

## 7. Regicides in the mass era: killing the past and rethinking the authority in the Iberian Peninsula (1906–1908)<sup>1</sup>

Margarita Barral-Martínez

### Introduction

After the age of revolutions, kings and emperors became directly linked to liberalism as the 19th century progressed. Where it survived, monarchy emerged as a capital institution in the nation-state building. However, they had to relinquish their efficient power and engage with new symbolic functions to move towards contemporary times. Constitutions established the separation of powers, leading to a gradual imposition of governments on monarchs through the development of political parties and parliamentary systems.<sup>2</sup> Meanwhile, this ancient institution participated in the traditions' reinvention undertaken during the 19th century and assumed an eminently representative nature where national identity played an increasingly decisive role.<sup>3</sup> Venturing out to meet the nation and humanizing the institution, shedding its religious aura, allowed the monarchy to survive. However, the process also had negative aspects. In the period of mass movements and social revolution, episodes of extreme violence and assassinations increased all over the world, leading to moments of considerable instability. The development of anarchism and its propaganda by the deed's strategy focused on specific people who embodied what they wanted to destroy.<sup>4</sup> Among them, regicides stood out throughout Europe.

---

<sup>1</sup> My research was funded by the Ministry of Science, Innovation, and Universities of Spain under Grant (PID2022-136358NB-I00).

<sup>2</sup> Carsten Anckar, 'Constitutional monarchies and semi-constitutional monarchies: a global historical study, 1800-2017,' *Contemporary Politics*, vol. 27, issue 1 (2021), 23–40; Petra Schleiter and Edward Morgan-Jones, 'Constitutional Power and Competing Risks: Monarchs, Presidents, Prime Ministers, and the Termination of East and West European Cabinets,' *American Political Science Review*, vol. 103, issue 3 (2009), 496–512.

<sup>3</sup> David Cannadine, 'The Context, Performance and Meaning of Ritual: The British Monarchy and de 'Invention of Tradition', c. 1820-1977,' in Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Range, ed., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press: 1983), 101–64.

<sup>4</sup> Ángeles Barrio, 'Discursos sobre nación y patria en el anarquismo español,' *Historia Contemporánea*, vol. 66 (2021), 403–32; Juan Avilés, 'El terrorismo anarquista como propaganda por el hecho: de la formulación teórica a los atentados de París (1877-1894),' *Historia y Política*, no. 21 (2009), 169–90.

The list of failed or consummated regicides is overwhelming by the turn of the XX century. There were both individual and collective actions. The first ones mainly correspond to unbalanced individuals, portrayed by contemporaries as ‘madmen’, as characters with ‘lost imaginations’ who act driven by their madness, by ‘personal mystical impulses’.<sup>5</sup> For the Spanish case, these were the attempts against Isabel II in 1852, carried out by the priest Merino; the second attempt suffered by Alfonso XII in 1879; and the attempt against Alfonso XIII in 1902 on the day of his Constitution's swearing-in. In Portugal, for its part, individual regicide tried to murder Carlos I in April 1893 and January 1896. However, most of the time, regicides were the result of more complex and organized republican, worker and anarchist conspiracies. In these cases, ‘fanatics’ and not ‘madmen’ were responsible for the attacks. The examples of this typology were much more abundant and included the participation of tremendously varied ideological currents. For example, the attempt suffered by Amadeo I of Savoy in 1872, the plot hatched against María Cristina of Habsburg in 1897, the anarchist regicide attempt against Alfonso XIII in Paris in 1905, or the anarchist and Catalanist plots thwarted in 1913 and 1925. Among them are precisely those two whom I study in this paper: the attempted regicide of Alfonso XIII of Spain during his wedding in 1906 and the assassination of Carlos I of Portugal in 1908.

Undoubtedly, the threats and attempts of regicide caused unrest among the royalty, governments, and society. News of those occurring throughout Europe filled newspapers and the private correspondence of the monarchs. Furthermore, over the 19th century, the public presence of monarchs became much more common, both in appearances and in travels and state visits. As a result, the risk of suffering a regicide increased.<sup>6</sup> The monarchy always had a very particular bond with the people,<sup>7</sup> relationships that had to adapt to the growing public demand to see the royals. In all these moments, the monarch would leave the palace on horseback or in an open carriage to greet the gathered people, be seen by the citizens, and mingle with them. Alfonso XIII advised his friend Manuel II of Portugal to travel throughout the country to win over ‘the

---

<sup>5</sup> *La Actualidad*, 10/02/1852; *El Fígaro*, 31/12/1879; *La Época*, 05/01/1880 and 17/05/1902. Rui Ramos, *Don Carlos* (Rio de Mouro, Temas e Debates: 2007), 441.

<sup>6</sup> Hermann von der Dunk, ‘The Dutch Monarchy in Europe,’ in D. J. Elzinga, ed., *The Dutch Constitutional Monarchy in a Changing Europe* (Alphen aan den Rijn, Kluwer: 2007), 81–95; Christiane Wolf, ‘Representing Constitutional Monarchy in Britain, Germany, and Austria,’ in Laurence Cole and Daniel Unowsky, ed., *The Limits of Loyalty: Imperial Symbolism, Popular Allegiances, and State Patriotism in the Late Habsburg Monarchy* (Oxford, Berghahn: 2007), 199–222.

<sup>7</sup> Clifford Geertz, ‘Centers, Kings, and Charisma: Reflections on the Symbolics of Power,’ in *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology* (New York, Basic Books: 1983), 121–46.

hearts of all Portuguese’.<sup>8</sup> He firmly believed ‘that, in our kingdoms, one does not reign by tradition but by the sympathy and personal actions of the sovereign’. In fact, Alfonso was prolific in using this strategy of popularization by travelling almost constantly throughout Spain and abroad.<sup>9</sup> Conversely, this increased public presence raised the risk of suffering regicide.

