

reading for those in the fields of sociology and history, and demonstrates how area studies can contribute to advance disciplinary conversations well beyond their immediate geographical focus.

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ROMERO SALVADÓ, FRANCISCO J., *¿Quién mató a Eduardo Dato? Comedia política y tragedia social en España, 1892–1921*. Editorial Comares. Granada 2020. xv + 444 pp. Ill. €33.00.

ROMERO SALVADÓ, FRANCISCO J., *Political Comedy and Social Tragedy: Spain, a Laboratory of Social Conflict, 1892–1921*. Sussex Academic Press. Brighton 2020. xxiii + 340 pp. Ill. £34.95.

The book under review analyses a crucial period (1892–1921) of Spain's Restoration monarchy (1875–1923), a fascinating three decades punctuated by political instability, colonial war, nationalist discontent, sabre-rattling within the armed forces, terrorism, and social violence. Of these elements, the central axis of the book, as suggested by the title, consists of the interplay between elite politics and protest from below, which had its epicentre in Barcelona. Charting the struggle of elites to preserve oligarchic privilege as the age of mass politics dawned across Europe, the author makes a compelling case that there was a growing inevitability in the demise of the Restoration, even if, as he demonstrates, its capacity for survival was far from insignificant. Romero's study is shaped by the assassinations of two prominent politicians and prime ministers – Antonio Cánovas del Castillo (1897), the co-architect of the Restoration model, and Eduardo Dato (1921), its most fierce defender in the years of its final crisis after 1917. As Romero explains with aplomb, the fate of both men was sealed by their complicity in state repression. If Cánovas helped mould the Restoration, along with its repressive capacity, Dato can be seen more as its gravedigger: notwithstanding his liberal aura, his repeated dalliances with the military both undermined civil politics and aroused political aspirations inside the officers' corps. With a system "mired in fraud" and increasingly using repression as its everyday currency, Romero maintains that Dato's assassination in 1921 represented the "twilight of the political comedy" – indeed, just two years later a military coup by an emboldened army buried the Restoration.

This prequel to the author's important research monographs on Spain's political crisis during and after World War I is welcome. The first, which addressed the impact of World War I on Spanish political life, appeared in the 1990s, and was followed, in the 2000s, by a major analysis of the post-war crisis of the liberal system during 1918–1923. A measure of the expectation surrounding this study is that, during pandemic, it appeared in two languages in the space of a few months. This is unsurprising, since the hallmarks of Romero's work on the Restoration are evident in this new tome: the sharp analysis of high politics, the

considered examination of the changing and complex relationship between state and society and the careful conclusions informed by a deep awareness of archival sources. He is also to be commended for charting the subtle shifts in elite politics, as well as producing excellent biographical profiles of leading political figures from this time. A case in point is Antonio Maura, the shortcomings of whose reform programme are explained convincingly in terms of the structural limitations of dynastic politics, his authoritarian style and psychological limitations, such as his deep personal conceit. All this is integrated within the wider vicissitudes of a political comedy based on electoral falsification, corruption, and repression.

