JOHN DOS PASSOS'S TRANSATLANTIC CHRONICLING

CRITICAL ESSAYS ON THE INTERWAR YEARS

Edited by Aaron Shaheen
and Rosa María Bautista-Cordero

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DOS PASSOS AND THE PROMISE AND FAILURES OF THE SECOND SPANISH REPUBLIC, 1933

David Murad

Readings of John Dos Passos's life and writings have often explored his ties and interests in Spain through the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939), citing especially his falling out with Ernest Hemingway and supposed "disillusionment" with the left over the disappearance of his long-time Spanish friend José Robles.[1] However, it is telling that Dos Passos's informal memoir *The Best Times* ends not with his trip to Spain in 1937 but rather in 1933, a six-week journey across several regions during the Second Republic. Scholars have given scant attention to this trip, typically only noting brief run-ins with Hemingway at the restaurant Botín, which Dos Passos remembers as "the last time Hem and I were able to talk about things Spanish without losing our tempers" (*Best Times* 220). From such comments comes a narrative in the period's literary scholarship that, until 1937, Dos Passos and Hemingway were generally aligned regarding Spain or politics. Soon after 1937, critics suggest, Hemingway embraced the left with his homage to the Spanish Republican fighters in *For Whom the Bell Tolls,* while Dos Passos, wallowing in disillusionment, gradually swerved right, starting with his anti-communist sentiments in "Farewell to Europe" (1937), and then *Adventures of a Young Man* (1939).

While these readings have merit, they often ignore Dos Passos's entire oeuvre, including "The Republic of Honest Men," the chapter title of his Spanish excursions and interviews in the summer of 1933 and published in *In All Countries* (1934).[2] The lack of critical attention to this chapter—which contains over a dozen short essays covering a wide swath of Spanish life and politics, from the Golden Age through 1933—may partly stem from Dos Passos's own original assessments. Upon returning to the United States that fall, in a letter to his editor, Cap Pearce, Dos Passos commented that "things in Spain politically are not as interesting as I'd thought. . . . As I was laid up a good deal of the time I was not able to do half the traveling I'd intended"

(qtd. in Ludington, *John Dos Passos* 317). Townsend Ludington concludes that "Because of this and because Spain was less interesting politically than he had expected, he would have to change the character of the book" (*John Dos Passos* 317). Ludington later highlights an October letter in which Dos Passos tells Hemingway the "Summer was pretty much a fracaso," or a "failure," a quote featured as the epigraph to Virginia Spencer Carr's chapter covering these years.[3] Is it any wonder critics typically ignore this stretch of Dos Passos's writing—given that the author and his biographies have so foregrounded the disappointments of this period?

"Failure," of course, was partly having had to alter the trip's itinerary. That spring, Dos Passos had been hospitalized with rheumatic fever, which waned into the summer, hampering his travels. Years later, he also revealed how car troubles had interfered (*Best Times* 228–29). One sympathizes with his disappointment: how many lost opportunities to write, report, assess? Meanwhile, he had big expectations and was planning—even financially counting—on publishing a full volume (not just one chapter) on Spain.[4] In the spring, he had signed a contract with Harcourt-Brace and mused about how a resulting book might "be burned by Hitler, pissed on in the Kremlin, used for toilet paper by the anarchist syndicalists, deplored by the Nation, branded by the New York Times, derided by the Daily Worker and left unread by the Great American Public" (*Fourteenth Chronicle* 431). A book receiving that kind of vitriolic (and so noted) reaction would need to make a significant, even jarring, critical statement. And Dos Passos was hoping to deliver by traveling a country on fire with progressive change. Yet, despite the promise of a "Second Republic," there were deep divisions and mounting challenges. As I argue below, his remark that "things in Spain politically are not. . . interesting" does not suggest his ensuing chapter was itself uninteresting or lacking political insights. Rather, Dos Passos's phrase is a lamentation that the country's changes in government (after years of monarchical and, more recently, dictatorial rule) had not meaningfully reformed the political power structures. Thus, given his original expectations, his own limitations, and the less promising political landscape, the summer of 1933 was, admittedly, a partial "fracaso."

With these factors in mind, we can approach "The Republic of Honest Men" more soberly against the realities of the day and with the advantage of hindsight. History shows today that 1933 is deeply embedded within the larger context of the coming Civil War. But in 1933, such a conflict was not a given. In a series of thought-provoking sections, Dos Passos speaks to the political hostilities and complexities that would ultimately result in war. Despite its smaller stature, "The Republic of Honest Men" is a prescient chronicling of the emotions, attitudes, upsides, and defeats of 1930s Spanish life and politics. A close reading also indicates that Dos Passos was not a blind cheerleader of idyllic leftist causes or a once-doe-eyed liberal whose naïve worldview was later shattered by tragic events. Rather than serving as some partisan disciple's lament, "The Republic of Honest Men" scripts, even warns of, the structural problems and intense divisions despite the promise of the new Republic. Thus, Dos Passos emerges as a critical, and ultimately impartial and consistent "chronicler" of world affairs, in Spain or beyond.

Dos Passos was not a Spaniard, and we should accept that his critical approach, or "chronicling," was as someone who spent only so much time in the country and learned only so much of language and custom. However, his intellectual and personal background should not be undervalued. Harvard-educated, he was also somewhat of a linguist, having grown up fluent in both French and English, and his life and writing up to 1933 were well in-touch with international (specifically European) affairs. Although long categorized as an American writer, his upbringing was transnational in nature. Born in America in 1896, he was quickly moved to Europe, where residences included Belgium, Germany, France, and England. Much of his schooling was in the United States, but over the years he moved back and forth between the continents (travel destinations included Italy, Egypt, Greece, Turkey, and Mediterranean islands), so that by the time he was sixteen, he had spent much of his life abroad. This transnational journey continued the following two decades, as he spent time in Europe during World War I, with stints in Spain before and afterward. Reading Dos Passos's works through a lens of transnationalism—which acknowledges that individuals or communities are not necessarily divided into strict, distinct national units or identities—provides a useful construct for understanding this unique, thoughtful, and well-traveled writer. He was well-suited to address national issues that might both extend beyond and span his burgeoning American identity.

