

## Picasso's Malaga

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### The Spain of the Restoration.

After a number of particularly turbulent years in the Spanish political scene, the monarchy was restored in December 1874, by military uprising, with Alfonso XII



*Antonio Cánovas del Castillo (1828-1897).  
Retrato de Ricardo Madrazo*

as king. The Constitution of 1876 was unexpectedly to be the longest lasting in our history, in which stability was to be the greatest achievement of the Restoration regime (1874-1931). The Malagueño Antonio Cánovas del Castillo, leader of the Conservative Party, was the true instigator, with the support of the King and the complicity of Sagasta, leader of the Liberal Party, with whom he formed a pact ensuring a peaceful rotation of power in government. This pact led, however, to a perverse function of the system, particularly after the passing of the bill giving universal enfranchisement to the male population in 1890: electoral rigging,

cronyism, corruption and petty tyranny.

The Restoration strengthened the old social order: the upper middle classes and the nobility formed an alliance, the Church gave legitimacy to the new liberal state and to capitalism – faced with the revolutionary threat of the proletariat – in exchange for doctrinal influence and other privileges, the army was to assume responsibility for maintaining public order and the defence of centralisation and the Crown. The small provincial middle classes, conservative and mediocre, were also satisfied, whilst the majority of the people looked on the new political events with indifference, tired of the troubled revolutionary six-year period. Some time afterwards, in those cities that had grown the biggest and in those regions most affected by industrialisation, there was to be a resurgence of social unrest; the UGT (General Union of Workers) founded in 1888, gained a certain foothold in Madrid, Vizcaya and Asturias, while anarchism developed in Andalusia, Catalonia, Zaragoza and Valencia.

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The loss, in 1898, of Cuba, the Philippines and Puerto Rico, the last vestiges of the Spanish colonial empire, threw the system into a crisis, dramatically exploding the official image projected. Many intellectuals devoted their efforts to reflecting on the decadence into which Spain had fallen, while the small middle classes (petit bourgeois) and the proletariat were breaking onto the political scene.