

Ruling the Streets: The Policing of Protest and Political Violence in Madrid during the Second Republic, 1931-1936

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ABSTRACT: The state has occupied a privileged space in most of the explanations regarding the origins of the political violence that disrupted the course of the Spanish Second Republic. Nevertheless, the generalised notion that the majority of deaths were the outcome of the repression of popular mobilisation contrasts with the practical inexistence of studies devoted to the specific interactions between coercive forces and collective challengers. With the purpose of partially filling this gap, the following article analyses the policing of protest in the province of Madrid from 14 April 1931 to 17 July 1936. The research relies on a database of approximately 450 recorded events that has been constructed from a corpus of archival documentation from the Ministry of the Interior, contemporary newspapers and specialised monographs. This article argues that the mistakes, dysfunctions and collateral effects of the policing of social protests derived from the restoration of a lethal, military repertoire of coercion and, more indirectly, the invention of a civil, non-lethal style. The incoherent alternation of both repertoires followed politically motivated criteria and fostered an escalation of violence that increased the number of victims and obstructed the democratisation of the security apparatus.

KEYWORDS: interwar democracy; Spanish Second Republic; police; public order; social mobilisation; repression.

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Título traducido: Gobernar las calles: control policial de la protesta y violencia política en Madrid durante la Segunda República, 1931-1936.

RESUMEN: El Estado ha ocupado un lugar privilegiado en la mayoría de explicaciones sobre los orígenes de la violencia política que perturbó el curso de la Segunda República. Sin embargo, la noción generalizada de que el grueso de las muertes fue resultado de la represión de la movilización popular contrasta con la práctica inexistencia de estudios dedicados a las interacciones específicas entre las fuerzas coercitivas y los desafiantes colectivos. Este artículo analiza precisamente el control policial de la protesta en la provincia de Madrid desde el 14 de abril de 1931 hasta el 17 de julio de 1936. La investigación se sustenta en una base de datos con aproximadamente 450 episodios registrados, que ha sido elaborada a partir de un corpus de fuentes conformado por documentación archivística del Ministerio de la Gobernación, prensa histórica y monografías especializadas. Se argumenta que los errores, desajustes y efectos colaterales del control policial se debieron al restablecimiento de un repertorio militar y letal de coerción y, más indirectamente, a la invención de un estilo civil e incurso. La incoherente alternancia entre ambos repertorios obedeció a criterios políticos y promovió una escalada violenta que disparó el número de víctimas y obstruyó la democratización del aparato securitario.

PALABRAS CLAVE: democracia de entreguerras; Segunda República española; policía; orden público; movilización social; represión.

INTRODUCTION

The state has been considered the main cause and the principal agent of the spiral of political violence that destabilised and polarised the short life of the Spanish Second Republic. The premises of this interpretative frame were established by Manuel Ballbé (1985, pp. 318-320, 335-339), who argued that the governments did not demilitarise nor democratise the administration of public order, but rather implemented authoritarian and partisan policies that radicalised the opposition. Michael Mann (2004, p. 314) adds that most of the killings were produced by state agencies, with leftist groups as the victims. Chris Ealham (2005, pp. 134-136), likewise, describes the perpetuation of repressive, anti-working class mechanisms of control that undermined civil liberties. Rafael Cruz (2006, pp. 34-42, 118, 166) underlines that police interventions to control protests caused the majority of the deadly clashes. According to him, restrictive exclusion policies forced protesters to resort to more violent forms of mobilisation. Eduardo González Calleja (2014, pp. 51-53, 322-326) sums up that the democratisation of the police was a failure because the Republican leaders continued prioritising the principle of authority over the citizens' rights and policemen kept treating conflicts in an almost military manner instead of taking a more proportionate, flexible approach.

The postulates of this reading have been questioned from two different lines of argument. The first one decreases the state's responsibility without denying the heavy-handed character of the policing methods. Instead, it emphasises the causal weight of the brutalisation of protest. According to Manuel Álvarez Tardío and Roberto Villa (2010, pp. 205-209), deadly clashes with the police were usually started by radicalised groups that applied violent strategies to destroy the state. Fernando del Rey (2007, pp. 36-37) maintains that the security policies during the first biennium were often tolerant of left-wing actors and policemen were frequently forced to defend themselves against unprovoked aggressions. Stanley Payne (1993, pp. 403-406), from a distinctive viewpoint, maintains that, in 1936, the rulers made the mistake of not developing tougher police policies as a result of their alliance with the working-class movement. According to him, the Socialists were the primary source of violence.

The second interpretation argues that the demilitarising and professionalising police reforms enacted from 1931 to 1933 represented a qualitative breakthrough regarding the monarchist public order paradigm. Diego Palacios Cerezales (2011, pp. 598-599, 644-645) argues that the nature and procedures of the police were significantly altered. The problem was that the high level of conflict did not allow for the routinisation of the new non-lethal riot control techniques. Gerald Blaney (2012, pp. 104-105, 112-113, 118) adds that restrictive measures similar to those implemented by the Spanish Republican governments were adopted in other countries to counter extremist movements that threatened democracy. According to him, both the Civil Guard and the Assault Guard

presented patterns similar to those of other European gendarmeries and riot police forces. The key factor causing state violence was the policemen's sense of danger triggered by the rising social disorder.

Somehow or other, public order management and police action have become irreplaceable elements in the many explanations proposed to understand the violence that gripped the Republic until its last days. Therefore, the security system has been analysed addressing its different functions, organisations and agents, from disparate theoretical and hermeneutical approaches, and considering diverse territorial scales.¹ Nonetheless, even though the deaths were ultimately the outcome of the specific interactions between policemen and challengers, a monographic study on the policing of social mobilisation remains to be done. In addition, the small amount of research that has examined this phenomenon presents two major analytical insufficiencies. On the one hand, it assigns an external role to police forces as contenders with or, most frequently, the repressors of protesters. On the other, it addresses policing from an excessively generic perspective and extracts its conclusions from a meagre sample of events, namely, the bloodiest episodes that received more media coverage. This has produced an impressionistic and incomplete picture that has been presented as evidence of the supposedly authoritarian character of the Republican regime.² Nevertheless, although the police agencies' victims were numerically excessive and unjustifiable, the great majority of their operations concluded without deaths. The instances in which the police killed demonstrators cannot be adequately explained without considering this fact.

The demilitarisation of the policing of protest and its correlation with the democratisation of institutions and society lie at the core of the historical debate on the police. Social scientists have defined two styles of policing protest. The "escalated force" repertoire, typical of authoritarian or predemocratic regimes, is described as brutal, repressive, diffused, illegal, reactive, confrontational and rigid. In contrast, the "negotiated management" style, developed in Western democracies since the 1960s, is

1 A long-term study on the security legislation and militarisation in Ballbé (1985). The contemporary evolution of the public order agencies from a corporative view in Turrado Vidal (1995) and López Corral (2009). For the police forces' professional culture and the security policies in the Second Republic, see Blaney (2007a), Palacios Cerezales (2011) and Vaquero Martínez (2019). The most comprehensive research on the Republican security administration that addresses the policing of protest from a general perspective in González Calleja (2014). About public order maintenance and social mobilisation on a provincial scale, from different perspectives, see López Martínez (1995) on Granada, Prada Rodríguez (2007) on Orense and Risques Corbella (2012) on Barcelona. An analysis regarding the Civil Guard's policing practices in October 1934 and afterwards in Chamberlin (2020).

2 Anja Johansen (2005, p. 8) made the same assessment regarding the majoritarian interpretation of the army's policing interventions in the labour strikes of the French Third Republic. A consistent refutation of the authoritarian ethos of the Republican police policies in Blaney (2012).

recognisable for being soft, tolerant, selective, legal, preventive, consensual and flexible. The first type is normally associated with the continental security model, which is embodied by gendarmeries that are more prone to apply force and present low accountability. The second one is more related to the British system: a civil, communicative and lightly armed police, perfectly integrated into the community, whose uses of excessive force are punished when necessary. The transition between the two repertoires, however, is far from being definitive. It is a contingent process subject to cyclical setbacks, which shared a dynamic of reciprocal influence and adaptation with the institutionalisation and pacification of protest (Della Porta and Reiter, 1998; Della Porta and Fillieule, 2004; Della Porta and Reiter, 2006).

