

# **Forgotten Prisoners**

*Spanish Internment Practices and Military Culture during the Rif War, 1909-1927*

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## Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.....	3
<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<i>Forgotten memories.....</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>Intertwined Historiographies.....</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>Military Culture.....</i>	<i>12</i>
<b>1. Historical Context.....</b>	<b>17</b>
<i>1898 Disaster and Regeneration .....</i>	<i>19</i>
<i>Spanish Expansionist Desires in Morocco.....</i>	<i>23</i>
<i>Evolution of the Rif War.....</i>	<i>27</i>
<b>2. Africanist Military Press.....</b>	<b>32</b>
<i>Early Africanist Spanish Press: The Colonialists .....</i>	<i>34</i>
<i>Revista de Tropas Coloniales: Construction of a Singularized Discourse.....</i>	<i>38</i>
<i>RTC's Discourse: The Diffusion of an Idealized Africanism.....</i>	<i>42</i>
<b>3. Internment Practices.....</b>	<b>47</b>
<i>The Cuban War: A Precedent.....</i>	<i>49</i>
<i>Civil-Military Conflation. A Normalized State of Exception.....</i>	<i>50</i>
<i>The Annual Disaster: Spanish Prisoners and Social Trauma.....</i>	<i>52</i>
<i>Post-1921 Military Culture of Internment.....</i>	<i>58</i>
<b>Conclusion.....</b>	<b>64</b>
<b>Bibliography.....</b>	<b>66</b>

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## Introduction

“You will organize concentration camps for the perturbing elements, which will be employed for public works, separated from the general population.”<sup>1</sup>

*-Francisco Franco, dispatch to other Nationalist generals, July 20<sup>th</sup>, 1936*

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On July 20<sup>th</sup>, 1936, only three days after part of the Spanish army declared a coup d'état against the 'National Front' Republican government, the newspaper *El Telegrama del Rif* announced the creation of a “concentration camp for detainees” in the citadel of Zeluan.<sup>2</sup> In just three days, a majority of the Spanish Army of Africa had joined the insurrection against the Republican government and was now under the leadership of Francisco Franco. The Spanish Protectorate in Morocco, which spanned most of what is nowadays Northwestern Morocco, therefore quickly aligned with the Nationalist army. Militarily uncontested, the Nationalist faction in Morocco turned to repressing potential sources of future civil and military dissent. As a part of that strategy, they opened civil concentration camps in Zeluan, *El Mogote* (near the city of Tetouan), the fort *Isabel II* in Ceuta, and the *García Aldave* barracks, also in Ceuta. In addition, military forces loyal to the Republican government were imprisoned at places such as the Nador fort, the *Rostrogordo* fort in Melilla, and the *El Hacho* prison in Ceuta.<sup>3</sup> This constituted a complex system of forced internment throughout the Spanish Protectorate in Morocco. Following Franco's

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<sup>1</sup> Carlos Hernández de Miguel, *Los Campos de Concentración de Franco. Sometimiento, Torturas y Muerte tras las Alambradas* (Barcelona: B, 2019), 118.

<sup>2</sup> Hernández de Miguel, *Los Campos de Concentración de Franco*, 117.

<sup>3</sup> Hernández de Miguel, *Los Campos de Concentración de Franco*, 117.

instructions (quoted at the start of the section), this internment system was extended throughout Spain as the Nationalist army advanced in the following years.

However, starting our narrative in 1936 prevents us from understanding the more complete history of internment practices in the Spanish Protectorate in Morocco. For instance, let us return to the citadel of Zeluan, site of the first concentration camp created during the Civil War. It was a small walled military fortress in the eastern part of the Protectorate, close to the cities of Nador and Melilla. Before 1921, the citadel had been under the control of the Spanish Army, acquired during its campaign of military occupation and pacification of the Protectorate. The Spanish military steadily increased its control over Northern Morocco since 1912, with the formal establishment of the Protectorate. However, it had been met with armed resistance and rebellion by many tribes, or *kabyles*, especially in the mountainous area of the Rif, in what is known as ‘the Rif War.’<sup>4</sup>

In late July 1921, the Zeluan citadel was surrounded by Riffian troops under their leader Abd-el Krim.<sup>5</sup> This formed part of a larger series of military sieges of Spanish frontline positions by the Riffian army. The Spanish army was forced to surrender these enclaves and attempt a desperate retreat, as Spanish soldiers often become easy targets for the experienced Riffian troops. Zeluan was no exception. The Spanish captain in charge of the 400 soldiers and civilians in the citadel elected to surrender all weapons, in return for the promise of safe passage to the city of

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<sup>4</sup> The term ‘Rif War’ is used here to describe different military campaigns that occurred during the 1909 to 1927 period. For many scholars, it refers solely to the period from 1921 to 1927, which saw Spanish and French fighting against Riffian troops under the command of Abd-el-Krim. Those scholars distinguish it from other smaller campaigns, such as the Second Melillan Campaign (1909), and the Kert Campaign (1911). However, given the span of this work, and the continuity in Spanish military culture between 1909 and 1927, I opt for using ‘Rif War’ to denote the whole period.

<sup>5</sup> As this work is principally concerned with the history of the Spanish Army and military practices, I will consistently use Spanish forms of Moroccan names, both for places and peoples. For example, the form ‘Abd-el Krim’ will be preferred to others, such as ‘Abd al-Karim.’ In doing this, I do not pretend to assert that any form is more correct, or even the sole version present within Spanish primary sources, as these nomenclatures usually don’t maintain internal coherence in spelling.

Melilla. Instead, once the Spanish soldiers and civilians had been stripped of their belongings, they were fired upon and set ablaze by the Riffians, killing all 400.<sup>6</sup> This massacre, along with those occurred at other frontline positions, amounted to a total of 8,000 Spanish soldiers dead and 4,000 missing, in what became known as the ‘Annual disaster.’<sup>7</sup> These events left a profound emotional impact on the Spanish military and public. It seems no coincidence that the Zeluan citadel, with its traumatic legacy was used again in 1936, this time to imprison Republican dissenters.

But the parallelisms between the event of July 1936 and what had occurred a decade before during the Rif War extend further. The Nador fort, the *Rostrogordo* fort in Melilla, and the *El Hacho* prison in Ceuta, used to detain military troops loyal to the Republic, had all previously been used to arbitrarily imprison Riffian peoples, both soldiers and civilians, during the 1920s. In fact, as historian Sebastian Balfour determined through his acquisition of oral sources, these spaces were used by the Spanish military to torture potential political dissenters and “people suspected of having information about hidden arms.”<sup>8</sup> Reported methods of torture include “whipping the suspect’s body with a rope soaked in water and applying salt to the resulting wounds.”<sup>9</sup> Imprisonment without trial and forced labor were also commonplace. A few years later, many Spanish Republicans (between 700,000 and one million) were subjected to the same unjust imprisonment and forced labor during the Civil War.<sup>10</sup> It is no coincidence that the Spanish generals who were the main ideological figures of the 1936 coup (namely, Francisco Franco, José

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<sup>6</sup> David S. Woolman, *Rebels in the Rif: Abd El Krim and the Rif Rebellion* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 1968).

<sup>7</sup> Daniel Macías Fernández and Lorenzo Silva, eds., *A Cien Años de Annual: La Guerra de Marruecos* (Madrid: Desperta Ferro Ediciones, 2021): 221.

<sup>8</sup> Sebastian Balfour, *Deadly Embrace, Morocco and the Road to the Spanish Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 119.

<sup>9</sup> Balfour, *Deadly Embrace*, 119.

<sup>10</sup> Hernández de Miguel, *Los Campos de Concentración de Franco*, 73.

Sanjurjo, Emilio Mola, and Gonzalo Queipo de Llano) were in charge of the Protectorate at that time and had fought in the Rif War.

This shared history is often seen as two tales of independent wars, close in time and space, that involved the same individuals, war methods, and locations. However, considering historiographical developments over the last 20 years, any omission of the connections between the Rif War and the Spanish Civil War feels at best erroneous. The colonial warfare in the 1920s Spanish Protectorate significantly shaped the boundaries of what was considered valid treatment of civil detainees, going forward. In studying the intellectual conditions for the creation of concentration camps during the Spanish Civil War, we must first attempt to clarify the material and intellectual conditions that shaped internment in the Spanish Protectorate. This thesis will serve as a first step in the study of internment practices during the Rif War.<sup>11</sup>

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### *Forgotten memories*

Today, the memory of the Rif War has been almost forgotten both in Morocco and Spain. In Spanish press, the ‘Annual disaster’ has recently been referred to as “buried in oblivion for 94 years under the most abominable and ominous silence.”<sup>12</sup> When speaking about the Rif War, Spanish press now highlights the harsh conditions for the Spanish soldiers who fought there. *El Mundo*, in a 2014 article, called the Protectorate a “failed colony, [...] which ended as a vain

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<sup>11</sup> It is worth devoting some lines to discussing the terminology with respect to internment/concentration camps. There does not seem to be a clear historiographical distinction between the two concepts, with the term used in each instance often depending on the original sources’ terminology, or a desire on the part of the author to separate from the imagery of Nazi extermination camps. In this work, as I have not learned of a systematized approach of repurposing spaces by the Spanish military for concentrating prisoners in 1920s’ Morocco, I will use the terms internment practices, internment spaces, and prisons. However, the repurposing and use of some of those spaces as concentration camps during the Spanish Civil War (only a decade later) clearly shows the similarities between these different terminologies. Further work on the physical nature of these spaces, and its evolution throughout the Rif War could potentially also provide a reasoning for the use of the term ‘concentration camps’.