In recent years, cultural history has offered engaging interdisciplinary and transversal perspectives on the representations, images, and symbolic functions of monarchy in the 19th century. However, regicides –attempted or consummated– have gone unnoticed by Modern history. We barely have works that analyse them as historical episodes that shaped the monarchy’s image at a time, such as the mass era, where political and social changes generated a broad fear of these attacks. In addition to some general papers, such as Rachel Hoffman’s work,<sup>10</sup> historiography lacks political and social analysis of the true significance of these episodes in the medium and long term. Spanish and Portuguese cases, where there was a wave of plots and regicide attempts, have been even less successful.<sup>11</sup> These acts indeed had different motives and causes inserted into each national context. However, regicides and their perpetrators crossed national borders. For this reason, the study of regicides needs a comparative approach. In the end, they were perceived and experienced by their contemporaries in similar terms.

This chapter studies comparatively the attacks on the kings Alfonso XII of Spain (1906) and Carlos I of Portugal (1908). The comparison, in this case, is more than pertinent. These two monarchies shared kinship and political, economic, social and religious similarities. But they were also going through a profound political and social crisis. In the text, I analyse the recourse to regicide by anarchists and republicans, the questioning of traditional authority they entailed, and the reactions they generated in the press about monarchical legitimacy in the age of the masses. The press will be the primary

---

<sup>8</sup> Javier Tusell and Genoveva Queipo de Llano, *Alfonso XIII. El rey polémico* (Madrid, Taurus: 200)1, 146; Javier Moreno Luzón, ‘Alfonso el Regenerador. Monarquía escénica e imaginario nacionalista español, en perspectiva comparada (1902-1913),’ *Hispania*, vol. 73, no. 244 (2013), 319–48, 332.

<sup>9</sup> Margarita Barral, ed., *Alfonso XIII visita España. Monarquía y nación* (Granada, Comares: 2015).

<sup>10</sup> Rachel G. Hoffman, ‘The Age of Assassination: Monarchy and Nation in Nineteenth-Century Europe,’ in Jan Rüger and Nikolaus Wachsman, ed., *Rewriting German History. New Perspectives on Modern Germany* (London, Palgrave Mcmillan: 2015), 121–41; Paolo Edoardo Fiora, ed., *Monza, 29 luglio 1900. Il Regicidio, dalla cronaca alla storia* (Milan, Spirali/Vel: 2000);

<sup>11</sup> Juan Avilés, ‘Contra Alfonso XIII: atentados frustrados y conspiración revolucionaria,’ in Juan Avilés and Ángel Herrero, ed., *El nacimiento del terrorismo en Occidente: anarquía, nihilismo y violencia revolucionaria* (Madrid, Siglo XXI: 2008), 141–58; Maria A. Samara and Rui Tavares, *O Regicídio* (Lisboa, Tinta da China: 2008); Jorge Morais, *Regicídio. A contagem decrescente* (Sintra, Zéfiro: 2007); Miguel Sanches de Baêna, *Diário de D. Manuel e Estudo Sobre o Regicídio* (Lisboa, Testemunhos Contemporâneos: 1990).

source for this work. Ultimately, it is a central resource for exploring the legitimacy of monarchy and its integration into the contemporary mindset. Portuguese historiography, in fact, has emphasized how the republican press directly influenced the rapid discrediting of the monarchy during the reign of Carlos I.<sup>12</sup> These two regicides allow us to understand the similarities and differences in how monarchs confronted these violent episodes.

### **Alfonso XIII and the anarchist attack on his wedding**

Alfonso XIII ascended to the throne in 1902 in the middle of a deep crisis that touched the very being of the Spanish nation. The loss of the colonies in 1898 and the rise of anarchism resulted in permanent political instability and social tension. In addition, the country was also facing a war in Morocco that showed the poor preparation of an army with obsolete equipment. Many ideological currents called for national regeneration. The young king was very aware of the situation and the role he had to play in that regard. As he wrote in his diary that year at just 16 years old:

‘I find the country broken by our past wars, longing for someone to lift it out of this situation, and needed for social reform in favour of the deprived classes. A country with an Army lagging modern advancements, a Navy without ships, and the flag disgraced’.<sup>13</sup>

In that context, Alfonso had to be the regenerator king, as people called him then. First and foremost, national regeneration had to be political, tackling corruption and the rigged electoral system controlled by a few elite networks. **But the regeneration also included gender aspects to reinforce legitimacy, where tradition and modernity are combined to represent the royal family as a family reference.** For example, politics linked the imperialist expansion into Morocco during those years with the virile regeneration of the nation. In this way, the king had to contribute to improving political institutions and represent a new masculinity that would lift Spain out of its effeminacy.<sup>14</sup> Besides the contrast of Alfonso XIII’s personality, from the beginning of his reign, his gender

---

<sup>12</sup> José Saraiva, *Storia del Portogallo* (Milan, Mondadori: 2004), 308.

<sup>13</sup> José Luis Castillo-Puche, ed., *Diario íntimo de Alfonso XIII* (Madrid, Biblioteca Nueva: 1960), 109.

<sup>14</sup> Margarita Barral and Alfonso Iglesias, ‘Alfonso XIII, ese hombre: masculinidad, nación e imperio,’ *Ayer*, no. 132, (2024), 225–81. **Mónica Moreno, and Alicia Mira, ‘¿Un rey viril para una España fuerte? La masculinidad de Alfonso XIII y la Nación’, in Nerea Aresti, Karen Peters, and Julia Brühne, coords., ¿La España invertebrada?: masculinidad y nación a comienzos del siglo XX** (Granada: Comares, 2016), 101–18. **Alicia Mira, ‘Estereotipos de género y matrimonio regio como estrategia de legitimación en la monarquía española contemporánea,’ *Historia Constitucional*, no.17 (2017), 165–91.**

projection had to encompass such contrasting nuances that created the opposite effect desired. Several of the king's hobbies –notably horseback riding, polo, tennis, skiing, sailing, and cars– helped to construct his public image. In fact, news and photographs in the press highlighting the monarch's energy, agility, and youthfulness were very common, conveying a modern and healthy image that symbolized a strong and virile nation.<sup>15</sup> With this image, the young king's projected masculinity aimed to reinforce the national identity to overcome Spain's weakness.

