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**POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND PRESERVATION OF
NATIONAL PRIORITIES (ON THE EXAMPLE OF
GENERAL PRIMO DE RIVERA)**

Abstract: *Spain did not take part in the First World War (1914-1918), but its political consequences were reflected in the subsequent crisis that gripped the entire Spanish society. The post-war economic crisis led to an increase in social tension (emergence of inflationary processes, reduction in the supply of basic necessities, low wage growth) and to the strengthening of nationalism. The economic crisis further exacerbates social conflicts and disrupts the social structure of society. The problem in Morocco is also contributing to the country's financial deficit and exacerbating existing problems. Added to this was the political instability and ministerial crises of the period 1917-1923. The constitutional monarchy made efforts to maintain the status quo, but internal and external conflicts strongly affected the stability of the institution. General elections were held four times and eleven different governments were formed. It is the crisis of the parliamentary system that creates opportunities for changes in the Spanish political system. All this leads the country to a political impasse, which the military in the person of General Primo de Rivera takes advantage of.*

The intervention of the army in the political life of Spain is an attempt to resolve the conflicts among the rulers, but the crisis deepens not only in Parliament, but also in society. Constant contradictions give rise to hatred of politics. The army takes the responsibility (thus the king hides from the responsibility) of rearranging the political system or building a new one and meets the approval of the majority of the society, which is ready for political reorganization. The conditions in the country are ready for a coup, the main actors are needed who will go down in history and who will take advantage of the situation to take power. The man who takes a tougher stance, as well as the challenge of running the country after a series of failed governments, is General Primo de Rivera. He established a dictatorship and ruled Spain from 1923-1930.

The coup was carried out on the 13th of September 1923. Then General Primo de Rivera issued a Manifesto, which was an address to the army and

society and marked the main responsibilities and commitments that were undertaken for implementation. The civilian government of the dictatorship began an active economic and social policy. It was largely successful and coincided with the worldwide economic boom of the mid-1920s. Reforms were also undertaken in the social, educational and military systems. Changes are taking place in both political and ecclesiastical life. Attempts are being made to resolve the regional problem and the existing situation in Morocco. There are also innovations in relations with the republics of Latin America.

In view of later historical developments, it is clear that this regime could not have lasted long, but in a sense it became the basis of the subsequent "new state" regime after 1939. The time frame of the two dictatorships is long enough and the parallels and the events are different, but some ideas, institutions and even politicians in power in 1939 inherited the dictatorial years of 1923-1930. This coincides with the transformations that occurred in many European countries after the end of the First World War. The administration of General Primo de Rivera left an imprint on the historical development of Spain and served as an example for many European countries, including the Balkans.

Key words: Dictatorship, authoritarian regime, leader, coup, monarchy.

POLITIČKO LIDERSTVO I OČUVANJE NACIONALNIH PRIORITETA (NA PRIMJERU GENERALA PRIMO DE RIVERA)

Apstrakt: Španija nije učestvovala u Prvom svejetskom ratu (1914-1918), ali su se njegove političke posljedice odrazile u kasnijoj krizi koja je zahvatila cijelo špansko društvo. Poslijeratna ekonomska kriza dovela je do porasta društvenih tenzija (pojava inflatornih procesa, smanjenje ponude osnovnih životnih namirnica, nizak rast plata) i do jačanja nacionalizma. Ekonomska kriza dodatno pogoršava društvene sukobe i narušava socijalnu strukturu društva. Problem u Maroku takođe doprinosi finansijskom deficitu zemlje i pogoršava postojeće probleme. Tome je dodana politička nestabilnost i ministarske krize u periodu 1917-1923. Ustavna monarhija je uložila napore da održi status quo, ali su unutrašnji i spoljni sukobi snažno uticali na stabilnost institucije. Opći izbori održani su četiri puta i formirano je jedanaest različitih vlada. Upravo kriza parlamentarnog sistema stvara mogućnosti za promjene u španskom političkom sistemu. Sve to vodi zemlju u politički ćorsokak, što vojska u liku generala Prima de Riverere koristi.

Intervencija vojske u politički život Španije je pokušaj da se razriješe sukobi među vladarima, ali se kriza produbljuje ne samo u parlamentu, već i u društvu. Konstantne kontradikcije izazivaju mržnju prema politici. Vojska preuzima odgovornost (tako se kralj krije od odgovornosti) za preuređenje političkog sistema ili izgradnju novog i nailazi na odobravanje većine društva

koje je spremno na političku reorganizaciju. Uslovi u zemlji su spremni za državni udar, potrebni su glavni akteri koji će ući u historiju i koji će iskoristiti situaciju da preuzmu vlast. Čovjek koji zauzima tvrdi stav, kao i izazov upravljanja državom nakon niza neuspjelih vlada, je general Primo de Rivera. Uspostavio je diktaturu i vladao Španijom od 1923-1930.

Puč je izveden 13. septembra 1923. Tada je general Primo de Rivera izdao Manifest, koji je bio obraćanje vojsci i društvu i označavao glavne odgovornosti i obaveze koje su preuzete za realizaciju. Civilna vlada diktature započela je aktivnu ekonomsku i socijalnu politiku. Bio je uglavnom uspješan i poklopio se sa svjetskim ekonomskim procvatom sredinom 1920-ih. Poduzete su i reforme u socijalnom, obrazovnom i vojnom sistemu. Promjene se dešavaju i u političkom i u crkvenom životu. Nastoji se riješiti regionalni problem i postojeće stanje u Maroku. Tu su i novine u odnosima sa republikama Latinske Amerike.

