THE SPANISH LABYRINTH

SECOND EDITION

THE SPANISH LABYRINTH

AN ACCOUNT OF THE SOCIAL AND POLITICAL BACKGROUND OF THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR

BY

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FOREWORD BY SIR RAYMOND CARR

The publication of Gerald Brenan's *The Spanish Labyrinth* in 1943 turned an indifferent novelist and second-rate poet, known only to a limited circle of friends and admirers, into a cultural hero. Apart from squeals from outraged Catholics – Brenan later took a more favourable view of the Catholic church as the bastion of the Spanish 'intractability' he admired – and from the far right, the reviews verged on the ecstatic. The book was hailed 'as one of the most brilliant political and social studies in many years' (*Chicago Sunday Tribune*), as 'the essence of Spain' (*Manchester Guardian*). Then, in the 1960s, after the publication of a Spanish translation in Paris which was quickly smuggled into Francoist Spain, it became a sacred text for the democratic opposition to Franco. *The Labyrinth*, as it were lived two lives. One in the Anglo-Saxon world and another in Spain itself.

Its instant success in the Anglo-Saxon world can be explained by the extraordinary fact that in 1943 modern Spain was the only major European country lacking a history which was not a barren political chronicle; lacking any analysis of social structures or the class struggle, such dry compilations were dismissed by Marx as mere 'court histories'. Brenan was obsessed with the unique nature of Spanish society, and since his left-wing leanings led him to treat working-class movements at length and with sympathy, his book reflected these social concerns. It

therefore came as a revelation to my generation, still scarred by the memory of the defeat of the democratic Republic in the Spanish Civil War and bitterly hostile to a regime whose public support of the Axis powers in the Second World War was notorious. It seemed the definitive interpretation of modern Spain.

Gerald Brenan had settled in Spain in the 1920s partly because it was a cheap country in which he could hope to survive on his army pension. But there was a deeper psychological drive that was to colour his whole vision of Spain: the desire to escape the stifling social and sexual hypocrisies of British bourgeois society and, like the Romantics before him, he found in Spain a refuge from the anonymity of industrial society, a country of intense communal life marked by the persistence of a *social* egalitarianism which had been lost in the competitive, capitalist, technocratic civilizations of Western Europe. Spaniards, Napoleon had argued 'are like any other people; they do not form a class apart'. To Brenan this constituted a tremendous error. Already in Yegen, the village in the Alpujarras where he had settled, he set about an intense process of self-education, reading widely in Spanish history and literature. The shock of the Civil War crystallized his long brooding on the uniqueness of Spanish history. 'The Civil War was the explosion in the powder magazine that had been slowly accumulating' (p. xxviii). Given the sorry state of Spanish historiography at the time, his account of the tensions that exploded in 1936 is an astonishing achievement.

There is first the failure of the Restoration Monarchy (1875–1931) to create a viable democratic polity. He was the first British historian to analyse *caciquismo*: the

perversion of universal suffrage whereby the Minister of the Interior 'made' elections relying on the local bosses – the *caciques* – to bring in the vote. A multitude of studies by Spanish historians have shown us the mechanics of the system; but Brenan's picture still stands. It is enlivened by sympathetic portraits of the great protagonists: of Cánovas del Castillo, the architect of the false constitutionalism of the Restoration; of Antonio Maura who sought to destroy *caciquismo* by a conservative revolution from above that would put the artificial political structures into contact with the 'vital forces' of Spanish society – Unamuno's 'real' Spain. But the system could not be saved and Brenan believed that Alfonso XIII, by his intrigues, was largely responsible for its final collapse – a harsh judgement, since the petty quarrels of the dynastic parties made any attempt to create a stable government almost impossible. It was Alfonso's support of the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera (1923–30) that doomed the monarchy and assured the triumph of the Republic.