Dos Passos was also particularly well-read and well-acquainted with Spain. When he first arrived, in 1916, he secured various contacts, many of them, Dos Passos recalled later, "couldn't have been better chosen": "They were the journalists and literary people of what was then known as the generation of 1898." He befriended numerous Spaniards, including "José Giner, a nephew of Giner de los Rios, the great educator who was the apostle of the Spanish liberals" (*Best Times* 30), and a relation to Francisco de los Ríos Urruti, who plays an indirect and rather inauspicious role in "The Republic of Honest Men." By 1933, he had travelled often to Spain, totaling to more than a year's experience, and had published over twenty articles, poems, stories, and translations,

among other materials, pertaining to the country. While some appraisals had a tourist's eye—a romantic sheen attributable to his age and early writing style—he maintained a student-like and then scholarly approach, aiming to learn as much as he could. Learning developed into sincere social criticism and pragmatism: his artistry can be both "fascinated by Spain" (as he wrote to friend Rumsey Marvin [*The Fourteenth Chronicle* 66]) and instructive. For, if on the one hand we recognize, as Donald Pizer argues, that "the basis for his fascination with Spain" rested on "its difference from other Western societies" (6), we should also understand that *difference* was ultimately the impetus for further learning. These Spanish lessons impressed upon his entire oeuvre. As Ludington argues, "From the moment in October 1916 when he first arrived in Madrid until he departed Barcelona in early May 1937, he was a kind of student of the Spanish and their culture . . . Spain was the most important factor among many in shaping Dos Passos's ideas and forming the way he saw the world" ("I Am" 313). Spain impressed him, and his writings about the country were, in turn, an amalgamation of personal reflections, critical observations, and poignant commentary.

The strength of "The Republic of Honest Men" derives from this blended approach as well as its scholarly, journalistic analysis of events and ideas at both the micro and macro levels. One section leads the reader down to the streets of Madrid, Santander, or Casas Viejas, as if reporting to non-Spaniards abroad; another looks out broadly to the Golden Age, Restoration, or Generation of '98, as if weighing national or global implications to a history class. Previous works on Spain, notably *Rosinante to the Road Again* (written and revised through the early 1920s), incorporated a shifting perspective of time and content but primarily as an artistic mode. "The Republic of Honest Men," on the other hand, does so to further characterize the push and pull of right-left politics and Spanish reform movements—political shifts that too often squeeze working class folks against the weight of a larger historical trajectory. For centuries, Dos Passos writes, Spain had "been acting out a very old and very beautifully arranged play" toward liberal reforms. The story was of a "redeemer coming to life in the spring" to overtake an old system. But an oscillating "older and newer" Spain was ever-present and difficult to overcome (*In All* 137). Ultimately, while various Spanish governments promised to be the savior of the people, none succeeded in fully bringing those reforms to reality.

Observing a "new" Spain constrained by its past, Dos Passos examines the back-and-forth between ideals and reality, hopefulness and cynicism during a political transformation. Consider the very title, picked up from the "cries of *Vivan los hombres honrados*, Hurray for honest men" chanted so earnestly

at a Socialist rally in Santander (*In All* 121). At one level, Dos Passos accepts the word *honest* sincerely, as rightfully attesting to the good, honest men and women represented by the new Republic. Yet his chapter also accosts *honest* as an irony, a sarcastic if not tragic undertone to the surrounding realities. In the first section, "Doves in the Bullring," rally-goers and laborers (and their idealism) are put into contrast with dishonest political forces (the stark reality) through images of white birds, sheep, and wolves (respectively emblematic of peace, innocence, and violence). Along with their wives and children, Virginia Spencer Carr observes, "Miners, mechanics, and farmers had come in mule carts, buses, on bicycles, and on foot from all over northern Spain. . . . [They] sang the 'Internationale' and proclaimed the Second Republic to be 'the Republic of Honest Men.'" The parade opens peacefully and with promise. But when two white pigeons are let go in the hopes of symbolizing "the reign of peace and goodwill that was to come," they only "dropped to the ground because they had probably been cooped up in the heat too long." That was "a portent that the Second Republic was destined for trouble" (317).[5] The pigeons signify hope threatened by the reality of circumstance or environment, which aligns with the predicament of the rally-goers. After the rally, the workers and families parade back through town, "mild, straggling, wellmannered and," Dos Passos adds, "a little embarrassed" given the "silent hatred of the people at the café tables"—"people with gimlet eyes and greedy predatory lines on their faces." A silent yet obvious "hatred" signals palpable tensions between "predators" and prey. These onlookers "knew how to make two duros grow where one had grown before," and the rally-goers must "[file] on by as innocent as a flock of sheep in the wolf country" (*In All* 122–23). Rather than a triumphant symbol of optimism and prosperity, the rally only exposes deep divisions between economic or political classes. A sharp schism between those who own the country's wealth and those who labor for that prosperity will be a recurring theme in the chapter.