<sup>12</sup> Joaquín Mayordomo, “Annual: horror, masacre y olvido,” *El País*, Tánger (March 22, 2016).

illusion and a nightmare for the Spaniards who had to live and die in Africa.”<sup>13</sup> However, Spanish historical memory often obviates many of the crimes perpetrated by the Spanish army in the Protectorate. There is little or no reference to the use of chemical weapons, and to the focus of my investigation: massive internment practices. On the Moroccan side, the history is not preserved any better. “There is not a single [Rif] museum. In school textbooks, hardly a paragraph is dedicated to the ‘epic of Annual’. The figure of Abdelkrim is still uncomfortable for Morocco [...] because [he] managed to unite the tribes of the Rif against Spain and against Morocco.”<sup>14</sup> Recent Riffian autonomy claims have also been heavily suppressed by the Moroccan monarchy, and therefore a vindication of the successful historical Riffian revolt seems unlikely to come.

With this thesis, I set out to contribute to the ongoing reconstruction of the history of the Rif War, of the Spanish military, and of the Spanish Protectorate, by looking into the marginalized topic of internment practices. In my research, I turned to the two main archives containing material about the Rif War and the Protectorate: the *Archivo General Militar de Madrid* (General Military Archive of Madrid, shortened as *AGMM*) and the *Archivo General de la Administración* (General Administration Archive, shortened as *AGA*). The *AGMM* primarily holds the documents produced by the War Ministry, while the *AGA* contains documents from the Ministry of State, including most of the civil and judicial administration of the Protectorate. By reviewing roughly a thousand different documents, including internal correspondence, war reports, internee files, and draft bills, I establish a basic chronology for the evolution of internment practices in the Protectorate. This thesis builds on the work of other scholars who have studied the evolution of the Spanish military

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<sup>13</sup> Julio Martín Alarcón, “La Guerra del Rif y el Desastre de Annual, o cómo morir en África,” *El Mundo* (November 24, 2014).

<sup>14</sup> Francisco Peregil, “La derrota de Annual, cien años de olvido,” *El País* (July 16, 2021).



throughout the Rif War and the creation of the *Africanist* officiality. Nonetheless, in its use of these archival sources in connection to internment practices, my work is fundamentally new.

An important aspect present throughout my research is the impossibility of providing accurate statistics on the numbers of Moroccan prisoners when using Spanish archives.<sup>15</sup> This thesis will not speculate about the extent of the imprisonment system although, in its analysis, it will paint a general picture of the organization of internment. The thesis will explore, parallel to tracking internment practices, the creation of a singularized *Africanist* discourse in Spanish press.<sup>16</sup> In order to do so, I turned to the Digital Newspaper Archive of the *Biblioteca Nacional de España* (National Library of Spain, shortened *BNE*). Through its online database, I reviewed several publications from the 1910s and 1920s, analyzing the evolution of references to the military. This work, which I based in secondary literature about the Spanish military and its relation to the press, allowed me to explore why the internment practices taking place in the Protectorate never reached the attention of the Spanish public. In part, this explains the lack of a secondary historiography relating to the topic of the thesis and signifies the importance of this pioneering work.

### *Intertwined Historiographies*

Without a particular historiography of the Moroccan prisons, I have identified secondary sources roughly focusing on three topics: some discussing the development of the Spanish army in the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, some analyzing the evolution of the Rif War, and some

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<sup>15</sup> Further studies should be carried out analyzing documents that are now preserved in Moroccan archives. These documents, for example, could include administrative records by the High Commissioner of the Protectorate not present in the *AGA*.

<sup>16</sup> In other words, it will explore the homogenization of media discourses having to do with the Rif War in the 1920s. These discourses revolve around the ideas of a close group of officials from the Spanish Army of Africa, who started sharing their ideology through their own newspaper. This group of officials, later involved in the 1936 coup d'état, are often referred to as the *Africanists*.

dealing with Spanish military culture, or the set of ideas and practices that shaped martial practices. In the following paragraphs, I will briefly present each of these historiographies.

The history of the development of the Spanish army between 1898 and 1936 has been studied in multiple facets since the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>17</sup> The first works on early twentieth century Spanish military development were published in English-speaking academic circles, not subject to Francoist censorship. The works of Stanley G. Payne, *Politics and the Military in Modern Spain* (1967); Eric Christiansen, *The origins of military power in Spain, 1800-1854* (1967); and Carolyn P. Boyd, *Praetorian politics in liberal Spain* (1979) correspond to this first period.<sup>18</sup> All of these works study the complicated military involvement in domestic politics, foreign policy, and social movements, usually within the context of the Spanish Civil War's long-term causes. Within Spanish academia, it is worth mentioning the works of Fernando Puell de la Villa, Gabriel Cardona, and Eduardo González Calleja.<sup>19</sup> Their work has investigated various aspects of the 20<sup>th</sup> century evolution of the military, from a social analysis of the Spanish private, to the intersection between the military and social protest movements.

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<sup>17</sup> This section does not attempt to comprehensively list all works having to do with early 20<sup>th</sup> century Spanish military evolution or the Rif War. It is, instead, a quick summary of the main secondary sources directly quoted or referenced throughout the thesis. For a more detailed historiography, see Daniel Macías Fernández's *Franco "nació en África": Los Africanistas y Las Campañas de Marruecos* (Madrid: Tecnos, 2019), Chapter 2. Furthermore, for a complete bibliography on the Rif War, see Muṣṭafá Allūh, *Le Rif face aux visées coloniales: 1921-1927. Bibliographies 3* (Casablanca: Fondation du Roi Abdul-Aziz Al Saoud pour les études islamiques et les sciences humaines, 2004).

<sup>18</sup> Stanley G. Payne, *Politics and the Military in Modern Spain* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1967); Eric Christiansen, *The Origins of Military Power in Spain, 1800-1854* (London: Oxford University Press, 1967); Carolyn P. Boyd, *Praetorian Politics in Liberal Spain* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1979).

<sup>19</sup> Fernando Puell de la Villa, *El Soldado Desconocido: De La Leva a La "Mili", 1700-1912* (Madrid, España: Biblioteca Nueva, c1996); Eduardo González Calleja, *El Máuser y El Sufragio: Orden Público, Subversión y Violencia Política En La Crisis de La Restauración [1917-1931]* (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1999); Fernando Puell de la Villa, *Historia Del Ejército En España* (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 2000); Gabriel Cardona, *Alfonso XIII, El Rey de Espadas* (Barcelona: Planeta, 2010).

Regarding the Rif War, the first comprehensive works about the Spanish side of the war were published by David S. Woolman and Andrée Bachoud.<sup>20</sup> Their approximations at the conflict were heavily focused on tracing the military history out of the, at that point almost unstudied, archival remnants. In the case of Bachoud, his work also crucially focused on the social reactions to the events in the Moroccan campaigns. Within Spain, one of the first historians to approach the topic of the Rif War, was María Rosa de Madariaga, who worked on it continuously for the last 20 years.<sup>21</sup> An interesting set of publications on the events of 1921 and the following years, were published with the centennial anniversary of the ‘Annual disaster,’ last year. These have mostly followed the traditional line of military investigations, but it is worth mentioning the collection *A Cien Años de Annual. La Guerra de Marruecos (A Hundred Years from Annual. The Moroccan War)*, edited by Daniel Macías Fernández, which includes articles on smaller topics such as the role of photography.<sup>22</sup>

Lastly, with regards to the study of Spanish military culture, and in particular, the formation and cultural identity of the *africanistas*, the first and arguably most influential work on the topic was Sebastian Balfour’s *Deadly Embrace, Morocco and the Road to the Spanish Civil War*.<sup>23</sup> In it, he heavily stresses the link between Rif War military developments and the causes of the Spanish Civil War. For this reason, his work, and the work of other historians such as Pablo La Porte has sometimes been criticized as only looking at the military developments in Morocco as

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<sup>20</sup> David S. Woolman, *Rebels in the Rif: Abd El Krim and the Rif Rebellion* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 1968); Andrée Bachoud, *Los Españoles Ante Las Campañas de Marruecos* (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1988).

<sup>21</sup> María-Rosa de Madariaga, *En El Barranco Del Lobo: Las Guerras de Marruecos* (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, c2005); María-Rosa de Madariaga, *España y El Rif: Crónica de Una Historia Casi Olvidada* (Melilla: UNED, Centro Asociado de Melilla, 2008).

<sup>22</sup> Daniel Macías Fernández and Lorenzo Silva, eds, *A Cien Años de Annual: La Guerra de Marruecos* (Madrid: Desperta Ferro Ediciones, 2021); Diego Victoria Moreno, *Dolor y Vergüenza: El Recuerdo de Annual (1921)* (Cartagena: Ediciones Nova Spartaria, 2021).

<sup>23</sup> Sebastian Balfour, *Deadly Embrace, Morocco and the Road to the Spanish Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002),

causes for the Civil War.<sup>24</sup> Another early work dealing with the creation of different ideologies within the Spanish army, and therefore studying *Africanism* is Robert G. Jensen's doctoral dissertation: *Intellectual foundations of dictatorship: Spanish military writers and their quest for cultural regeneration, 1898-1923*.<sup>25</sup> Elisabeth Bolorinos Allard's dissertation *Spanish national identity, colonial power, and the portrayal of Muslims and Jews during the Rif War (1909-27)* is of special interest in understanding the cultural aspects of the Rif War and the psychology of the Spanish soldiers participating in it.<sup>26</sup> Lastly, but of special importance, I wanted to mention a book published in 2019 by the Spanish historian Daniel Macías Fernández, *Franco "nació en África": Los africanistas y las Campañas de Marruecos (Franco "was born in Africa": Africanists and the Moroccan Campaigns)*.<sup>27</sup> In this work, Macías Fernández attempts to expand on the different aspects that shaped the *Africanist* mentality, including the Spanish imperial heritage, *fin-de-siècle* ideologies such as social Darwinism and irrationalism, the developmental discourse around colonization, and the Rif War conditions. The many influences of the *Africanist* ideology are drawn out through the integration of a linear narration of the military history with sociological, anthropological, and psychological analyses of the colonial experience.

### *Military Culture*

As I noted earlier in the introduction, this work deals both with the development of internment practices and with the creation of a military discourse around said internment practices.