Nevertheless, the decontextualised application of these theoretical models has been called into question by specialised historians, because it may lead to a teleological, monosemic idea of “democratic police” that hinders properly comprehending societies undergoing the democratisation process (Johansen, 2017). The dichotomy between the British and continental systems has been discussed by Clive Emsley (1991, pp. 160-162), who pointed out that discipline, officers and part of the rank-and-file of the Metropolitan Police came from the military. Furthermore, during the interwar period, soldiers were deployed as an auxiliary contingent during major strikes without necessarily causing a step backwards in the modernisation of policing. Anja Johansen (2005, pp. 275-282) demonstrates how the French Republican authorities increasingly called on the military to gather enough men to implement the non-lethal, intimidating tactics of crowd control invented by Louis Lépine, prefect of the Parisian police. Diego Palacios Cerezales (2016, pp. 235-236), for his part, points out that, despite not appearing in their regulations, gendarmes normally used their weapons in a dissuasive, non-lethal way (rifle butt strikes, sword attacks with the flat side, shooting into the air, cavalry charges...) before shooting into the crowd. Other researchers also explain that some paramilitary attributes of the current riot police units enable them to scatter demonstrators without firearms. According to P. A. J. Waddington (1991, pp. 136-137), thanks to military discipline, officers can ensure that policemen hold a compact formation, correctly execute manoeuvres and apply force proportionately.

This article intends to rethink this very issue through an exhaustive analysis of the policing of popular protest and political violence during the Spanish Second Republic. The chronological framework begins with its foundation, on 14 April 1931, and concludes with the coup d'état of 17-18 July 1936. The spatial context is the province of Madrid. Despite of its unique character, this case study is particularly interesting because it challenges the dominant thesis on this topic. On the one hand, as the capital of Spain, every police innovation was always tested in Madrid before being extended to the whole country, because the government directly managed public order in this territory. This fact allows me to analyse the

immediate effects of national police policies on a local scale. On the other hand, Madrid was the province with the second highest number of political killings in this period, which makes it an excellent scenario to dissect the relation between policing and political violence.³ If we accept that this violence was the consequence of the maintenance of an authoritarian coercive repertoire, how can one explain how the province where the non-lethal policing style reached its maximum development suffered so many victims? This article maintains that the growing use of violence was caused by an inconclusive transition to a modern, more proportionate paradigm of policing that was disturbed by both the police inexperience with the new protocols and, especially, the maintenance of a militaristic repressive style.

The empirical material for this research is provided by a database of approximately 450 policing events. For each event, certain data points have been gathered: date, location, police forces involved, type of intervention (surveillance, negotiation, dissuasion, repression), weapons, number of dead and wounded people, arrests, protesters' affiliation, forms of action and protest nature (prescribed, legal, transgressive, violent). The quantitative dimension of this study is limited to episodes in which there were deaths for two reasons. Firstly, the documentation of the Ministry of the Interior that has been consulted at the Archivo Histórico Nacional, the Archivo General de la Administración and the Centro Documental de la Memoria Histórica is mainly the correspondence between the minister, the civil governors and the mayors. These files have significant gaps that have been filled by looking at newspapers, police journals and specialised monographs, but the voluminous quantity of these sources has made a more selective approach necessary. Secondly, the varying duration and number of police actions per intervention have complicated the delimitation and overall count of the episodes. To minimise this problem, the rule has been to concentrate on one event the policing actions motivated by a particular conflict that happened successively on one or more days.

TOWARDS A REPUBLICAN REPERTOIRE OF COERCION

From April to October 1931, with the purpose of ensuring its supporters' hegemony on the streets, the Provisional Government placed them at the top of the order of precedence regarding the occupation of the public spa-

3 According to Eduardo González Calleja (2015, pp. 110-111), the province of Madrid suffered 174 of the 2,629 sociopolitical killings that occurred in the entire country. This last number represents a considerable increase in comparison with the 2,225 deaths counted by Stanley Payne (1993, p. 404) or, to a lesser extent, the 2,500 estimated by Michael Mann (2004, p. 313). In addition, Juan Blázquez Miguel (2009, pp. 709-717) elevates both quantities to 237 killings in Madrid and 3,623 in Spain, although the highly questionable methodology applied by him raises serious questions about these results.

ce. The demonstrations, strikes and meetings performed by Socialists, Radical-Socialists, left-wing Republicans and Radicals were authorised or directly facilitated. On the contrary, even though their meetings were generally allowed, the protests carried out by anarchists, syndicalists, Communists, Catholics, traditionalists and monarchists were usually prohibited or even repressed. The second element that conditioned the security policies was the rulers' mistrust towards police forces, who were still perceived as henchmen of the overthrown dictatorship. This prejudice imposed three major guidelines on the policing of protest: discrete police presence, tolerance of pro-government voters' riots and institutionalisation of a Republican-Socialist civic guard. On the evening of 14 April, precisely, many young militants protected the Royal Palace wearing red armbands, while policemen remained on "mandatory holiday" (Maura, 1962, pp. 177-178; Juliá, 1984, pp. 12-13).

This trusting approach was abandoned after certain disturbances that showed the inertia of the traditional repertoires of both police action and collective protest, as well as the paralysis of the policemen, who feared to be sanctioned if they charged against the Republican demonstrators. On 10 May, some monarchists played the "Marcha Real" and thereby provoked a protest by supporters of the Republic in Alcalá Street. The minister of the interior, Miguel Maura, attempted to calm the protesters, although it was necessary to call the Civil and Security Guards, whose men, in a sign of the times, sheathed their sabres in response to people's whistles, and three detainees were beaten by the crowd. Then, the rioters decided to assault the newspaper *ABC*'s building but were intercepted by some civil guards who, after being stoned, finally shot at them, thus killing two people. In protest against these killings, thousands of demonstrators gathered in Puerta del Sol. An Athenaeum delegation delivered its complaints to Manuel Azaña, the minister of war, requiring Maura's resignation and the disarmament of the Civil Guard. Maura gave the order to disperse the crowd, but his colleagues refused to employ any "three-cornered hat" against the *pueblo* and, eventually, some gunmen triggered another riot during which two men were murdered. These riots also left twelve people injured, including two policemen, and 40 people were detained (Maura, 1962, pp. 240-245; Azaña, 2000, pp. 433-435; Bravo Morata, 2001, IV, pp. 155-156).

The following day several extremist rioters maintained the revolutionary pulse during the disgraceful episode of the "burning of the convents." Keeping their non-interventionist attitude, policemen and civic guards limited themselves to guaranteeing the safety of priests and nuns. Twelve religious buildings were evacuated, sacked and burned while their furniture and paintings were reduced to ashes in massive bonfires. There were no more deaths, although one person was stabbed. In order not to resort to the Civil Guard, the government called in the army, which was surprisingly well received by the arsonists. In fact, it did not need to exercise violence to control the situation. Everything concluded with a classic

monarchist ritual: Captain General Queipo de Llano read a declaration of a state of war, flanked by a company of the Regiment of León and a military band, which at least played the Republican "Himno de Riego" by popular request (Pla, 2003, pp. 75-77; Gutiérrez-Ravé, 1932, pp. 151-162).⁴

These disturbances discredited the authorities because they involved significant and contrasting political costs as a consequence of both the disproportionate repression and the arsonists' impunity.⁵ The government concluded that urban unrest should not be managed by the Civil Guard, considering the lethality of their rifles and the inflexibility of their regulations. Nevertheless, neither the civic guard, which was inefficient and politically biased, nor the military, whose interventions were unpredictable and inappropriate in a democracy, were a suitable alternative. The solution, both politically and technically, was to organise a new brigade within the Security Corps, the Assault Section, which would apply an innovative coercive repertoire defined by the deployment of motorised vehicles and non-lethal instruments, emulating the Garde Républicaine Mobile and Weimar Republic's Schutzpolizei. Selected for their youth and outstanding athletic conditions, the new section's members replaced swords and rifles with rubber batons, tear gas and pistols. Their basic mission was groundbreaking: to suffocate popular disorders before they were unstoppable without killing anyone (Palacios Cerezales, 2011, pp. 612-617; Vaquero Martínez, 2017, p. 82).⁶ Additionally, in July, the cavalry of the Security Corps substituted their sabres with wooden truncheons as had the mounted guard in England. The underlying idea was that the fear inspired by the horses and a few blows would allow it to dissolve demonstrations without causing deaths.⁷

This innovative paradigm of coercion aspired to offer a more proportionate response to the proliferation of demonstrations, strikes, rallies and other forms of the modern repertoire of protest derived from the new context of political opportunities.⁸ However, the strong increase in social mobilisation, the police's lack of experience

4 *Ahora*, 12 May 1931, pp. 6-8; *El Sol*, 12 May 1931, pp. 5-6.