The Santander rally is just one demonstration that this period of Spanish history is far from "politically uninteresting." A constitutional monarchy in the decades preceding, Spain had recently been ruled by the king-supported, nationalistic military dictatorship of Miguel Primo de Rivera during the 1920s. In January 1930 (after falling support from the right, including the military and the king), Primo de Rivera resigned, creating an abrupt chasm of power. King Alfonso XIII attempted to stabilize the government with Dámaso Berenguer, then viewed as a more liberal alternative; but as Javier Tusell and Genoveva Queipo de Llano point out, Berenguer's approach was also anachronistic: he aimed to revert to a pre–Primo de Rivera era of government that relied on an

outdated constitution and system of order. Moreover, at the outset of a worldwide great depression, the country needed a far more proactive government (218). Within a year, coalitions from radicals to centrists would successfully draw out Alfonso's own "abdication" (not officially but ultimately so), following the first wave of "Republic" elections in April 1931. As Dos Passos quips in the subsection "The Royal Palace," Alfonso fled for France "as stealthily as a defaulting bank cashier," leaving behind "The crown of Spain . . . found poked into a green baize bag, in a wardrobe in the palace" (*In All* 126). The crown's discovery in an actual closet bag is partially humorous and an odd, sober ending to a dynastic monarchy that lasted over two centuries in Spain. But in analogizing Alfonso's fleeing in economic terms, Dos Passos effectively links the monarchy to wealth and banks. Given the class tensions outlined in the previous section, the passage further suggests that even if Alfonso had left Spain, the repercussions and consequences of that old system had not: the monarchy and wealthy classes still owned Spain's riches while a potent symbol of the monarchy still lurked in the shadows.[6]

In the immediate wake of Alfonso's leaving, the country's schisms might have appeared less pronounced, less threatening. As widespread excitement, anticipation, and hope followed the 1931 elections, Tusell and Queipo de Llano find an "awakened," "impassioned" populace: "Spain had never known elections in which all citizens, across all classes, were so interested," and "Spanish society gave the impression that it was dispensing with monarchist institutions because these were an impediment to its modernization" (219). Comparing it to Weimar Germany, they observe a "strong reformist character" (220). Nigel Townson affirms that this early spirited wave gave rise to a Republican-Socialist coalition that later "won a landslide victory in the general election of June 1931" (224). "The Republic of Honest Men" captures this initial jubilation with Dos Passos keying in on themes of celebration and unity:

> You could shout "Viva la Republica" into the moustaches and mausers of the Civil Guard without being arrested. Trucks paraded the main thoroughfares crowded with armyofficers and sailors and workingmen in blue denim singing the *Marseillaise* together. In the Puerta del Sol an army officer appeared on the balcony of the Gubernacion (the ministry that traditionally has charge of breaking the heads of dissenting citizens) and hoisted the new tricolor, red yellow and purple, to the flagpole. (*In All* 126–27)

Like the Santander rally, the atmosphere is a "parade," but here shouts of joy and song are woven harmoniously among the various representatives of Spanish life: "armyofficers" and workingmen cheer in unison—or at least on equal terms (an everyman "you" who could look eye-to-eye with a Civil Guard). In this passage, there is not yet the glimmer of a silent hatred, as distinct Spanish classes appear able to co-exist.

Had Dos Passos's chapter only emphasized this immediate jubilation—or had it only focused on the brighter side of the Republican or reformist causes—it might have been like any other political propaganda. And it would have been disingenuously incomplete. Historians have since argued that the initial waves of Republican gains were not a symptom of a completely progressive, converted, or likeminded population. The parade was real; but it was also a façade. Townson observes that the election results were a "misleading snapshot of the balance of forces within the Republic. First, the right, still disorientated and disorganized, was underrepresented." Moreover, monarchists had joined Republicans under the impression monarchy was a lost cause (an impression that reversed course soon after). "The failure of 1931–1933," Townson adds, "to take such recent converts realistically into account would frustrate and even prevent the application of reform," ultimately undermining "relations between the left republicans and their socialist allies" (224). Francisco J. Romero Salvadó concurs that, while "unprecedented festivities erupted in Spain" in the first days and months of the Second Republic, "there existed latent and profound social conflicts barely concealed by the national celebrations. They were only momentarily submerged but would reappear in full once the initial euphoria was over" (27).

In Dos Passos's text, these latent conflicts are purposefully "unsubmerged." He will take the "recent converts realistically into account," without falling into the trap of misplaced optimism or unsubstantiated outcomes. Amid the "Viva la Republica" celebrations, where "unpopular" "generals and politicos" were leaving the country, there remained behind powerful and far less enthusiastic community members, who did not support a Republic from the same perspective, if at all. "Wealthy businessmen stayed at home with shutters closed and doors barred till they found out how a liberated Spain was going to behave. Even the dyedinthewood republicans," Dos Passos adds, "were uneasy when they stepped out of doors that morning and found themselves in the middle of the glorious republic of honest men . . . (*In All* 127). In one respect, the passage may allude to the threat of sporadic violence in 1930s Spain, especially between antagonistic groups: workers and owners or various political groups and the Spanish state. Although the transition out of the monarchy was "rapid and bloodless," Romero Salvadó writes, "[t]hroughout 1931, strikes and riots [were] induced by" various anarchist or communist groups (28, 38–39). Meanwhile, although labor conflicts during the Republic

were "greatest in the countryside," relations between workers and employers worsened in both "urban and rural areas" given economic crises at-home and abroad (Townson 225–27). Perhaps businessmen and politicians had sufficient cause to "bar" the doors and tread "uneasily" outward.