S obzirom na kasniji historijski razvoj, jasno je da ovaj režim nije mogao dugo da traje, ali je u izvesnom smislu postao osnova režima „nove države“ poslije 1939. godine. Vremenski okvir dve diktature je dovoljno dug i paralele i događaji su različiti, ali neke ideje, institucije, pa čak i političari na vlasti 1939. naslijedili su diktatorske godine 1923-1930. To se poklapa sa transformacijama koje su se desile u mnogim evropskim zemljama nakon završetka Prvog svjetskog rata. Administracija generala Prima de Rivere ostavila je pečat na historijski razvoj Španije i poslužila kao primjer mnogim evropskim zemljama, uključujući i Balkan.

Ključne riječi: *Diktatura, autoritarni režim, vođa, državni udar, monarhija.*

Introduction

On September 13, 1923, General Miguel Primo de Rivera came to power in a coup and established a period of dictatorship in Spain for seven years. The dictatorship of General Primo de Rivera deserves more attention on part of researchers. It is generally believed that this was a period of relative social and political calm, which separated two turbulent periods in the history of Spain. The interpretation of this period requires consideration of the reality then and analysis of the known and not so well-known details of the events and personalities that organized the coup itself.

There are many scholars of the dictatorship of General Primo de Rivera. Some of them examine the entire period of his reign, and others individual

aspects of it. We can note: García Nieto & Donézar & Puerta¹, Tusell², Morodo³, Ben-Ami⁴, González Martínez⁵ and the modern ones González Calleja⁶, Montes⁷, Jimenez Redondo⁸, Martínez⁹, Volodko¹⁰, Rico-Gómez¹¹, etc.

The period of the seven-year rule of General Primo de Rivera, unlike other periods of Spanish history, has not found a suitable place in modern Bulgarian historiography. We can name the authors who worked on this issue: Draganov¹², Aleksieva.¹³ In 2015, the only comprehensive study of the rule of General Primo de Rivera in Bulgaria was published: “The Dictatorship of General Primo de Rivera - a step back on the road to democracy”.¹⁴

This article is an attempt to cover the events that led to the “disintegration” of the traditional political model, as a result of which Spain fell into economic and social crisis. It is widely believed that the Primo de Rivera coup was in fact a relief from the tensions in the country. The general's revolt was fully supported by the military. The dictatorship itself is a kind of liberal policy that cannot be perceived as a harbinger of a new and lasting democratic future for the country. The general's rule is rather a “historical staple”, but not a change, and the place of the dictatorship in the history of Spain in the twentieth century cannot be neglected as this regime is similar to the Balkan and European authoritarian regimes.

The policy of the Primo de Rivera regime was aimed at the modernization of the country. During his reign, Spain achieved some successes: some order was restored in the country, the war in Morocco was won, the

¹ M. García-Nieto-J. Donézar-L. Puerta, *La Dictadura 1923 – 1930*, Published by Guadiana de Publicaciones, Madrid 1973.

² J. Tusell, *La crisis del caciquismo andaluz (1923 – 1931)*, Editores: Cup, Madrid 1977.

³ Morodo, R, Und revisión de la dictadura: Acción Española, *En Cuadernos Económicos de I.C.E.* 10, 1979.

⁴ Sh. Ben-Ami, *La Dictadura de Primo de Rivera 1923 – 1930*, Planeta, Barcelona 1984.

⁵ C. González Martínez, La Dictadura de Primo de Rivera: una propuesta de análisis, *Anales de Historia Contemporánea*. 16, 2000.

⁶ A. E. González Calleja, *La España de Primo de Rivera: la modernización autoritaria, 1923-1930*, Alianza, Madrid 2005.

⁷ P. Q. Montes, The dictatorship of Primo de Rivera and historiography, A methodological confrontation. *Historia Social*. 74, 2012.

⁸ J. C. Jimenez Redondo, Primo de Rivera and Portugal, 1923-1931: From “the Spanish danger” to longing for authoritarian Spain, *Pasado y Memoria*, 16, 2017.

⁹ M. A. G. Martínez, A representação política na Espanha durante a ditadura de Primo de Rivera, *Estudos Históricos*, 31(64), 2018.

¹⁰ A. Volodko, General Miguel Primo de Rivera’s “Development Dictatorship”, 1923-1930. *Istoriya*. 11(5), 2020.

¹¹ M. L. Rico-Gómez, The socio-economic reality of industrial vocational training during the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera in Spain, 1923–1930, *Paedagogica Historica*. 57(3), 2021.

¹² D. Draganov, *Frankizmat. Istoriya i politika*, Sv. Kliment Ohridski, Sofia 1995.

¹³ G. Aleksieva, Monarhiyata v kriza: politicheskiyat obrat v Ispaniya (1930-1931 g), In: Draganov, D. (ed). *Balgariya i Evropa prez savremennata epoha*. Faber, Veliko Tarnovo 2010.

¹⁴ T. Dimitrova, Diktaturata na general Primo de Rivera - krachka nazad po patya kam demokratsiyata, Faber, Veliko Tarnovo 2015.

economy flourished, labor strikes stopped. Primo de Rivera's dictatorship did not amount to totalitarian control over the lives of citizens or brutal repression of dissidents: it was not fascist and can be more correctly characterized as a kind of “developmental dictatorship”.¹⁵

The subject of the scientific study is the seven-year rule of General Primo de Rivera, and *the subject* of the study are the key aspects of his policy. Our *aim* is to review the rise to power of General Primo de Rivera and his government, reflecting to what extent his rule was outside the traditional norms of conservative circles and how far a dictator could be called “modern”. For us, the answer to the question is important: is a new economic and social approach being implemented in Spain at this time? It is an indisputable fact that protectionism is not new to Spain, as it was widespread in the country and in the pre-dictatorship period, but the institutionalization of economic nationalism was the work of General Primo de Rivera.