5 On the political costs of repression and the adoption of non-lethal policing equipment, see Palacios Cerezales (2016).

6 *Policía Española*, 17 July 1931, pp. 10-12. The closest precedent of the Assault Guard was the Gymnastics Section, an experimental unit organised by General Emilio Mola. This brigade was composed of 25 security guards who utilised rubber truncheons covered in leather and their first operation took place on 24 March 1931 during a student protest (Viqueira Hinojosa, 1989, pp. 284-285).

7 *Policía Española*, 16 July 1931, pp. 17-18. The security cavalry used these batons for the first time in an anticlerical demonstration on 14 October, during which the assault and security guards charged with their truncheons and swords, respectively. This mixture of old and new weapons resulted in 17 wounded, 14 civilians and three policemen; in *Ejército y Armada*, 15 October 1931, p. 3.

8 For the application of Charles Tilly's notion of repertoire of protest on the Spanish history, see Cruz (2008, pp. 63-81). The definition of the political opportunity structure in Tarrow (1997, pp. 49-50).

with the application of non-lethal techniques and means of crowd control, and the absence of fixed “rules of the game” that normalised the interactions between policemen and their opponents complicated the new paradigm’s development. The main problem was that violent practices increased in parallel with peaceful protests, which were far more numerous, and this complicated the policemen’s mission since they barely had any training in targeting and isolating belligerent protesters from the rest of the multitude.

These difficulties became tragically evident during the strike called by the Confederación Nacional del Trabajo (CNT) at the Telephone Company. On 6 July 1931, the anarcho-syndicalists established pickets to intimidate scabs, whose exit from the building had to be protected by the Security Guard. In the afternoon, the assault guards performed their first action: they cleared the Gran Vía by executing a non-lethal, choreographed baton charge that deserved the public’s applause. During the following weeks, demonstrations, beatings, sabotages of phone lines, explosions and attacks against shops took place, motivating an escalating number of detentions. The violence reached its boiling point on 7 August. That night, after a frightening explosion, four policemen attempted to search a vehicle in San Jerónimo Street and its occupants began a shootout in which Agent Conrado Álvarez died and one gunman was seriously injured (Juliá, 1984, pp. 198-206; Herrérin López, 2019, pp. 94-95).⁹ The presence of the armed people who escorted the saboteurs had a hazardous side effect since it weakened the policemen’s willingness to employ their truncheons because their lives depended on keeping their superiority of firepower.

During the summer, other actors carried out transgressive mobilisations with some violence, although their consequences were much less serious. On 6 August, a Communist rally at the Wonders Theatre was followed by multiple unauthorised demonstrations. The security guards attempted to scatter one peacefully, but they were shot at, so the cavalry guards charged against the crowd. Shortly after, assault and security policemen attacked with their truncheons and swords, respectively. One of the latter was surrounded by the protesters and fired at them, seriously wounding one activist.¹⁰ This incident exemplifies the high danger of providing firearms to police officers without proper riot training, since it was not unusual that they panicked when being outnumbered and shot into unarmed multitudes. Sometimes they compensated for this lack of instruction and modern armaments by using their military weaponry in a non-lethal manner. On 6 September, the police dispersed a demonstration in front of the Model Prison and two security guards literally broke their swords beating the protesters. No-

theless, there were no seriously injured demonstrators, which means that they intentionally attacked with the flat side of their sabres to not kill anyone (Gutiérrez-Ravé, 1932, p. 339).¹¹

RIOT POLICE ARMED AGAINST INSURGENCY

Since December 1931, police reform increased its pace and scale because of the formation of a new government by Azaña with only leftist Republicans and Socialists. For two years, these leaders fostered the republicanisation, professionalisation and demilitarisation of the security system along the following axes. The first was the expansion of the assault guards to other major cities and provincial capitals, and the acquisition of war weaponry to make them able to crush anarchist uprisings without the aid of the army, which naturally challenged their *raison d’être* as non-lethal riot police, but did not entirely remove this original function. The second was the attempted limitation of the Civil Guard’s range of operation to the countryside and the increase in their accountability to civilian authorities, which was achieved by dismantling its General Directorate and that of the Carabineers at the Ministry of War (Palacios Cereales, 2011, pp. 616-620; Blaney, 2007b, pp. 153-154). The last axis was the sanction of emergency legal instruments that enabled the security forces to implement a graduated response to demonstrations that did not rely upon the military, although the purpose was also to narrow the opposition’s constitutional rights of protest. These instruments were the October 1931 Law for the Defence of the Republic and the July 1933 Public Order Law.¹²

The first anarcho-syndicalist insurrection, which took place in January 1932, was still expeditiously repressed by the army. Hundreds of workers were arrested and deported to Villa Cisneros, in Western Sahara, but there were no fatalities (Casanova, 2010, pp. 102-106). In Madrid, in fact, this revolt had almost no repercussions in comparison with the next disturbance on 29 May. On that day, the police posted squads at strategic locations while soldiers patrolled some streets and stood at the barracks. In Angel Square, a sudden fire broke out between two agents who were conducting pat downs and some suspects; one policeman and a gunman were severely wounded. Afterwards, two assault groups charged at both ends of a Communist demonstration without leaving the mandatory escape route. This compelled the participants to run away through the side streets towards the flea market, where a second shooting took place. Meanwhile, several anarcho-syndicalists provoked yet another gunfight in Magdalena Street and killed Sargent Enrique Mateos, who was not even on duty. Furthermore, in Antonio Zozaya Square, other guards accidentally fired on two civilians who were watching the spectacle from their

9 *El Sol*, 7 July 1931, p. 5; *El Sol*, 8 July 1931, pp. 5, 8; *El Sol*, 7 August 1931, p. 1; *Ahora*, 8 August 1931, pp. 7-8; Centro Documental de la Memoria Histórica, Salamanca [CDMH], Sección Político-Social de Madrid, Caja 989, Leg. 1289, Exp. 35.

10 *El Sol*, 7 August 1931, p. 1; *Ahora*, 8 August 1931, p. 8.

11 *El Sol*, 8 September 1931, p. 4.

12 *Gaceta de Madrid*, 295, 22 October 1931, pp. 420-421; *Gaceta de Madrid*, 211, 30 July 1933, pp. 682-690.

balcony. Such a deployment of soldiers to stamp out a revolt was certainly not a new tactic. However, it must be stressed that the soldiers' role was essentially dissuasive since there were no direct confrontations. The first line was always formed by assault men, who only abandoned their truncheons when they were shot at.¹³ The minister of the interior, Santiago Casares Quiroga, even told journalists that they supposedly had "orders to let themselves be killed before using their pistols."¹⁴

The intrinsic politicisation of the democratising process had a deep impact on the youth, causing a powerful escalation of student protests. On 5 April 1932, 200 Carlists destroyed some posters of the Federación Universitaria Escolar (FUE) and triggered a brawl; in response, the police made 58 arrests and closed the Carlist headquarters, where they seized many clubs and pistols (González Calleja, 2009, pp. 146-147).¹⁵ As these disorders were particularly onerous for the authorities, the police officers tried to stamp them out with exceptional restraint regardless of their political orientation. One month later, fascist and traditionalist students demonstrated against the Statute of Autonomy of Catalonia. They burned newspapers near the Congress of Deputies, threw the furniture out the windows and attacked other students at the university, and shouted *vivas* to Spain at the Catalan Centre. However, the mere presence of the assault guards, some simulated charges and one detention were enough to disperse them.¹⁶ In the meantime, in the towns of the province, the brutal methods of the Civil Guard remained immutable. On 12 November 1931, in Parla, numerous strikers who were harassing some foreign workers attacked a civil guard and his comrades, who then killed an old man and wounded a woman with their Mausers (González Calleja, 2015, p. 322).¹⁷

The foremost challenge for the Assault Guard and the process of police modernisation that it represented was presented by the military, the monarchist old elites and some extreme right forces. The *pronunciamiento* headed by the director general of the Carabineers Corps, José Sanjurjo, who had held a similar position in the Civil Guard, started on 10 August 1932. Some officers guided a squad from the Remonta Barracks to the Hippodrome, where they confiscated numerous vehicles. From here, the military rebels marched toward Cibeles Square, where they fought a bloody battle against the assault policemen. Another detachment appeared at the Ministry of War. Disobeying the orders of Arturo Menéndez, the director general of security, they refused to retreat and started a fatal shooting. Shortly after, four officers tried to take the Communications Palace, but one civil guard managed to stop them until the arrival of reinforcements, which led to a last gunfight. Defeated, the insurgents collected their fallen comrades and returned to their ba-

racks on a sequestered bus. They had suffered ten fatalities, nine military men and one Carlist, 18 wounded and 90 arrests; in contrast, five guards, one watchman and a civilian had been injured by them (Gutiérrez-Ravé, 1932, pp. 372-375; Viqueira Hinojosa, 1993-1999, pp. 113-119).¹⁸