Ultimately, though, much like the predatory café dwellers of Santander, these powerful classes serve primarily as a *threatening* presence (not a *threatened* one). The wealthy businessmen are quite like the defaulting bank cashiers or the Spanish crown: they clearly still own the wealth; though shuttered away, for now, their power and presence remain only behind closed doors. In calling out Republican politicians, moreover, Dos Passos appears far less naïve about the political transformation. Criticizing outgoing parties is easy; warning of the incoming—and one you might generally agree with—takes steady judgment, critical awareness, and foresight. While Dos Passos sympathized with a reformist spirit and progressive cause, he was not going to be convinced simply by rhetoric or platform. During the Santander rally, for instance, Socialist leaders spoke "simply and definitely," but by incorporating their own "vague" political slogans, they too mirrored their conservative forebears (*In All* 120–21). Looking for a "kind of order the workers and producers wanted," the Socialists claimed they "had no choice but to go ahead and install socialism right away (cheers) . . . through a dictatorship if need be (more cheers)" (120, ellipses in text). Any optimism generated by the first phrase is undermined by the cynicism of the next. Ultimately, the rally—almost a microcosm of the whole reform movement—reflects a political battle for power (order and control) and not a people's revolution. Furthermore, that the main speaker was Ríos Urruti, cousin to an early Spanish friend, shows Dos Passos's criticism stretched across party and friendly lines.[7]

The chapter's criticism lands on two primary culprits: an old guard, represented by aristocratic lineages and attitudes, an established upper class, and entrenched wealth; and a new Republican leadership, whose initial aims were to represent the people and open wealth and prosperity to all, but who Dos Passos ultimately classifies as a new version of the old story. With Alcalá Zamora, whom Dos Passos calls the "silvertongued head of the new government," "It was the turn of the intellectuals to spring to the defense of order, progress, and the rights of private property" (*In All* 128). Given the concentration of wealth and land in the hands of so few, the last point upends the first two, and order and progress become a farce. *Order* means protecting the wealthy and those already entrenched; *progress* means business as usual. Partly cynicism—and one that at first glance ignores significant, even radical reforms by the Zamora government in the coming months—the passage is

rather cautionary. Despite the Republic's best intentions, overturning centuries of worker and peasant exploitation is not just about changing governments, whatever the slogans promise or portend.

That a Spanish working class might not benefit from this changing of the guard is further emphasized in two sections about Madrid, one on the Ateneo—an academic parlor, lecture-forum, library of sorts—and another on cafés. "It's no accident," Dos Passos writes, "that Manuel Azaña, the dominant political leader of the liberal republicans, was president of the Ateneo before he was president of the council of ministers," nor was it an accident that writers of the recent constitution were "Ateneistas" (*In All* 129). While Dos Passos can praise the Ateneo as "the finest flower of free thought of the rising middle classes in the nineteenth century and Madrid is the very special soil in which it grew" (*In All* 130), these spaces of influence (Ateneo, cafés, Madrid itself) are representative of a greater problem: stale intellectualism that comprises or endorses an out-of-touch elite. First, Madrid is a city "invented by Philip II" (notably, a man of "order") to move Spain out of its medieval past and into the sixteenth century and beyond. Yet in also being a "lay capital" full of clerks recording and holding down "scattered empires," Madrid becomes "the first great bureaucracy in the modern world" (*In All* 132). The pejorative is *bureaucracy*: when the Spanish empire died, "[o]nly the bureaucracy went on giving out reflex motions like the legs of a dead frog . . . the bureaucracy was admittedly nothing but a jobholders' paradise," void of any "concrete thought of service to the commonwealth" (*In All* 132–33). While they might be "the brains and spinal column of Madrid," the cafés and Ateneo symbolize the faults of bureaucratic malaise and the disconnect between the "commonwealth" (the average citizen, worker) and the "jobholders" (not productive laborers but an entitled class, whose "jobs come from family pull, money comes from a salary or a stipend, or from the lottery or roulette" [*In All* 134]). Zamora, Azaña, and the Ateneistas were intellectual proponents of the Republican cause, but they were also remnants and propagators of a decadent middle- to upper-class ethos. Would this entitled intelligentsia be able to overturn centuries of bureaucratic indolence and worker exploitation? Under ideal settings, perhaps in time, but not if merely appropriating past systems of order. Dos Passos continues, wryly, that in this decadent atmosphere, everyone "was very wellbehaved indeed. Property and persons were respected. Everybody was for law and order in the shape of the now republican Civil Guard led by the now republican General Sanjurjo" (*In All* 127). At best, "wellbehaved" and "respected" speak to a "law and order" that either maintains the status quo or else offers change of little or no consequence. At

worst, the passage is dark humor, given Dos Passos's coming commentary on abuses carried out under the Republic.

Perhaps the most significant phrase is "now republican," which suggests many of these individuals or institutions are converts in name only—they have come off the sidelines not out of duty to the people or ethic but for personal gain or survival. The case of General José Sanjurjo is especially telling. In one respect, Sanjurjo exemplifies the double-faced nature of Spanish politics in these transition years. A well-known leader from the Moroccan Rif wars, Sanjurjo represented the older, traditionalist, militarist, conservative Spain. Despite this, he originally offered assurances to Republican leaders that the Civil Guard, which he oversaw, would not interfere with the 1931 election results (i.e., would not defend the monarchy in the event of their loss). This "defection" (which might also be viewed as allegiance or opportunism, depending on perspective), Gerald J. Blaney writes, helped instill the "neutrality of the Civil Guard" and was "fundamental for the peaceful, and perhaps successful, installation of the Republic" (33). However, just a year later, Sanjurjo's public support for the new government (whether façade or not) ended abruptly when he led a failed uprising. He had been reassigned from his Civil Guard post following a deadly response to a protest in Arnedo, a small town in La Rioja.[8] "After Arnedo," Paul Preston writes, "Sanjurjo declared that the Civil Guard stood between Spain and the imposition of Soviet communism and that the victims [of the Civil Guard's deadly response] were part of an uncultured rabble that had been deceived by malicious agitators" (*Spanish Holocaust* 23). Socialists were also a threat to the Spanish government "because their presence encourages those who favour excess" (qtd. in Casanova 54).