We set ourselves the task of marking the most important events that span the period of the dictatorship (the end of the war in Morocco, the socio-economic initiatives, the institutionalization of the regime, etc.). The regime's weaknesses are also highlighted, while not neglecting the successful initiatives implemented by General Primo de Rivera. Our aim is to build a real picture through the study of events in politics, economy, culture and political figures that influenced the history of Spain during the period under consideration.

The study is the result of a long-term scientific research and does not claim to be exhaustive, but we believe that this is an attempt to present a turbulent period, studied relatively poorly in Bulgaria. Without seeking to describe the chronology of day-to-day events, we intend to analyze only those moments that play a significant role in the process of the imposition of the dictatorship and during the regime itself.

The main research methods are the system-structural analysis and the comparative-historical research method. The applied approach can be useful in other similar studies concerning the processes of establishment of authoritarian regimes in the first half of the twentieth century in Europe.

The regime of General Primo de Rivera is similar to the regimes in the Balkans, such as the regime of General Metaxas in Greece, during the dictatorship of King Alexander, General Stojanovic in Yugoslavia (former), and in Romania under the auspices of King Carol. The rule of Tsar Boris III in Bulgaria also provoked controversy. All such regimes began with violence and the use of undemocratic methods, which gradually acquired fascist features, satisfied the interests of the wealthy classes and completely changed the structure of governments. All the Greek, Romanian, and Yugoslav dictatorships all were initially successful, and the dictatorship of General Primo de Rivera was initially successful, too. The negatives in the Spanish dictatorship remained at the expense

¹⁵ A. Volodko, General Miguel Primo de Rivera's “Development Dictatorship”, 1923-1930, *Istoriya*, 11(5), 2020.

of the king because he violated the Constitution, as well as democratic procedures in the change of power.¹⁶

Dictatorships in most countries are established in moments of transition from traditional development to modern socio-economic and political development of the countries. Rapid structural changes in investment, industrialization, and in railway construction, as well as the emergence of a market economy, the division between urban and immigrant rural workers created tensions that are evident not only in Western Europe but also in the Balkans in the early twentieth century.

Exhibition

This period of Spain's historical development has attracted the interest of scholars from all over the world. In modern Spanish history, most research on the dictatorship of General Primo de Rivera reflects the authors' bias towards certain details or personalities involved in the organization of the coup.

In Spanish historiography, it is widely believed that this was a period in which nothing happened and time had stopped. Researcher Tusell¹⁷ states: "This Dictatorship is primarily a 'bracket': without significant change".

Maria Garcia Nieto, Javier Donesar and Luis Puerta¹⁸, in an introduction to a collection of texts on the dictatorial regime, write: "This is a 'bracket' in which the country experiences moments of order and peace". These claims are supported by the speeches of General Primo de Rivera himself, who said that his regime would be "a short bracket in the constitutional progress of Spain".¹⁹

The general described his regime in the early stages as a "constitutional bracket" or "first ninety days", however, the authors who accept these claims do not actually reflect the real political situation in Spain but refer to slogans coming from the dictator himself. From 1923 to January 1930, the vision of Spain remained the same, i. e. nothing changed.²⁰

Some researchers argue that social activity as well as dynamic political action took place during the time of General Berenger and Admiral Asnar.²¹

The changes that were taking place in Spanish political life and leading the country to the establishment of a dictatorship can be marked by the following parameters:

¹⁶ Sh. Ben-Ami, *La Dictadura de Primo de Rivera 1923 – 1930*, Planeta, Barcelona 1984, 6.

¹⁷ J. Tusell, *La crisis del caciquismo andaluz (1923 – 1931)*, Editores: Cup, Madrid 1977, 11.

¹⁸ M. García-Nieto-J. Donézar-L. Puerta, *La Dictadura 1923 – 1930*, Published by Guadiana de Publicaciones, Madrid 1973, 17.

¹⁹ *Gaceta*, 15.IX.1923

²⁰ M. García-Nieto-J. Donézar- L. Puerta, *La Dictadura 1923 – 1930*, Published by Guadiana de Publicaciones, Madrid 1973, 18.

²¹ J. Tusell, *La crisis del caciquismo andaluz (1923 – 1931)*, Editores: Cup, Madrid 1977, 17.

- a collapse of traditional dynastic parties in Spain, an ideological and political crisis;
- the lack of an alternative to reform within the monarchy and the existence of an intermediate space between the monarchy and the republic (some researchers call this period “draining the political space”);
- the emergence of new theoretical and political possibilities that seek an answer to the crisis that is collapsing the political system of Canovas.²²

The dictatorship of Miguel Primo de Rivera implemented in practice, for the first time in Spain, a representative system different from the liberal parliamentary model.²³

During the dictatorship, the mechanisms by which political decisions were imposed change significantly, a significant difference from previous regimes. The dictatorship openly opposed the traditional political system, but this move did not affect the interests of the king and the army.

The crisis in Spain was felt in all sectors, but General Rivera tried to neutralize this crisis in order to show the public that there were opportunities to overcome it.

The role of the king during the coup is still unclear, and the search for evidence on this issue is also one of the challenges for researchers.

The king was undoubtedly a supporter of the regime, while the army was divided, especially over controversial dictatorial decisions affecting the military reform. The intervention of the king and the army in the coup deprived the country of the traditional dominant support mechanisms in Spanish politics, which in times of crisis must maintain national priorities.

