

= Spanish coup of July 1936 =

The Spanish coup of July 1936 fractured the Spanish Republican Armed Forces and marked the beginning of the Spanish Civil War . Following a period of troubles in the Second Spanish Republic , a group of officers attempted to overthrow the left @-@ wing Popular Front government , elected five months previously , in a military coup . Planning started in early 1936 , and the coup was launched on 17 and 18 July . The coup failed to take complete control of the country and civil war ensued .

The rising was intended to be swift , but the government retained control of most of the country including Málaga , Jaén and Almería . Cadiz was taken for the rebels and General Queipo de Llano managed to secure Seville . In Madrid , the rebels were hemmed into the Montaña barracks , which fell with much bloodshed . On 19 July the cabinet headed by the newly appointed prime minister José Giral ordered the distribution of weapons to the unions , helping to defeat the rebels in Madrid , Barcelona , and Valencia , which led to anarchists taking control of large parts of Aragon and Catalonia . Rebel General Goded surrendered in Barcelona and was later condemned to death . The rebels had secured the support of around half of Spain 's Peninsular army , which allowing for large numbers on extended leave totaled about 66 @,@ 000 men , and all of the 30 @,@ 000 @-@ strong Army of Africa . The Army of Africa was Spain 's most professional and effective military force . The government retained less than half the supply of rifles , heavy and light machine guns and artillery pieces . Both sides had few tanks and outdated aircraft , and naval capacity was fairly even . Officers ' defections weakened Republican units of all types .

= = Background = =

Following the elections of November 1933 , Spain entered a period called the " black two years " (Spanish : bienio negro) . Both Carlists and Alfonsist monarchists continued to prepare , receiving the backing of Italian Prime Minister Benito Mussolini . José @-@ María Gil @-@ Robles struggled to control the CEDA 's youth wing , which copied Germany 's and Italy 's youth movements . Monarchists , however , turned their attention to the Fascist Falange Española , under the leadership of José Antonio Primo de Rivera . Open violence occurred in the streets of Spanish cities . Gil @-@ Robles ' CEDA continued to mimic the German Nazi Party , staging a rally in March 1934 . Gil Robles used an anti @-@ strike law to successfully provoke and break up unions one at a time . Efforts to remove local councils from socialist control prompted a general strike , which was brutally put down , with the arrest of four deputies and other significant breaches of articles 55 and 56 of the constitution .

On 26 September , the CEDA announced it would no longer support the Radical Republican Party 's minority government ; it was replaced by an RRP cabinet that included three members of the CEDA . A UGT general strike was unsuccessful in most of Spain . General Francisco Franco was put in informal command of the military effort against the Asturian miners ' revolt of 1934 , the only place it had succeeded . Around 30 @,@ 000 workers had been called to arms in ten days . Franco 's men , some brought in from Spain 's Army of Africa , acted horrifically , killing men , women and children , and carrying out summary executions when the main cities of Asturias had been retaken . About 1 @,@ 000 workers were killed , and about 250 government soldiers . This marked the effective end of the republic . Months of retaliation and repression by both sides followed ; torture was used on political prisoners . Bombings , shootings , political and religious killings were usual on the streets . Political parties created their own armed militias . Gil @-@ Robles once again prompted a cabinet collapse , and five members of Lerroux 's new government were conceded to CEDA . The military was purged of Republicanist members and reformed ; those loyal to Gil @-@ Robles were promoted ? Franco was made Chief of Staff .

Elections in 1936 were won by a grouping of left @-@ wing parties united as the Popular Front . The right began to conspire as to how to best overthrow the republic , rather than taking control of it . The government was weak , and Azaña led a minority government . Pacification and reconciliation would have been a huge task . Acts of violence and reprisals spiralled . In April , parliament replaced

Zamora with Azaña as president . However , Azaña was increasingly isolated from everyday politics ; his replacement , Casares Quiroga , was weak . This was a watershed event which inspired conservatives to give up on parliamentary politics . CEDA turned its campaign chest over to army plotter Emilio Mola . Monarchist José Calvo Sotelo replaced CEDA 's Gil Robles as the right 's leading spokesman in Parliament . Prieto did his best to avoid revolution , promoting a series of public works and civil order reforms , including parts of the military and civil guard . Communists quickly took over the ranks of socialist organisations , scaring the middle classes . Several generals decided that the government had to be replaced if the dissolution of Spain was to be prevented . They held a contempt for professional politicians .