It could be argued that Sanjurjo was merely defending the Spanish people against a corrupted government, but his stock characterizations of the socialist left, and of whom to blame for Spanish woes, align well with the coming rhetoric employed by the anti-Republican right in the Civil War. With this malcontent and perspective—and just nine months after Arnedo—Sanjurjo declared a "state of emergency" from Seville, using "the classic tradition of the military *pronunciamento*" to announce a military dictatorship (Casanova 75). The insurrection—to be called the *Sanjurjada*—was short-lived, as other Civil Guard corps and military garrisons failed to join, and Sanjurjo was promptly arrested.

In the "Port of Seville" subsection, Dos Passos alludes to this uprising as a "typical" clash between right and left, but it is noteworthy that his harshest criticism is for the disorganization, ineffectiveness, and ultimate failure on the left's part especially. Despite Seville having "suffered the worst slump of any Spanish town," its strong working-class organizations had helped "[nip] General Sanjurjo's uprising in the bud." And how did various leaders on the left (including "the government rightwing socialists," a sharp three-word description) respond? They jailed the very groups who had defended against the monarchists, and "[w]hat resulted was the crushing of the Longshoremen's Union, the buildingup of a small weak Socialista Tammany, a bitter triangular fight between socialists, communists and anarchists, all equally threatened with unemployment and starvation, shooting, gangsterism and bleak discouragement." In effect, the left's response was no better than chaotic governance or harsh autocratic rule. Reflecting on the repercussions of this mess—and with a nod to the fall 1933 elections in particular—Dos Passos observes that "[i]t's not surprising that propertyowners, backed up by the unsleeping everunited organization of the church, carried the day" (*In All* 149–50). Again arrives an image of a rightist coalition on the sidelines ("unsleeping," as if silent but alert), and the whole passage reaffirms that forces capable of undermining the Republic were not addressed in the 1931 elections and that the political left's own disunity or corruption need only stir such forces out of slumber. Writing in the fall of 1933, Dos Passos obviously has the benefit of knowing that this "everunited" right coalition (in Seville and beyond) gained seats in later elections. But his critique of the reasons why—especially that "triangular fight" within the left—makes the chapter precise, diagnostic, and ultimately prescient to what transpired in the years leading up to and during the Civil War.

In a way, Sanjurjo is emblematic of the "unsleeping" coalition right: he is a figure who, much like other characters in "The Republic of Honest Men," may be originally removed from power only to return time and time again, and this even well beyond what Dos Passos could have known or imagined in 1933. Following the revolt, Azaña's government originally sentenced Sanjurjo to death, but Azaña, aiming to quell a "long tradition of uprisings and firing squads," commuted that penalty to life in prison, a sentence pardoned by a later government in 1934, which allowed Sanjurjo the freedom to participate against the Republic in the more impactful rebellion of July 1936 (Casanova 75–76). Sanjurjo's core motivations and allegiances would perhaps come full circle, but in the text Dos Passos is not suggesting a complete obliteration or purge of the political right to preemptively guard against such possibilities. Instead, his chapter outlines why the Republic at-large failed to secure a true people's/worker's movement that might successfully defend itself from such anti-Republican threats. The recipe for failure is a mixture of ineptitude and betrayal by various parties.

Sentiments of ineptitude and betrayal arrive in sections recounting the 1931 constitutional reforms, as well as the Republican government's response to civil strife. As Townson argues, the 1931 elections emboldened the left, and Azaña's government initiated legislative reforms, but its

> new lease on life came to an abrupt end in January 1933 with the repression of a CNT insurrection that had stretched from Catalonia to Cádiz. In the southern village of Casas Viejas, the Republic's own security force, the recently created Assault Guards, killed 22 peasants, most of them in cold blood. Although the Azaña administration was not directly implicated in the massacre, its image was badly tarnished. (228)

In "The Republic of Honest Men," Dos Passos carefully addresses these 1931–1933 actors and events, depicting various political parties vying for power and various local events taking on nationwide import. Before addressing Casas Viejas directly, "Las Constituyentes" covers the Republic's legislative efforts as idealistic, yet impractical at best and harmful at worst. While he admits that the intellectuals and their "tertulias" (more informal academic conversations or debates that might occur in the cafés) were "the republic's strength," they were also its "weakness": "The trouble was that the life of a professor, of the holder of a sinecure in a government office, or an entertaining talker in a café, offers little training in dealing with the grim coarse hardtoclassify and often deadly realities of the life of a country day by day. They never could span the distance between word and deed" (*In All* 135). Like other passages in the chapter, idealism runs heavy into reality. The intellectuals were good at rhetoric—and had articulated lofty ideals—but they fell short on putting those ideas into practice. Despite all "their various ideas about liberty, education, transportation, and farming," these "wellintentioned gentlemen" "helped create a Spain they did not intend" (*In All* 135–36).

In a lengthy paragraph that follows, Dos Passos lays out the various liberal reforms, many with possibly fine intentions but that are ultimately unable to "span the distance between word and deed." Among the more disputed reforms, the Republic

> established a new corps of strongarm men, the Assault Guards, whose business it is to break up demonstrations hostile to the Republic of Workers and to private property . . . and passed a Law of Public Order and a Law against Vagrancy that would have made old Fernando VII, the Bourbon who got most pleasure out of shooting down his subjects, stand aghast. They sanctioned casual arrests of batches of citizens, mass deportations of working men and shootings of the rebellious. . . . (*In All* 136)

The Republic had created its own "strongarm men"—in a sense, its own "business" of maintaining order and private property. The allusions to a past Bourbon king further cement the current political movement as just another "old act" in that "arranged play" of Spanish reforms. This play, or act, is on the one hand almost a satire. "Don Alfonso," Dos Passos continues, must be bitter about the trickery of history: "He'd been put on the skids for carrying out the death penalty against two mutinous army officers, and here were the honest men of the republic, in the name of progress and socialism, shooting down their fellowcitizens by the hundreds" (*In All* 136). That final statement, however, invokes a tragedy: in the name of *law* and *order*, *progress* and *socialism*, well-intentioned folks were responsible for hypocritical and appalling outcomes.