It is also interesting to see how the regime was institutionalized and how the dictator sought popularity for his unpopular decisions. In the dictatorial regime, most researchers point to the conscious neglect of elections as a weakness.²⁴

This study focuses specifically on the political history of Spain, but also touches on aspects of the country's socio-economic development. According to M. Jerez: “The study of power in a country also affects aspects of the socio-economic development of the country, especially if the studied regime is totalitarian, authoritarian or dictatorial. Authoritarian regimes encourage the creation of a certain class that grows as an economically dominant one. It can be said that these types of regimes are losing their dependence on the economically strong class. Gradually, they create the feeling that politics creates freedom only for those in power and for the economically strong”.²⁵

²² *Ibidem.*

²³ M. Á. G. Martínez, A representação política na Espanha durante a ditadura de Primo de Rivera, *Estudos Históricos*, 31(64), 2018, 133.

²⁴ M. Jerez, *Élites políticas y centros de extracción de España 1938 – 1957*, Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas, Madrid 1982, 28.

²⁵ *Ibidem.*

Public interest in the dictatorship was also sparked by the crisis in the political system itself. The crisis is the result of a desire for public intervention in politics. Between 1917 and 1939, the Spanish society witnessed two dictatorships. General Rivera's authoritarian regime was a consequence not only of the society's desire to participate in the country's politics, but also of the socio-economic crisis.

In 1930 and early 1931, Spain was again in turmoil and in a deep crisis, which once again led the country to growing political mobilization.

The period of the republic was the other alternative to the country, but events show that after the Civil War the regime of General Franco triumphed and the country again chose the path of an authoritarian rule, however, this time for a longer period. Many researchers consider the paradoxical involvement of the masses in active political life as one of the reasons for the establishment of this type of political governance.

One of the most important issues is the role of the king in establishing the dictatorship. The conclusions that would follow from the established regime of dictatorship would greatly influence political events and contribute to the collapse of the monarchy.

Analyzing the dictatorship, we trace the new structures that General Rivera created, as well as the military governors who replaced the civilian representatives of the government.

The established Military Directory was a new structure that was part of the political decisions of General Primo de Rivera. Its creation aimed at destroying the previous political regime, but that was not enough to build the dictator's popularity. The successful conclusion of the war in Morocco was a necessary condition for gaining stability and at the same time an opportunity to institutionalize the regime.

The institutionalization of the regime was part of the general's political views of building the vision of the dictatorship. The victory in the Moroccan War (1921-1926) made this possible, and the self-confidence of military "Africans" (those who support the war in Africa) after the end of hostilities also temporarily stabilized tensions in the army²⁶. In Catalonia, more and more radical political proposals were gradually spread. Administrative reform was about destroying the ties that have been created by Chiefdom.

The events in Catalonia also created tension, but the firm position of General Primo de Rivera, albeit temporarily, managed to ease the tension.

Weakness of the period is the excessive censorship of literature. Many books have been discontinued because they contain criticism of the government.

The opinions of the ambassadors expressed in the press are undoubtedly important for the political life of any country, and the comments of the British

²⁶ S. Álvarez, *La administración española en el protectorado de Marruecos, plazas de soberanía y colonias de África*, Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, Instituto de Estudios Africanos, Madrid 1949, 65.

have priority, since they correspond to the description of many details that affect the international situation in Spain. For their part, the French military attachés correctly reflected the situation of the Spanish army, since they had direct supervision as a result of their joint military initiative in Africa.

The events in Africa are seen as part of Spain's military history, and some of the studies give a clear picture of the division in the army and the financial problems.

The historiographical analysis of the literature reflecting the coup of September 13, 1923, contains many points of view, but the main motive is the king and his role during the coup. Another argument for the success of the coup is the inadequate security measures taken by the government of Garcia Prieto.

One of the first researchers to address the role of the king during the coup was M. Almagro, who wrote: "In order for the body of the dictatorship to take shape, the actions of the king, with whom Primo de Rivera always agrees, must be traced".²⁷ Professor Serrano disagreed, arguing that "any researcher who is considered a serious historian should not attribute the emergence of dictatorship to the idea of King Alfonso XIII".²⁸

Professor Shlomo Ben Ami claims that "the last constitutional government in Spain fell from power due to the fact that it was the king who withdrew his support".²⁹

According to Tusell, the king acknowledged the triumph of the dictatorship, but did not participate in the preparation of the coup.³⁰

We claim that the king's position is one of the conditions for the coup, but it is not the main reason for its success.

The political and economic conditions in the country also influenced the preparations for the coup, and the military failures in Morocco were also a significant factor in the general's actions. The crisis of the Restoration continued after 1917, and the ministerial crises showed the inability of the rulers to face Spanish society in order to solve the problems accumulated over the years. The coup d'état of General Primo de Rivera, on the one hand, was an expression of the political changes that had taken place in the economic and social spheres, but it was also a symbol of the change that had taken place after class imbalances in Spanish society.

The political crisis of 1921-1923 laid the foundations for all the serious problems affecting Spanish society in the following decades. The society was becoming more active in the process of seeking responsibilities (for example, the case with responsibilities for Morocco). The mobilization of society was due to facts and events that were outside the parliamentary system.

²⁷ M. Fernández, *Historia del reinado de Alfonso XIII*, Montaner y Simón, Barcelona 1934, 33.

²⁸ S. Serrano, *Militarismo y civilismo en la España contemporánea*, Instituto de Estudios Económicos, Madrid 1984, 303.