Although this public strategy aimed to promote an image of a brave and virile king, Alfonso did not fully embody this regenerative model of masculinity that would even surpass chivalry. The reality, however, was very far from this. On a political level, Alfonso XIII became characterized by his constant intervention in politics, especially in the issue of Morocco. Historiography has highlighted these points in recent biographical works, emphasizing his role as an active agent of his time.<sup>16</sup> The monarch never understood his constitutional role –strictly symbolic and not political– and generated more instability in the regime, deepening the crisis that the lack of representativeness had as Spanish society prospered and modernized. The support he gave to the coup d'état and the dictatorship of General Miguel Primo de Rivera in 1923 ended all the prestige he had gained. The only solution was his exile when, even within a corrupt and controlled electoral system, republican parties won the 1931 municipal elections. Furthermore, from a gender perspective, Alfonso failed to embody that ideal of masculinity. He went down in history as a corrupt, womanizing, bon vivant, and extravagant man.

In any case, Alfonso XIII's life was subject to the same tensions as the rest of the European monarchs. Like them, he had to choose between dictatorship and democracy, popularize the monarchy, and tackle flatteries, harsh criticism, and assassination attempts. The king endured a total of six regicide attempts, four of which occurred in the early years of his reign, and almost all of them took place in the capital. Their frequency was such that a newspaper stated in 1905, after one of these attempts, that 'bombs were part of the luggage of the kings'.<sup>17</sup> The first threat was in 1902, when an admirer of his sister,

---

<sup>15</sup> Javier Moreno Luzón, *El rey patriota. Alfonso XIII y la nación* (Barcelona, Galaxia-Gutenberg: 2023), 332–3; Julio Montero, María Antonia Paz and José J. Sánchez, *La imagen pública de la monarquía. Alfonso XIII en la prensa escrita y cinematográfica* (Barcelona, Ariel: 2001), 229–34.

<sup>16</sup> Carlos Seco Serrano, *Alfonso XIII* (Madrid, Arlanza: 2001); Tusell and Queipo de Llano, *Alfonso XIII*; Morgan C. Hall, *Alfonso XIII y el ocaso de la monarquía liberal 1902-1923* (Madrid, Alianza: 2005); Javier Moreno Luzón, ed., *Alfonso XIII. Un político en el trono* (Madrid, Marcial Pons: 2003); Gabriel Cardona, *Alfonso XIII, el rey de espadas* (Barcelona, Planeta: 2010); Moreno Luzón, *El rey patriota*.

<sup>17</sup> *El Nuevo Régimen*, 06/06/1905.

Princess Maria Teresa, lunged at the royal carriage. The most serious occurred in 1905, during a State visit to France. This time, the failed murder's responsibility corresponded to an international network of Franco-Spanish anarchists aiming to assassinate the heads of state of both countries. However, these dramatic events also reinforced the monarch's popularity and masculinity. After the regicide attempts, people took to the streets fervently, displaying their 'popular acclaim' for the violated sovereigns.<sup>18</sup> That circumstance and reaction happened precisely in the 1906 regicide attempt that concerns us here.

King Alfonso XIII married Princess Victoria Eugenie of Battenberg on 31 May 1906 in the St Jerome church in Madrid. This Queen Victoria's granddaughter came to complement with her femininity the virile and modern discourse that young Alfonso was trying to perform. Thus, the bride represented youthfulness, energy, and modernity. Educated in a 'vigorous and strong' country that filled Spanish society with 'enthusiasm', she became the 'charming' princess who glimpsed 'the magical four-leaf clover' that would also lead to the longed-for national regeneration.<sup>19</sup> However, that fairy tale was cut short by a regicide attempt. The anarchist Mateo Morral awaited the path of the royal parade on the balcony of a guesthouse located on the third floor of number 88 (now 84) of Calle Mayor. Five minutes before 2:00 p.m., the regicide threw a bomb hidden in a bouquet. The bunch struck the tram's power lines and veered off course, falling among the crowd gathered to watch and cheer the newlyweds; **the event was a 'spectacular passion' before the parade of 'social hierarchies'**.<sup>20</sup> The king and queen emerged unscathed, but 25 people died, and more than 100 spectators were injured. At the very moment of the violent event, the king displayed a 'manly composure' that was applauded and acclaimed by the people, contrasting with the cowardice of the aggressor.<sup>21</sup> The incident sparked great excitement among the public and created an image of the king as a man who was impulsive yet calm, brave, and courageous, unruffled in the face of danger. This momentary enthusiasm also led the monarch to develop a false perception

---

<sup>18</sup> *El Imparcial*, 01/06/1906.

<sup>19</sup> 'El regalo de boda,' *El Correo de Galicia*, 30/05/1906.

<sup>20</sup> José Miguel Hernández Barral, 'La boda de Alfonso XIII: 'pasión espectacular' y jerarquías sociales'', *Circunstancias*, no. 27 (2012), 1–7.