The failure of this military rebellion consecrated the Assault Guard's new role as a counter-insurgency force, since it verified their effectiveness versus enemies with war training and weaponry. Actually, the progressive government's fear of future coups fostered a deeper militarisation of their discipline, protocols and tools. The inherent dangers of this orientation were denounced during an extended, hostile campaign against the cabinet motivated by the massacre perpetrated by assault guards in Casas Viejas during the second anarchist uprising, in January 1933. Fortunately, the outcome of this insurrection was less dramatic in Madrid, where there were no deaths despite the insurgents' obstinate attempts to assault the main barracks of the capital. On the 8th day, the Civil Guard aborted an attack against the military railway station of Cuatro Vientos, which compelled the soldiers to fight the anarchists back. In addition, other guards had a fierce firefight with 400 anarchists, gravely injuring one rebel, and some surveillance and security policemen were involved in other shootouts by the Montaña and María Cristina Barracks (González Calleja, 2018, p. 147).¹⁹

Once again, the next anarchist disturbance on 8 May produced much bloodier results in the capital. During a 48-hour general strike, numerous affiliates of the CNT were arrested mostly for coercing other workers and planting explosives in railroads and electrical installations. However, some of them also shot a truck and threw a bomb into a crowd, injuring two civilians. In the working-class neighbourhood of Cuatro Caminos, the assault men charged at the strikers and ended up firing into the air to disperse them; in Francos Rodríguez Street, the anarchists shot someone else. As a preventive measure, the police had been equipped with short-barreled rifles, but their deployment was calibrated to the violence applied by the strikers; as a rule, they used their truncheons in front of unarmed workers. Nonetheless, in Manuel Becerra Square, some policemen attempted to frisk certain strikers, and a young woman dropped a bomb that instantly killed Agent Francisco Juarros and triggered a gunfight. As a consequence, two gunmen passed away, four more were wounded and four policemen were also injured (Viqueira Hinojosa, 1993-1999, pp. 169-170; Hernández Quero and Cruz Salanova, 2019, p. 71).²⁰

13 *El Sol*, 31 May 1932, p. 3; *Heraldo de Madrid*, 30 May 1932, pp. 8-9; *Policía Española*, 2 June 1932, pp. 18-19.

14 *Ahora*, 31 May 1932, p. 4.

15 *Heraldo de Madrid*, 6 April 1932, p. 5.

16 *El Sol*, 7 May 1932, p. 5; *El Sol*, 10 May 1932, p. 6.

17 *El Sol*, 13 November 1931, p. 3.

18 Archivo Histórico Nacional, Madrid [AHN], Ministerio de la Gobernación, Serie A, Leg. 18, Exp. 9; *Ahora*, 11 August 1932, pp. 3-6.

19 *Heraldo de Madrid*, 9 January 1933, pp. 1-3; *Ahora*, 10 January 1933, pp. 3-5; *Revista Técnica de la Guardia Civil*, February 1933, pp. 48-49.

20 AHN, Madrid, Ministerio de la Gobernación, Serie A, Leg. 40, Exp. 10; *Heraldo de Madrid*, 9 May 1933, pp. 1-4; *El Sol*, 10 May 1933, pp. 1, 5.

KEEPING THE FIREARMS DRAWN AND LOADED

Since autumn of 1933, the coalition governments controlled by the Radical Party, a Republican centre-right formation, and pressured by the Catholic parliamentarians of the Confederación Española de Derechas Autónomas (CEDA), promoted a gradual rollback of the policies of police modernisation implemented up to that point. Determined to re-establish law and order, these authorities developed a counter-reformist programme to reorganise the administration of public order in a militarising, centralising and heavy-handed direction. The renamed General Inspectorate of the Civil Guard recovered its organisational autonomy with respect to the political authorities because the recently founded Special Section and the also new Technical Secretariat at the Ministry of the Interior were neutralised (Blaney, 2007a, pp. 49-50). Most importantly, the Assault Guard experienced intense structural and operational militarisation. Contradicting their restrained philosophy on firearms, Lieutenant-Colonel Muñoz Grandes ordered the policemen to carry their weapons drawn and loaded even inside their trucks to be prepared to repel any possible attack (Palacios Cerezas, 2011, 627-628). In addition, from now on constitutional liberties would be almost permanently suspended as a result of the repeated proclamations of the states of exception as authorised by the Public Order Law (Ballbé, 1985, p. 363).

Likewise, these governments applied different tolerance standards regarding the occupation of the street to favour their supporters and punish their rivals. On the one hand, they encouraged and protected the political events and mobilisations of Radicals, Catholics, Agrarians and other conservative groups, while Falangists were still pursued but benefited from the complicity of certain police and judicial sectors. On the other hand, the growing demonstrations and strikes of anarchists, syndicalists, Communists and Socialists were always banned and frequently suppressed. At the same time, police agencies had to operate in a much more hazardous environment due to the labour movement's strategic radicalisation and the hostile counteroffensive of the Falange.

The combination of these variables began a long-term escalation of violence, whose first victims in Madrid were not caused by police militarisation itself, but by union rivalries. In October 1933, the CNT called a massive construction strike that became the first industrial general strike in those years. It was particularly dangerous for the anarcho-syndicalists' adversaries of the Socialist Unión General de Trabajadores (UGT). From the 23rd to the 25th, the strikers shot some scabs and exchanged gunfire with the police, wounding five civilians, while the assault guards charged violently in Cuatro Caminos and injured one striker in the head. The movement ended with more than 120 detentions, but the only deaths were caused by the anarchists, who shot dead two workers and fatally stabbed another (Juliá, 1984, pp. 232-257; Souto Kus-

trín, 2004b, p. 102; González Calleja, 2015, p. 348).²¹ Of course, the police kept carrying and using truncheons in this stage, but the presence of armed strikers increasingly encouraged them to charge more aggressively and resort to firearms sooner.

The intensification of ideological maximalism and the unbridled proliferation of armed skirmishes between antagonistic groups further poisoned the university atmosphere. Nonetheless, the delegitimation of the government that resulted from the repression of students caused the restoration of a tougher policing style to be less intense on university campuses. On 24 October at the Faculty of Health, some students occupied the street, sabotaged the tramways and threw objects out of the windows. The assault guards charged with batons, cordoned off the street and inexplicably fired into the building, which compelled Muñoz Grandes to command them personally to sheathe their guns.²² A higher level of governmental support enabled the policemen to operate more efficiently. However, as can be seen, the intrinsic growth of their discretionary power and the reduction of their accountability simultaneously made more likely an abusive use of force on their part.

The triumph of the centre-right parties in the general election on 19 November 1933 was answered by anarchists and syndicalists through a third uprising on 8 December.²³ This violent revolt was ferociously repressed by the government, which declared a state of alarm and called in troops; by the end of the insurrection, 75 civilians and 14 guards had been killed (Casanova, 2010, pp. 115-123). In Madrid, the rebels did not kill anyone, but the quantity of explosives and flammable bottles thrown was unprecedented. The police carried out pat downs, discovered weapons depots and dispersed aggressive picket lines (Villa García, 2011, p. 187). In Cuatro Caminos, two Assault Guard trucks were attacked with incendiary material and one lieutenant was wounded. Afterwards, a striker threw an explosive on a tramway. Some assault guards ran after a man who attempted to hide inside a building, but he was eventually found and shot dead. The victim, Antolín Pérez Recuero, was actually a former UGT affiliate who had not participated in the incident and was not even armed. This absolutely unjustified use of violence, in addition to the reinforcements with rifles and machine pistols that occupied that district and the overall 500 detainees, were symptomatic of the militarisation of the policing strategies and weaponry that was in progress.²⁴

21 AHN, Madrid, Ministerio de la Gobernación, Serie A, Leg. 58, Exp. 27; *El Sol*, 24 October 1933, p. 4; *El Sol*, 25 October 1933, p. 4; *El Sol*, 26 October 1933, pp. 2, 8.

22 *Ahora*, 25 October 1933, pp. 7-8; *Heraldo de Madrid*, 25 October 1933, p. 2.