What is remarkable about Brenan's account of the Second Republic of 1931–6 is the fairness that has enabled it to stand the test of time. Brenan's support of the Republic against the victorious Nationalists in the Civil War was unflinching, but amidst the polemics of the time his account stands out as surprisingly impartial. He makes no bones about the determination of the landowning oligarchs of the right to destroy a democratic Republic that threatened its interests. But he cannot forgive the Republic for failing to solve the agrarian problem – to Brenan *the* major social problem which had to be solved if the Republic was to survive. By the time he wrote the preface to the 1952 edition of *The Labyrinth* he confessed

that he felt 'less patient with the folly of the Republicans in attacking the church'. It was this attack which gave the right its war cry 'Religion in danger' and strengthened Gil Robles' CEDA, a coalition of conservative parties, out to replace the democratic Republic by some quasi corporative regime. In October 1934 President Alcala Zamora admitted three minor members of the CEDA to the government: 'all the disasters that have followed', Brenan writes, 'may be traced to this one unhappy decision'.

To resist what they regarded as the first step towards fascism the workers rose in Asturias and the Catalans staged a futile coup to install a Catalan State. For Brenan, the subsequent savage repression of the Asturian workers by the Foreign Legion and Moorish troops revealed the true nature of the right. He had a particular interest in atrocity stories – his wife coined the phrase that they were the pornography of war; the right in 1934 invented atrocity stories, the rape of nuns and murder of priests in order to 'produce an atmosphere in which a terrible vengeance could be taken'. If Brenan's account of 1934 and the Civil War, which he treats in a brief final chapter, has a fault it is his denial of any genuine convictions or mass support to the right. It is simply wrong to argue that the Nationalists lacked any of the 'exhilaration' and enthusiasm that were evident on the Republican side, at least during the first six months of the war. Republican enthusiasm weakened with defeat as Nationalist enthusiasm waxed with victory, sustained by a genuine religious revival and exploited by Franco's propaganda machine. Nor, as Brenan argues, could an armistice have been forced on Franco in 1938–9 by a reversal of British support for the 'stupid and cynical farce of non-intervention'

(p. 540). Franco was set on nothing short of unconditional surrender and the total destruction of liberal democracy as 'anti Spain' as the condition of his own uncontested rule as Caudillo by the Grace of God. Though he was later to modify his views, in 1942 he seemed to have no premonition that Franco had come to stay until his death; he was 'merely one general among many who had come to power through an accident and who was singularly lacking in all führer-like qualities' (p. 540). The Spanish individualism he so admired would reject authoritarianism: 'in a country where half the population sits in cafés and criticises the Government no dictator can prosper for long' (p. 134). He occasionally lapses into such superficial judgements as when he argues that the generals rose against Isabella II in 1868 'because she had chosen a lover who was not in the Guards'.

Such misjudgements – usually explicable by Brenan's own convictions and easily recognizable by his readers today as conditioned by the passions of the time – are less important than the validity and originality of his interpretation of the peculiar and exceptional nature of Spanish history.

There can be no doubt that Brenan inherited and manipulated the stereotypes of the Romantics. Spain is the land of the *patria chica*, the local community to which Spaniards owe their primary allegiance; and only if we realize this can we understand Spanish society and, by extension, Spanish politics. Spain's 'normal condition', he writes in his first preface, 'is a collection of small, materially hostile or indifferent republics held together in a loose federation'. It acts in unison only when 'infected' by a common idea. Once fused by Catholicism,