<sup>21</sup> 'El atentado contra sus majestades,' *La Correspondencia de España*, 02/06/1906, 2; 'Atentado contra los reyes,' *Nuevo Mundo*, 31/05/1906, 22; 'Las bodas reales,' *El Noroeste*, 01/06/1906; Julio Camba, *Cuando la boda del rey* (Madrid, Instituto Editorial Reus: 1944), 301.

of admiration from his people. This overconfidence would cause him more than one problem throughout his life.<sup>22</sup>

After committing the attempted regicide, Mateo Morral sought refuge in the offices of the satirical weekly *El Motín*, directed by the republican José Nakens, who sheltered him in the house of a typesetter. Although he managed to escape from Madrid, the police arrested him on June 2nd in a place near the Torrejón de Ardoz train station. He was waiting to catch the train to Barcelona. What happened next remains a mystery to this day. The official investigation maintains that Morral surrendered peacefully but shot and killed a guard while being escorted to the barracks in Torrejón and then committed suicide. However, a forensic study based on photographs of the guard's body suggests that the bullet hole in the chest is incompatible with both a close-range shot and the Browning pistol Morral allegedly carried concealed. Until transferred to Madrid, the town council kept both bodies for a few hours. The people gathered in mass in front of the council, expressed outrage against the assassin and anarchism, and cheered loudly for the kings of Spain. Faced with hostile demonstrations and fearing attacks on the regicide corpse, six pairs of police officers surrounded the carriage carrying the coffin on its way to Madrid.<sup>23</sup> The trial took place on June 3, 1907, and the judge sentenced José Nakens and two other anarchists, Isidro Ibarra and Bernardo Mata, to nine years in prison for aiding Mateo Morral's escape. Francisco Ferrer Guardia and three other defendants were acquitted. All of them were pardoned a year later, thanks to an intense campaign on their behalf. Nakens himself recounted in newspaper articles the terrible living conditions in prison. Ferrer Guardia was later accused of instigating the incidents of the Tragic Week of Barcelona (1909) and died executed for it despite international protests and pressure.

The social response to the attack demonstrates, on the one hand, the immediate anger and rejection of the people against the assassins. But it also showed solidarity with the monarchs who were targeted for assassination, suggesting a certain degree of attachment to the institution they represented.<sup>24</sup> Popular and political discourses thus contrast the courage and composure of the royal couple with the cowardice of the assailants.<sup>25</sup> The study of the regicide attempt and the resulting popular monarchism show us the active role played by ordinary people in these episodes. It also reveals the agency

---

<sup>22</sup> Cardona, *Alfonso XIII*, 115.

<sup>23</sup> Francisco Pérez Abellán, *Morral, el reo asesinado. El falso suicidio del hombre que atentó contra Alfonso XIII* (Madrid, Poe Books: 2017).

<sup>24</sup> *El Imparcial*, 01/06/1906; *La Ilustración Española y Americana*, 05/06/1906.

<sup>25</sup> *El Imparcial*, 01/06/1906.

of the royals attempting to use these regicides to popularize themselves and the crown. After all, the royal couple continued with the wedding celebration, demonstrating their perseverance and that of the nation. The display of the unharmed royal bodies would acquire a theatrical aspect and great political significance. The printing presses of newspapers sold special editions, even abroad, with portraits of the monarchs and images of the events and the popular reaction. Commemorations of the attacks also linked religious-sacred aspects with national-patriotic. Crowds gathered to officiate religious acts of thanksgiving and pray for the wounded and slain.<sup>26</sup> Even commemorative monuments were inaugurated, such as the sculptural ensemble erected in 1908 in front of the house where the bomb fell in the bloody attack of 1906.<sup>27</sup>

### **The failed revolution and the consummated regicide of Carlos I**

In the case of Portugal, the state of overexcitement and crisis had been almost general since the British Ultimatum (1890) and the subsequent Treaty of Windsor (1899). Signed in London by the British Prime Minister, Lord Salisbury, and the Portuguese ambassador, Luis Pinto de Soveral, the treaty prevented the unification of the Portuguese colonies in Africa –Angola and Mozambique– to create a *Novo Brasil*. But that Portuguese defeat showed mostly the relegation to a secondary position on the international stage of that once mighty empire. At the national level, republicanism and its proposals for social changes deepened the political crisis. Since the Luis I proclamation in 1861, progressive and conservative politicians took turns into power through a system of electoral fraud controlled by local elites called *rotativismo*. This situation led to the deterioration of Portugal in education, political stability, technological progress, and economic growth. When his son Carlos I came to power in 1889, the ancient Portuguese nation was in visible decline.

From the 1880s onwards, the monarchy and its representatives faced an intense smear campaign. Criticisms arose from all fronts and targeted every issue, no matter how trivial they were. The wedding of Carlos I to Princess María Amelia of Orleans, daughter of the Count of Paris, pretender to the throne of France, was interpreted in this meaning. Although it was a love marriage, just like Alfonso XIII and Victoria Eugenia, the

---

<sup>26</sup> *El Día*, 02/06/1906; *La Ilustración Española y Americana*, 7, 8 and 15/06/1906.

<sup>27</sup> Obra de los escultores Enrique Repullés y Aniceto Marinas. El monumento fue demolido durante la Guerra civil, y en 1963 se inauguró otro, obra de Federico Collaut-Valera.