23 On the political confrontation and violence during this electoral process, see Villa García (2013).

24 *El Sol*, 10 December 1933, pp. 3, 12; *El Sol*, 12 December 1933, pp. 5, 10; *Heraldo de Madrid*, 12 December 1933, p. 6; *Ahora*, 12 December 1933, p. 9; *El Sol*, 13 December 1933, p. 8.

The next year the incessant confrontations and struggles between the radicalised youth organisations of certain parties became a major catalyser of the political violence. Most of these deadly conflicts were triggered by sellers of newspapers, as were the skirmishes on 11 January and 9 February in which the Falangist students Francisco de Paula Sampol and Matías Montero were killed.²⁵ Other episodes took place during political groups' excursions to the mountains, such as the struggle on 10 June in which Juan Cuéllar was murdered and the subsequent retaliation attack suffered by the Socialist Juanita Rico.²⁶ Finally, other clashes happened because of the distribution of fascist propaganda in workers' territories like Cuatro Caminos. On 29 August, some Falangists shot dead the Communist young leader Joaquín de Grado while they were escaping from an angry multitude that was about to lynch them (Souto Kustrín, 2004b, pp. 142-145).²⁷

The government's attitude towards the meeting of the youth branch of Acción Popular on 22 April in El Escorial demonstrated a new determination to protect Catholic mobilisations from the Socialists and Communists' counter-protests, who called the first political strike of that period. A few days before, the strikers fired on Acción Popular's headquarters and killed one militant; in another shooting, the police killed one Communist. On the 22nd day, an impressive security deployment was established in El Escorial with the assistance of the young Catholic militants, who controlled the entrances wearing red armbands. In Madrid, investigation agents lit the street-lights while security guards delivered bread supplied by the soldiers, who were again performing policing tasks. In Puerta del Sol, some assault guards that had been previously attacked shot the strikers, killing one of them. Another protester passed away because of the explosion of a bomb he probably planted himself. Lastly, in Puente de Vallecas and the Pacífico neighbourhood, many protesters stoned the vehicles that returned from El Escorial and exchanged gunfire with various right-wing militants and some guards (Souto Kustrín, 2004b, pp. 133-139; González Calleja, 2015, p. 358).²⁸

This episode reveals some important changes regarding protest control. On the one hand, there was the already mentioned abandonment of the Republican-Socialist governments' policy on Catholic rallies, which cancelled them when some leftist groups decided to sabotage them instead of sending police protection (Álvarez Tardío and Villa García, 2010, p. 180). On the other hand, there were a greater disposition to shoot by policemen, who

caused most of the 27 wounded in the previous incident, and a higher governmental resoluteness concerning the maintenance of essential services during strikes. Nevertheless, the most remarkable novelty was that Socialists were now being repressed as well, which logically fuelled the brutalisation of their characteristic repertoire of action.

In the countryside, the militarisation of the coercive approach promoted the revival of traditional, more aggressive mobilisation practices (thefts, arsons, sabotages, hunger riots...).²⁹ However, unlike the latifundia provinces, in Madrid this tendency did not cause an increase in deaths by state repression. During the general strike called on 5 June by the Federación Española de Trabajadores de la Tierra, numerous Socialists were detained for attacking other peasants, destroying irrigation structures or burning crops. In Velilla de San Antonio, many strikers cornered a few civil guards, but the gendarmes' prudent attitude avoided a tragic result (Souto Kustrín, 2004b, pp. 120-123).³⁰ Actually, this bloodless outcome was not due to the disproportionate reaction of the government, which denounced the supposed revolutionary character of the movement and declared the harvest a "national public service." The actual reason was the generally peaceful behaviour of the peasantry. Nevertheless, it is equally undeniable that the vigorous police presence discouraged the strikers from resorting to more violent tactics.³¹

Despite the dominant counter-reformist trend, police officers kept testing technologically more sophisticated crowd control resources. On the night of 21-22 July 1934, during a strike in the pits of the Bank of Spain, assault guards launched tear gas grenades after an unsuccessful negotiation. Consequently, the workers fled the building with symptoms of asphyxiation and one of them suffered a cardiopulmonary arrest. This was the second occasion that the police had deployed this device and, though their inexperience might have proved fatal, there were no further consequences.³² The innovative, non-lethal nature of this policing tool was even underlined by Edmundo Domínguez, secretary of the Socialist Federación de la Edificación, who said that "the procedure to chase those workers out is scarcely used [...], but we have to recog-

25 *Ahora*, 12 January 1934, p. 5; *Heraldo de Madrid*, 9 February 1934, p. 6.

26 *El Sol*, 12 June 1934, p. 2; *Heraldo de Madrid*, 11 June 1934, pp. 1-2; *Revista Técnica de la Guardia Civil*, June 1934, pp. 277-280.

27 *Ahora*, 30 August 1934, p. 3; *El Socialista*, 1 September 1934, p. 1; *Ahora*, 1 September 1934, p. 23.

28 *El Socialista*, 21 April 1934, p. 6; *El Sol*, 24 April 1934, pp. 2, 5; *Ahora*, 24 April 1934, pp. 5-11; *El Socialista*, 22 April 1934, p. 4.

29 There were hunger riots in Colmenar Viejo and Aranjuez on 8 February and 9 March, respectively, which concluded with disturbances, physical attacks and assaults against bakeries. Nevertheless, the Civil Guard managed to control both episodes without firing their Mausers; in *Revista Técnica de la Guardia Civil*, March 1934, pp. 121-123 and *El Sol*, 10 March 1934, p. 9.

30 AHN, Madrid, Ministerio de la Gobernación, Serie A, Leg. 50, Exps. 10-14; *ABC*, 8 June 1934, pp. 29-31; *ABC*, 9 June 1934, pp. 25-28; *El Socialista*, 10 June 1936, p. 2.

31 *Gaceta de Madrid*, 150, 30 May 1934, pp. 1387-1389.

32 *El Sol*, 21 July 1934, p. 4; *Heraldo de Madrid*, 23 July 1934, p. 2. The police employed tear gas for the first time in Montera Street on 25 March 1931, and some guards of the Gymnastics Section suffered its effects because they were not wearing their masks correctly (Viqueira Hinojosa, 1989, pp. 284-285).

nise that its employment by the authorities did not cause any casualty.”³³

POLICEMEN FIGHTING IN A STATE OF WAR

From September to October 1934, the convergence between the Socialist militias’ actions and the counterrattack unleashed by the state raised the violence to its highest point up to that time. The leftists’ first test was presented on 8 September, when Socialists and Communists called another general strike to disrupt the scheduled assembly of the Instituto Agrícola Catalán de San Isidro at the Monumental Cinema. The authorities made a new effort to guarantee primary services: soldiers and guards distributed bread, drove tramways and coaches, and protected the young Catholics that sold the newspaper *El Debate*. Aside from the usual sackings, threats and physical attacks, there was a sharp increase in the shootouts with the policemen, which resulted in a security officer being severely injured. However, all the deaths were caused by the state agencies. In Bravo Murillo Street, an assault policeman shot a man dead; in Santa Isabel Street, the strikers fired on some guards and their reaction left three dead people, including a woman hit by a stray bullet; in Atocha Street, another policeman took down a shooter; and in Ángel Square, civil guards killed a striker just for throwing some stones at them. Additionally, in Carabanchel Bajo, another young protester that was sabotaging the tram lines died by gunfire. These bloody results (seven deaths, 40 wounded and 200 detentions) and the well-founded suspicions of brutal behaviour by the assault guards revealed an authoritarian leap in public order policing, as well as a growing use of weapons by the Socialists (Souto Kustrín, 2004b, pp. 147-162).³⁴

On 4 October, as promised, the Socialist leaders called for the violent seizure of power in response to the appointment to the government of three ministers from the CEDA. Despite its intended national scope, the rebellion only broke out in a few provinces in northern Spain, mainly in Asturias and Catalonia, and was mercilessly “pacified” with brutal violence by the army, the Civil Guard, the Assault Guard and the colonial troops. The rebel militias’ ferocious assaults, the ruthless state counteroffensive and the repression of the working-class population resulted in a blood bath with more than 1,300 deaths.³⁵

33 *El Sol*, 21 July 1934, p. 4.

34 *El Sol*, 9 September 1934, pp. 1, 8. The press published that the civilian killed in Bravo Murillo Street, who was only trying to protect his son, was murdered in cold blood by an assault policeman when he was lying on the ground, despite an attempt by a civil guard to protect him; in *El Sol*, 11 September 1934, p. 4.