when that fails it falls into particularisms – here the influence of Ortega's *España Invertibrada* is evident, even more so, that of Richard Ford, whose guidebook published in the 1840s Brenan much admired. To Ford 'localism' was the key to Spanish history: Spain was a 'bundle of small bodies held together by a rope of sand'. They unite against a foreign body but once the foreigner is expelled they 'fall to loggerheads against each other'. Spaniards, therefore, in Brenan's view, are in search of a unifying idea. Once the church lost its influence, the working classes found that idea in anarchism and socialism. Brenan's treatment of anarchism and its social roots is the most striking and novel feature of *The Labyrinth*. His description of the day labourers of the Andalusian *latifundia* as the most wretched proletariat of Western Europe is unforgettable and unmatched to this day. They are the subjects of waves of millenarian enthusiasm. There can be no doubt that the anarchist's rejections of bourgeois lifestyles, from prostitution to the use of money, appealed deeply to Brenan. He tended to overlook that, as the Marxist historian Tufion de Lara put it, landless labourers caught up in the anarchist movements were struggling less for some collectivist utopia than for an extra peseta a day or the right for a break to smoke a cigarette. Brenan has proved a false prophet: anarchism, with all its obvious faults of which he was well aware, embodied, he argued, peculiar Spanish virtues in placing 'the spiritual things of life above material comforts' – principles that must be recognized 'if Spain is to become a great and united nation'. Anarchism is dead and Spain has become a consumer society *par excellence* under a socialist government.

Yet none of this matters. Brenan's account of working-class movements remains a classic based on a meticulous examination of difficult sources. His emphasis on the *patria chica* is misguided and is in part responsible for leading a generation of social anthropologists to seek the essence of Andalusia, Spain etc. in isolated village communities; yet it did yield insights into Spanish social mores. He enriched, and in a sense modernized, the Romantic stereotypes he had inherited. The collectivist tradition which Brenan saw as providing a base for a socialist agricultural reform remains encapsulated in the works of Joaquin Costa, the Aragonese polymath, 'regenerationist' and chronicler of Spain's collectivist experiences whom Brenan quotes frequently, rather than embodied in laws of the present government. Nevertheless, his detailed description of the agrarian Spain of the 1930s determined by climate (the division between 'wet' and 'dry' Spain) and an oppressive system of land tenure (whether the *minifundia* of Galicia or the great estates of the *latifunda* south) retains an immediacy that still compels even if the agrarian question is no longer a problem that would provoke a Civil War, since it has been 'solved' by emigration and capitalist techniques.

What makes *The Labyrinth* live for all of us are the insights of a strange and complex character. Brenan forced himself to become an historian and always distrusted professional historians as dry-as-dust men, even if he occasionally showed them an absurd deference, as when he professed an inclination to come and work with me at Oxford. He wished to be remembered as a novelist and his set pieces reflect this. His portrait of the young army officer, stuck, underpaid, in the boredom of a

provincial garrison, ready to follow the first general who rises against politicians who are dishonouring the *patria*, remains as vivid in my mind as when I first read it some fifty years ago. Or take the portrait of Primo de Rivera, the bohemian dictator who abhorred new clothes and fingered a silk shirt with horror. He much admired Gibbon, the historian and gentleman of leisure: like Gibbon, he relegates some of his sharpest observations to his footnotes. Take his footnote on the crop of miracles – communists falling dead after firing at a Crucifixion, relics saved from the flames etc. – that flourished after the church burnings of 1931; 'Miracles never go out of date in Spain and during the next few years there was to be no lack of them' (p. 388n). Many footnotes are based on personal experience and are invaluable – for instance a long footnote on social tensions in Andalusia in the spring of 1933 (p. 418). We are brought up with a jump to a realization of the wretched state of Andalusia when we are told that Ejica, a town of 30,000 people, has 'far worse shops than Wantage' with its 4000 inhabitants (p. 189n). It is in his footnotes that he reveals the width of an erudition that extends far beyond the modern era: the repeated hoeing of Andalusian crops goes back to the Arabs in the twelfth century; it was recommended by Kutsami, quoted by Abu Zacaría. What makes *The Labyrinth* a classic is the sense of immediacy derived from personal observation and experience together with a constant awareness of the way the past, as it were, sticks through the present. It is a rare combination.

January 1993.