No single incident more sharply reflects the climax of tragedy—or Dos Passos's bitterness—as Casas Viejas. Directly or indirectly, it encompasses roughly a third of the text. In one long question laced with frustration and incredulity, Dos Passos asks, "How was it that these honest men, lawyers, doctors, socialist professors and lecturers, that finer element of the population that it is the dream of reformers the world over to get into positions of power, found themselves so situated that it was easy for them to vote approval of the deportations on the *Buenos Aires* or the shootings at Casas Viejas . . ." (*In All* 137). Most all comprehensive histories covering this decade include some mention of Casas Viejas, given its lasting, negative impact on the new Republican leadership. In his *Coming of the Spanish Civil War*, Preston argues that it was the "greatest blow" to the unity and momentum of the Republican administration. Anarchists had organized a nationwide uprising for January 1933, which was generally held in check everywhere except "in the village of Casas Viejas (Cádiz), [where] the most violent events of the rising and its repression took place." When violence erupted between the local residents and the Civil Guard, many villagers "fled to the fields and some took refuge in the hut of the septuagenarian Curro Cruz, known as Seisdedos . . . after a night-long siege, the Civil Guard and the Assault Guard . . . set fire to Seisdedos's house" (*Coming* 108–09). Those who did not die there, in the words of Romero Salvadó, "together with other arrested villagers, were put against a wall and shot, leaving a final toll of 19 peasants and 3 policeman dead" (42). The tragedy was

immense, and it was amplified by the participation of not only Civil Guards but the Republic's newly created Assault Guards. Blaney argues that the Assault Guards' original intent was "to avoid bloodshed when restoring order" (41), and in his opus on the Civil War (which devotes two pages to the incident), Hugh Thomas states, "This corps, more efficient than the older civil guard, had been founded after the May riots in 1931 as a new special constabulary for the defence of the Republic" (99). Again, though, whether well-intentioned or not, the Assault Guards became emblematic of the Republic's reform failures, not its success.

The Casas Viejas tragedy reverberated across the nation, ultimately gaining strength within propaganda campaigns against the Republican-Socialist coalition. The central government, Thomas writes, "had plainly never given such" specifically deadly orders to the Assault or Civil Guards, but "they never recovered from the consequences of this outrage" (100). For Townson, Casas Viejas was "symbolic of the reformist government's inability to tackle the structural problems of rural society such as the inequitable distribution of land, unemployment, and *caciquismo*" (228). Historians like Raymond Carr press this point even further: The "long-term effects of Casas Viejas . . . destroyed Azaña's government in September 1933. The cycle of disorder and repression not merely alienated the proletarian forces but put a weapon into the hands of malcontents on the right: the Republic was presented as other governments of the past—corrupt, incapable of preserving public order, yet violent" (625). Perhaps no sentiments can better introduce readers to why "The Republic of Honest Men" is so cynical yet so validated in its criticism. Dos Passos lays before the reader various reasons why the Spanish government in 1933 was viewed as not that much different than "other governments of the past—corrupt, incapable of preserving public order, yet violent."

To further emphasize this long, drawn-out staging of both promising and yet failing Spanish reforms, the final section of the text weaves together various subsections—on "History," "Geography," "The Caciques," "Casas del Pueblo," among others—all of which lead to a final warning from "The Ghost of Casas Viejas," the final section. Dos Passos traces Spanish revolts and conflicts back through Napoleon to the Roman era. Early Valencians "held out for months against the enormous army of Hannibal" just as "Zaragoza and Gerona are famous for the heartbreaking sieges they stood from the French." For centuries, small groups and villages had been relentless in fighting off invaders, even in the face of insurmountable forces or lack of resources: "the history of the workers' struggle," he argues, "is full of strikes carried on and on by small groups to the point of starvation" (*In All* 140). As an example, he briefly covers Lope de

Vega's *Fuente Ovejuna*, "the story of the revolt of a small town . . . ," which, in 1873, had revolted in the Federalist Revolution, and whose "daylaborers were involved in revolutionary anarchist strikes in the first decade of this century." From Rome to Fuente Ovejuna, Dos Passos argues, "you can run a straight line through recorded history to the shootings at Casas Viejas . . ." (*In All* 141). One silver lining this chapter presents, then, is that despite the structural failures, the perseverance and—at times—triumphs of the Spanish people and working class remained.

The barrier to progress was, then, the disconnect between the central government and these individual Spanish workers and communities that comprised the nation. As in past appraisals, Dos Passos observes there are "many Spains" in order to acknowledge the difficulty of centralizing power and governance under one national model. "Spain remains a country of independent towns . . . [and] seen from Madrid is a very different country." To each respective province or city, "They are Gallegos or Catalans or Valencians. . . . Few of them seem to know the many and diverse Spains that exist under the surface." As such, the independent towns have little relationship to or faith in any centralizing forces or goings on in Madrid: "The monarchy has long since ceased to mean anything," even "the republic that has replaced it means very little" (*In All* 142–43). Added to this challenge of political representation was the "cacique," "a Tammany wardboss Iberian style with some traces left of a feudal commendador" (*In All* 143). His description of this ever-exploitative system of voter corruption, regional control, and pseudo-landed gentry supports the Spanish "play" thesis, of an antiquated system that continually resurfaces in contemporary politics. Perhaps subtly recalling the case of Sanjurjo, Dos Passos observes that the politics of caciques "were liberal or conservative according" to the governing powers in Madrid. If Madrid is a dictatorship, they join that party; whence it became a Republic, "it was only natural . . . [they] should undergo an overnight change of spots into a republican or into a socialist . . ." (*In All* 144). The more ominous parallel of this cacique system is to the "wellintentioned gentlemen," the "jobholders" and intellectuals currently running the Republic who gained money by position or by lottery: "The old type of cacique was not very active outside of his home town, tended to sit in the casino receiving friends and retainers and settling business . . ." (*In All* 144). Spain's fragmentation on various fronts—regionally but also politically and by wealth—speaks to the trials of the Republic, one that Dos Passos warns as potentially incongruous, if not destructive, to national unity.