35 According to the official statistics, the casualties were 1,051 civilians and 284 soldiers, civil guards and policemen, although the actual numbers were far higher (González Calleja, 2015, pp. 238-240). Afterwards, in Asturias, the military maintained control of public order and organised a methodical repression, which was primarily executed by the Civil Guard under the

Madrid was the third major location of this armed movement. During the simultaneous general strike, the longest in the city’s history, soldiers and assault and municipal policemen took charge of the basic services (bakeries, public lighting, tramways, the slaughterhouse...) with the enthusiastic support of the right-wing parties’ young affiliates, who performed auxiliary tasks. The strikers were arrested for distributing propaganda, gathering clandestinely, damaging means of transport and threatening other employees. The armed insurrection was exclusively carried out by the Socialist militiamen, who were involved in innumerable shootouts with the state forces and attacked several barracks, police stations and institutional buildings. The first night, during a massive gunfight in the Prosperidad neighbourhood, an assault guard and a militiaman died, and another insurgent passed away during a failed assault on the Moret Barracks. The next day, in Atocha, some assault policemen backed by soldiers got involved in another firefight and killed one rebel, while the civil guards killed another rebel while repelling an attack on the Montaña Barracks. On Saturday the 6th, during a confrontation next to the Negro Hotel, three revolutionaries were killed; furthermore, two more civilians were killed by a Civil Guard’s stampede from the Guzmán el Bueno Barracks (Souto Kustrín, 2004b, pp. 238-265; González Calleja, 2018, pp. 154-156).

From the 7th onwards, the coordinated assaults were replaced with isolated violent actions: bomb-throwing, shooting from rooftops—the so-called *paqueo*—and sporadic gunfire. That night, in Puerta del Sol, General Cabanellas read a declaration of a state of war escorted by two infantry sections. The next morning military planes flew over Madrid in search of snipers and large reflectors were installed at the top of emblematic buildings such as the Telephone Company’s headquarters to blind them. Simultaneously, in the surrounding towns, there were bloody incidents as well, despite the majority of strikers were behaving peacefully because they had orders to do so. On Friday the 5th, in Carabanchel Bajo, an exchange of fire left one young Socialist dead and many others wounded. The following day, in Colmenar Viejo, after refusing to negotiate, the Civil Guard fired at hundreds of demonstrators who had stoned and fired on the town hall, causing five deaths. Lastly, on Wednesday the 10th, in a disastrous attempt to take the Carabanchel military base, four insurgents were killed. The results could not be more dramatic: 44 people dead (38 civilians, six policemen and soldiers), 50 injured and almost 2,000 detainees (Souto Kustrín, 2004b, pp. 254, 270-278, 282-283; González Calleja, 2015, pp. 373-375).³⁶ This was the outcome of the first confrontation between workers’ militias equipped with weapons of war and police agencies operating as military units side by side with the army,

command of Mayor Lisardo Doval. Several prisoners were threatened, abused and tortured by his men; see Chamberlin (2020).

36 *El Sol*, 14 October 1934, pp. 4-5; *ABC*, 9 October 1934, pp. 33-35.

whose high command had approached the insurrection from the point of view of an urban war scenario.

After the revolution, the government decided to re-establish state control of the streets by applying unprecedented strong-arm policies that brought the militarisation of the public order system to its peak under the umbrella of martial law. During the uprising, the authorities had already militarised the municipal guards and authorised soldiers and retired officers' cooperation. Soon after, Muñoz Grandes ordered the assault guards to use Mauser rifles on their deployments and parades. Since December, the minister of the interior, Eloy Vaquero, sponsored two projects that restructured both the Investigation and Surveillance Corps and the Security and Assault Guard with an openly militaristic aim, although the pressure of the police's civilian branch obstructed their ratification (Palacios Cerezas, 2011, pp. 633-634; Vaquero Martínez, 2017, pp. 87-88).³⁷ Additionally, the government took advantage of the nationalist wave triggered by the rebellion to recover the control of the security services in Catalonia, which had been managed by the Generalitat, the autonomous government, since December 1933.³⁸

This militarised strengthening enlarged the costs of protest to such an extent that popular mobilisation was reduced to a minimum, which is why police work focused on the search for weapons depots and on the investigation of social killings. These murders were generally workers' revenge for the numerous firings employers made to punish those employees who had gone on strike in October.³⁹ This counter-revolutionary approach was briefly abandoned on 1 May 1935 using a contingency plan that constituted the most accurate materialisation of Lépine's principles in Spain. In a general order to the civil governors, the minister of the interior, Manuel Portela Valladares, explained that the "best way of avoiding the painful possibility of shooting against the multitude is presenting public force in an overwhelming quantity, so it clears the situation and re-establishes normality by its own weight." He ordered a graduated utilisation of force—first batons and then firearms, the use of every available policeman and the army's cooperation as a deterrent force to discourage any violent initiative.⁴⁰ He prohibited every rally, except those by moderate Socialists, and organised an impressive deployment of police and Civil Guard squads with 164 police cars continuously patrolling the capital to project a bigger presence than the real one. Policemen and soldiers ensured that the underground and tramways worked regularly, which enabled hundreds of families to spend the day in outdoor areas

37 *Diario de las Sesiones de Cortes*, 143, Apéndice 5.º, 20 December 1934, pp. 1-5. The following year the government did manage to militarise the organisation and regulations of two secondary police agencies, the Forest Guard Corps and the Roads Surveillance Corps, in January and March, respectively; in Blaney (2007b, p. 222) and *Gaceta de Madrid*, 72, 13 March 1935, pp. 2091-2095.

38 *Gaceta de Madrid*, 331, 27 November 1934, p. 1613.

39 *El Sol*, 9 November 1934, p. 8.

40 Archivo General de la Administración, Alcalá de Henares [AGA], Ministerio del Interior, Caja 44/02416.

like the Casa de Campo, where 80,000 people gathered. There were only two demonstrations, which were scattered by the assault guards, and although some shots were fired, there was no bloodshed, only numerous arrests (Mera Costas, 2015, pp. 172-177).⁴¹

From the beginning of 1936, Madrid's political life and associative participation recovered their natural effervescence as a consequence of the calling of general elections on 16 February. The electoral campaign was disrupted by a violent atmosphere of discursive polarisation, labour confrontation and political murders. During this campaign at least five people died in individual attacks or violent brawls: two Socialists, two Falangists and one anarcho-syndicalist (Álvarez Tardío, 2013, p. 471; González Calleja, 2015, pp. 392-395).⁴²

THE EPHEMERAL REVIVAL OF THE TRUNCHEON

The Popular Front coalition's victory enabled Azaña to construct a new cabinet exclusively composed of centre-left Republicans but reliant on the Socialist and Communist parliamentary groups, who constantly lobbied for the application of tougher measures against fascism. Right after the amnesty of the October prisoners, the modernising police agenda of the first biennium was re-established by developing its three core axes: demilitarisation of the public order apparatus, decentralisation of security management in Catalonia and republicanisation of the police personnel through the invention of the "mandatory leave" status, which was conceived to neutralise possible collaborators with coup-plotting officers (Blaney, 2007b, pp. 233-236; Vaquero Martínez, 2019, pp. 69-73).⁴³ The hegemony of the non-lethal repertoire and higher respect for protest were both restored, although once again they primarily benefitted the antifascist groups. There were two practical applications of this biased approach: the occasional confinement of the security forces to barracks during disorders triggered by leftists to avoid their deadly confrontations with the police, and certain permissiveness towards the uniformed parades of the labour youth sections, who even took care of public order during their demonstrations (Vidarte, 1977, I, p. 65).⁴⁴

From February to July 1936, due to this reformist policy, the victims of state repression decreased drastically but the space resulting from police absence was occupied by extremist armed elements, whose attacks and clashes generated a chronic escalation in the number of political murders. On 10 March, in Alberto Aguilera Street, some Communists shot dead the Falangist students Juan José Olano and Enrique Belseuil after attempting to pat them

41 *Ahora*, 2 May 1935, pp. 3-6.

42 *Ahora*, 11 January 1936, p. 23; *El Socialista*, 21 January 1936, p. 2; *Ahora*, 6 March 1936, p. 25.

43 *Gaceta de Madrid*, 84, 24 March 1936, pp. 2326-2327.