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

This book was written during and immediately after the Civil War. It was often difficult to get the material I needed and still more difficult, in the heated atmosphere of Spanish politics, to rely upon what I got. I had, too, to contend in my own mind with strong feelings and prejudices, for I had taken sides in the war in support of the Republic against the Nationalist Movement. Those who remember the intense passions aroused all over the world by this conflict will understand how difficult it was to see Spanish affairs objectively. Yet I tried to do so, for my object in writing this book was not to justify the side I supported, but rather to explain to myself and to others how things had turned out as they did. I especially wished to make clear the mistakes and illusions of the Spanish Left, for they were the people who, on the whole, seemed to me to have the greatest amount of justice and decency on their side and, since most persons of good will in other countries supported them and their cause was also that of the Democracies, the lessons to be learned from their failure might find a wide audience. Not of course that I claimed to see further at the time than the actors in these events, but that in the course of writing about them, the mistakes stood out and demanded to be taken notice of.

On rereading this book to-day, nine years after it was finished, I naturally find some things in it that I would like to change. Errors of fact have been corrected, but

passages which require rewriting or amplifying have had to be left as they are. The chapter I am least satisfied with is that which deals with the struggle between the Liberals and the Church. A national Church, even when it has fallen far below what is expected of it, has resources of a different kind from those of a political party. It is not to be judged, as we Anglo-Saxons are apt to suppose, as a sort of divinely appointed ethical society, whose health and vigour depend solely upon the religious spirit of its members. At its lowest it occupies a key position in the social pattern of the country, from which, especially in agricultural communities, it cannot easily be displaced. Then, if it is a Catholic Church, it has a certain unsuspected power of rising and expanding, because it provides something for which there is an increasing demand in times of stress. This is especially true in Spain, where a destructive and sceptical frame of mind is accompanied, often in the same person, by a deep longing for faith and certainty.

My mistake in this chapter was to take up a too exclusively moral and political attitude. The Spanish Church has a vitality which its conduct does not suggest. When one has finished pointing out its narrowness, its obstinacy, its talent for making enemies, as well as its incapacity for adapting itself to modern times, there is still a good deal left to be said. At all events it is the power which remains in the field when wars and revolutions are over, when everything else has failed, the parent to whom the Prodigal, not entirely willingly, returns.

It is true that a Church as rigid and uncompromising as the Spanish Church is not conceivable in France or Italy. But is not that the case with almost every other Spanish

body and institution? The Spaniards who most strongly object to it – the intellectuals and the Liberals – are precisely those who wish to see their country more European. That, no doubt, if one has been bom a Spaniard, is a sensible ideal, yet, seen from this side of the Pyrenees, the chief virtue of Spain may be thought to lie in its intractability. Death by monotony, by sameness, by loss of identity is – if we are spared destruction in another war – the fate held out by the brave new world of universal control and amalgamation. Against that death Spain will put up a long drawn out resistance.

As regards the rest of the book, I have little to say. So far as I am aware, no new material has appeared to affect the account I have given of the events which led up to the Civil War. Nor have my opinions upon these events changed in any important particular. I feel more sympathetic than I did to General Primo de Rivera, though it is certain that, as I have pointed out, his brief age of gold was a consequence of the American boom; and I feel less patient with the folly of the Republicans in attacking the Church, neglecting the land question and generally overestimating their own strength. But these are matters of degree and if I were to rewrite this book to-morrow, I should not do so very differently. Of the folly and wickedness of the Military rising, dependent as it was upon foreign assistance, there can to-day be no two opinions. With a little patience the Right would have gained much of what it sought without a war, for the Popular Front was breaking up rapidly through its inner discords, and a revolution from the Left had already been tried and had failed. But the Nationalist leaders had had their heads turned by Nazi Germany: they wanted nothing less than a

complete victory with the annihilation of their enemies; and their followers, who in any case had no choice, were frightened. The result was a civil war which has ruined Spain for half a century.