= = Preparations = =

The republican government had been attempting to remove suspect generals from their posts , and so Franco was relieved as chief of staff and transferred to command of the Canary islands . Goded was replaced as Inspector General and made general of the Balearic islands ; Emilio Mola was moved from head of the Army of Africa to be military commander of Pamplona in Navarre . However , this allowed Mola to direct the mainland uprising , although the relationship between him and Carlist leaders was problematic . General José Sanjurjo became the figurehead of the operation , and helped to come to an agreement with the Carlists . Mola was chief planner and second in command . José Antonio Primo de Rivera was put in prison in mid March in order to restrict the Falange . However , government actions were not as thorough as they might have been : warnings by the Director of Security and other figures were not acted upon .

On 12 June , Prime Minister Casares Quiroga met General Juan Yagüe , who was rightly accused of masterminding the growing conspiracy in North Africa , but Yagüe managed to convince Casares of his loyalty to the republic . Mola held a meeting between garrison commanders in the north of Spain on 15 June , and local authorities , on hearing of the meeting , surrounded it with Civil Guards . However , Casares ordered their removal , saying he trusted Mola . Mola began serious planning in the spring , but General Francisco Franco hesitated until early July , inspiring other plotters to refer to him as " Miss Canary Islands 1936 " . Franco was a key player because of his prestige as a former director of the military academy and as the man who suppressed the Socialist uprising of 1934 . He was well respected in the Spanish Moroccan Army , Spain 's strongest military force . He wrote a cryptic letter to Casares on 23 June , suggesting that the military was disloyal , but could be restrained if he were put in charge . Casares did nothing , failing to arrest or buy off Franco , even if placing him in overall command was impossible . Franco was to be assigned control of Morocco in the new regime , and largely sidelined . On July 5 , an aircraft was chartered to take Franco from the Canary Islands to Morocco . It arrived on July 14 .

= = Murder of Calvo Sotelo = =

On 12 July 1936 , in Madrid , a member of the Falange named Jorge Bardina murdered Lieutenant José Castillo of the Assault Guards police force . Castillo was a member of the Socialist party . The next day , members of the Assault Guards arrested José Calvo Sotelo , a leading Spanish monarchist and a prominent parliamentary conservative ; the original target was Gil Robles but he could not be found . Calvo Sotelo had protested against agricultural reforms , expropriations , and restrictions on the authority of the Catholic Church , which he considered Bolshevik and anarchist . He instead advocated the creation of a corporative state . Calvo Sotelo was shot by the Guards without trial .

The killing of Sotelo , a prominent member of Parliament , with involvement of the police , aroused suspicions and strong reactions among the government 's opponents on the right . Massive reprisals followed . Although the conservative Nationalist generals were already in advanced stages of a planned uprising , the event provided a catalyst and convenient public justification for their coup , and in particular that Spain would have to be saved from anarchy by military rather than democratic means . The Socialists and Communists (led by Prieto) demanded that arms be distributed to the

people before the military took over . The Prime Minister was hesitant .

Franco 's plane landed in Gran Canaria on July 14 , but , based in Tenerife , he would have been unable to make the plane without the death of General Amado Balmes , military commander in Gran Canaria , who was killed in a shooting accident on July 16 . Whether his death was an accident , suicide , or murder is unknown .

= = Beginning of the coup = =

The uprising 's timing was fixed at 17 July , at 5 : 00 p.m. ; this was agreed to by the leader of the Carlists , Manuel Fal Condé . However , the timing was changed : the men in Spanish Morocco were to rise up at 5 : 00 a.m. and those in Spain itself starting exactly a day later , so control of Spanish Morocco could be achieved and forces sent to Iberia from Morocco to coincide with the risings there . The rising was intended to be a swift coup d 'état , but the government retained control of most of the country .

Rebel control in Spanish Morocco was all but certain . The 30 @, @ 000 strong Army of Africa comprised the professional elite of the Spanish Army . Many of the soldiers acted as mercenaries and the vast majority of officers backed the rebel cause . The regulares (troops recruited from the local populace) were predominantly Muslim and were told that the Republic wished to abolish Allah . The plan was discovered in Morocco during 17 July , which prompted it to be enacted immediately . By the scheduled time , Spanish Morocco had already been secured as legionnaires moved into working @-@ class areas and shot unionists . The army commander in eastern Morocco , General Manuel Romerales , and other senior officers loyal to the Republic were executed . Little resistance was encountered ; in total , 189 people were shot by the rebels . Goded and Franco immediately took control of the islands to which they were assigned . Warned that a coup was imminent , leftists barricaded the roads on 17 July , but Franco avoided capture by taking a tugboat to the airport .