²⁹ Sh. Ben-Ami, *La Dictadura de Primo de Rivera 1923 – 1930*, Planeta, Barcelona 1984, 50.

³⁰ J. Tusell, *La crisis del caciquismo andaluz (1923 – 1931)*, Editores: Cup, Madrid 1977, 18.

The Spanish model of dictatorship

Despite the specific Spanish conditions for the emergence of the dictatorship, it fits into the European trends that were then prevalent. The first place is the fear of communism, which could conquer the nation and make something worse than the dictatorship itself.³¹

In other words, General Primo de Rivera was aware of the loss of Spanish power and loyalty to the nation. The period of the dictatorship coincided with the European socio-political processes, which in 1923 were identified with the “crisis of democracy”. Proponents of the dictatorship say: “The coup and the dictatorship itself are not a whim of General Primo de Rivera himself, but a response to Spanish society, on the one hand, and an element of global political movements against parliamentary democracy”.³²

The concept that “an uprising against constitutional law is a patriotic act” is a legacy of traditional philosophy. Following the patriotic movements today, we will undoubtedly find that in many countries around the world such “statements” and “speeches” as those of General Primo de Rivera occur daily and are repeated in a number of variants³³, which leads us to think that as a politician who emerged in the twentieth century, Primo de Rivera is still relevant today.

The dictatorship of General Primo de Rivera was in the spirit of the European authoritarian regimes that conquered Europe in the twentieth century, but has the specifics of an early regime aimed at overcoming the “social chaos” in Spain.

Democratic practices did not work during this period, as the combination of an illegal mob and revolutionary unions could not control the norms of democracy. The current situation of instability and insecurity was a signal of military intervention as well as military rule.

Many dictatorships emerged between the two world wars, but not all were the result of a crisis in society, and not all could be equated with the category of “modern”.³⁴ We do not believe that the dictatorship contains the purest mechanisms of power, but we argue that the dictatorship mobilizes and controls a large part of the population, and that the dictatorship contains to some extent a national consensus.

The old political and social order was undermined by industrialization, as a result of which social changes were taking place causing tensions in all structures of the state, and the reason was that the new order had not yet been established. The destruction of the old order and the delegitimization of the

³¹ L. Araquistain, *El ocaso de un régimen*, Published by Editorial España, Madrid 1930, 35.

³² *The Economist*, 22.IX.1923.

³³ R. Morodo, Und revisión de la dictadura: Acción Española, *En Cuadernos Económicos de I.C.E.* 10, 1979, 99.

³⁴ F. Neumann, *El Estado democrático y el Estado autoritario: ensayos sobre teoría política y legal*, Volumen preparado por Marcuse, Editorial Paidós, Buenos Aires 1968, 235.

political parties during the period was one of the reasons for the establishment of dictatorial regimes.

The new political forces were mobilizing a large part of the population, benefiting from demographic change and social tensions. In countries such as Spain, Greece, Yugoslavia and Romania, dictatorships were encouraged by the ruling classes to prevent the creation of a new economic or political class.

The world was increasingly convinced that political leaders could not depend on election fraud or limit themselves to concrete decisions aimed at protecting the economic interests of certain sections of society.

Parliament and parliamentary governance are largely perceived as a conservative type of policy in countries such as Spain, Greece, Yugoslavia, Romania and Bulgaria, although they differ significantly from the British and French types of parliamentary governance. It seems that the more protests there are and the more disgruntled the masses are, the greater the threat of a social revolution, with which a parliament and a parliamentary government could not cope. Some researchers have summarized dictatorial regimes as the last breath of conservative thinking in the years of social and political tension that accompanied the transition to modern political development.

In the words of a contemporary opponent of the Spanish dictator: "On September 13, a military movement is created, which is not just a military association inherited from the old authoritarian elite but created to maintain the supremacy of its political regime. What was done that day? The answer is very clear - Spain has been transformed to support a dictator who has no specific political vision".³⁵

The regime of General Primo de Rivera has often been compared to the Balkan dictatorships, which are officially called "fascist regimes". Spanish researchers point out that in Spain, unlike in the Balkans, for the fascist type of politics there is no way out of the conservative time frame.

Fascism comes to power by mobilizing the masses, i. e. revolution from the bottom up, other regimes come to power by traditional means, using the authority of the monarch. These techniques were also used to some extent by General Primo de Rivera, but in Spanish society the dictatorship lasted less than seven years.³⁶

The regime, which will be permanently established in Spain, began as a counter-revolutionary and its representative was also a military man, who started the revolution from top to bottom and managed to neutralize the comparison of his regime with that of General Primo de Rivera.

General Metaxas and King George share a common view of intolerance of political and social unrest, and the idea of fighting anarchy was embedded in

³⁵ M. Barrington, *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*, Beacon Press, Boston 1967, 447.

³⁶ C. Vivir-Pi, Editores. In: *El personal político de Franco (1936 – 1945)*, Vicens-Vives, Barcelona 1978, 56.

the new government.³⁷ General Metaxas established a dictatorship on the eve of a powerful 24-hour strike organized by the Communists over labor disputes.

General Primo de Rivera and General Metaxas did not have a significant number of supporters in the army and this was a presumption to seek support in society, therefore there was a threat to the existing social peace.

Both the Spanish and the Greek generals needed the decisive support of the monarch in order to establish themselves in power.³⁸

Leaders such as General Metaxas, Stojadinovic and Galinesco, as well as Primo de Rivera, sought inspiration from Mussolini and support from the monarch in order to establish themselves in power.³⁹

There are also studies in Spanish historiography that emphasize that dictatorial regimes are the result of the influence of Mussolini, who illustrates “how power is taken and how a political regime is organized”⁴⁰.