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

Nearly ninety years ago Karl Marx observed that the knowledge of Spanish history in his time was altogether inadequate. 'There is perhaps', he wrote, 'no country except Turkey, so little known to and so falsely judged by Europe as Spain.' And he went on to explain that this was because historians 'instead of viewing the strength and resources of these peoples in their provincial and local organization have drawn at the source of their court histories'. These remarks still have a good deal of truth in them. The standard histories of the Peninsula give a false impression of the events they describe. And this is due chiefly to one thing. Spain, both economically and psychologically, differs so greatly from the other countries of Western Europe that the words of which most history is made – feudalism, autocracy, liberalism, Church, Army, Parliament, trade union and so forth – have quite other meanings there to what they have in France or England. Only if this is made clear, only if each piece of the political and economic machine is separately described, only if the provincial questions are fully gone into and the interactions of all the local and sectional organizations on one another are brought to light will anything like a true impression be arrived at.

The first point to be noticed is the strength of provincial and municipal feeling. Spain is the land of the *patria chica*. Every village, every town is the centre of an intense

social and political life. As in classical times, a man's allegiance is first of all to his native place, or to his family or social group in it, and only secondly to his country and government. In what one may call its normal condition Spain is a collection of small, mutually hostile or indifferent republics held together in a loose federation. At certain great periods (the Caliphate, the Reconquista, the Siglo de Oro) these small centres have become infected by a common feeling or idea and have moved in unison: then when the impetus given by this idea declined, they have fallen apart and resumed their separate and egoistic existence. It is this that has given its spectacular character to Spanish history. Instead of a slow building up of forces such as one sees in other European nations, there has been an alternation between the petty quarrels of tribal life and great upsurges of energy that come, economically speaking, from nowhere.

The main political problem has therefore always been how to strike a balance between an effective central government and the needs of local autonomy. If too much force is applied at the centre, the provinces revolt and proclaim their independence: if too little, they withdraw into themselves and practise passive resistance. At the best of times Spain is a difficult country to govern. And it happens that this difficulty has been accentuated, if it has not been caused, by one thing. Castile, which by its geographical position and its history represents the centralizing tradition, is a barren tableland, poor in agriculture, in minerals and in industry. The provinces of the sea border are all much richer and more industrious. Thus though Spain can only be held together by Castile – for a Spain governed from Barcelona, Bilbao or Seville is

unthinkable – the Castilians lack the industrial and commercial dynamism to provide an effective economic organization. Their outlook is military and authoritarian, and the richer and more industrious provinces have been quick to realize that, so long as they are governed by Castile, not only their local liberties but also their economic interests will be sacrificed. There have no doubt been partial exceptions to this – the reign of Carlos III (who was brought up in Italy) and the Dictatorship of Primo de Rivera (an Andalusian) stand out – but in general one may say that the principal cause of Spanish separatism has been the industrial and commercial apathy of the Castilians. How else can one explain the fact that at a time when modem methods of production and communication were welding together the European nations and when the small states of Germany and Italy were uniting, the separatist tendencies in Spain were becoming more acute?

There is often however something to be said for living out of one's age. The concentration of the social forces of a country into small local groups brings compensations. By their failure to form a politically homogeneous nation Spaniards have preserved a kind of life which was common in the Middle Ages and in antiquity, but which modern men, the children of small families and diffuse societies, have lost. Most of the qualities we admire them for come from this. Their vigour and independence of character, the quickness and completeness of their response to any social situation, their emotional integrity, their gift of words – and, one should add, their chronic indiscipline – are all due to the fact that they have gone on living the intense life of the Greek city-state or Arab tribe

or medieval commune. Instead of the agora, there is the club and café. Politics are municipal or tribal and in this sense real – that the man on the losing side pays a forfeit. Hence the political acuteness which strikes even the most superficial observer of the Spaniards, but hence too the ineffectuality. Even the best minds among them rarely escape sufficiently from the web of personal relations to dominate the scene around them. The same causes that have made Spaniards the most vigorous and human people in Europe have condemned them to long eras of political stagnation and futility.