44 *¡Presente...!*, 15 April 1936, p. 6. On the political mobilisation of the youth, see Souto Kustrin (2004a).

down.⁴⁵ On 13 April, the judge in charge of the case of the unsuccessful attack against the Socialist parliamentarian Luis Jiménez de Asúa was assassinated by two fascists in Covarrubias Street.⁴⁶ In addition, on 7 May, Captain Carlos Faraudo, a notorious instructor of the Socialist militias, was murdered in Alcántara Street by some Falangists while he was returning home (Tagüeña Lacorte, 2005, p. 96). As a final example, on 25 May, four Communists were riddled with bullets in a tavern in Cartegena Street in retaliation for the killing of the fascist Pascual López Gil two days before (Muñiz, 2009, pp. 152, 249; González Calleja, 2015, pp. 401, 414).

The “discreet instruction” transmitted to the security forces by the authorities and the radicalisation of protest caused an extraordinary revival of the anticlerical riots (Muñiz, 2009, p. 71). On 13 March, the funeral of Jesús Gisbert, the agent murdered in the aforementioned attack on Jiménez de Asúa, led to an antifascist demonstration that finished with the burning of two churches and the newspaper *La Nación*’s office, during which two firemen died and a security guard was killed (Ruiz, 2012, pp. 39-40).⁴⁷ This re-emergence of old expressions of popular unrest was an unexpected chance for the police to prove the worth of new, state-of-the-art resources of crowd dispersion. On 3-5 May, the spread of a rumour about the distribution of poisoned candies among children triggered serious disturbances in Cuatro Caminos and Tetuán. Eight nuns and 22 civilians were injured, and nine religious buildings were set on fire despite the Socialist leaders’ efforts to dissuade the arsonists. To avoid the costs of repressing the rioters, the government ordered police to deploy for the first time a water tank to scatter them bloodlessly. Furthermore, there were more than reasonable suspicions that the policemen were deliberately not applying the necessary force to stop the mutineers. Nevertheless, at the Padres Paúles Church, some arsonists shot the security guards and these fired back at them, killing a member of the Socialist youth. Another militant of this organisation died as well due to severe burns at the Nuestra Señora del Pilar Convent (Álvarez Tardío and Villa García, 2013, pp. 715-716, 742).⁴⁸

The Popular Front stage differed from earlier phases in that contentious politics took place in the context of a new scenario characterised by the convergence of four interrelated phenomena: the politicisation of funerals, far-right mobilisation, military insubordination and shootings triggered by agents provocateurs. These factors made their appearance together on 16 April 1936 during the service of the Civil Guard officer Anastasio de los Reyes. He had been murdered two days earlier, during a parade for the anniversary of the Republic. The per-

petrators were left-wing militants, who also wounded four civilians and three civil guards, one of whom would die. Several officers who had stolen the deceased’s body transformed his funeral into a dangerous demonstration against the government.⁴⁹ In different locations along the route, leftist gunmen fired at the procession and its attendees, most of them military men and civil guards. These men shot back, carried out aggressive pat-down searches and performed arrests together with the assault men and many Falangists.⁵⁰ Some protesters even called for assaulting the parliament, where a stormy control session of the government was in progress, but the presence of assault guards armed with rifles discouraged them. At the end, a group of policemen intercepted some demonstrators next to Manuel Becerra Square and Lieutenant José del Castillo shot a traditionalist student, wounding him severely. This last confrontation elevated the number of civilian victims to five dead, 31 injured and more than 170 detained (Gibson, 1982, pp. 25-53; González Calleja, 2015, pp. 408-409).⁵¹

During the following month, the new minister of the interior, Santiago Casares Quiroga, intended to reinstate public order by intensifying the pursuit of Falangists and military plotters, controlling labour mobilisations with greater firmness and issuing instructions against some workers’ guards that usurped the police’s tasks in certain towns (Vaquero Martínez, 2019, pp. 82-84). The major reason for this alternative policing strategy was the belligerent cycle of strikes promoted by the CNT since the end of May, which interrupted the activity of vital sectors of the city economy (gastronomy, textile, wood, construction...). Once more, tens of thousands of anarcho-syndicalists organised massive assemblies, planted explosives, attacked scabs and shot their antagonists from the Socialist UGT, whose directors were more willing to accept the government’s mediation (Juliá, 1991, pp. 210-213; Sánchez Pérez, 1991, pp. 64-69; 2013, pp. 41-42). On 15 June, the assault force dispersed several female textile employees who were harassing their co-workers and performed 80 arrests.⁵² Two days later, some construction strikers threw explosives and fired on one café in Alcalá Street, although they were eventually scattered by the assault guards. Numerous workers also attempted to stop the closing of the CNT headquarters in Luna Street.⁵³ This conflict did not turn deadly until July, when four workers were murdered: an electrician of the CNT,

45 *Diario de Burgos*, 11 March 1936, p. 3.

46 *El Sol*, 14 April 1936, p. 16.

47 *Ahora*, 14 March 1936, pp. 5, 23-24; *Policía Española*, 16 March 1936, pp. 5-8. A few days before, some religious buildings were burned in Alcalá de Henares, but the army restored order without using violence (Álvarez Tardío, 2018, pp. 319-320).

48 *El Liberal* (ed. Murcia), 5 May 1936, pp. 1, 4; *El Socialista*, 10 May 1936, p. 3.

49 *Ahora*, 15 April 1936, p. 7; *ABC*, 15 April 1936, pp. 23-24.

50 This was not the only case of military indiscipline. On 17 May 1936, after certain incidents between Socialists and officers in Alcalá de Henares that left eight wounded, the government transferred two cavalry regiments to Palencia and Salamanca because of the labour associations’ threat of calling a general strike. Several officers disobeyed that order and many assault guards were sent to escort them to the military prison (Álvarez Tardío, 2019, pp. 770-777; Vadillo Muñoz, 2013, pp. 304-305).

51 *ABC*, 17 April 1936, pp. 27-29; *Ahora*, 17 April 1936, pp. 11-12.

52 *Ahora*, 16 June 1936, p. 13.

53 *Ahora*, 18 June 1936, p. 9.

TABLE 1. Distribution of sociopolitical deaths by stage and authorship

	Deaths	Deaths per day	Deaths caused by state forces	Deaths caused by civilians	Deaths caused by unknown perpetrators
Provisional Government	5	0.03	2 (40%)	2 (40%)	1 (20%)
First biennium	18	0.03	13 (72.22%)	5 (27.78%)	0 (0%)
Second biennium	110	0.12	43 (39.09%)	59 (53.64%)	8 (7.27%)
Popular Front	52	0.35	5 (9.62%)	46 (88.46%)	1 (1.92%)
Overall period	185	0.10	63 (34.05%)	112 (60.54%)	10 (5.41%)

Source: Database compiled by the author.

killed for not joining the strike, another syndicalist in a skirmish with some Socialists and two other affiliates of the UGT (Muñiz, 2009, p. 326; González Calleja, 2015, pp. 422-424).⁵⁴

This level of disorder and violence delegitimised the public order policies and fostered the politicisation of the police forces, which emerged as the foremost challenge to the government before the coup d'état. On the evening of 12 July, enraged by the killing of Lieutenant Castillo, also a former instructor of the Socialist militias, several assault officers started a turbulent mutiny at the Pontejos Barracks. One of the several groups of guards that left to arrest illegally certain right-wing politicians targeted as "fascists" kidnapped the authoritarian monarchist leader José Calvo Sotelo, and Luis Cuenca, one of the Socialist gunmen that accompanied the guards, shot him twice in the nape of the neck. His funeral, celebrated two days later, was attended by the chiefs of all rightist parties and became another massive protest against the government. In order not to aggravate the audience, the Civil Guard monitored the Alameda Cemetery while the Assault Guard watched the road to the capital. As was expected, the attendees started a demonstration and the policemen managed to scatter them near Madrid's bullring without violence. However, the protesters regathered in Manuel Becerra Square and fought some workers who responded to their lifted arms by raising their fists. In Alcalá Street, finally, unknown agents provocateurs took some shots from a vehicle and the assault guards fired on the crowd, killing three demonstrators and wounding other two (Gibson, 1982, pp. 86-214; González Calleja, 2015, p. 423).⁵⁵ This politicisation undermined the policemen's loyalty and neutrality, the profesionalisation of public order maintenance and the state monopoly on violence, since it encouraged their cooperation with both the Socialist militiamen and, which was far more hazardous for the survival of the Republic, the imminent military uprising.

54 *El Sol*, 15 July 1936, p. 5; *La Voz*, 16 July 1936, p. 8; *El Liberal* (ed. Murcia), 16 July 1936, p. 6.