Portuguese union did not receive the nation's approval. From the beginning, the new consort was the target of hard criticism and received epithets as negative as 'the French' or 'the Jesuit'. The country's governance went from bad to worse due to the monarch's interventionism particularly. The criticisms extended beyond republicanism who attempted to proclaim the republic in 1891 after the British Ultimatum's crisis.<sup>28</sup> In fact, progressive politicians launched the so-called 'anti dynastic democratic campaigns' between 1883 and 1884 in response to Carlos I's favouritism to the conservatives.<sup>29</sup> He also failed to maintain international prestige despite his efforts to return the State visits received and go over European courts.<sup>30</sup> The economic situation was also dire, with an unsustainable public debt. Between 1890 and 1913, Portugal failed to recover from its economic deficit compared to more industrialized countries, defining itself as a backward state, primarily rural, with minimal industrial growth and an illiteracy rate of around 70% among the adult population.<sup>31</sup>

The state of crisis reached its peak with the appointment of João Franco as prime minister in 1906. He had created the new party in 1901, splitting from the traditional Conservatives who ruled alternatively with the Progressives since the 1870s. The new prime minister embarked on an authoritarian drift with the suspension of the Constitution in 1907. The king supported Franco's dictatorship solidly, justified by a theoretical second regeneration. Carlos I acknowledged this publicly in an interview with the French newspaper *Le Temps*, where he expressed his satisfaction and understanding with João Franco.<sup>32</sup> Political repression and the cutback to rights and freedoms actually led to an increase in discontent and social unrest. A trend capitalized upon by the growing republican identity since then. Proportionally, the monarchical identity was gradually diminishing along with the rejection of the figures of the 'squanderers' Carlos I and Maria Amalia. The widespread discredit of the crown was also on the increase through the delicate issue of the *adiantamentos*: the granting of undeclared loans outside the approved economic allocation for the Royal House. The Portuguese monarchy thus represented

---

<sup>28</sup> *O Mundo*, 31/01/1908.

<sup>29</sup> José Miguel Sardica, 'Crise e queda da monarquia liberal portuguesa,' in Rui Ramos, José Murilo de Carvalho, and Isabel Corrêa da Silva, ed., *Dois países um sistema. A monarquia constitucional dos Braganças em Portugal e no Brasil (1822-1910)*, (Lisboa, Don Quixote: 2018), 379–406, 391.

<sup>30</sup> En efecto, el primer viaje que el nuevo rey de Inglaterra, Eduardo VII hizo al extranjero, fue a Lisboa. Vinieron otros jefes de Estado como Alfonso XIII de España, Guillermo II de Alemania y el presidente de la República francesa, Loubet.

<sup>31</sup> Pedro Lains and Álvaro Ferreira da Silva, *História económica de Portugal, 1700-2000, Vol. II: O século XIX* (Lisboa, Imprensa de Ciências sociais: 2012).

<sup>32</sup> *Diário Ilustrado*, 16/11/1907.

excessive spending, a waste, without popular support or any possibility of reversing this lack of prestige.<sup>33</sup>

Thus, intense debates, economic crises, crimes, and political passions defined the context of early 20th-century Portugal. The degradation of the system, differences within the traditional monarchist parties, Carlos I's constant foray into politics, scandals, republican conspiracies, etc. All these factors contribute to the overall crisis context through which the Portuguese monarchy was passing, and they explain the attack that ended Carlos I's life. Carlos de Braganza never experienced a plausible assassination attempt until then. In 1893, a boy ran towards him, wielding a flare, while the king drove his Phaeton in the Avenida da Liberdade. The perpetrator was a recently arrived French Jew in Lisbon, Salomon Levy Azancot, who ended up interned in a psychiatric hospital. A second episode occurred in 1896. When Carlos I passed by Calzada de Sacramento in Lower Lisbon, Manuel de Matos hurled him with a stone. The police captured him, and although he cheered for anarchy, the justice considered him another madman. He was admitted to the same psychiatric hospital as the previous one, in Rilhafoles. In fact, the king did not believe in the possibility of a crime of this nature. He continued to stroll through the capital in an open carriage, trusting his people despite the atmosphere of social revolution in the capital since 1890.

The month before the regicide, the royal family left Lisbon to hunt in *Vila Viçosa*.<sup>34</sup> Republican press interpreted this absence as an escape from their responsibilities.<sup>35</sup> In this context of a generalized crisis, the government made some decisions that further aggravated the situation. Among them were the preparation of the elections announced for April and the organization of a royal tour to Brazil.<sup>36</sup> But above all, repressive and censorship measures stood out. The dictatorship responded that way to massive protests and unrest, supported mainly by Republicans.<sup>37</sup> But above all, repressive and censorship measures stood out. The dictatorship responded that way to massive protests and unrest, supported mainly by Republicans. On January 30, Carlos I signed a

---

<sup>33</sup> Fernando Rosas and Maria Fernanda Rollo, *História da Primeira República Portuguesa* (Lisboa, Tinta da China: 2009), 36–40.

<sup>34</sup> *Vila Viçosa* es un municipio portugués del distrito de Évora, región de *Alentejo* y comunidad intermunicipal de *Alentejo Central*, con cerca de 5400 habitantes actualmente. Los duques de Bragança mantuvieron durante varios siglos propiedades en dicho municipio como el Palacio Ducal de *Vila Viçosa*, hasta la proclamación de la República.

<sup>35</sup> *Ilustração Portuguesa*, 10/02/1908.

<sup>36</sup> Rocha Martins, *João Franco. O último cônsul de D. Carlos* (Lisboa, Bonecos Rebeldes: 2007), 111.

<sup>37</sup> *A Lucta*, 28 and 31/01/1908; *Diário Ilustrado*, 29/01/1908. Para un reportaje de los días previos al atentado perpetrado contra la familia real portuguesa véase *Ilustração Portuguesa*, 24/02/1908.

decree suspending five newspapers: *O Dia*, *Correio da Noite*, *Liberal*, *Paiz*, and *Diario Popular*.<sup>38</sup> The next day, he signed another one, increasing sentences for individuals condemned of public disorder and hostility to national peace. The measure included expulsion from the kingdom, relocation to overseas provinces, and parliamentary immunity's repeal. Arrests followed in the subsequent days, among them the Republican deputy Afonso Costa and the dissident progressive Ribeira Brava. José Maria de Alpoim, leader of the progressives, fled to Spain to avoid arrest. These actions further inflamed and agitated the situation. On January 28, there was an attempted coup by dissident republicans and monarchists.<sup>39</sup> Their objective was not to change the political system but to remove the dictator João Franco.