It goes without saying that the tendency of the country to divide up its life into small local compartments has not excluded other lines of cleavage. There has also been a class stratification and a class struggle. But even this has been deeply affected by the provincial question. Thus, to take only the simplest case, one finds in those provinces where there were autonomist leanings among the bourgeoisie, that the working classes adopted a wildly expansive and liberty-loving form of socialism known as anarchism, whereas in Castile they preferred a severely authoritarian and centralizing Marxism. Even the Marxist heretics (the 'Trotskyist' P.O.U.M.) hailed from Catalonia. It might be thought that the rise of Liberalism in Castile in the last century was an exception to this. But Liberalism reached Madrid from Andalusia and was accepted by the Castilians when they saw what use they could make of it. They found it not only strengthened the Castilian bourgeoisie by handing over to them the Church lands and common lands free of all feudal embarrassments, but that it provided them with an instrument of government of strongly centralizing tendencies. The

one element in the Constitution which gave some measure of local autonomy, the provision for the free election of the Municipal councils, was suppressed as soon as the Carlists had been safely defeated, whilst the difficulty presented by the clause in the constitution requiring general elections to the Cortes was got over by the organization of local bosses or caciques, who saw to it that only the Government nominees got in. Thus the triumph of the Liberal Party failed to bring any of the characteristic features of parliamentary Liberalism. Spain continued to be ruled by the landlords, who alone held all the political power. The real Liberals, the petite bourgeoisie of the South and East, found themselves left out in the cold and condemned to a sterile ferment of radical and federal propaganda, with occasional revolutions, till the end of the century. The seed they had sown was then reaped by the Anarchists.

It is thus clear that the pattern of political forces in Spain has been determined throughout by geography. In the East and South there was Catalan nationalism among the middle classes and anarcho-syndicalism among the factory workers and agricultural labourers – both movements that lay stress on liberty. In Castile there was an authoritarian Catholic conservatism based on land tenure and an equally authoritarian Marxism that drew its strength from land hunger. In the North there were autonomist movements linked to an ultra-Catholic, agrarian creed known as Carlism. Even such widely felt movements as Republicanism had a regional background, because, however centrally minded its leaders might be, however Castilian in their outlook, they could only reach and hold power with the aid of Catalonia. Just as the

Carlists, for all their autocratic ways, had been forced to promise the Basques and Navarrese their historic *fueros*, so the Republicans and Socialists of 1931, Castilians to the marrow almost all of them, were obliged to grant the Catalans a very high degree of autonomy. Indeed, as their enemies increased their pressure against them, they were compelled to go farther and to hand out autonomy statutes to the Basques and Galicians as well – an example of the fact that every popular movement, every Republican régime in Spain, tends under pressure of events to become federal and that the farther it carries its federal programme, the weaker it becomes, because it has parted with power to the provinces. Military revolts, on the contrary, which also (unless they have foreign aid) require the Catalan springboard, are able to go back on their promises as soon as they are established in power, because they rule by force and not by consent.

But what was it that made these various parties into which Spain was divided so incapable of coming to terms with one another? As well explain why it is that the nations of Europe find it so difficult to live in harmony. Spain is a miniature Europe and the Spaniards are great power lovers. This comparison, however, must not lead one to exaggerate the separatist sentiments of the different provinces. Even Catalans feel themselves to be Spaniards. The force behind every autonomist movement in the Peninsula is the discontent of the petite bourgeoisie at the narrow and impecunious groove in which they live. The root of their local jingoism is economic. But the peculiar intertwining of provincial and social issues and the balance of power tactics adopted by the Governments at Madrid have helped very greatly to increase the

tension. One may see this best in the case of Barcelona, where Conservative Governments systematically built up the power of the revolutionary working classes in order to keep in check the middle classes, who were clamouring for autonomy, and even, on one occasion, when the Anarchists had failed to do their job, laid bombs at the doors of the capitalists themselves. A régime given over to wretched shifts and petty politics of this kind does not contribute to the peaceful development of a country. On the contrary it is a source of perpetual irritation. More than anything else it has been the failure of the ruling classes to provide honest government, or to show the least regard for the complaints that cried to Heaven against them from the provinces, that has made Spain the classic land of insurrections.

