

Causes of the Spanish Civil War: Sourcework Exercise

Source A: From a Catholic catechism of 1927

What kind of sin is committed by one who votes for a liberal candidate?

Generally a mortal sin.

Is it a sin for a Catholic to read a liberal newspaper?

He may read the stock exchange news.

Source B: Evaluation of the dictatorship of Primo by a German historian, 1937

What elements of modern European life there are today in Spain mostly date from the time of Primo...wherever there is a splendid road, a modern inn, a modern barrack or a modern prison, in nine out of ten cases it will have been constructed under Primo's administration. For the first time in Spanish history a concerted attempt was made so solve the "social problem". Compulsory arbitration was introduced, to secure acceptable wages for the workers...altogether it was the greatest attempt every made to transform Spain into a modern country.

Source C: Evaluation of the dictatorship of Primo by English MP Katherine Atholl, 1938, known as the "Red Duchess" for her vigorous support of the Republic during the Civil War



For forty or fifty years Spain has had her Socialist and trade union movements, by no means confined to the towns. A peasant rising, however, as recently as 1919 had been fruitless, and since Primo's seizure of power in 1923, though some useful constructive work has been achieved, no agrarian reform had been possible. Moreover, there had been no freedom to ventilate grievances in speech or press, no free elections, and no Cortes with any power to legislate; while the desires of Catalonia for autonomy had been sternly refused. Some universities had been suppressed; professors and teachers were miserably paid...and religious tests had been imposed on state officials. The dictatorship, in fact, by overriding the constitution, had read the nation a lesson in anarchy.

Source D: Speech by Gil Robles, leader of the CEDA, in 1933

We are faced with a social revolution; in the political panorama of Europe I can see only the formation of Marxist and anti-Marxist groups...it is necessary now to defeat socialism...what does it matter if we have to shed blood? We need full power and that is what we demand...when the time comes either parliament submits or we will eliminate it.



Source E: Communist Arthur Koestler gives his view on "the two black years" (1934-35)

All the protective legislation introduced by previous governments was repealed by the Gil Robles regime...the distribution of the land among the peasants was declared null and void...and the land was restored to its former owners...at the same time unemployment relief was abolished...the masses had returned to their old state of unspeakable misery and suffering.

Source F: A British Journalist reports on the causes and effects of the Asturias uprising (1934)

Largo Caballero [leader of the socialist UGT] changed his political tactics after the elections of 1933. He was bitterly denouncing the sham, shadow institutions of democracy, declaring that if the Republic was to be saved, the road must be closed to Fascism and that this would not be achieved by mere parliamentary action – “There is no alternative but to destroy and rebuild society from its foundations”. [In Asturias] the socialists hurled themselves against the Republic with violence to conquer “all power to the proletariat” by means of a bloody revolution...Red Guards entered the houses through shattered doors or broken windows, molesting, imprisoning and shooting at pleasure. The greatest cruelty was shown to priests and nuns. About 40 were killed in Asturias.

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| 1a | Why, according to Source B, did the regime of Primo de Rivera slow down the drift towards civil war? | 3 |
| 1b | What message is conveyed by Source A? | 2 |
| 2 | Compare and Contrast the views on the problems facing Spain expressed in Sources D & F. | 6 |
| 3 | With reference to their origins and purpose, assess the value and limitations of Sources C and E for historians studying the origins of the Spanish Civil War. | 6 |
| 4 | Using the sources and your own knowledge, explain to what extent you agree with this statement: “The Spanish Civil War was largely the result of political divisions between the main parties” | 8 |