The author's prowess at teasing out the various hues of grey in high politics is strikingly absent when it comes to the analysis of protest from below. Regrettably, this book does not shine any new light on the reasons for the attraction or the dynamics of anarchist and anarcho-syndicalist movements in Spain; for such a task, it seems to me, a greater reliance on social rather than political history is required. More problematic still is the author's approach to the question of individual and collective violence. At times, it is suggested that there existed a culture of protest from below that was forged by social exclusion and repression from above; at other moments, violence is attributed to the social malady brought by mass immigration. Since the 1980s, the most suggestive and penetrating work in violence – in Spain and beyond – has been informed by sociology and, more recently, by social movement theory. Romero appears to be following this trend in the introduction, when he refers to important structural reasons for social violence, even suggesting that direct action protest from below was a rational choice for the dispossessed. Yet, by the end of Chapter One, in his discussion of Michele Angiolillo's assassination of Prime Minister Antonio Cánovas, an act of retribution motivated by the torture and arbitrary executions of the anti-anarchist "Montjuïc trials" in Barcelona (1897), he demurs from his earlier point, placing the accent on Angiolillo's assumed irrationality and his anomic emotional state as a "neurotic fanatic". Such a judgement is firmly at odds with the most comprehensive study of Italian anarchist advocates of propaganda of the deed, in which Angiolillo is shown to have acted through the "highest level" of "political and moral consciousness".<sup>1</sup> Indeed, rather than a depraved maniac evoked by Romero, Pernicone and Ottanelli maintain that Angiolillo was moved deeply by the legalized terror in Spain, before which "neither his personality nor philosophy suggested him capable of violence" (pp. 111–112). It is also noteworthy that Pernicone and Ottanelli's more anthropological, cultural approach towards violence, whereby they consider the meaning of violence for its perpetrators, is perhaps more productive as it affords greater awareness of the aims of the protagonists. In such a way, it is possible to grasp the cultural meaning of violence and historicise it, without simply dismissing it, as is so often the case in this work, as "impulsiveness", "fanaticism", or "hot-headedness", closed terms that do not develop our understanding of this phenomenon at all.

Another example of this problematic treatment of politics from below is provided by the repeated assertion that the anarchist and anarcho-syndicalist movements in Barcelona, the main theatre of social war during these years, were sustained essentially by the immigration of non-Catalans. Romero's references to "floods" of "uprooted immigrants" whose imported ideas were apparently at variance with traditional social mores and value structures seem also to borrow from Durkheimian sociology. This equation of immigration and radical politics has its roots in the political mythology of nineteenth century Catalan nationalism and continues to be influential in the independence movement today. In historiography, it was evident in the work of Jaume Vicens Vives in the 1950s and, from the 1960s onwards, in that of Josep Termes. However, this century, the most detailed and thorough analysis

of immigration and protest of José Luis Oyón has exploded these myths.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, my work on Barcelona and anarcho-syndicalist protest culture details how newly arrived workers were radicalized by their experiences of industrial life and poor housing in the Catalan capital – as opposed to harbouring atavistic hatreds they brought with them from their place of origin; subsequently, they entered labour organizations that were comprised of both local and migrant workers and which were grounded in local socio-political realities. Although there are many cases of immigrant workers who gravitated towards violent protests, this was equally true of Catalan militants. The “action group” that assassinated Prime Minister Dato in 1921 consisted of Catalans, who were bound together through ties of affection based on neighbourhood, workplace, and organizational loyalties.

A final observation relates to the decentralized nature of the anarchist and anarcho-syndicalist movements. Romero suggests that a more centralized, presumably Bolshevik style, type of organization, could have been more “effective” in the social war and might have constituted a “genuine threat” to the state. While the Spanish left had long been divided between centralist and federalist wings, it is striking that the centralized socialist movement, for all its apparent collective discipline and organization, posed no real threat to the state during the same period. Yet, this concern with the internal structure of radical movements misses the more crucial point relating to state power. Any inferred comparison with Russia must take on board the greater coherence of the state apparatus in Spain in 1917 and beyond. For all the fissures within the state, and notwithstanding important divisions within the army, Spain was not Russia, nor even Bavaria and Hungary during 1917–1919, where the imperial armies had largely collapsed and where the state structures had disintegrated during the war.

The author is planning a new project that covers the remaining two years of crisis of the Restoration and the early years of the Primo de Rivera dictatorship. This is welcome news as there is still much to scrutinize in this period, ranging from the attempt at constructing a communist party to the deepening colonial crisis in Spanish Morocco. Even with the reservations expressed in this review, I can think of few historians better equipped to undertake this endeavour. It is hoped that Romero will use this opportunity to treat the changing winds of labour politics and protest from below with the same expertise that he examines high politics and shifts in elite opinion.

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