as the effects of depression, and Gil-Robles's insistence on maintaining military spending, made budget cuts inevitable, his party's line hardened, with education suffering badly. But it was above all the complete reversal of land policy, which now blatantly favoured big landowners that made the CEDA look downright reactionary. Indeed, Gil-Robles's promotion of extreme right-wing generals, and his talk of a 'revolution' to return Spain to its roots, gave weight to
The Left's argument that it did not merit treatment as a democratic party.

For some on the Right, though, the CEDA was too cautious. Nominally they were monarchists, but, for most, the real issue was not so much the Republic's lack of a king as its reformist nature. Their feelings lacked a vehicle until, in May 1934, the charismatic José Calvo Sotelo returned from exile (p62). He gave the far Right a new impetus with his vigorous verbal attacks not just on the Republic, but on Gil-Robles for 'treacherously' propping it up. Like his contacts with seditionists, they made the undemocratic nature of his intentions clear to all, supporters and opponents.

Gil-Robles's plans were now approaching fulfilment. The four-year moratorium imposed by the Constitution on amendments to its text would soon be up, and he could move to repeal Article 26. But his moment never came. In late 1935 Lerroux's political career was ended by financial scandal: without his leader the Radicals fragmented and the government fell. Again, President Alcalá refused to countenance a CEDA-led administration, and called an election for February 1936. In total, the Right obtained more votes than in 1933, but its parliamentary strength was decimated, since the enmity between Gil-Robles and Calvo Sotelo prevented the close co-operation between their parties that the electoral system made essential (p71). For the Radicals, such techniques were irrelevant, in common with the rest of the centre; their support in the country simply vanished.

The reunification of the Left

In 1936 the Right's opponents reaped the reward of standing as a united bloc, in contrast to their fragmentation in 1933. That had been caused by the workers' disillusion with Republican reforms, and its increasingly radical expression. The process of radicalisation was accelerated by the election of a right-wing government, and culminated in an attempted revolution. Its failure, and the government's brutal reaction to it, opened the way for a reunification of the Left as a whole.

In the changing pattern of relations between the Left the Socialists played a crucial role. Given the absence of an anarchist party (p46), they were the only means by which the Left's working-class support was represented in the Parliament, which had become the centre of political life. They were also the link between the workers' movement as a whole and the Republicans, with whom anarchists mainly refused to talk. The main channel for such contacts was the Basque Socialist leader Indalecio Prieto, one of those who attended the signing of the San Sebastian Pact (p63). Thereafter he persuaded the PSOE to drop its policy of non-co-operation with middle-class parties (p45) – overcoming the reservations of party leader Julián Besteiro among others – and to join the Republic's Provisional Government (p68).

While he argued that the Republic would bring in the reforms the PSOE had always seen as the prerequisite for a revolution (p45), Prieto's real reason for co-operating with it was pragmatic: that the alternative was much worse. Pragmatism also weighed heavily with the Socialist movement's trade union wing, the UGT (p59), which found that state-sponsored labour regulation brought the same advantages as under the Primo regime, only in greater measure; civil service jobs for union officials, and the title as well as the functions of Labour Minister for the UGT leader, Francisco Largo Caballero. As a bonus, it was able to secure a further rise in membership by offering workers access to – often favourable – arbitration procedures.

Such access remained the preserve of the UGT because Spain's other large labour organisation, the anarcho-syndicalist CNT (p47), continued to boycott arbitration. Its attitude was dictated by the traditional anarchist view that all governments, dictatorial or democratic, were equally bad (p46). Even so, amidst the euphoria of 1931 many anarchists forgot their disdain for 'bourgeois' elections and voted, mainly for the PSOE. In the same year a group of prominent anarcho-syndicalists led by Ángel Pestaña issued a manifesto in which they argued against an immediate revolution. But they and their supporters (treintístas) were overwhelmingly defeated, and expelled from the CNT.

For the next two years, anarchism was in thrall to its terrorist tradition, represented by the Iberian Anarchist Federation (p60). Attacks on property were common, often accompanied by waves of political strikes; Barcelona, Seville and Saragossa were especially affected. With the government's failure to legislate an effective programme of land reform, the focus of violence shifted to the countryside (p70). In 1932 the Alto Llobregat area of Catalonia was briefly 'liberated' from government control. Andalusia was another hotbed, with the tragic incident at Casas Viejas merely the worst of many (p71).

Its attitude hardened by the government's tough response to such activities, in 1933 the CNT urged its followers 'Don't vote', an injunction most were happy to obey. In theory, the Right-wing government's abstention helped to elect was meant to provoke a spontaneous revolution. In practice, its effect on most anarchists was another blow of the periodic disillusion to which their movement had always been prone.

In the meantime, the failure of land reform had affected Socialists as well, provoking the PSOE to leave the government. The UGT, terrified of losing rural members to the CNT, changed its line even more dramatically. Abandoning his habitual caution, Largo Caballero began to talk of an imminent workers' revolution. After the Right’s election victory he set up a semi-secret Workers' Alliance (Alianza Obrera), with the aim of uniting militants from both wings of the workers' movement under UGT leadership. He also stepped up his inflammatory rhetoric, warning that he would regard the CEDA's
admission to government as a fascist takeover. When it occurred (p.73), he was forced to back his words with deeds.

Largo Caballero's call for a 'revolutionary strike' was catastrophic. Dispirited anarchists mainly ignored it, with particularly damaging effects in Catalonia. There, the ERC regional government had also boxed itself into a corner with interemtive attacks on the Madrid authorities (p.73), and was dragged along in Largo's wake. The regional premier, Lluís Companys, reluctantly declared Catalonia a free Republic within federal Spain, but fewer workers rallied to his support and, even worse, the Catalan police controlled by his own party helped to crush those who did. 'Free' Catalonia survived less than a day; in most of Spain the uprising was over even more quickly.