There is perhaps one more factor in the political scene that needs to be taken account of – the influence of religion. To understand this one must go back some way in history. Modem Spain owes her existence as a nation to the Reconquista. For eight centuries the work of driving out the Moslems was her peculiar vocation, and her unity was the reward of its successful conclusion. The crusading impulse had by this time become so much a part of the national character that till complete exhaustion set in in the seventeenth century the holy war was continued without any regard for self-interest against the Protestants. The Church had naturally taken a leading part in these events. The clergy were the guardians of the great idea that Spaniards were fighting for, and under their influence Spaniards became accustomed to thinking that all differences of opinion were crimes and all wars were ideological. Then, in 1812, the Church became engaged in a political struggle

with the Liberals. This struggle led to a civil war that lasted seven years and, though the Church lost, politics and religion were left so fatally entwined that they could never afterwards be separated. This became clear when it was seen that the defeat of the Church had thrown it into the arms of the landowners, so that from now on an attack on the one would inevitably mean an attack on the other. The harmonizing role which religion had played in the social disputes of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries had changed to one of exacerbation.

Then, at the beginning of this century, a general decay of religious faith set in. The middle classes fell off first and after them the working classes, but religion had meant so much to the poor that they were left with the hunger for something to replace it. And this something could only be one of the political doctrines, anarchism or socialism, that they found waiting for them. They adopted them therefore in the same spirit, with the same crusading ardour and singleness of mind with which in previous ages they had adopted Catholicism. For a time it seemed that a compromise might be possible because the Socialist leaders desired reform rather than revolution, but the intransigeance of the governing classes combined with the decline of the economic situation and the rise of fascism in Austria and of Nazism in Germany made this impossible.

In other countries respect for the State might have acted as a moderating influence. But this was a feeling that not a single party in Spain ever showed. A succession of disreputable sovereigns had discredited the Monarchy. Military *pronunciamientos* had compromised the Army and corrupt elections had destroyed faith in the Cortes. The Church, which had initiated the most terrible civil war of

the century, was a permanent focus of disaffection. To most Spaniards the Government meant simply the clique of politicians which had managed to get into power, and none had any moral authority outside its own circle of supporters. One may say that the only thing that delayed the outbreak of civil war was that no party felt strong enough to begin.

Under these political and social alignments there lay of course an economic question. In raw materials and in foodstuffs, as well as in manufactures, Spain was in 1931 more self-sufficient than any other European country But to make it a working concern the earnings of the peasants and agricultural labourers needed to be raised to enable them to buy more in the towns. This however, under the system of private ownership of land, was not easy. The soil through the greater part of the country is poor and the rainfall deficient: the land has to support a far larger population than modern farming technique will allow. With even the best organization only a low standard of living would have been possible. But in most parts of the country the level of farming was backward, the credit system unhelpful and the marketing system worse, whilst the number of middle-class families (many of them extremely poor and others just drones) was greater than the wealth of the country could support. The result for more than half the population was therefore chronic undernourishment, amounting in bad years to semi-starvation. This provided a permanent incitement to revolution. And yet so accustomed are the Spanish poor to privation that without the loss of hold of the Church and the introduction of new creeds to replace it, this factor would not have been sufficient. The revolutionary

forces in Spain had to be moral and ideological ones and the working classes aspired rather to freedom and control of their own affairs than to a higher standard of living. Where there was envy of the rich (and Spaniards are a very envious race) it took the form of desiring to bring them down almost as much as of raising themselves.