Fragmentation was not necessarily a problem in itself, for Dos Passos had a history of admiring Spain's regionalism, of autonomous control among

various geographic and political entities. In the subsection "The Casas del Pueblo," Dos Passos turns from the negativity of fragmentation—represented by caciques—to the potential successes, represented by workers' movements that aimed for reforms apart from state governments. He describes the Casas del Pueblo as "political and cultural centers for the workingclass," but while these had originally good intentions, they, too, had been converted into "small Tammanies" under Azaña and Largo Caballero, then Ministry of Labor and vocal leader of the Socialist Party (*In All* 147). The Republican government was centralizing political power: Why would this be any better or different than if under king or dictatorship? His prefatory words on "Libertarian Communism" and the Socialist Party in Spain suggest missed opportunities from this perspective: "The Spanish working class awoke to the modern world under the spell of Bakunin," the nineteenth-century Russian intellectual, generally referred to as a father of modern anarchism. In other words, anarchist philosophies that promoted individual or regional autonomy developed in Spain as a rising response to the older order, as a way for Spain to enter modern governance. No government could hope to progress without addressing, perhaps appeasing, that anarchist spirit.

To understand Casas Viejas, one must understand Bakunin, anarchism, libertarianism, and a long stretch of workers' movements. This, then, was a failure of the Republic, but not one solely directed to the Ateneistas in Madrid but also leadership within the workers' collectives themselves. Organized anarchists, Dos Passos writes, are more like "agitators" seeking "immediate action and any kind of action," including violence, and are rather unlike the socialists, "cooling the ardor of their adherents" and seeking more moderate, legislative, or state-bound solutions (*In All* 151–52). What results is a disorganized January 1933 uprising, but one that the small town of Casas Viejas (or "Benalup") still believes in: "The landless peasants who live like serfs on the great Andalusian estates, and millhands in Catalonia ground down between rising prices and lowering wages, had been excited by the ease with which the bourgeoisie of the big towns had run out the king and at least temporarily paralyzed the power of the church." Becoming ever more economically "desperate," they watch as "the landlords and millowners were quietly sabotaging the new deal social legislation of the liberals in Madrid" (*In All* 152–53). Again, Dos Passos was sympathetic (at least hopeful if not laudatory) of the "new deal social legislation" by the Madrid intellectuals. If only the Republican government could have implemented it successfully . . . if only the entrenched moneyed or political classes would not have "sabotaged" the reforms . . . if only union agitators would not have instigated violence.

In each case, Dos Passos remains sympathetic and committed to the people over the leadership. Years later, in a 1962 interview with *The Paris Review*, Dos Passos remarked that throughout his writing, "I have tried to look at it from the point of view of the ordinary man, the ordinary woman, struggling to retain some dignity and to make a decent life in these vast organizations" ("Interview with David Sanders" 246).[9] He was always for the "ordinary man," the "common laborer," the "workingclass." In 1933, the "vast organization" was not just a monarchical, conservative legacy that exploited "the ordinary man"; it was, in part, the very Republican, Socialist, or union leadership whose professed goal was to overturn that legacy. Perhaps this leadership had better intentions; but their actions could not rise to the occasion. Thus, even as Dos Passos acknowledges the problems inherent in the Casas Viejas uprising—that Seisdedos was always a "village rebel," that the local syndicate had their guns "oiled and ready" for an uprising, that Seisdedos confronted the local authorities to surrender, and that when violence broke out two guards were shot in the head—amid all this, the chapter is unabashedly for the workingclass and ordinary folks, the "[h]ungry men who had been shivering in their thin denims," living as "the landless live from hand to mouth as daylaborers" in "complete poverty" (*In All* 154–57). Dos Passos hated war, violence, and conflict. But he understood what years and decades of starvation, oppression, and exploitation would do to a person, to a village. And the villagers needed more than a few scattered reforms and empty promises to overturn that.

Undoubtedly, the timing of Dos Passos's stay in Spain is important to the tone and scope of the chapter, which signs off with "Madrid, August, 1933." But while that date probably reflects an early draft, he had most likely kept revising it that fall, for the text alludes to the November elections, which brought in further power to conservative coalitions.[10] Thus, when his final pages relate the "Ghost of Casas Viejas," readers also have the benefit of hindsight to see how the chapter's ominous tone and implications stretch out across Spain: "Whether it was the shooting of the daylaborers of Casas Viejas, or the repudiating of it afterwards that turned out most unluckily will be a matter for historians to decide. Anyway the hour has struck for the liberals and the day of reactionaries has come" (*In All* 168). "Reactionaries" perhaps aptly characterizes the whole of 1931–1936, the days and politics leading up to the Spanish Civil War, but it specifically refers to radical interests that gained power in 1933. Within this context, we see what "failure"—or "fracaso"—meant to Dos Passos after all. The most judgmental passage in the chapter berates and blames those