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<sup>24</sup> Sebastian Balfour and Pablo La Porte, "Spanish Military Cultures and the Moroccan Wars, 1909–36." *European History Quarterly* 30, no. 3 (July 1, 2000): 307–32. <https://doi.org/10.1177/026569140003000302>.

<sup>25</sup> Jensen, Robert Geoffrey. "Intellectual Foundations of Dictatorship: Spanish Military Writers and Their Quest for Cultural Regeneration, 1898-1923." Ph.D., Yale University. Accessed December 2, 2022. <https://www.proquest.com/docview/304256281/abstract/655850035D0E4E31PQ/1>.

<sup>26</sup> Elisabeth Bolorinos Allard, *Spanish National Identity, Colonial Power, and the Portrayal of Muslims and Jews during the Rif War (1909-27)*, (Woodbridge, Suffolk, UK ; Rochester, NY: Tamesis, 2021).

<sup>27</sup> Daniel Macías Fernández, *Franco "Nació En África": Los Africanistas y Las Campañas de Marruecos* (Madrid: Tecnos, 2019).

A first step in approaching both topics is the establishment of a general methodology with which to tackle military developments in all its forms (ideological, regarding war methods, in its relationship with indigenous populations, etc.). As can be seen in Daniel Macías Fernández's work, it is possible to approach military development from multiple perspectives. However, I opt to focus my methodological analysis on the *structural* dynamics of the Protectorate that made possible both internment practices and the discourse around it.

In doing so, it is first important to stress what my work leaves out. Notably, I will not be dealing extensively with imperial ideologies, nor with the role of economic development in military culture. Certainly, these two factors were present throughout the struggle, and had an impact on decision making. For example, Spain's first penetration into Morocco in 1909 was heavily influenced by economic factors, as explained in chapter 1. Furthermore, within both military and non-military newspapers, I found discourses about previous historical Spanish triumphant military incursions into Morocco.<sup>28</sup> Scholars of imperial violence, such as Caroline Elkins, stress that the triumph of the liberal imperialistic model was contingent on its ability to adopt a "dual [system] of authority and legitimation".<sup>29</sup> In other words, the liberal imperialistic model put in place in the British Empire presented local customary laws and leaders (that permitted non-violent economic exchange), but also maintained a monopoly of violence (regressing to martial law, and exceptional violence). It can be argued that a similar process occurred in the Spanish Protectorate, which maintained local laws and political figures, but also subjected all decisions to the will of the High Commissioner of the Protectorate, and Spanish military authorities in general. However, during the 1920s, the period of interest for my study, most economic

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<sup>28</sup> For example, see Mariano Ferrer Bravo, "La conquista del Peñón de Vélez de la Gomera," *Revista de Tropas Coloniales. Propagadora de Estudios Hispano-Africanos*, year 1, no. 3 (March 1, 1924): 6.

<sup>29</sup> Caroline Elkins, *Legacy of Violence: A History of the British Empire* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2022): 19.

development and empire-creation methods were cut short by the logic of the war. As detailed in the first chapter, the Spanish army was at points forced to retreat from territories, impeding any effective economic control, and rendering the “dual system” posited by Elkins ineffective.

Another aspect that is left out of this thesis is the role of racism in military culture. The psychological weight of the “moor” figure is undeniable both among the general troop and the Spanish officers. The “moor” was described as “in general, a degenerate, filthy, lazy, miserable, hard, fanatical, thieving, crafty, cunning, envious, vindictive and proud being.”<sup>30</sup> Many Spanish officials reacted to these ideas and denounced them as inaccurate. This reaction can be in part understood as a product of the military defeats the Spanish incurred at the hands of Riffian fighters, which rendered obsolete the description of indigenous peoples as lazy and degenerate. Furthermore, racist discourses diminished after the expansion of the *regulares* corps, that is, the indigenous colonial troop, most of whom were Moroccan in origin. However, throughout the war there was no change in the characterization of “moorish nature” as treasonous and cunning. For this reason, the role of racism in assessing internment practices cannot be overlooked. In future works, this aspect should be studied, perhaps in conjunction with the structural factors explored in this thesis.

The structural definition of military culture that I will use in this thesis is based on the work of historian Isabel Hull. In her study of military practices of German South West Africa during the Herero Revolts, Hull found that “nineteenth-century European military culture tended toward rigidity, encapsulation, control mania, and overvaluation of force.”<sup>31</sup> Military culture is therefore defined as the automatic reproduction of violent orders, justified by the expectation of a

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<sup>30</sup> Andrée Bachoud, *Los Españoles Ante Las Campañas de Marruecos* (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1988): 131.

<sup>31</sup> Isabel Hull, *Absolute destruction: military culture and the practices of war in Imperial Germany* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2005), 102.

clear victory over the racialized foe, that made European armies more prone to escalations of extreme violence. European self-perceptions of technical and tactical superiority over colonial enemies reinforced the idea that complete victory was the only possible outcome. In the Spanish case, this rejection of de-escalation and negotiation was also justified by the unsuccessful attempts of the civil government to pursue a policy of pacts with local tribes, through economic negotiation, which occurred in the 1910s.<sup>32</sup> On the other hand, the *Africanist* military officers attempted to pursue a policy of no alliances and quick military expansion, backed up by public opinion after the ‘Annual disaster,’ in 1921.<sup>33</sup> The eventual dominance of the *Africanist* bellicose strategy over a policy of pacts, was united with the idea that Morocco represented a training ground that allowed for new, more violent, military practices to be developed. A direct consequence of this was the use of new war methods, such as aerial bombing campaigns, the use of chemical bombs, and the routine burning of villages. An extremist military culture, as presented by Hull, serves as the best tool to explain this military development. At the beginning of Chapters 2 and 3, I will delve into how this extremist military culture interacted and shaped both military public communication and internment practices.

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In summation, by using a structural conception of military culture, in this thesis I will study both the evolution of Spanish internment practices in the Spanish Protectorate of Morocco in the 1920s, and the appearance of the intellectual conditions through military public discourse that accompanied those practices. This work represents an innovative attempt to understand the intersection between military culture, military discourses, and internment practices, within the context of the creation of a Spanish *Africanist* ideology. Its findings will not only shed light on

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<sup>32</sup> Macías Fernández, *Franco “Nació En África”*, 376.

<sup>33</sup> Macías Fernández, *Franco “Nació En África”*, 382, 383.

this understudied topic in Spanish history, but potentially inform further work on internment practices during the Spanish Civil War.

In the first chapter of this work, I will review the historical context of the Rif War and Spain's military intervention in Northern Morocco. As part of that context, I will present the connections between the Spanish defeat in the Cuban War of Independence, and the renewed military interest in Morocco. In the second chapter, I will investigate the evolution of specialized press on the Moroccan conflict, analyzing the creation of a newspaper that represented *Africanist* interests within the army. I will argue that this medium provided a stereotyped, idealized depiction of the army, that combined with high levels of censorship, helped the propagation of a factional concept of Spanish military actions among the Spanish public. In the third chapter, I will analyze the evolution of internment practices in the Spanish Protectorate, exploring the administrative conditions that shaped them and demonstrating an increased prevalence of internment practices towards the end of the 1920s. This combined analysis will allow us to posit that the Rif War normalized an extremist military culture with regards to the imprisonment of Moroccans and manufactured a high level of social acceptance due to a combination of censorship and misinformation.



## Chapter 1. Historical Context

“Yesterday ended the year 1899, without any single event of transcendental interest for the real and positive benefit of the Fatherland, which continues to debate in an interminable agony.”

-*La Correspondencia Militar*, January 1st, 1900

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As it entered the new century, the Spanish society was undergoing a profound crisis, intimately linked to recent military developments. The Spanish defeat in the Spanish-American war of 1898 entailed the surrender of the Spanish territories of Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines, in what became commonly referred to as ‘the 1898 Disaster,’ and ‘the end of the Spanish Empire.’ The disaster initiated an intellectual crisis, heavily based in revisionism of the imperial past through conservative and pessimist attitudes.<sup>34</sup> For the military stratum, the focus of the present work, the spiritual blow was the strongest, “perhaps to a greater extent because of the humiliation of defeat than due to the actual loss of the remnants of the colonial empire.”<sup>35</sup> *La Correspondencia Militar* was a Madrid-based daily newspaper characterized by giving voice to the conservative and corporative ranks of the Spanish army. In its first issue of 1900, one could read: “thousands of Spaniards, especially those troops, avid for combat, saw infamously [their] immeasurable defeat; a defeat that history, with its unappealable ruling, cannot but call the greatest sacrifice of an army in holocaust of the senselessness of its homeland.”<sup>36</sup> This style of intense and impersonal lament served as an unconcealed praise of the army’s mission in response to the

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<sup>34</sup> Carlos Serrano, *Final del imperio: España, 1895-1898* (México, D.F.: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 1984), 141.

<sup>35</sup> Francisco Alía Miranda, *Historia Del Ejército Español y de Su Intervención Política: del desastre del 98 a la Transición* (Madrid, Catarata, 2018), 28.

<sup>36</sup> Oriol Sabaté, Sergio Espuelas, and Alfonso Herranz-Loncán, “Military Wages and Coups d’État in Spain (1850–1915): The Use of Public Spending as a Coup-Proofing Strategy,” *Revista de Historia Económica - Journal of Iberian and Latin American Economic History* 40, no. 2 (September 2022): 219, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0212610920000270>.; “Día Fatal,” *La Correspondencia Militar*, no. 6678 (January 1, 1900): 1.

incessant political discourses blaming generals for the Cuban defeat, and suggesting strong personnel cuts.<sup>37</sup> Through this example, we start to see the development of a growing rift between the military and the civil government.