The revolution failed, and the government's repression was harsh. But the response from the republican opposition was no less forceful. In this context, they planned the regicide for the day the royal family returned to Lisbon on January 1, 1908. In fact, the press saw the return as a provocation.<sup>40</sup> As Carlos I and his family passed through the *Terreiro do Paço –Praça do Comércio*, Alfredo Costa and Manuel Buíça fired several shots from the crowd gathered to watch the royal parade. The king died instantly, his heir Luis Felipe was fatally wounded, and Prince Manuel was hit in the arm. The assassins were shot dead on the spot by the police and later identified as members of the Republican Party. Approximately twenty minutes later, the heir also passed away. Manuel and Queen Amelia were the only survivors from the royal carriage, and he was proclaimed the last king of Portugal.<sup>41</sup> João Franco, who travelled in another carriage, also survived. The social tension and popular discontent had even led him to doubt the royal family's safety measures and advise the king to travel in a closed carriage. Carlos I, however, ignored the prime minister's advice. He considered that the security measures established an inconceivable physical and symbolic separation from his people. The political and social consequences of this decision would have, for him, the same effects as regicide: the end of the myth of the king as the first citizen.<sup>42</sup> Although rumours of a potential attack circulated, nobody believed such violent acts would occur neither in Portugal nor Spain; it was something from abroad.

---

<sup>38</sup> *Diário de Notícias*, 31/01/1908.

<sup>39</sup> *A Lucta*, 01-07/02/1908.

<sup>40</sup> *Ilustração Portuguesa*, 24/02/1908.

<sup>41</sup> *Diário do Governo*, 02/02/1908.

<sup>42</sup> Ramos, *Don Carlos*, 443.

During the trial, the identity of the regicides was never in doubt: they were Manuel dos Reis da Silva Buiça and Alfredo Luís da Costa, two Republicans, Masonic (both were linked to the Carbonari lodge) and convicted who claimed to participate in an international anarchist movement to transform the world, even to the death. Besides, the political plot overshadowed the 1908 Portuguese regicide. For years, the leading debate about the regicide focused on determining which of the two anarchists had killed the king and who had ordered them to do so. The judicial investigation focused on Buiça's weapon, a semi-automatic Winchester of recent model and high precision calibre, and Costa's handgun, an FN-Browning. The inquiries revealed that the armourer Heitor Ferreira sold them to Ribeira Brava. With this, the police demonstrated that the regicides belonged to organized revolutionary groups, including those who participated in the attempted coup in January. The initial secrecy of the trial records and the subsequent disappearance of the original documentation fuelled all sorts of guilt speculation among revolutionary republican and monarchist groups. João Franco himself considered the king's death as the result of political conspiracies, publicly declaring that 'the regicide was undoubtedly the work of politicians'.<sup>43</sup> Today it is known that the regicide command was made up of at least 18 individuals, among which were three who operated abroad.<sup>44</sup>

The state funeral for the regicide's victims took place on February 8th, and leaders from most of the world attended. The funeral procession moved from the Palace of Necessidades to the Royal Pantheon of São Vicente de Fora amidst a silent and sparse crowd, with little mourning or respect.<sup>45</sup> Some republican newspapers like *O Mundo* even ignored the event. In contrast to this indifference, the population showed support for the regicides. The same individuals who watched the royal hearses without any emotional involvement mourned the regicides and visited their graves to lay flowers. It was a kind of republican pilgrimage of support.<sup>46</sup> In the 1906 Spanish case, the image of the regicide Mateo Morral included the idea of the 'royal assassin' as a 'social enemy,' rejecting anarchist violence as a social scourge. The Portuguese regicide of 1908, however, generated the opposite effect. The nation did not widely mourn the king and the heir to the throne's death, nor did they create a wave of popular support for the institution. On

---

<sup>43</sup> João Franco, *Cartas de El-Rei D. Carlos a João Franco Castelo Branco* (Lisboa, Bertrand: 1924), 175.

<sup>44</sup> Paulo Jorge Fernandes, 'Impacte internacional do regicídio de D. Carlos', in Carlos Fiolhais, José Eduardo Franco and José Pedro Paiva, dirs., *História Global de Portugal*, (Lisboa: Círculo de Leitores, 2020), 539–44.

<sup>45</sup> Ramos, *Don Carlos*, 458–9.

<sup>46</sup> *Portugal*, 16/02/1908; Martins, *João Franco*, 385–7.

the contrary, the violence perpetrated by the regicides was supported and hailed by a significant portion of the population.

But one part of the people did not mean that everyone supported it. Despite the monarchy's unpopularity caused by the repression and authoritarianism of João Franco, supported by the king, not all means were legitimate to put an end to the monarchy. There were also condemnations of the tragic event. Some non-supportive newspapers of the dictatorship described and published photographs of the events, such as the case of *Ilustração Portuguesa*.<sup>47</sup> There were also those who, like the conservative *Diário Ilustrado*, denounced the infamous and unacceptable act of violence. The attack undermined the civility and modernity that the Portuguese nation tried to show at the beginning of the 20th century.<sup>48</sup> In fact, the international press commented that after the violent act, the society of Lisbon fell silent in the face of the perpetrated massacre.<sup>49</sup>

Manuel II initiated the so-called policy of *acalmação* (pacification) in 1908, starting with João Franco's and his supports removal.<sup>50</sup> In fact, they did not have a distinctive place at the funeral. If Carlos I took part in politics to channel the party system and reoriented the social crisis, his son Manuel (supported by his mother) opted for abstention to safeguard the institution. During the two years he was on the throne, he never took sides in the struggles of the *rotativismo* system and just reigned but did not govern. The one who would be the last king of Portugal had no education for his new task and became a stranger in his kingdom.<sup>51</sup> The murder of his father and brother also forced him to rethink his security and took some distance from the people.<sup>52</sup> The proclamation of the new sovereign placed the Portuguese monarchy in charge of a dying regime. Besides, Manuel's lack of empathy for his role and Portuguese society in general also did not contribute to reversing an already very minority monarchic identity. It was, in fact, 'a monarchy without monarchists,' even a 'monarchy without a monarch'.<sup>53</sup> However, the anti-Franco leaders triumphed not only over João Franco but also over the constitutional monarchy of Portugal.