Only in Asturias did the 'October revolution' get off the ground. There anarchists, and Communists, who were well represented among the local miners, backed Largo's Alliance. For a week they controlled the coalfield area. Even when the government sent in hardened units of the Moroccan army, the miners put up determined resistance which ended only after several thousand had been killed or wounded. Their resistance gave the Left a powerful symbol. But it derived more concrete benefit from the government's overreaction to events (p.73), which not only drew workers together but also unleashed a wave of sympathy for them among Left Republicans (p.68).

The 1934 uprising thus provided a foundation on which to rebuild the unity of 1931, a process initiated by Azaña. Founding a new party, 'Republican Left', he toured the country speaking in favour of a renewed alliance. He found a willing ally in Prieto, who swung chauvinist Socialists behind the notion of a Popular Front to fight the 1936 election. Its programme was simple: resumption of reforms, release of imprisoned strikers and an amnesty for those involved in the 'October revolution'. On that platform the Front won a narrow lead in votes, which was converted by the electoral system (p.71) into a large parliamentary majority.

Although the Front as a whole was broader than the alliance that had formed the 1931 Provisional Government (p.68), its Republican base was markedly depleted. Its real strength lay in the working-class support that the CNT had, unprecedentedly, helped to mobilise by calling on its supporters to vote. But, as before, that backing was represented almost exclusively by the POE. It was therefore disastrous that pressure from Largo Caballero prevented his party from entering the new government.

Without the Socialists it looked like a minority administration, its only parliamen-

tary base being that of the Republican MPs, whose meagre numbers actually over-represented their popular support. Even worse, its main law and order instrument was the Assalto Guards (Guardias de Asalto). Set up in 1931 because of doubts about the existing security forces' loyalty to the Republic, they had since fallen under the control of the Socialists, becoming a sort of party militia. As a result, a succession of weak cabinets were constantly attacked by the Right as unrepresentative and partisan.

The new government provided grounds for such charges by following the bad example of their right-wing predecessors (p.73). The 'revolutionaries' of 1934 were not just pardoned but fêted, and press censorship was aimed almost exclusively at the conservative press. As well as allowing such actions as Azaña succumbing to the mood of hysteria, talking of radical reform in terms calculated to alarm even moderate conservatives. But he remained the Republicans' greatest asset, and when they appointed him President in place of the officious Alcalá Zamora they only worsened their plight. Day-to-day government was left in the charge of Santiago Casares Quiroga (p.68), who was quite inadequate for the task.

By this time, in any case, the government was no longer in control of events. Admittedly Catalan autonomy was restored, and work began on similar devolution for Basques and also Galicians; even land reform (p.70) was reintroduced and pursued with some vigour. But the real force for change on the land now was the seizure of estates by farmworkers convinced that the Front's victory meant that revolution had come. The Socialists made little attempt to disapprove them. In the cities, too, politics was becoming a spiral of street violence between organised gangs, including those of the openly fascist Falange (p.84). Their appearance indicated how the division into two camps apparent in 1933 had been widened and polarised.

On the Left this could be seen in the growing strength of the Communists, to whom the Socialist youth organisation defected en bloc. Largo Caballero was speaking of revolution in fierier terms than ever; on May Day he presided over a massive parade whose banners demanded a workers' government and lauded the Soviet Red Army. Meanwhile, on the Right, Gil Robles' gradualist strategy (p.72) was to retreat; his own party's youth wing defected to the Falange and his leader's mantle passed to the more extremist Calvo Sotelo (p.74), who had plans in place for a military-backed coup. On 13 July 1936 they were pre-empted when Calvo Sotelo was murdered by Assalto Guards avenging a colleague killed by the Falange. It was the spark that lit the country alight.

Summary of main points

The reforming years

- The Republic's 1931 Constitution was mostly uncontroversial and impeccably democratic, but its religious provisions (Article 26) imposed significant restrictions on the Catholic Church that were, at best, ill-judged.
- Like the Constitution, the next two years of the Republic's course were effectively determined by an alliance between Left Republicans and the Socialists, under the leadership of Azaña.
• During this time a range of significant reforms were carried out, most notably a massive expansion of the education system and the granting of devolution to Catalonia. However, neither military nor land reform was carried through successfully; while the first alarmed the Right in principle, the disastrous failure of the second alienated much of the Left, and led to the government’s fall.

The rise of the Right
• The Right, moribund at the Republic’s outset, was revived by opposition to the Constitution’s anticlerical provisions. As a result, the CEDA became the first Spanish right-wing party to attract a mass support.
• Despite winning the 1933 election, the CEDA initially remained outside government because of justified suspicions that it was anti-democratic. But for the next two years it was the driving force behind attempts to dismantle and reverse many of the earlier reforms, and behind reprisals after the failed 1934 ‘revolution’.
• Even so, many ‘monarchists’ considered the CEDA to be too moderate; the resultant split led to the Right being defeated at the 1936 election.

The reunification of the Left
• In 1931 the Socialist PSOE joined the new government, while even some anarchists supported it. However, both groups were alienated by the failure of land reform and split with their Republican allies.
• The Right’s 1933 victory led to a further radicalisation; the following year the Socialists, along with Catalan regionalists, staged the disastrous ‘October revolution’, which was brutally crushed.
• The failure of this uprising, and the government’s vicious reaction to it, laid the basis for a renewed and broadened alliance between the workers’ movement as a whole, regionalists and Republicans.
• This Popular Front won the 1936 election, but once in power proved unable to stem either anarchist land seizures or street-fighting fomented by extremists on both sides.