the left and even more because of its own ready recourse to armed repression. The defeat of the urban Socialists in 1917 did not mark the end of the assault on the system. Between 1918 and 1921, three years known as the *trienio bolchevique*, the anarchist day-labourers of the south took part in a series of risings. Eventually put down by a combination of the Civil Guard and the army, the strikes and land seizures of these years intensified the social resentments of the rural south. At the same time, urban anarchists were also coming into conflict with the system. Northern industrialists, having failed to invest their war profits in modern plant and rationalisation, were badly hit by the postwar resurgence of foreign competition. The Catalans in particular tried to ride the recession with wage cuts and lay-offs. They countered the consequent strikes with lock-outs and hired gunmen. The anarchists retaliated in kind and, from 1919 to 1921, the streets of Barcelona witnessed a terrorist spiral of provocations and reprisals. It was obvious that Restoration politics were no longer an adequate mechanism for defending the economic interests of the ruling classes.

On 23 September 1923, a *coup d'etat* was carried out by General Miguel Primo de Rivera. Ostensibly, Primo came to power to put an end to disorder and to prevent an embarrassing report by a parliamentary commission causing discomfort to the King. However, as Captain-General of Barcelona and intimate of the Catalan textile barons, Primo was fully aware of the anarchist threat to them. Moreover, coming from a large landowning family in the south, he also had experience of the peasant risings of 1918–21. He was thus the ideal praetorian defender of the coalition of industrialists and landowners which had been consolidated during the great crisis of 1917. Initially, his dictatorship had two great advantages – a general revulsion against the chaos of the previous six years and an upturn in the European economy. He outlawed the anarchist movement and made a deal with the UGT whereby it was given a monopoly of trade union affairs. A massive public works programme, which involved a significant modernising of Spanish capitalism and the building of a communications infrastructure that would bear fruit only thirty years later, gave the impression that liberty was being traded in for prosperity.

The Primo de Rivera dictatorship was to be regarded in later years as a golden age by the Spanish middle classes and became a central myth of the reactionary right. Paradoxically, however, its short-term effect was to discredit the very idea of authoritarianism in Spain. This fleeting phenomenon was born partly of Primo's failure to use the economic breathing space to construct a lasting political replacement for the decrepit constitutional monarchy, but more immediately it sprang from his alienation of the powerful interests which had originally supported him. A genial eccentric with a Falstaffian approach to political life, he governed by a form of personal improvisation which ensured that he bore the blame for his regime's failures. Although by 1930 there was hardly a section of Spanish society that he had not offended, his most crucial errors led to the estrangement of industrialists, landowners and the army. Attempts to standardise promotion machinery outraged army officers. The Catalan bourgeoisie was antagonised by an offensive against regionalist aspirations. Northern industrialists were even more enraged by the collapse of the peseta in 1928, which they attributed to his inflationary public spending. Perhaps most importantly, the support of Primo's fellow landowners was lost when efforts were made to introduce arbitration committees for wages and working conditions into rural areas. At the end of January 1930, Primo resigned.

There was no question of a return to the pre-1923 political system. Apart from the fact that it had fallen into disrepute by the time that Primo seized power, significant changes had taken place in the attitudes of its personnel. Among the senior politicians, death, old age and, above all, resentment of the King's cavalier abandonment of the constitution in 1923 had each taken their toll. Of the younger men, some had opted for

the republican movement, partly out of pique, partly out of a conviction that the political future lay in that direction. Others, especially those Conservatives who had followed the authoritarian implications of 'Regenerationism' to the logical extreme, had thrown themselves wholeheartedly into the service of the dictator. For them, there could be no going back. Their experiences under Primo had left them entrenched in the view that the only feasible solution to the problems faced by the right was a military monarchy. They would form the general staff of the extreme right in the Second Republic and were to provide much of the ideological content of the Franco regime.

In desperation, therefore, Alfonso XIII turned to another general, Dámaso Berenguer. His mild dictatorship floundered in search of a formula for a return to constitutional monarchy but was undermined by republican plots, working-class agitation and military sedition. When he held municipal elections on 12 April 1931, Socialists and liberal middle class republicans swept the board in the main towns while monarchists won only in the rural areas where the social domination of the local bosses, or *caciques*, remained intact. Faced by the questionable loyalty of both army and Civil Guard, the King took the advice of his counsellors to depart gracefully before he was thrown out by force. The attitude of the military reflected the hope of a significant section of the upper classes that by sacrificing the King it would be possible to contain the desires for change of both the progressive bourgeoisie and the left. That was to be an impossible ambition without some concessions in the area of land reform.

The conflicts of the *trienio bolchevique* had been silenced by repression in 1919–20 and by the Primo de Rivera dictatorship, but they continued to smoulder. The violence of those years had ended the uneasy *modus vivendi* of the agrarian south. The repression had intensified the hatred of the *braceros* for the big landowners and their estate managers. By the same token, the landlords were outraged by insubordinate behaviour

of the day-labourers whom they considered to be almost subhuman. Accordingly, the elements of paternalism which had previously mitigated the daily brutality of the *braceros'* lives came to an abrupt end. The gathering of windfall crops, or the watering of beasts, even the collection of firewood were deemed to be 'collective kleptomania' and were prevented by the vigilance of armed guards. In consequence, the new Republic was to inherit a situation of sporadic social war in the south which was dramatically to diminish its possibilities of establishing a regime of co-existence. Nevertheless, with goodwill on both sides, everything, even peace, was possible in 1931. Within weeks of the Republic being established, however, it was clear that among the erstwhile supporters of Alfonso XIII and within the anarchist movement there was anything but goodwill to Spain's new democracy.