---

<sup>47</sup> *Ilustração Portuguesa*, 10/02/1908.

<sup>48</sup> *Diário Ilustrado*, 02/02/1908.

<sup>49</sup> *The Times*, 02/02/1908; reproduction in David Evans and Manuel Filipe Canaveira, *Regicídio e República. Olhares Britânicos e norte-americanos* (Casal de Cambra, Caleidoscópio: 2010), 30–1.

<sup>50</sup> *Diário do Governo*, 02/02/1908.

<sup>51</sup> Sardica, 'Crise e queda', 401.

<sup>52</sup> Ramos, *Don Carlos*, 443.

<sup>53</sup> Ramos, *Don Carlos*, 456; Maria Cândida Proença, *Don Manuel II* (Lisboa, Temas & Debates: 2008), 37–40; Samara and Tamares, *O Regicídio*.

## **Conclusion**

Neither Carlos I of Braganza nor Alfonso XIII of Bourbon really understood their new role as constitutional and parliamentary monarchs. Their constant direct intervention in political matters, squandering, and penchant for extravagance contributed to putting an end to the institution they personified. The public exposure they had to undergo as part of the changes the monarchy had to experience to survive led them to take to the streets. They had to show themselves publicly to make themselves and their crowns popular. In return, like in the rest of Europe, their risk of experiencing assassination attempts increased due to everything they represented. A regicide meant much more than murdering monarchs. It also implied trying to kill the past and rethink the authority, the political hegemony. The cases analysed in this paper, the attempted regicide of Alfonso XIII in 1906 and the assassination of Carlos I in 1908, show us all the facets of the violent attacks that marked the lives of monarchs and political elites at the turn of the century.

Although condemned by a portion of national and international society, another equally significant part showed explicit support for those who committed these assassinations. The press thus reveals the contradictions, ambiguities, and conflicts that European society experienced during this time of decisive upheavals and social changes. On the one hand, the attempted regicide on the day of Alfonso XIII's wedding went deep into a new era of modern nationalism represented by the arrival of the young monarch and his partner. In this case, the episode of violence sparked massive public demonstrations of loyalty to the state through the newlywed royals. This popular monarchism initially reinforced national identity and support for the monarchy. On the other, the assassination of Carlos I and the heir to the Portuguese throne had the approval of a part of society. Here, the crisis that the country and the crown were going through did not focus on their regeneration through the monarchs but rather on their destruction. Carlos I's support of the dictator João Franco was decisive in the dissatisfaction of a significant portion of the monarchists who had supported the political regime since the 1870s. These, together with the Republicans, contributed to forging social republicanism represented in the support for the regicides.

## **Appendix 1. Regicide attempts suffered by Alfonso XIII of Spain and Carlos I of Portugal**

<b>Monarch</b>	<b>Year (Place)</b>	<b>Regicides</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Alfonso XIII</b> (1902-1931)	1903 (Madrid)	José Collar Feito	6
	1905 (París)	Alejandro Farrás	
	<b>1906</b> (Madrid)	Mateo Morral	
	1913 (Madrid)	Sancho Alegre	
	1925 / complot (Túnel del Garraf)	Perelló, Compte, Garriga, Juliá, Badía, Ferrer, Cigit, Argelaguet, Fabregar, Garnier y Barrera	
	1926 / complot (Francia)	Buenaventura Durruti Francisco Ascano	
<b>Carlos I</b> (1889-1908)	1893 (Lisboa)	Salomon Levy Azancot	3
	1896 (Lisboa)	Manuel de Matos	
	<b>1908</b> (Lisboa)	Manuel dos Reis da Silva Buíça Alfredo Luis da Costa	

*Fuente:* Elaboración propia

## **Bibliography**

Anckar, Carsten, ‘Constitutional monarchies and semi-constitutional monarchies: a global historical study, 1800-2017,’ *Contemporary Politics*, vol. 27, issue 1 (2021), 23–40.

Avilés, Juan, ‘Contra Alfonso XIII: atentados frustrados y conspiración revolucionaria,’ in Juan Avilés and Ángel Herrérin, ed., *El nacimiento del terrorismo en Occidente: anarquía, nihilismo y violencia revolucionaria* (Madrid, Siglo XXI: 2008), 141–58.

– ‘El terrorismo anarquista como propaganda por el hecho: de la formulación teórica a los atentados de París (1877-1894),’ *Historia y Política*, no. 21 (2009), 169–90.

Barral, Margarita, ed., *Alfonso XIII visita España. Monarquía y nación* (Granada, Comares: 2016).

Barral, Margarita and Iglesias, Alfonso, ‘Alfonso XIII, ese hombre: masculinidad, nación e imperio,’ *Ayer*, no. 132 (2024), 225–81.