Furthermore, in the same issue of *La Correspondencia Militar* from January 1<sup>st</sup>, 1900, we already encounter another of the main themes of this work: Spanish military interest in Morocco. In a section entitled ‘A look at the world,’ the newspaper reported on an interview by “a London diary” to “one of our officials in the Moroccan Sultan’s court.” The aforementioned Spanish official claimed that “the Moroccan problem is one of those that will soon attract Europe’s attention,” and stated that France was preparing for an occupation.<sup>38</sup> A connection between the crisis that ensued the ‘1898 Disaster’ and a renewed interest in Morocco is also seen in multiple other newspapers, just by looking into the first days of 1900. For example, on January 2<sup>nd</sup>, both *El Día* and *El Correo Militar* reported a detection of arms smuggling between the British and Moroccan tribes, and the news was expanded on the following day by *El Globo* and *El Siglo Futuro*.<sup>39</sup> As I will show, the ideological construction of a “Moroccan problem” would lead from 1909 onwards to the military invasion of Morocco by the Spanish Army, and the beginning of the so-called ‘Rif War’.

In this first chapter, I will provide the historical context for the following chapters. Firstly, to understand the social and ideological composition of the Spanish Army before 1909, I will consider the development of the Cuban War. Then, with the aim of understanding why Spanish generals turned their attention to North Africa, we will look into the historical relation between

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<sup>37</sup> Stanley G. Payne, *Politics and the Military in Modern Spain* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1967), 98.

<sup>38</sup> “Mirada al Mundo,” *La Correspondencia Militar*, no. 6678 (January 1, 1900): 2.

<sup>39</sup> “Contrabando de armas en Marruecos,” *El Día*, no. 7000 (January 2, 1900): 2; “Lo del Día,” *El Correo Militar*, no. 7216 (January 2, 1900): 2; “Un aviso. Armas para Marruecos,” *El Siglo Futuro*, no. 7508 (January 3, 1900): 2; “Armas para Marruecos,” *El Globo*, no. 8798 (January 3, 1900): 2.

Spain and Morocco. Lastly, we will look into the development of the Spanish invasion of Morocco, that will contextualize the following chapters.

### *1898 Disaster and Regeneration*

On April 25, the U.S. Congress formally declared war on Spain following the sinking of the battleship *Maine*.<sup>40</sup> The war of 1898, in which the United States quickly defeated the Spanish Army and Navy, was the epilogue of the Second Cuban War of Independence that had started in 1895. The resulting quick Spanish defeat fueled social criticism, already present during the years of anti-independentist fighting, because of the high number of losses and seeming arbitrariness of the three-year campaign. This generated a fervent antimilitarist movement, headed by popular classes and demanding army reforms, which, on the other hand, were also pressing from an economic perspective. Spanish military recruitment was based on a lottery system known as *quintas*, which allowed conscripts to be “exempted [...] from performing military services by paying [...] 2,000 pesetas if [they were] assigned to Overseas.”<sup>41</sup> This system, in which one could pay to avoid being enlisted, generated a colonial army in which manual laborers and peasants were heavily overrepresented in the lower military ranks. Being unmotivated, and poorly trained for colonial warfare, more than 250,000 Spanish soldiers faced an irregular guerrilla war that combined with maladies such as malaria or dysentery caused the death toll to rise to “well over 50,000 soldiers.”<sup>42</sup> Given these conditions, the emotional impact of the war on Spanish society was deeply felt, with many turning to anti-bellucose political options.

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<sup>40</sup> Alía Miranda, *Historia Del Ejército Español y de Su Intervención Política*, 26.

<sup>41</sup> Yolanda Díaz Martínez, “La Guerra del ’95 desde una perspectiva social,” in *XIII Coloquio de Historia Canario-Americana; VIII Congreso Internacional de Historia de America*, Cabildo Insular de Gran Canaria, (2000): 585, <https://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/articulo?codigo=2196903>.

<sup>42</sup> Díaz Martínez, “La Guerra del ’95 desde una perspectiva social”: 592.

Regarding army officer ranks, the 1898 disaster showed the necessity for profound reforms, that, however, would not take place in the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Officials in the Spanish Army faced two problems: an overrepresentation with respect to the soldier troop, and post-1898 factionalism. Spanish generals “were the oldest set of generals in any European Army” and “the Corps took the lion’s share of the [military] budget,” with the Spanish army presenting an excessively large officer/private rate with respect to other European armies.<sup>43</sup> After budgetary limitations forced a reduction in army size, a minimum of 50,000 men enlisted was reported during the first four years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. At that time, when companies of 33 soldiers carried military exercises in rural Spain, locals derisively referred to them as “marching bands escorted by platoons of soldiers.”<sup>44</sup>

Simultaneously, the Cuban war also significantly shaped into factions the composition of the army. Originally, army officials’ enlistment for overseas campaigns was completely voluntarily. Only if not enough officials were enlisted voluntarily, forced conscription was resorted to. In the case of the Cuban war, most peninsular officials rejected joining the fighting, and thus the system of forced conscription started enlisting young lieutenants, most of which had only recently completed their training. A schism was therefore created between this new officiality (young, unexperienced, and quickly adapted to the brutal realities of guerrilla warfare in Cuban soil) and the metropolitan strata of the army. In Daniel Macías Fernández’s words: “it opened a gap between the peninsular military -police- and the colonial military -soldiers-, gradually giving the latter an awareness of superiority over the former.”<sup>45</sup> This ‘new’ colonial army was also characterized by employing military counter-insurgency strategies, such as internment of civil

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<sup>43</sup> Payne, *Politics and the Military in Modern Spain*, 90.

<sup>44</sup> Fernando Puell de la Villa, *Historia Del Ejército En España* (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 2000), 106.

<sup>45</sup> Macías Fernández, *Franco “Nació En África”*, 75.

populations, and scorched earth tactics. The experience of the 1898 galvanized a cultural subgroup within the Spanish army, that would later be heavily involved, especially its younger units, in the Rif War.

This military system of overrepresented higher ranks and with a colonial subgroup, resulting from 1898, was almost untouched by reform in the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The army had felt abandoned by the Spanish government, in its decision to sign an armistice and withdraw from Cuba.<sup>46</sup> Similarly, army generals had also rejected attempts by the parliamentary system to clarify responsibilities about the disaster, becoming an immobilistic anti-political force. Politically, since the approval of the 1876 Constitution (that started the so-called Restoration period), Spain had been a Parliamentary democratic monarchy. However, since its inception, this theoretical democracy was, in fact, a two-party system in which Conservatives and Progressives alternated in power through controlled elections. Moments of social unrest, often instigated by political movements such as republicans, socialists, or regionalists, were simply resolved through military intervention and with a change in government. In another example of that tendency, the 1898 disaster resulted in the downfall of the Progressive government of Práxedes Mateo Sagasta, and the rise of the Conservative government of Francisco Silvela. This change in government was also accompanied with a wave of politics, called ‘regenerationism’, that tried to make sense of the social mourning resulting from the disaster. Regenerationist politicians argued for new ways of doing politics, often through decentralization, and a relaxation of the two-party system. However, this did not stop the Restoration period from falling into political instability. Between the rise of King Alfonso XIII to the throne in 1902 and the fall of the parliamentary system in 1923, there

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<sup>46</sup> Macías Fernández, *Franco “Nació En África*, 76, 77.

were thirty-three different Presidents of Congress (the official title at the time of the head of government).

In this context of political instability, the army grew significantly closer to the figure of King Alfonso XIII who, in turn, based his social legitimacy in martial values, presenting himself in public in military attire. The army officiality, “educated in an elitist and ‘aristocraticizing’ environment, excluded itself from the middle classes to which it belonged to both socially and economically.”<sup>47</sup> Its association with the figure of the king allowed them to reproduce an aristocratic ethos even while facing political criticism. Furthermore, the army also undertook different processes of military regenerationism, as scholars such as Sebastian Balfour, Robert Geoffrey Jensen, and Daniel Macías Fernández have asserted.<sup>48</sup> To Balfour, regenerationism is explained mainly as an argument for reinforcing the army by increasing the presence of army values within society. Jensen goes a step further in identifying various currents of thought within the Spanish military, from some isolationists to certain that reflected a deep contact with European politics of the time. Macías Fernández, lastly, and perhaps most interesting for our analysis, studies regenerationism especially within the Spanish Army of Africa, finding that it is defined by four ideological tenets: anti-materialist spirituality, warmongering, apoliticism, and social militarization. In short, in response to the 1898 Disaster, the Spanish army was to turn away from politics, arguing for a politically isolated military, that could spread martial values into society through a mandatory military service. Furthermore, they supported the idea of spreading military missions, both abroad and internally, to keep the martial spirit active even within the corps.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Puell de la Villa, *Historia Del Ejército En España*, 119.

<sup>48</sup> Balfour, *Deadly Embrace*; Robert Geoffrey Jensen, “Intellectual Foundations of Dictatorship: Spanish Military Writers and Their Quest for Cultural Regeneration, 1898-1923” (Ph.D., United States -- Connecticut, Yale University), accessed December 2, 2022, <https://www.proquest.com/docview/304256281/abstract/655850035D0E4E31PQ/1>; Daniel Macías Fernández, *Franco “Nació En África”*.

<sup>49</sup> Macías Fernández, *Franco “Nació En África”*, 129-131.