Mussolini was undoubtedly an inspiration to General Primo de Rivera, on the occasion of a ceremony for the Italian soldiers killed in the First World War, General Rivera generously praised the Duce, who also wished him Spain to be led by “such a man”. Later, during his visit to Italy, General Rivera would make a statement in which he would once again show his admiration for Mussolini⁴¹.

The actions of King Alfonso XIII during the coup were similar to those of King Victor Emmanuel during Mussolini's seizure of power.

In an interview with an Italian journalist, King Victor Emmanuel said: “I accepted the dictatorship due to the fact that it is better for Italy to have a vision of a fascist country than a communist one. Communism would create anarchy and depravity in Parliament”⁴²

General Primo de Rivera takes power with the support of the army and this is an open military takeover, while in Italy, according to a contemporary British observer: “Mussolini with one foot is differentiated as a representative of civil society”⁴³. The powerful impetus of fascism in Italian civil society should not be overlooked either, because Mussolini himself did not enjoy success in the army and in the judiciary. It is often forgotten that Mussolini's seizure of power has all the characteristics of a vanguard, as it is a necessary condition for the power of the fascist dictator to be imposed. The non-interference of the army in Mussolini's campaign is also a result of the Duce's ability to present himself as a

³⁷ R. Wolff, *The Balkans in Our Time*, Harvard University Press, Massachusetts 1974, 105-106.

³⁸ J. Campbell-P. Sherrard, *Modern Greece*, Praeger, New York 1968, 156.

³⁹ R. Martinez, *Las Jornadas Triunfales de un Golpe de Estado*, Artes Gráficas Molero, Madrid 1923, 58.

⁴⁰ J. Tusell, *La crisis del caciquismo andaluz (1923 – 1931)*, Editores: Cup, Madrid 1977, 420.

⁴¹ *Ibidem*.

⁴² J. Cortes, *Alfonso XIII. Vida Confesiones y Muerte*, Prologo por el Marques de Luca de Tena, Prensa Española, Madrid 1956, 290.

⁴³ *The Economist*, 22.IX.1923.

firm monarchist, though not without the personal support of King Victor Emmanuel.

The same British observer surprisingly states that “there is an organized protest center in Spain in preparation for the coup of General Primo de Rivera and this is the industrial area of Catalonia based in Barcelona, a similar industrial area supported by Mussolini is Milan. This is the point of analogy between the revolution of General Primo de Rivera in Spain and the fascist movement of Mussolini in Italy”.⁴⁴

After the end of the First World War, the desire of the newly emerging economically strong class was to participate in governing the country, but then the political system flatly rejected such ambitions.

The dictatorship of Primo de Rivera would try to impose a revolution “from above” and would win the sympathy of the majority of society.

The September 13 coup aimed to “save the country from the dead body”. The traditional dynastic parties had no real interest in democratizing the parliamentary system, and the other parties were not modernizing their structures to win the election and replace the “traditional parties” that remain the only winners thanks to the existing system.

The coup in 1923 was supported and encouraged by three sectors: the Crown, the military, and public opinion.⁴⁵

The problem of responsibilities in Morocco was affecting the whole spectrum of Spanish politics, and neither the Conservatives nor the Liberals were taking action to solve this pressing problem in society. The fact that part of the army was also waiting for an answer to the same problem was conducive to the merging of interests with certain public sectors in the country that were affected by this unresolved situation.

The aggravation of the problem with public order (terrorism, strikes), the difficulties in the functioning of business, etc. all increasingly created a sense of state inefficiency.

From an economic point of view, there were also interests that converged with the organizers of the coup. In the early 1920s, business in Spain suffered not only from public disorder (strikes, terrorist attacks, etc.), but also from funding the war in Morocco. These costs become the main reason for the deficit in the state budget and the subsequent increase in the tax burden on taxpayers.

The economic crisis, in turn, was exacerbating the struggle between the various economic sectors, opposing individual industrial interests and exacerbating problems with farmers.

At the moment, industry was neglected at the expense of political interests in favor of the agricultural sector. The Catalan and Basque bourgeoisie supported the Primo de Rivera coup, largely because of the promise of increased protectionism.

⁴⁴ *Ibidem.*

⁴⁵ *Ibidem.*

Politicians paralyzed the legislature and the executive, leading to system inefficiencies and ongoing government crises. The crisis of the parliamentary system raised, in addition to economic and national problems, which were successfully embedded in the ideology of the coup.

Regional issues were also on the agenda, but they did not pose a serious threat, unlike the military, which was simply waiting for a specific date to organize the strike.

Emerging social and political movements facing the challenge of the Recovery System were also gaining sympathy among the armed forces. In times of crisis, emerging political movements emphasized the need for a strong army. The progressive strengthening of the military organization also reflected on the stability of civic organizations encouraged by the monarch, who supported their political ambitions.

The military had an attitude towards a coup, as they were most affected by the reforms in the army, in addition, they were well organized and sympathetic to the coup, which created good conditions for its implementation.

One of the most incredible facts about the September 13 uprising was the “albeit apparent” cessation of divisions among most of the military and the unification of a common cause.

Recent governments had taken different approaches in the military to try to curb the military ambitions of the “Africans”. The rise of the military, which had merit during the clashes in Morocco, was, to put it mildly, a reform aimed at benefiting the “Africans” again.