On 18 July , Casares Quiroga refused an offer of help from the CNT and UGT , proclaiming that nowhere outside Spanish Morocco had joined the rebels and that the populace should trust legal methods to deal with the uprising . Handing out weapons would be illegal . The CNT and UGT proclaimed a general strike , in effect mobilising . They opened weapons caches , some buried since the 1934 risings . The paramilitary forces , better trained than the army , often waited to see the outcome of militia action before either joining or suppressing the rebellion . Quick action by either the rebels or anarchist militias was often enough to decide the fate of a town . General Queipo de Llano managed to secure Seville for the rebels , arresting a number of other officers .

= = Outcome = =

Despite the ruthlessness and determination of the supporters of the coup , the rebels failed to take any major cities with the critical exception of Seville which provided a landing point for Franco 's African troops . The primarily conservative and Catholic areas of Old Castile and León fell quickly , and in Pamplona they celebrated the uprising as if it were a festival . The government retained control of Málaga , Jaén and Almería . Cadiz was taken for the rebels with the help of the first troops from the Army of Africa . In Madrid they were hemmed into the Montaña barracks . The barracks fell the next day , with much bloodshed . Republican leader Santiago Casares Quiroga was replaced by José Giral who ordered the distribution of weapons among the civilian population . This facilitated the defeat of the army insurrection in the main industrial centres , including Madrid , Barcelona , Valencia and other main cities in the Mediterranean area , but it allowed the anarchists to arm themselves and take control of Barcelona and large swathes of Aragon and Catalonia . In Barcelona , the official government lost control of security , essential services and welfare . However , the anarchists held back from demanding too much political power , which could have had even more serious consequences . General Goded surrendered in Barcelona and was later condemned to death , despite broadcasting a message explaining his captivity over the radio at the request of the authorities .

Meanwhile , the Army of Africa crossed the Gibraltar Strait , using Junkers Ju 52 transport planes

provided by Nazi Germany , without any loyalist Air Force interference owing to the confusion and lack of decision of the Spanish Republican side . The massive airlift of troops from Spanish Morocco was the world 's first long @-@ range combat airlift and it allowed Franco 's troops to join General Queipo de Llano 's forces in Seville . Their quick movement allowed them to meet General Mola 's Northern Army and secure most of northern and northwestern Spain , as well as central and western Andalusia . The Republican Government ended up with controlling almost all of the Eastern Spanish coast and central area around Madrid , as well as Asturias , Cantabria and part of the Basque Country in the north . Mola was keen to create a sense of fear within Nationalist @-@ controlled areas . There was a massive purge of freemasons , and a wide part of the left , including some moderate socialists .

The result of the coup was a polarization of Spain . Following General Mola 's orders of instilling fear in potential pro @-@ republican ranks by means of systematic executions in captured cities , a spontaneous revenge in the form of random murders of perceived fascists , conservatives and coup @-@ sympathizers by exalted mobs flared up in loyalist areas .

The Nationalist area of control contained roughly 11 million of Spain 's population of 25 million . The rebels also had secured the support of around half of Spain 's territorial army , some 60 @,@ 000 men . In Republican units , however , as much as 90 % of officers either rebelled , defected or merely disappeared and their loyalty to the republic was put in doubt , therefore some would later turn up in Nationalist ranks . This considerably reduced the units ' effectiveness as a new command structure had to be fashioned . No such problem occurred in Nationalist units . The Army of Africa , however , was entirely under Nationalist control , and numbered 30 @,@ 000 men considered Spain 's top fighting force . The rebels were also joined by 30 @,@ 000 members of Spain 's militarized police forces , the Assault Guards , the Civil Guards , and the Carabineers . 50 @,@ 000 members of the latter stayed loyal to the government . Of 500 @,@ 000 rifles , around 200 @,@ 000 were retained by the government . 65 @,@ 000 were issued to the Madrid populace in the days following the uprising ? of these , only 7 @,@ 000 were usable . 70 @,@ 000 or so were lost following early Nationalist advances in the war . Republicans controlled about a third of both heavy and light machine guns ; of 1 @,@ 007 artillery pieces , 387 were in Republican hands . The Spanish Army had , before the coup , just 18 tanks of a sufficiently modern design , and the Republicans retained 10 . In terms of numbers , the Nationalists had seized control of 17 warships , leaving the Republicans with 27 . However , the two most modern (both cruisers of the Canarias class) were in Nationalist hands ; although not ready for service when the war broke out , when launched they compensated for the lack in numbers . The Spanish Republican Navy suffered from the same problems as the army : many officers had defected or had been killed after trying to do so . Due to the concerns of a Republican officer that such a coup was imminent , two @-@ thirds of air capability were retained by the government ? however , the whole of the air service was very outdated and vulnerable both during flight and to mechanical problems .