*Spanish Expansionist Desires in Morocco*

The connection between Spain and Morocco had existed since the early modern ages. In 1492, combined armies of Iberian Christian kingdoms militarily expelled the last Islamic rulers from the kingdom of Granada, the remainder of Al-Andalus. Only five years later, the Castilian captain Pedro de Estopiñán conquered the city of Melilla, in the coast of North Africa, initiating a Spanish rule of the city that has continued until today.<sup>50</sup> However, in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, the relation between the Spanish Kingdom and the Moroccan Sultanate would develop substantially. In part weary of French and British expansionism in North Africa and around Gibraltar, but mainly to maintain national unanimity in a time of political unrest, then President of the Spanish Council of Ministers, General Leopoldo O'Donnell, declared war on Morocco on October 12<sup>th</sup>, 1859.<sup>51</sup> A territorial dispute around the Spanish town of Ceuta (also on the Northern coast of Morocco), unpunished by the Sultan, served as the excuse for the invasion of a 50,000 men-strong army, and by March 1860, a peace treaty had been reached. Morocco agreed to pay an economic compensation, that heavily affected its finances, despite having received economic aid from Britain throughout the war.<sup>52</sup> Fighting between Spain and Morocco would start again in 1893, because of a similar territorial dispute, this time around the city of Melilla. However, in this case, it would be resolved without significant military action, as the Spanish army was already preoccupied with the looming American independence struggles. *El Imparcial* claimed, in 1899, that “the national instinct knows that Morocco would be part of Spain if the latter had followed

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<sup>50</sup> María-Rosa de Madariaga, *España y El Rif: Crónica de Una Historia Casi Olvidada* (Melilla: UNED, Centro Asociado de Melilla, 2008), 35.

<sup>51</sup> Madariaga, *España y El Rif*, 70.

<sup>52</sup> Madariaga, *España y El Rif*, 82.

the course of its history. [...] From Covadonga, Spain was on its way to the Atlas.”<sup>53</sup> All these instances showcase how Morocco became in the 19<sup>th</sup> century the target of Spanish expansionism, both within the military but also in popular culture.

However, on the international stage, this expansionist tendency was originally met with reticence by other European powers, at least during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. England supported Moroccan independence, and, as we pointed out before, traded arms with Moroccan tribes during armed conflict against the Spanish. Meanwhile, France had their own expansionist interest set in the southern and eastern parts of the Moroccan Sultanate, thus entering in territorial competition against Spain. These disputes went unaddressed in the 1884 Berlin Conference, that effectively recognized the Moroccan Sultanate as an independent state. At the Berlin Conference, a principle of effective occupation was ratified: “The state taking possession of a new territory on the [African] coast had to notify the other signatory powers, to proclaim its right of sovereignty.”<sup>54</sup> Spain made use of this norm to establish its sovereignty over Western Sahara, the African territory next to the Canary Islands, South of Morocco, but respected the sovereignty of the Sultanate.<sup>55</sup> For this reason, expansionist attempts were carried out through bilateral secret agreements. One of the most important was the 1904 Franco-Spanish treaty, that divided Morocco into two spheres of influence, one French and one Spanish. This 1904 accord delimited the Spanish area of influence to the Northwestern fifth of Morocco and allowed both Spain and France to “exercise freely [their]

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<sup>53</sup> Covadonga was the mythologized first Christian victory over Islamic troops during the invasion of the Iberian Peninsula in the 8<sup>th</sup> century. Nicolas Estevanez, “Fragmentos de Mis Memorias,” *El Imparcial*, no. 11512 (May 8, 1899): 4.

<sup>54</sup> Roberto Ceamanos Llorens, *El Reparto de África: De La Conferencia de Berlín a Los Conflictos Actuales* (Madrid: Casa África, 2016), 54.

<sup>55</sup> Ceamanos Llorens, *El Reparto de África*, 55.



action” in their established regions of influence in case the political state of Morocco failed to “bring about security and public order.”<sup>56</sup>

These accords would be internationally ratified in 1906, in the Algeciras Conference. On April 7<sup>th</sup>, 1906, representatives from European countries, the United States, and the Moroccan Sultan reached a diplomatic agreement authorizing French and Spanish security-related interventions in the Sultanate of Morocco. The Algeciras Conference, named after the Spanish town of Algeciras where it was held, effectively blockaded the Prussian Empire from intervening militarily in Morocco, after the alignment of most European powers behind France and England’s position.<sup>57</sup> The treaty cemented the division present in the 1904 Franco-Spanish accord, by requiring the creation of a Moroccan police corps, instructed and supervised by Spanish and French officials, that allowed for a continuous Spanish military presence in Morocco.<sup>58</sup> In codifying this, the accord also had other crucial repercussions. First, it undermined the authority of the Moroccan Sultan Abdel Aziz, who was pressured to sign the treaty by the Great Powers.<sup>59</sup> This led to a climate of internal instability in Morocco, that radicalized notably the detractors of the Sultanate. Furthermore, it effectively imported a foreign administration for both border control and economic organization. It did so by banning any weapon imports in the whole Moroccan territory, and by creating a State Bank under international control. Although both these measures were framed as a way to fight against internal armed dissent and unrest within the Sultanate, in effect it rendered the Moroccan state unable to carry out some of its basic functions without either notifying or directly relying on external intervention.

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<sup>56</sup> “Treaty Between France and Spain Concerning Morocco,” *The American Journal of International Law* 6, no. 2 (1912): 117, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2212123>.

<sup>57</sup> We are reminded that these events were taking place in the buildup and during World War I. The tensions between France, England and Prussia are thus explained.

<sup>58</sup> United States. *General Act of the International Conference of Algeciras*. Washington, 1906. <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/101759128>.

<sup>59</sup> Balfour, *Deadly Embrace*, 7.

In Spain the document was seen in a positive light, as a great international success on the part of Spanish diplomacy. For the daily paper *El Liberal*, characterized by its moderate, liberal tone, Spain had “regained the consideration and respect we had lost [after the Cuban defeat], and at the same time we have been able to save our primary interests.” Furthermore, the same article stated that “since the black year of 1898, this is the first clarity that comforts and enlightens us.”<sup>60</sup> On the other hand, reactions to the Algeciras Conference by the Spanish military press were characterized by their bellicose nature and their disillusion with the agreement. Days before the final document of the Conference was approved, *La Correspondencia Militar* stated that: “The road to Tetouan; the holes of Anghera, watered with the blood of our battalions, will again feel the footprint of the Spanish soldier [...]. The conclusion of the Conference of Algeciras [...] has only been to designate which powers are to carry war to the African territory.”<sup>61</sup> Even before the resolution of the conference, the Spanish military hoped that this agreement could justify a full-scale military intervention into Morocco, seen as historically entitled to Spanish rule. This military mission was seen as the necessary preface to a peace-securing Spanish military settlement (“the Spanish army [...] is going to enter Morocco [...] with the mauser in one hand, and the olive branch in the other.”)<sup>62</sup> Once the full resolution of the conference was published, *La Correspondencia Militar* responded with a harsher text: “Frankly, either we do not understand it [the agreement] or we believe that the political exhilaration about Algeciras is not such a big deal. [...] if we are not mistaken, what we have achieved [...], is that they have effectively blocked [...] the future of Spain [from] being on the other side of the Strait.”<sup>63</sup> This openly irredentist statement published three days after Spain was given the role of safeguarding public safety in Morocco

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<sup>60</sup> “Después de la Conferencia,” *El Liberal*, no. 9668 (April 8, 1906): 1.

<sup>61</sup> “La Chilaba Triste,” *La Correspondencia Militar*, no. 8610 (April 2, 1906): 1.

<sup>62</sup> “La Chilaba Triste,” *La Correspondencia Militar*, 1.

<sup>63</sup> “Impresiones,” *La Correspondencia Militar*, no. 8617 (April 10, 1906): 2.

clearly shows the conviction on the part of the military estate on their right to conquest, thus paving the way to what would become an eighteen-year war in Northern Africa.

### *Evolution of the Rif War*

Spain's 1906 exalted militaristic spirit in relation to Morocco had a quick test in the 1909 Melilla campaign. Spanish industrialists quickly understood the economic opportunity opened by the protective mission of the Spanish army in Morocco awarded by the Algeciras Conference.<sup>64</sup> Within the Spanish sphere of influence, there were several important mineral deposits, located in the mountainous Rif region. Mining these resources became a priority for a series of Spanish oligarchs, which prompted an economic penetration into a region of Morocco controlled by a series of tribes.<sup>65</sup> Conflict between the *kabyles* (Spanish term for the Berber tribes, sometimes nomadic, that populated the mountainous Rif region) and the Spanish presence materialized in an attack on Spanish railway workers in 1909. The Spanish attempt at retaliation was cut short through a Riffian ambush in the Wolf Ravine.<sup>66</sup> Due to the high number of losses, the Wolf Ravine defeat generated violent left-wing protests in Barcelona, although it eventually brought forward support for the army from many in Spain's upper and middle classes, who became emotionally invested in the conflict. For the following decade, Spain was immersed in a series of military campaigns against different *kabyles*, especially on the occidental side of the Spanish sphere of influence.

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<sup>64</sup> The relationship between the army and Spanish oligarchs is a complicated one. In the first decade of the 20th century, military suppression of Spanish social protests casted the army as favorable to industrialist interests. However, on the other part, the industrialists did not always support a military penetration of Morocco. In fact, they contacted Abd-el Krim to develop their mining interests outside of the area controlled by the Spanish army. De Madariaga, *España y El Rif*, 196.

<sup>65</sup> Diego Victoria Moreno, *Dolor y Vergüenza: El Recuerdo de Annual (1921). El Fracaso Político-Militar En El Protectorado Español de Marruecos* (Cartagena: Ediciones Nova Spartaria, 2021), 54.

<sup>66</sup> Balfour, *Deadly Embrace*, 22-23.

In 1912, through a Franco-Spanish accord, the Spanish Protectorate of Morocco was officially established, which led to the creation of the figure of Spanish High Commissioner, who assumed both military and consular control.<sup>67</sup> This official change of status led to a momentary escalation of violence, through the insurgence of many tribes under the guidance of Ahmed al-Raisuli, also known in Spanish sources as ‘El Raisuni’. Al-Raisuli was a leader in the Yebala area, being considered a *sharif* by local populations, but he was denied any position of government by the Spanish authorities, which led him to instigate revolts.<sup>68</sup> The Spanish army’s response was organized in columns, and often used combined infantry-artillery tactics in going over enemy lines and establishing small outposts called *blocaos*, that were often abandoned by night. This tactic allowed for many open-field military encounters with the Riffian *harkas*, significantly increasing the number of Spanish casualties. Eventually, by 1915, the Spanish High Command reached a secret military and economic pact with Al-Raisuli, by which he was put in charge of an army of a thousand soldiers fully funded by the Spanish, and he was also given command of all local *kabyles*.<sup>69</sup> For the next six years, the Spanish would establish military outposts throughout the Rif and pursue agreements to pacify the area of the Protectorate. These were temporarily successful but did not alter Spain’s reliance on the collaboration of local *kabyles*.