The trend changed as the society began to look for answers to questions about military failures in the Protectorate area. Governments were gradually in difficulty and were beginning to seek a balance between the Iberian military and the African military.

Gradually, politicians were trying to remove the military influence in politics by trying to repeal a law that allowed the military to receive promotions based on military merit. This political move led to rivalry in the army. The military was divided into warring factions and the situation was further complicated.

Politicians stood behind the idea of giving priority to the civilian supremacy in Morocco at the expense of the military, and this was officially regulated at the end of 1922 by the Liberal Party.

The military did not accept this political decision, and the government did not receive public support, thus creating an alternative for military intervention in the country's political life.

The unity of action (or inaction) of the army aimed to protect an institution whose power and privileges they considered affected.

The military took the initiative in 1923 because they believed they had lost their security. The question is why they had not taken action before? In our opinion, the answer is this: each government took a different approach to solving problems in the military. These differences stimulated anticipation and slowed

down the military as much as possible, while the Protectorate area had not yet been finally conquered.

Primo de Rivera was trying to cover up the differences among the military and especially among the conspirators, and his merit was precisely in the temporary normalization of differences. He himself said he would “temporarily rule” because, as a military man, he was fully aware that the controversy was serious.

The Annual disaster united some of the upper military and part of the middle class in society, who were pushing for active war and an end to the conquest of the troubled reef tribes.

The public was urging a review of the military and political catastrophe in Monte Arruit, as well as the one near Annual. The lack of a definite answer from the last government on this issue was a reason to generate frustration and mistrust in the system. In this way, the society was set to look for an alternative that was not necessarily militaristic, but in the absence of another it turned out to be the only one.

The desire of the Crown and the army to control the common policy became a problem and created a situation of crisis. Both the army and the Crown distanced themselves from governing the country during the regime. Both institutions failed to synchronize their actions during the regime, and both proved to be losers and frustrated by the dictatorship.

Some of the military do not accept Primo de Rivera's new administrative proposals and distance themselves from what they consider to be “unattractive proposals”.

Of all the decrees issued during the dictatorship, it was established that General Primo de Rivera was responsible for governing the country. The military, who were appointed in the administrative structures, performed only control functions, but this was not enough to satisfy a former officer...

During the military regime, they had to perform a variety of administrative functions, for which they were often unprepared. In April 1924, the general took the initiative to engage civic and patriotic organizations in support of the dictatorship in order to build administrative capacity that could fill “gaps in the administration”.⁴⁶

Until 1926, the dictator had only civic support, but gradually the Socialist Party joined the regime, acting as a “loyal opposition”, ensuring peace among social groups. The socially disadvantaged in society were consolidating and receiving patronage from the Socialist Party. The fact that a large mass of people who had social demands and denied the old political system was uniting, in our opinion, also created favorable conditions for a coup in 1923.

⁴⁶ R. Morodo, Und revisión de la dictadura: Acción Española. *En Cuadernos Económicos de I.C.E.* 10, 1979, 96.

Following the consolidation of the Patriotic Union party, the dictator's pursuit of despotism has increased dramatically. Actions were launched to persecute all those who opposed the regime.

Supporters of General Saro in Jaen were not worried, while those of Alba in Valladolid, Alcala Zamora in Jaen, Burgos and Huelva were under constant repression.

The provision of advisers and future deputies during the regime was carried out entirely at the will of the leader of the official Patriotic Union party.

District governors, appointed directly or indirectly by the dictator, had the right to reject a deputy or municipal councilor without difficulty. On the other hand, anyone "rejected" had no way of challenging this decision.

The destruction of dynastic parties provided an opportunity to develop new political formations such as the Socialist Party, the Catalan League and others.

The former political system presupposed a succession of power, and the dictatorship was launching a destructive campaign against this system, thus hindering political functioning. During the dictatorial period, there was no possibility of transferring power, because all power was concentrated in the hands of Primo de Rivera.

The end of the war in Morocco was largely due not only to Spanish interests but also to French ones. The end of the war was an undeniable success for the dictator as well as for the military Africans.

The establishment of the Military Directory was also one of the regime's successes. Later, General Primo de Rivera took advantage of the popularity he was gaining to end the Military Directory and took action to institutionalize the regime. A new policy and a permanent closure of the "brackets" stage and the "letter within ninety days" phase were gradually beginning. These intentions began to be realized after January 1926.

Although temporarily, the military was calming down, unlike the regionalists, who remained deceived and surprised. After taking power, Primo de Rivera turned out to be a centralist. We believe that this was due to the military tradition to which the dictator himself belonged, namely a strong and stable state without opportunities for autonomous regions.

The Catalan issue remained unresolved, but regionalists had the opportunity to use all parliamentary means to achieve their goals. Later, many Catalans would evolve in their thinking and accept the republican idea.

The political system of the Restoration had been fundamentally destroyed, the only alternative being the creation of a Patriotic Union.⁴⁷

Primo de Rivera himself, apart from his own party, did not allow the establishment of another alternative that would guarantee the successful functioning of the political model. This was undoubtedly a step backwards on the road to democracy.

⁴⁷ *Ibidem.*

During the dictatorship in Spain, there were no aggressive terrorist ideologies that characterized other European governments in the period. Rather, in Spain, some values were gaining popularity that corresponded to the traditional aspects of the conservative right.

General Primo de Rivera remained closer to traditional Spanish culture than to modern societies.