> [s]teeped in that academic ignorance . . . the intellectual and professional classes . . . [who] called for jails and Mausers and machineguns to protect the bureaucracy that was the source of the easy life and the hot milk and the coffee and the Americanmade cars, and order, property, investments. . . . Maybe the new Spain wasn't the Spain of the Madrid bureaucracy, or the Spain of those who weren't holding jobs yet; the honest men. So the Republic of Manual and Intellectual Workers turned out to be the Republic of those who work others so that they shan't have to work themselves. (*In All* 138–39)

In the fall of 1933, there was no way of knowing exactly how the Spanish Republic would turn out. It was still a Republic at that point, regardless of conservative wins. No one could know the extent to which progressive reforms would be undermined by incoming conservatives, how a 1936 election would return a leftist "Popular Front," and how these pendulum swings would precipitate to war in the summer of 1936. But that "The Republic of Honest Men" ends with a question—and not a firm sense of the country's direction—provides yet more evidence that Spain and its future were certainly in crisis, even if Dos Passos's political attitudes were not. There had been a disillusionment of the left—and Dos Passos could see it clearly even in 1933.

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NOTES

1. The "disillusionment" depiction is almost ubiquitous in literary scholarship. "Disillusionment in Spain, 1937," is the title of biographer Virginia Spencer Carr's chapter covering this epoch. Though fellow biographer Townsend Ludington opts for "Crisis in Spain, 1937," the last sentence of the biography puts Dos Passos as a "disillusioned moralist" (*John Dos Passos* 507). The characteriza-

tion manifested almost immediately in literary criticism, including 1939 reviews of Dos Passos's *Adventures of a Young Man*. John Chamberlain asserts that "Dos Passos has been disillusioned about Spain and Europe" (193); Malcolm Cowley criticizes Dos Passos for having "come down from the high mountains of idealism," and his review was entitled simply "Disillusionment" (163). Later academic and popular appraisals echo this idea, with only scattered exceptions. For instance, Eugenio Suárez-Galbán rightly observes that one need only read Dos Passos's "Republic of Honest Men" or other 1930s writings to see that 1937 and "the Robles incident was simply the straw that broke the camel's back" (170). My essay aims to temper this "disillusionment" thesis, as if one or two catastrophic events created an abrupt crisis or about-face for the author.
2. Throughout the essay, I refer to "The Republic of Honest Men" as a *chapter* in the larger volume of *In All Countries*, which is the cited text. That chapter contains three *sections*, "Doves in the Bullring," "Topdog Politics," and "Underdog Politics," the latter two containing *subsections*. On some occasions, *sections* can refer to sections and/or subsections.
3. See Ludington (*John Dos Passos* 319–20) and Carr (315), of which the latter's translation reads, "Summer was pretty much of a fiasco."
4. Letters from Dos Passos in May 1933 suggest that, while he was not necessarily broke, his financial situation had attracted the attention (and money) of friends, including Hemingway (who offered a thousand dollars) and Gerald and Sara Murphy (who offered to support passage abroad). As he wrote to his wife Katy from Johns Hopkins Hospital, "What this is turning into is a gigantic panhandling operation in which all our friends are being victimized. Now that our debts are funded we must try to pull ourselves together and extract some jade from our natural enemies" (Letter to Katy Dos Passos). In other words, with a feeling of indebtedness to friends, Dos Passos had further motivation to "extract some jade," or royalties, from the book publishers.
5. Ludington (*John Dos Passos* 318) and Carr land on this idea of *portent* given Dos Passos's own recollection in *The Best Times* ("That summer I kept seeing signs and portents" [227]), and it remains a just characterization given events after 1933.
6. Romero Salvadó offers a similar appraisal of these lurking and ultimately antagonistic institutional forces, observing that the "rapid and bloodless" transition out of the monarchy in April 1931 was perhaps a reason why the "principal pillars of the old regime (the army, the Church and the land-owning oligarchy) not only managed to preserve their social and institutional might, but were also able to act as a constraint upon change" (28)—all of which reflects Dos Passos's idea that a reformed Spain was unable to fully outlive its "old" past.
7. Dos Passos had much respect for the family and man, but, as his criticism of this

rally shows, he also held Ríos Urruti and other leaders responsible for many of the ill-actions, including that of Casas Viejas (further explained below). According to Preston, Ríos Urruti had told Azaña, "that what had happened at Casas Viejas was necessary . . ." (*The Coming* 109).

8. Julián Casanova aptly describes the Civil Guard's response to this Arnedo shoe factory strike as a "bloodbath": Among workers, families, and townsfolk, eleven were killed and over thirty wounded (Preston puts the wounded to over fifty [*The Spanish Holocaust* 22]): "All ages were represented: among the dead were a seventy-year-old woman and a child of four, whose mother was also killed; the wounded included men and women of over sixty and a five-year-old child whose leg had to be amputated" (Casanova 53). I also provide this Arnedo discussion as a primer for my discussion on Casas Viejas.
9. In his footnote covering the interview (from the *Major Nonfictional Prose* edition of Dos Passos works), Donald Pizer says that the *Paris Review*'s 1969 publication erroneously noted the interview had occurred in 1966.
10. The elections drew a "hung parliament," Townson observes, but given the "pendulum effect of the electoral law . . . the only majority possible was a coalition between the centre and the right" (229), and the right generally, if also insecurely, held power through January 1936. Moreover, the party with the most seats was the Confederación Española de Derechas Autónomas (CEDA), a conservative and Catholic-based party that, Townson notes, "although not a fascist party itself admired the Nazis and their legalistic tactic for the conquest of power" (230); in the words of Thomas, although not its platform or focus, CEDA "included those who wanted to restore a monarchy" (4).

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