The shortcomings of this unstable equilibrium were exposed in July 1921, when a coalition of Riffian tribes under Abd el-Krim, a local leader, attacked the advanced positions of Mount Igueriben and Annual. The lack of water supplies in these frontline enclaves, made the commander in charge, General Silvestre, hesitate between ordering a full-scale retreat or a defense of the

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<sup>67</sup> Macías Fernández, *A Cien Años de Annual*: 142.

<sup>68</sup> Arabic title of respect, restricted, after the advent of Islam, to members of Muhammad’s clan of Hāshim, according to the Encyclopedia Britannica.

<sup>69</sup> Macías Fernández, *A Cien Años de Annual*: 149, 150.

positions.<sup>70</sup> When the retreat was finally ordered, the Spanish garrison was found defenseless in the face of Riffian attacks. A similar fortune quickly ensued for the multiple isolated Spanish military posts. Scenes of massacre took place until mid-August in these encampments, reducing the Spanish area of military control effectively to the city of Melilla and its suburbs. The Spanish disastrous defeat convinced many tribes, all over the Protectorate, that the armed struggle could be an effective way to bring about a sought after, independent Rif Republic. On the Spanish part, the martial collapse was also significant in its human cost, with around 8,000 soldiers dead and 4,000 missing (many of whom were reported to have deserted to the enemy, especially among colonial units).<sup>71</sup>

The response to the crisis was profound, both within the civilian population and military chains of command. The government ordered General Juan Picasso to craft a “report on the basis of which legal proceedings could be initiated against those responsible for the events in the eastern zone up to July 1921.”<sup>72</sup> However, the general was denied access to the documents of the High Commissioner, and his accusations against powerful figures of the army structure brought about ample hostilities on the part of army commanders, many of whom did not show up to declare. By the time the report was completed, it exonerated the highest-ranking officials, arguably the most responsible for the disaster, and instead blamed subaltern officers.<sup>73</sup>

An important shift after the Annual defeat had to do with the psychology of the Army of Africa. In Balfour’s words, “the driving force of the professionals of the colonial army in the months and years that followed [the ‘Annual disaster’] was a spirit of compulsive revenge.”<sup>74</sup> This

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<sup>70</sup> Balfour, *Deadly Embrace*, 71.

<sup>71</sup> Macías Fernández, *A Cien Años de Annual*: 221.

<sup>72</sup> Balfour, *Deadly Embrace*, 76.

<sup>73</sup> Balfour, *Deadly Embrace*, 77, 78.

<sup>74</sup> Balfour, *Deadly Embrace*, 83.

renovated attitude, exacerbated by public support from the peninsular civilian society, prompted a spiral of brutality, characterized by forms of violence on the part of the Spanish army improper of conventional war, such as routine mutilations and beheadings, understood as revenge mechanisms.<sup>75</sup> However, by November 1922, the Spanish government ordered a hiatus in the offensive, and a retreat towards coastal positions, attempting to negotiate an armistice with Abd el-Krim, and opting for aerial bombing campaigns. This, on top of the appointment of a series of civilian Protectorate high commissioners, crystalized the antagonism between martial leaders and the peninsular government.<sup>76</sup> The discontent within the army was harnessed by the figure of the general Miguel Primo de Rivera who, on September 13<sup>th</sup>, 1923, led a successful coup d'état that toppled the Parliamentary system, with the consent of King Alfonso XIII.<sup>77</sup>

The Primo de Rivera dictatorship, however, did not bring about a significant shift in the martial strategy of the Army of Africa, that instead came about after France joined the war on the Spanish side. Primo de Rivera first ordered a retreat of the Spanish positions, abandoning several important towns, to create a more reduced frontline, that could be sustained by a smaller contingent. Simultaneously, he ordered an upscaling of the bombing campaign, and started both producing and buying chemical weapons to be used in attacking those positions left by the Spanish army. Once again, the retreat was at times disorganized, and the number of Spanish casualties raised to 18,000, according to French reports, or 13,000, according to Spanish ones.<sup>78</sup> However, the war situation shifted radically after the attack on French positions by Riffian armies in 1925, which prompted a military agreement between Spain and France. In the following years, the

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<sup>75</sup> Balfour, *Deadly Embrace*, 87.

<sup>76</sup> Balfour, *Deadly Embrace*, 90.

<sup>77</sup> Debates on King Alfonso XIII's level of implication in the coup are multiple. It hasn't been established that he knew about the plan to overthrow the government, although he certainly accepted the new regime in a swift manner. Macías Fernández, *A Cien Años de Annual*: 411.

<sup>78</sup> Balfour, *Deadly Embrace*, 102.

Spanish army would undertake a coordinated campaign, with attacks throughout the frontline, and including an amphibian attack at the Bay of Alhucemas. By 1926, Abd el-Krim surrendered to the French army, which effectively concluded the war in the Spanish Protectorate.

These last two years of military conflict, and even the years right after the conclusion of the war were characterized by the highest levels of violence and brutality on the part of the Spanish army. Spanish troops, saving previous logistic obstacles, organized in more mobile units that attacked villages, took hostages, and retreated. Reports of detentions, tortures and forced internment abounded during the 1925-30 period, in a situation in which violence became as much the means for pacification as an end in itself.<sup>79</sup> This situation was a product of the military extremist culture resulting from the multiple traumatic experiences of the Wolf Ravine disaster (1909), the ‘Annual disaster’ (1921), and the 1923/24 retreat.

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<sup>79</sup> Balfour, *Deadly Embrace*, 116, 117.

## Chapter 2: *Africanist Military Press*

In Hull's analysis of extremist military culture, one of the consequences of the adoption of such a military culture by European colonial armies was the appearance of a militaristic symbolism that accompanied all military narrations in the civilian social sphere.<sup>80</sup> In the last chapter, I presented how military developments between 1898 and 1921 prepared the common consciousness of a faction of Spanish officials to adopt an extremist military culture in Morocco. Furthermore, by the end of last chapter, I reproduced the argument, made by multiple other historians, that a sense of revenge pushed the Spanish Army of Africa into a mindset of exalted violence that included forced internment, torture and rutinary executions. In this chapter, I will map how that military culture translated into a press discourse, a discourse meant for the consumption of the civilian public in the Spanish metropolis. But first, it is interesting to return to Hull's analysis of the media component of German military culture. This analysis highlights the peculiarities of the Spanish case, and the relation between its military and the press, which will be developed along the chapter.

If, as we established in the introduction of this thesis, in the frontline, the military cult of violence led to a refusal to admit any military setbacks, in the civilian sphere, distant from conflict, the image of the military was to be correspondingly glorious. The army became full of symbolic overload, by adopting both the traditional symbols of the nation, and the symbolic structure associated with technical progress. The Prussian army, in Isabel Hull's words, became "exemplar of its national virtues of technological prowess, discipline, rational planning, and practicality, and the instrument of its future in a cut-throat, competitive world."<sup>81</sup> Because of its exemplary nature,

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<sup>80</sup> Hull, *Absolute destruction*, 106.

<sup>81</sup> Hull, *Absolute destruction*, 108.



social discourses about the army reinforced some of the tendencies of extremist military culture: in particular, any sign of imperfection, lack of professionalism, or strategic setback, was to be removed from social perception. In this process, the army became heavily stereotyped. It became a finite collection of characters defined and presented to the public solely through their military utility: the experienced commander and the new metropolitan recruit, along with the colonial soldier. In tacitly accepting and promoting this stereotyping, army members reproduced a shared series of myths about martial practices and psychology. Along with the necessity to portray the army in an unrealistic positive light, stereotyped army narratives helped in deepening the cliff between colonial war realities and social narratives.<sup>82</sup>

In the Spanish case, the emergence of discourses filled with military symbolism was fundamentally shaped by the general evolution of the military and by state intervention. The Spanish army could not, either in 1909 or in 1921, claim to be exemplary or “a disciplinary and technological prowess”, as the military setbacks we described in the last chapter fundamentally damaged its social credibility. The stereotyped characters in the public imagination of the army also furthered this negative conception. Instead of the experienced general, high officials in the Spanish army had been considered to blame for the defeats. Furthermore, the metropolitan recruit was often invoked in a pessimistic tone, as the unlucky recruit who was sent to Morocco to die.

In this chapter, I will analyze how this image was turned by a faction of high officials serving in the Spanish Protectorate during the Rif War. To track this change, I will first start by presenting the way in which the Spanish press talked about the Rif War in the 1910s, through newspapers that argued for the economic colonization of the Protectorate. Secondly, I will introduce the figure of *Revista de Tropas Coloniales*, a magazine that agglutinated the writings of

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<sup>82</sup> Hull, *Absolute destruction*, 108.

most *Africanist* officials. In this section, I will analyze how the combination of state-sponsored censorship of other media and a self-portrayal by *Revista de Tropas Coloniales* as opposite to all other periodicals effectively singularized and validated the *Africanist* ideas. Lastly, I will look into some of the main tenets argued for in *Revista de Tropas Coloniales*, and show how they align with the discursive elements of extreme military culture introduced here.