- Barrio, Ángeles, ‘Discursos sobre nación y patria en el anarquismo español,’ *Historia Contemporánea*, vol. 66 (2021), 403–32.
- Camba, Julio, *Cuando la boda del rey* (Madrid, Instituto Editorial Reus, 1944).
- Cannadine, David, ‘The Context, Performance and Meaning of Ritual: The British Monarchy and de ‘Invention of Tradition’, c. 1820-1977,’ in Eric Hobsbawn and Terence Range, ed., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press: 1983), 101–64.
- Cardona, Gabriel, *Alfonso XIII, el rey de espadas* (Barcelona, Planeta: 2010).
- Castillo-Puche, José Luis, ed., *Diario íntimo de Alfonso XIII* (Madrid, Biblioteca Nueva: 1960).
- Evans, David and Canaveira, Manuel Filipe, *Regicídio e República. Olhares Britânicos e norte-americanos* (Casal de Cambra, Caleidoscópio: 2010).
- Fernandes, Paulo Jorge, ‘Impacte internacional do regicídio de D. Carlos’, in Carlos Fiolhais, José Eduardo Franco and José Pedro Paiva, dirs., *História Global de Portugal*, (Lisboa: Círculo de Leitores, 2020), 539–44.
- Fiora, Paolo Edoardo, ed., *Monza 29 luglio 1900. Il Regicidio, dalla cronaca alla storia* (Milan, Spirali/Vel: 2000).
- Franco, João, *Cartas de El-Rei D. Carlos a João Franco Castelo Branco* (Lisboa, Bertrand: 1924).
- Geertz, Clifford, ‘Centers, Kings, and Charisma: Reflections on the Symbolics of Power,’ in *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology* (New York, Basic Books: 1983), 121–46.
- Hall, Morgan C., *Alfonso XIII y el ocaso de la monarquía liberal 1902-1923* (Madrid, Alianza: 2005).
- Hernández Barral, José Miguel, ‘La boda de Alfonso XIII: ‘pasión espectacular’ y jerarquías sociales’, *Circunstancias*, no. 27 (2012), 1–7.
- Hoffman, Rachel G., ‘The Age of Assassination: Monarchy and Nation in Nineteenth-Century Europe,’ in Jan Rüger and Nikolaus Wachsman, ed., *Rewriting German History. New Perspectives on Modern Germany* (London, Palgrave Mcmillan: 2015), 121–41.
- Lains, Pedro and Ferreira da Silva, Álvaro, *História económica de Portugal, 1700-2000, Vol. II: O século XIX* (Lisboa, Imprensa de Ciências sociais: 2012).

Mira Abad, Alicia, 'Estereotipos de género y matrimonio regio como estrategia de legitimación en la monarquía española contemporánea,' *Historia Constitucional*, no.17 (2017), 165–91.

Montero, Julio; Paz, María Antonia and Sánchez, José J., *La imagen pública de la monarquía. Alfonso XIII en la prensa escrita y cinematográfica* (Barcelona, Ariel: 2001).

Morais, Jorge, *Regicídio. A contagem decrescente* (Sintra, Zéfiro: 2007).

Moreno Luzón, Javier, ed., *Alfonso XIII. Un político en el trono* (Madrid, Marcial Pons: 2003).

– 'Alfonso el Regenerador. Monarquía escénica e imaginario nacionalista español, en perspectiva comparada (1902-1913),' *Hispania*, vol. 73, no. 244 (2013), 319–48.

– *El rey patriota. Alfonso XIII y la nación* (Barcelona, Galaxia Gutenberg: 2023).

Moreno Seco, Mónica and Mira Abad, Alicia, '¿Un rey viril para una España fuerte? La masculinidad de Alfonso XIII y la Nación', in Nerea Aresti, Karen Peters, and Julia Brühne, coords., *¿La España invertebrada?: masculinidad y nación a comienzos del siglo XX* (Granada: Comares, 2016), 101–18.

Pérez Abellán, Francisco, *Morral, el reo asesinado. El falso suicidio del hombre que atentó contra Alfonso XIII* (Madrid, Poe Books: 2017).

Proença, Maria Cândida, *Don Manuel II* (Lisboa, Temas & Debates: 2008).

Ramos, Rui, *Don Carlos* (Rio de Mouro, Temas e Debates: 2007).

Rocha Martins, João Franco, *O último cônsul de D. Carlos* (Lisboa, Bonecos Rebeldes: 2007).

Rosas, Fernando and Rollo, Maria Fernanda, *História da Primeira República Portuguesa* (Lisboa, Tinta da China: 2009).

Samara, Maria A. and Tavares, Rui, *O Regicídio* (Lisboa, Tinta da China: 2008).

Sanches de Baêna, Miguel, *Diário de D. Manuel e Estudo Sobre o Regicídio* (Lisboa, Testemunhos Contemporâneos: 1990).

Saraiva, José, *Storia del Portogallo* (Milan, Mondadori: 2004).

Sardica, José Miguel, 'Crise e queda da monarquia liberal portuguesa,' in Rui Ramos, José Murilo de Carvalho, and Isabel Corrêa da Silva, ed., *Dois países um sistema. A monarquia constitucional dos Braganças em Portugal e no Brasil (1822-1910)* (Lisboa, Don Quixote: 2018), 379–406.

Schleiter, Petra and Morgan-Jones, Edward, 'Constitutional Power and Competing Risks: Monarchs, Presidents, Prime Ministers, and the Termination of East and West

European Cabinets,' *American Political Science Review*, vol. 103, issue 3 (2009), 496–512.

Seco Serrano, Carlos, *Alfonso XIII* (Madrid, Arlanza: 2001).

Tusell, Javier and Queipo de Llano, Genoveva, *Alfonso XIII. El rey polémico* (Madrid, Taurus: 2001).

Von der Dunk, Hermann, 'The Dutch Monarchy in Europe,' in D. J. Elzinga, ed., *The Dutch Constitutional Monarchy in a Changing Europe* (Alphen aan den Rijn, Kluwer: 2007), 81–95.

Wolf, Christiane, 'Representing Constitutional Monarchy in Britain, Germany, and Austria,' in Laurence Cole and Daniel Unowsky, ed., *The Limits of Loyalty: Imperial Symbolism, Popular Allegiances, and State Patriotism in the Late Habsburg Monarchy* (Oxford, Berghahn: 2007), 199–222.