The Civil War was the explosion in the powder magazine that had been slowly accumulating. The Popular Front elections had temporarily aligned the political forces in Spain on two opposite, though by no means well assorted, sides. The Army then rose, expecting with its usual over-confidence to overwhelm the population of the large towns within a few days. But the heroism of the working classes defeated this project and the revolution they had so long waited for, but would probably never have been able to launch themselves, began. It is in the nature of revolutions to throw up moments when all the more brilliant dreams of the human race seem about to be realized, and the Catalans with their expansive and self-dramatizing character were not behind other peoples in this respect. Visitors to Barcelona in the autumn of 1936 will never forget the moving and uplifting experience[1] and, as the resistance to the military rebellion stiffened, the impressions they brought back with them

[1] Perhaps it is not too cynical to recall the similar scenes that attended the inauguration of the short-lived Federal Republic of 1873. This is how Alexandre Dumas *fils*, a cold and unemotional Frenchman, who professed to despise popular movements and in politics belonged more to the Right than to the Left, reacted to a street demonstration in Barcelona in November 1868: 'Hier, ivre de bonheur, il me fut impossible de retenir les larmes qui par instants coulaient sur mes joues; il me semblait que je voyais les yeux ouverts le plus beau rêve de ma vie – la République Universelle.'

spread to wider and wider circles. Spain became the scene of a drama in which it seemed as if the fortunes of the civilized world were being played out in miniature. As in a crystal, those people who had eyes for the future looked, expecting to read there their own fate.

Spain, the symbol, was however rather a different thing from Spain, the actuality. The war had begun as a straightforward class struggle between the reactionary landowners on one side and the revolutionary peasants and factory workers on the other. The Church, the Army officers and the majority of the middle classes supported the former, and the petite bourgeoisie and the intellectuals the latter. Such is the broad outline, though the fact that the Republicans had bought over by the grant of an autonomy statute two of the most solidly Catholic and anti-liberal provinces in the country introduces a complication. But this apparently simple setting concealed, on the anti-fascist side, a fatal dilemma. Was the revolution to be carried out according to the ideas of the anarchists, or to the very different and much less radical ones of the Socialists? And what was to be the position of the Catalan peasants and petite bourgeoisie, caught between the Scylla of the C.N.T. and the Charybdis of the centralizing Madrid Government? No answer to these questions other than a second civil war seemed possible, when suddenly they were solved, or at least postponed, by fresh events. For the Spaniards, it turned out, were not to be left to fight out the war by themselves. Two totalitarian nations, Germany and Russia, intervened and their intervention led to the growth almost overnight of the small Falangist and Communist parties to positions of overriding influence. The Falangists absorbed the popular, more or less

Left Wing elements on their side, and the Communists absorbed or worked in with the Right Wing of the Republicans. The C.N.T., deprived of its hopes of social revolution, adopted a more and more passive attitude. The Carlists submitted. For a time the success of the new parties seemed to show how strong was the desire in Spain for an efficient central party that would make a clean sweep of the futile struggles of the past hundred and fifty years and impose a final solution, but in the end their totalitarian ideals and methods and their dependence upon foreign nations led to a reaction against them. Receptive as Spaniards are on the surface to ideas that come from abroad, they are at bottom extremely tenacious of their own clannish ways of life, and it soon became evident that, except by foreign domination, these all-embracing parties would not be able to establish themselves. Since the termination of the war, the colossal failure of the Falange to produce tolerable conditions for anyone not a member of their own party, and their peculiar combination of graft, apathy and terrorism, have put the final touch to their unpopularity.

And what of the future? The Civil War was an appalling calamity in which every class and every party lost. In addition to the million or two dead, the health of the people has been sapped by the famine and disease that have followed it. Hundreds of thousands are still in prison. Both physically and morally Spain is the wreck of what it was. The hope of a resurrection lies in the indomitable vitality of the Spanish race and in the fulfilment, when the war is over, of the promises of lease-lend assistance that have been held out to all European nations by the Allies. Among other things, this help should