### *Early Africanist Spanish Press: The Colonialists*

Despite the setback of 1909, in the 1910s, most Spanish media did not maintain a harsh tone against the army, as had been the case during the Cuban War. This phenomenon was explained by Martínez Gallego and Laguna Platero, who studied national governmental hindrances of media discourses through both state subsidies, news fabrication, and a strong censorship apparatus, that made use of the 1906 Law of Jurisdictions to curtail the spread of news from Morocco in the Spanish Peninsula.<sup>83</sup> The Spanish government favored a discourse that stressed the “civilizing” attitude towards the Moroccan territory and population, guided by the interest of mining companies. Even before the onset of the Protectorate, these important mining companies had signed lucrative mining concessions in Northern Morocco.<sup>84</sup> Spanish media, subsidized by the national government, instead of critically analyzing the evolution of the war, tended to stress the virtues of Spanish colonization, and in consequence stereotyping local populations as primitive and undeveloped. News of military setbacks at the hands of these native populations were consequently heavily censored, with the official tone being not warmongering, but defending the importance of a quick pacification. Therefore, in the early decades of the Protectorate, the

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<sup>83</sup> Francesc A. Martínez Gallego and Antonio Laguna Platero, “Comunicación, propaganda y censura en la guerra hispano-marroquí (1906-1923),” *Comunicación y Sociedad*, Vol. 27, Iss. 3 (2014): 49, 54.

<sup>84</sup> Madariaga, *España y el Rif*, 125-147.

Restoration government helped shape a military symbolism, heavily linked to commercial and colonization efforts.

In this context, we witness the appearance of some of the first specialized newspapers on the Spanish intervention in North Africa, such as *África Española*, founded in 1913, by the Spanish Africanist League. The League was an intellectual heir to the Commercial Geography Societies created in Madrid and Barcelona in the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, explicitly concerned with to promote Spain's foreign trade.<sup>85</sup> *África Española* is created, according to their opening statement in their first issue, to answer the question: “How [...] to advocate the convenience of an action of mercantile conquest [...] and how to divert opinions towards what can be a rich source of moral and material benefits?”<sup>86</sup> Their answer focused crucially on the profitability of the establishment of a Protectorate, already insinuating the commercial focus of the publication, that included extensive articles on trade reports and international investments on every issue. After the establishment of a pacified Protectorate, they argued for a system of economic colonialism (that is, the creation of agricultural colonies that could incentivized the arrival of immigration from the Peninsular Spain). For this reason, *África Española*, along with other newspapers, are referred to as colonialist media.<sup>87</sup>

However, understanding colonialist publications as solely commercial and therefore unrelated to the military struggle would be a mistake. From that very first article in their first number, we can already grasp the strong centrality of martial debates in these arguments. Vivero states: “It is sad to soak in generous blood the Moroccan lands; but it will be sadder to do it —

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<sup>85</sup> José Luis Villanova, “La actividad africanista de la Sociedad de Geografía Comercial de Barcelona (1909-1927),” *Revista de Geografía* 5 (2008): 80.

<sup>86</sup> Augusto Vivero, “Al Empezar,” *África Española. Revista de Colonización*, no. 1 (July 30, 1913): 3.

<sup>87</sup> It is important to stress that later discourses, even those appearing in military press, also supported economic colonization. The difference between militaristic and colonialist media is the interpretation of military victory as the main objective (as was the case for militaristic publications), or as the means to achieve an economic situation (as was the case for the colonialists).

since we are bound by inescapable commitments— without national profit [...], as must necessarily happen if we do not begin to think of tomorrow.”<sup>88</sup> As we can see, the military struggle is assumed to be unavoidable (given Spain’s “commitment” in the Algeciras Conference, to maintain a military presence in the Sultanate, later Protectorate). In assuming this martial necessity, it justifies the role of the army without centering the brutality of the war in the public’s mind.

In reviewing further examples of *África Española*, we can reveal ambivalent positions with respect to their opinion on the army, with some writers already putting forward an openly praising message. Mariano Marfil, secretary of the Africanist League, argued that:

There is no military problem in Morocco... There, we are going to be protectors, not dominators. We are going to assimilate Muslim customs, to be inspired by them and to take advantage of them, putting them at our service. We must not destroy these customs, sacrifice them, outrage them. To think of a plan of invasion and conquest would be madness. We would have to carry it out, something very difficult, and it would not bring us any advantage.<sup>89</sup>

Marfil does not directly criticize the actions of the Spanish army, but even avoids conceding the, rather evident, existence of a Spanish plan of invasion. He presents a purely practical view of colonization, adopting a conciliatory tone towards indigenous peoples, that goes in line with his mercantilist approach. Military invasion is deemed “madness,” but, perhaps more importantly, is stated not to bring any advantages.

This directly contradicts José G. Benítez’s words on war in a later *África Española* issue. Benítez, Commander of the Army Corps of Engineers, states that “war is a melting pot of collective virtues, of sovereign and beautiful initiatives by the people who in the name of civilization promote

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<sup>88</sup> Vivero, “Al Empezar,” *África Española*: 3.

<sup>89</sup> Mariano Marfil, “Ante el problema de Marruecos,” *África Española. Revista de Colonización*, no. 1 (July 30, 1913): 44.

it, in struggle with the great courage of a savage people, fierce of their independence, and united by their religion.”<sup>90</sup> In Benítez’s writing, we observe a valorization of war as inherently positive for the people who practice it “in the name of civilization.” While adhering to the general tone of the publication by praising colonization (and depicting locals as “savage” and “united by their religion”), Benítez goes on to praise the army’s mission, as a revitalizing spirit, both for the national spirit and economy.<sup>91</sup> And in his writing, we already encounter a later common trope: the praise of military sacrifice. Benítez states: “war demands blood; it is a sacrifice as tremendous as it is beautiful.”<sup>92</sup>

The social interest in the core message of newspapers such as *África Española* started failing by the end of the 1910s and the beginning of the 1920s. By 1917, the level of censorship increased substantially, blocking numbers with “articles discrediting the authorities, criticisms of the policy followed in Africa, articles spreading inaccurate news or, simply, those which, even if they report reliable news, should not be disseminated in Morocco,” allowing for absolute arbitrariness.<sup>93</sup> These unrestricted practices created a high level of social skepticism about national press, and made heroes of those left-wing newspapers that proclaimed that they were being routinely censored. According to Martínez Gallego and Laguna Platero, another factor debilitating the colonialist media discourse, which focused on economic colonization as the end goal, was the increased subsidization of military press, which focused on military victory as its end goal. Military press from the Spanish peninsula, especially *La Correspondencia Militar*, started to represent the opinion followed by the rest of newspapers.<sup>94</sup> These military newspapers distanced

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<sup>90</sup> José G. Benítez, “Axiomas Nefastos,” *África Española. Revista de Colonización*, no. 2 (August 15, 1913): 106.

<sup>91</sup> Benítez, “Axiomas Nefastos,” *África Española*: 107.

<sup>92</sup> Benítez, “Axiomas Nefastos,” *África Española*: 107.

<sup>93</sup> Martínez Gallego and Laguna Platero, “Comunicación, propaganda y censura en la guerra hispano-marroquí,” *Comunicación y Sociedad*: 56.

<sup>94</sup> Martínez Gallego and Laguna Platero, “Comunicación, propaganda y censura en la guerra hispano-marroquí,” *Comunicación y Sociedad*: 59.

themselves from the official position of the government, and would go on to support General Miguel Primo de Rivera's 1923 coup d'état. From that moment onwards, we see the creation of a new kind of media, that attempted to differentiate itself from the colonialist, militarily-ambivalent view of *África Española*, and starts adopting an openly militaristic discourse.

*Revista de Tropas Coloniales: Construction of a Singularized Discourse*

On January 1<sup>st</sup>, 1924, the first number of *Colonial Troops Magazine* ('*Revista de Tropas Coloniales*', or *RTC* going forward) was published in Ceuta. Under the direction of the commander general of the city, Gonzalo Queipo de Llano, this monthly publication amalgamated the views of a majority of the African Army's officials. In 1926, the publication would adopt a new name, '*África*', maintaining '*Revista de Tropas Coloniales*' as its subtitle.<sup>95</sup> From 1925 to 1929, it would be under the direction of Lieutenant General Francisco Franco.<sup>96</sup> From its very inception, *RTC* distinguished itself and its contents from the rest of Spanish media. Queipo de Llano described its purpose in the following words: "[its] mission will be to serve as a platform for those who wish to present the fruit of their observations or experience, thus contributing to [...] the formation of a doctrine that gives the necessary fixity to the rules we must follow, the lack of which has [been greatly influential] in the irresolution of this problem [the Rif War]."<sup>97</sup> *RTC* was therefore defined as a publication created by those who had participated in the war, who were direct witnesses to the situation in the Protectorate (and, as it was written in early 1924, mostly by survivors of the

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<sup>95</sup> A comparative study of *RTC* and *África* shows an evolution in its form that is accentuated around the time of the magazine's renaming. Issues become shorter, and with a significantly heavier presence of images. However, given the common objective of both publications, we won't distinguish between them, and will use the term *RTC* to refer to both.

<sup>96</sup> Both Franco and Queipo de Llano would go on to have prominent roles in the 1936 coup d'état, and a study of their ideological evolution is therefore linked to the development of the Africanist discourse in press.

<sup>97</sup> Gonzalo Queipo de Llano, "Nuestro Propósito," *Revista de Tropas Coloniales. Propagadora de Estudios Hispano-Africanos*, year 1, no. 1 (January 1, 1924): 1.

traumatic defeats of 1921). Furthermore, *RTC* attempted to determine a series of rules of conduct (as we will see, both military and social), for finding victory at war. It is, lastly, important to stress the word “fixity” in the previous quote. *RTC* did not solely attempt to describe the state of the Protectorate, but to find a *uniquely* true explanation for the military situation, and consequently be able to correctly forecast Spain’s path to victory in Morocco. In the following paragraphs, we will analyze the two methods by which *RTC* was able to singularize itself and its message: delegitimization of other newspapers, and heavy censorship.