55 *Ahora*, 15 July 1936, pp. 7-8; *ABC*, 15 July 1936, p. 18; AHN, Madrid, Fiscalía del Tribunal Supremo, Causa General, Leg. 1500, Exp. 9.

THE QUANTITATIVE DIMENSION OF POLICE VIOLENCE

The quantitative analysis of the sociopolitical killings perpetrated in the province of Madrid allows to draw interesting conclusions on the policing of protest in the Republican period (Table 1). Far from provoking the majority of the 185 overall casualties, the state forces were responsible for 63 deaths (34.05%).⁵⁶ With the Provisional Government, the invention of a non-lethal coercive repertoire and the low significance of violent protests decreased the level of repression to a minimum (2 out of 5 victims). In the first biennium, however, the Assault Guard's militarisation triggered by the anarchist and military uprisings explained most of the 13 police victims within a total of 18 deaths. During the second biennium, the reinforcement of the heavy-handed policing style, the rising revolutionary activism of the working-class associations and their bloody confrontations with the Falange caused the level of repression to reach its highest value (43 deaths), although it must be highlighted that the murders not committed by state agencies represented a 53.64% (59 killings).⁵⁷ Lastly, during the Popular Front period, policemen only provoked five deaths because of the attempted revitalisation of the soft coercive repertoire, but their diminishing presence opened a window of opportunity for armed groups from both extremes. The result was that political and social agents perpetrated 88.46% of the murders and caused 46 victims, which elevated the rate of deaths per day to its highest level during the Republican period (0.35).⁵⁸

56 These numbers on the public order forces' involvement are not that different from Eduardo González Calleja's data about the city of Madrid. He counts 154 fatalities, 56 of which were caused by soldiers, guards and policemen, which represents 36.36% of the total (González Calleja, 2018, pp. 169-170).

57 The number of the state forces' victims was probably higher because most of the killings by unknown people took place during the October Revolution and were caused by the Assault Guard, the Civil Guard or the army.

58 Actually, the specific period when sociopolitical violence reached its peak of intensity was from 8 September to 13 October 1934, with 1.49 killings per day.

TABLE 2. Typology of policing episodes with mortal casualties

	Deaths
Anticlerical riots with unarmed attacks	2
Anticlerical riots with shootings	1
Clashes between sociopolitical groups	1
Strikes with unarmed attacks	1
Strikes with shootings	11
Demonstrations with shootings	3
Attacks against courts with shootings	1
Politicised funerals with shootings	4
Military insurrections	10
Working-class insurrections	28
Police checkpoints	1
Overall count	63

Source: Database compiled by the author.

Contrary to the claim made by the predominant interpretation of protest control in Republican Spain, most of the lethal policing interventions did not happen during peaceful actions (Table 2).⁵⁹ Non-violent mobilisations and protests with only physical aggressions, stone throwing or destruction of property were normally dispersed with batons, although their recurrent repression certainly stimulated their participants to employ more dangerous methods. Of the 63 killings committed by the security forces, 38 happened during labour or military insurrections and 18 took place in response to armed protesters during mobilisations that theoretically belonged to a peaceful repertoire of mobilisation. What is more, the first shots were generally made by them, which makes sense considering that the police officers did not need to fire as long as they had truncheons, but this fact obviously does not justify the policemen’s lethal response in every single case.

It should be stressed that this analytical picture is exclusive to Madrid and perhaps other urban areas. In rural Spain, which represented the majority of the national territory, both the persistence of military policing protocols and the coercive agencies’ responsibility in the escalation of hostilities were clearly dominant. This clarification is important because most of the murders happened in small and medium-sized towns. However, the reason was not that mortality was higher in the countryside but that rural provinces were higher in number. In fact, the deaths per person were generally more elevated in urban provinces (González Calleja, 2015, pp. 110-111). This could be explained by certain factors that were specific to larger cities such as Madrid, which promoted a more

59 In Table 2, two unarmed civilians were killed by the police forces during strikes with shootings. Moreover, they accidentally killed one civilian in the strike of September 1934, another civilian and a military man in the October Revolution, and a surveillance driver at a police checkpoint in January 1935.

extensive application of violent strategies among society (higher concentration of sociopolitical associations, bigger competition to control the public space, greater access to firearms...).

On the authorship of the murders (Table 3), there is a notorious difference between the 72 deaths provoked by left-wing elements and the 24 killings executed by rightist actors.⁶⁰ This is not that surprising considering that the former, aside from being much more numerous, were involved in the majority of the confrontations with the police and were divided by deep-rooted union rivalries. These reasons also explain why leftist actors suffered far more killings than their right-wing enemies (80 versus 47), while the public order institutions only had 19 casualties. Regarding the security forces, the Assault Guard was the agency that caused the most deaths (at least 23), which is relatively understandable considering their greater deployment in the capital and the militarisation that they experienced since the spring of 1932. What is striking is the small difference from the 18 deaths caused by the civil guards. This is due to the greater military ethos of their personnel, instruction and equipment, as well as their preeminent presence in the surrounding towns. On a national scale, the Civil Guard’s lethality was much higher because the political costs of their interventions were lower in the periphery, which was a factor that allowed the gendarmes to resort to force with less accountability.

TABLE 3. Perpetrators and victims of sociopolitical killings

	Perpetrators	Victims
Investigation and surveillance agents	2	5
Assault guards	23	3
Security guards	5	4
Governmental policemen	4	0
Civil guards	18	2
Carabineers	1	0
Army men	1	3
Prison watchmen	0	2
Public order forces	9	0
Anarcho-syndicalists	16	8
Socialists	25	47
Communists	7	15
Marxists	3	0
FUE members	1	2
Republicans	0	1
Extreme left-wing military men	0	1
Extreme left-wing assault guards	0	1

60 On Table 3, at least seven killings were accidentally caused by comrades of the victims or by the victims themselves while they were handling guns, explosives or flammable materials.

Leftists	20	5
Falangists	20	31
Traditionalists	1	1
Monarchists	1	2
CEDA members	1	3
Extreme right-wing military men	0	9
Rightists	1	1
Unknown affiliation	26	39
Overall count	185	185

Source: Database compiled by the author.

CONCLUSION

The evolution of the policing of protest in Madrid during the Republican years demonstrates the coexistence of two styles: a traditional, military and deadly repertoire that required the utilisation of sabres, rifles and machine guns; and a modern, civil and non-lethal paradigm characterised by the deployment of batons, tear gas and water tanks. This archetypical dichotomy, however, should not be accepted without nuances. On one hand, the brutal repertoire was not only restored. In fact, the counter-revolutionary reaction added to it a much greater destructive capacity that increased its lethality to unprecedented levels. On the other hand, applying a normative approach, the softer style cannot be categorised as entirely “democratic” because the right to protest was not effectively guaranteed, especially when it was exercised by the opposition. Nevertheless, this must not lead one to underestimate the breakthrough that, from a historically contextualised perspective, this non-lethal repertoire represented compared to the monarchist period. Additionally, it must be remembered that the Second Republic was a new democracy born in the polarising interwar years, when not even the most advanced democracies met today’s parameters of “democratic policing.”

Therefore, the relation between the policing of protest and the escalation of political violence is only understandable by recognising the alternation between both repertoires and their respective operative problems and outcomes. The implementation of a proportionate and more tolerant style by the left-wing Republicans reduced the number of casualties caused by state actors, although the persistent repression of peaceful mobilisations against the government led some protesters to develop more aggressive methods. On other occasions, the absence of police offered the extremist sectors a space to exercise violence with a certain impunity. Likewise, although the right-wing governments’ purpose was to contain the popular protests through a dissuasive, frightening exhibition of force that made it unnecessary to repress them, the re-emergence of military manoeuvres and firearms, ins-

tead of re-establishing law and order and decreasing the number of victims, dramatically increased the killings by the state and fostered the strategic brutalisation of both working-class organisations and far-right parties, which elevated the rate of deadly violence to an unprecedented level.

In conclusion, the deficiencies, dysfunctions and collateral effects of the policing of protest were caused by both the restoration of a heavy-handed style and, more indirectly, the development of a non-lethal repertoire. The inconsistent implementation of each one according to the protesters’ political affiliation generated rising violence that obstructed the transition to a softer policing paradigm, a process that was definitely interrupted by the military uprising. In the end, the Republic was unable to accomplish both the protection of the citizens’ right to protest and the maintenance of control over the streets, something necessary in every process of police democratisation, and this failure was utilised by the Republic’s most dangerous enemy to destroy it.

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