Summary

From what has been said so far, several main conclusions can be drawn:

- We can emphasize the importance of political leadership in a positive way because it creates a period of relative social and economic stability (albeit temporary). The measures taken, related to economic “nationalism” and state intervention, gave the regime positive features related to the recovery program. The “recovery program” imposed by Primo de Rivera favored interventionism and nationalism while rejecting market competition. This encourages the creation of monopolies, banking institutions and similar complex bureaucratic regulatory bodies. Dictatorships increase government revenue through debt issuance rather than more efficient collection of existing taxes. On the other hand, public procurement significantly stimulates industrial production. Revenues in the state have been used mostly in programs related to temporary employment, public works, such as massive expansion of the highway network and improvement of tourism infrastructure. These are indisputable successes related to the modernization of the country;

- We cannot fail to note the foreign policy successes achieved by the dictatorship, as well as the end of the war in Morocco. In the field of diplomacy, the active policy in relations with the republics of Latin America is new. The accents in the Spanish-American orientations are reduced to political-religious propaganda: the Catholic religion, together with the language, is the great heritage of Spain in Spanish-America. After six years of hostilities (1921-1926), the Rif Republic capitulated, ending the Spanish-Rif Wars. The established Spanish protectorate in Northern Morocco was not without the help of France;

- The administration of General Primo de Rivera left an imprint on the historical development of Spain and served as an example for many European countries, including the Balkans. This is explained by the tense post-war situation and existing similar problems. The subsequent dictatorships are a confirmation of this. Dictatorships in most countries are established at times of transition from traditional development to modern socio-economic and political development of countries;

- The main priority for the 7-year period is the general's personal mission, which he realizes as a national cause. At the beginning of the dictatorship, an attempt was made to impose new political methods aimed at the regeneration of political life. The beginning of a new political wave is set, which conquers all the

levers of power. The formation of the Patriotic Union was an attempt by Primo de Rivera to create his own political party. The results of this rule are tailored to the personal qualities of the general, as a soldier, a politician and a leader supported by society. The respect, even from the general's political opponents, is a testament to his undoubted leadership skills;

- We believe that the proposed Spanish model of governance, due to time constraints and in accordance with the turbulent international environment, is not a panacea and cannot solve all problems in any society. General Primo de Rivera remained closer to traditional Spanish culture than to modern societies. The proclamation of the Republic is actually the most significant change in the political life of the country and is a judgment on the activity of Primo de Rivera.

Zaključak

Iz do sada rečenog može se izvući nekoliko osnovnih zaključaka:

- Važnost političkog liderstva možemo naglasiti na pozitivan način jer ono stvara period relativne društvene i ekonomske stabilnosti (iako privremene). Preduzete mjere vezane za ekonomski „nacionalizam“ i državnu intervenciju dale su režimu pozitivne karakteristike u pogledu programa oporavka. „Program oporavka“ koji je nametnuo Primo de Rivera favorizovao je intervencionizam i nacionalizam, dok je odbijao tržišnu konkurenciju. To podstiče stvaranje monopola, bankarskih institucija i sličnih složenih birokratskih regulatornih tijela. Diktature povećavaju državni prihod kroz izdavanje dugova, a ne efikasniju naplatu postojećih poreza. S druge strane, javne nabavke značajno stimulišu industrijsku proizvodnju. Prihodi u državi korišteni su najviše u programe vezanih za privremeno zapošljavanje, javne radove, kao što su masovno širenje mreže autoputeva i unapređenje turističke infrastrukture. To su neosporni uspjesi vezani za modernizaciju zemlje;

- Ne možemo a da ne istaknemo spoljopolitičke uspehe koje je postigla diktatura, kao i završetak rata u Maroku. U oblasti diplomatije, nova je aktivna politika u odnosima sa republikama Latinske Amerike. Akcenti u špansko-američkim orijentacijama svedeni su na političko-religijsku propagandu: katolička religija, zajedno sa jezikom, veliko je nasljeđe Španije u španjolskoj Americi. Nakon šest godina neprijateljstava (1921-1926), Republika Rif je kapitulirala, okončavši špansko-Rifске ratove. Uspostavljeni španski protektorat u sjevernom Maroku nije bio bez pomoći Francuske;

- Administracija generala Prima de Rivere ostavila je pečat na istorijski razvoj Španije i poslužila kao primer mnogim evropskim zemljama, uključujući i Balkan. To se objašnjava napetom poslijeratnom situacijom i postojećim sličnim problemima. Naredne diktature su potvrda toga. Diktature se u većini zemalja uspostavljaju u vremenima tranzicije od tradicionalnog razvoja ka modernom društveno-ekonomskom i političkom razvoju zemalja;

- Glavni prioritet za period od 7 godina je generalova lična misija, koju on ostvaruje kao nacionalnu stvar. Na početku diktature pokušavalo se nametnuti nove političke metode koje su imale za cilj regeneraciju političkog života. Postavljen je početak novog političkog talasa koji osvaja sve poluge vlasti. Formiranje Patriotske unije bio je pokušaj Prima de Rivere da stvori sopstvenu političku stranku. Rezultati ovog pravila su prilagođeni ličnim kvalitetima generala, kao vojnika, političara i vođe podržanog od društva. Poštovanje, čak i od strane generalovih političkih protivnika, svedoči o njegovim nesumnjivim liderskim sposobnostima;

- Smatramo da predloženi španski model upravljanja, zbog vremenskih ograničenja i u skladu sa turbulentnim međunarodnim okruženjem, nije lijek za rješavanje svih problema u bilo kojem društvu. General Primo de Rivera ostao je bliži tradicionalnoj španskoj kulturi nego modernim društvima. Proglašenje Republike je zapravo najznačajnija promjena u političkom životu zemlje i presuda je o aktivnostima Prima de Rivere.

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