The first aspect of *RTC*’s construction of a differentiated view on war and the Protectorate with respect to other publications was its characterization of other Spanish media as disinterested and unpatriotic. In another article by Queipo de Llano, he states: “If we were to believe the majority of Spanish newspapers, we would not think that the Spanish people would support the resolution of this problem because they do not even want to be talked about this issue.”<sup>98</sup> Further along in the article, the Spanish general describes the mission of the press as “to encourage [society] and demonstrate greater faith [in the army].”<sup>99</sup> Queipo de Llano starts by positing that the Spanish society’s reported lack of interest in the Rif War was, in fact, only the result of the erroneous work of the press. *RTC* is presented as distinct from “the majority of Spanish newspapers,” not just in narrating the developments of the war, but in doing so in a way that demonstrated “faith in the army”. In a subtle rhetoric maneuver, Queipo de Llano overlooked existing connections between Spanish anti-war movements and the early 1920s military failures, and rather assumed that all social lack of interest could be explained solely by looking at media discourses. *RTC* thus became the ultimate, much-needed, patriotic media: it (falsely, as we have seen) established itself as the

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<sup>98</sup> Gonzalo Queipo de Llano, “El Problema de Marruecos. Al aparecer la ‘Revista de Tropas Coloniales’,” *Revista de Tropas Coloniales. Propagadora de Estudios Hispano-Africanos*, year 1, no. 2 (February 1, 1924): 1.

<sup>99</sup> Gonzalo Queipo de Llano, “Nuestro Propósito,” *Revista de Tropas Coloniales. Propagadora de Estudios Hispano-Africanos*, year 1, no. 1 (January 1, 1924): 2.

sole reporter on Moroccan news, and, by presenting an untarnished view of the Spanish army, it simultaneously addressed social preoccupations about the development of the war.

A common strategy *RTC* used to singularize itself was by claiming that the Spanish press had fabricated news to delegitimize the army. An article by Víctor Ruiz Albéniz (a war journalist, director of the newspaper *Informaciones* from 1924 to 1936, and eventually known as ‘the official chronicler of Franco’s Regime’) is framed as coming from the assumedly informed position of “those [of us] who have the honor and glory of exercising the craft of journalism.”<sup>100</sup> Albéniz went on to state that, regarding the Spanish Press, “it does not matter if [an army member] carries out meritorious works for the interest of the country; if [that person] is on the list of the newspaper’s undesirables, everything is accepted as long as he is defeated, [...] even the propagation of harmful false news.”<sup>101</sup> Albéniz presents the totality of Spain’s press as extremely factional and anti-patriotic, and ready to lie in order to damage the reputation of those who carry out “meritorious work for the interest of the country.” In combination with Queipo’s criticism of the government, *RTC* projects an image of Spanish press as sided with the government in criticizing the African Army. However, as we have seen before, this was far from the case. The Spanish government often protected the African army, establishing a fierce censorship to cover up military setbacks, such as the ‘Annual disaster’, to a great extent covering their own mishandling of the war in the process.<sup>102</sup> It is especially ironic to read Albéniz’s generalized criticism, as he himself had covered the war for other newspapers such as *La Voz*. In these previous works, he had conducted interviews of Africanist generals, being in support of the army.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Víctor Ruiz Albéniz (known as El Tebib Arrumi), “La causa de muchos males. La actuación del periodista en la guerra colonial,” *Revista de Tropas Coloniales. Propagadora de Estudios Hispano-Africanos*, year 1, no. 2 (February 1, 1924): 13.

<sup>101</sup> Ruiz Albéniz, “La causa de muchos males,” *Revista de Tropas Coloniales*: 13.

<sup>102</sup> Victoria Moreno, *Dolor y Vergüenza*, 156-161.

<sup>103</sup> Víctor Ruiz Albéniz (El Tebib Arrumi), “Noticias de África. La situación en los peñones,” *La Voz*, year III, no. 550, (April 3, 1922): 4.



Turning to the second aspect in *RTC*'s portrayal as the unique source of news for Morocco, we must analyze its context of heavy censorship. This censorship effort rendered the Africanist discourse not just rhetorically but effectively singularized. The military leadership of the Spanish Protectorate was heavily involved in these efforts, from the middle of the 1910s onwards, as can be seen in my primary source research. For example, on September 24<sup>th</sup>, 1916, General Jordana telegraphed General Lobera in Melilla informing that:

Leopoldo Bejarano in *El Liberal* announces a campaign of Moroccan affairs with the purpose of undermining the prestige of [the] High Command and mainly to censure my management: the intentions of said editor are due to his unsatisfied pecuniary demands. To avoid inconveniences that reading these articles may cause in this Army, please adopt the necessary measures so that *El Liberal* is revised daily not allowing the sale of the same that publishes the advertised article.<sup>104</sup>

The actual main objective of the aforementioned *El Liberal* article was informing of the unhappiness of Spanish lower officials, as their orders were only to “guard advanced posts.” Furthermore, in said article, there was no reference to the military High Command in Morocco, or to Jordana’s management.<sup>105</sup> Jordana’s characterization of the “purpose” of the article then seems highly inventive. Similarly, Jordana’s statement that “the intentions of said editor are due to his unsatisfied pecuniary demands,” is clearly the result of the general’s opinion. This example could be solely seen as an anecdotic case, but on the following day Jordana telegraphed Lobera again, extending his censorship: “As an extension of [yesterday’s] telegram about censorship on *El Liberal* [...], the same censorship should be extended to newspapers *El Mundo*, *España Nueva* and

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<sup>104</sup> “Cross correspondence between Generals Lobera and Jordana on the occasion of published articles offensive to the African authorities.” September 24, 1916. Est. 3, Body 1, Tab. 6, Leg. 453, Folder 5. *AGMM*. War Ministry, Spain.

<sup>105</sup> Leopoldo Bejarano, “Notas de Marruecos. El Más Grave Error,” *El Liberal*, year XXXVIII, no. 13464, (September 24, 1916): 1.

*El Socialista*.”<sup>106</sup> This exchange shows how, without any specific motive or justification, the military had the effective authority to censor any newspapers.

Towards the end of the 1920s, censorship was enacted through a legislative effort in the Protectorate to control the number of newspapers and their contents. In June 1927, Francisco Gómez-Jordana Sousa, acting on behalf of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, drafted a bill “to regulate periodical press in the Protectorate”. This new regulation had the aim of funding “a short number of publications [...] able to achieve [...] a degree of perfection that will make them effective in channeling public opinion regarding Moroccan affairs, [and counteract] the tendentious campaigns that foreign publications might undertake.”<sup>107</sup> Among other measures, this ‘*dahir*’, or proposed law, established that “every newspaper [was] obliged to insert, free of charge, in the following published issue [...] all clarifications and rectifications addressed to it by any authority.” Furthermore, it gave the High Commissioner of the Protectorate the competence “to suspend the publication of a newspaper for a period of less than fifteen days.”<sup>108</sup>

### *RTC’s Discourse: The Diffusion of an Idealized Africanism*

As we established in the previous section, along with military-sponsored censorship, *RTC*’s effort to socially delegitimize all other media discourses on the Rif War had the result of singularizing its opinions. In this section, I will summarize the three-part intention behind this self-portrayal mechanism: achieving group distinction from other Spanish army factions, militarizing

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<sup>106</sup> “Cross correspondence between Generals Lobera and Jordana on the occasion of published articles offensive to the African authorities.” September 25, 1916. Est. 3, Body 1, Tab. 6, Leg. 453, Folder 5. *AGMM*. War Ministry, Spain.

<sup>107</sup> “Dahir para la publicación de ciertos medios en el Protectorado” June 27th, 1927. (15)003.004 81/00692 – ‘Justicia’. *AGA*. Culture and Sports Ministry, Spain.

<sup>108</sup> “Dahir para la publicación de ciertos medios en el Protectorado” June 27th, 1927. (15)003.004 81/00692 – ‘Justicia’. *AGA*. Culture and Sports Ministry, Spain.

the colonialist organization of the state, and putting forward a view of the colonial soldier that matched grandiose and stereotyped army narratives (equivalent to those analyzed by Hull).

With regards to group-formation, *RTC*'s distinction from other news sources must be understood in the context of its purported audience, "officers coming to [serve in] Morocco."<sup>109</sup> Ostensibly, these would be officers previously stationed in peninsular Spain, that would greatly benefit from hearing first-hand testimonies of the situation in Morocco. However, there were clear political differences between army members who had been in the Spanish Protectorate for most of the war, and those who had stayed in the Peninsula. Most of the latter, often referred to as *junteros*, because of their support of the *Juntas de Defensa*, argued for a system of command within the army based on seniority.<sup>110</sup> Africanist generals, on the other hand, argued that promotions had to be understood as rewards "for all those who earn merit or suffer privations and hardships that go beyond the norm of garrison life."<sup>111</sup> In that sentence, "norm of garrison life" refers, somewhat accusingly, to the pacific life of the Peninsular garrison. Furthermore, in the same article Queipo de Llano explicitly asks for promotions to be handed out in accordance to war merit, marking his separation from *juntero* ideals completely explicit. With this context in mind, we can understand *RTC*'s singularization of its message as a strategy by its contributors to distance themselves from other military writers. This would be especially relevant as most of the military periodicals printed in metropolitan Spain supported the *Juntas*.

Secondly, *RTC* also argued for the involvement of the military in the running of the traditionally civil administration of the Protectorate, for the completion of the colonizing mission. As we established before, colonialist publications such as *África Española* defended the

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<sup>109</sup> Queipo de Llano, "Nuestro Propósito," *Revista de Tropas Coloniales*: 1.

<sup>110</sup> Balfour, *Deadly Embrace*, 165, 166.

<sup>111</sup> Gonzalo Queipo de Llano, "Hablemos de Recompensas," *Revista de Tropas Coloniales. Propagadora de Estudios Hispano-Africanos*, year 1, no. 3 (March 1, 1924): 1.

establishment of an colonialist economic system as the end goal of the military intervention. Most of *RTC*'s contributors expressed their views on the war and how to win it. However, these militaristic views were not circumscribed to the organization and strategy of army members, but also included judgements on the civil running of the Protectorate. An article from February 1924 argued for the creation of "political-military commanders," who controlled so-called circles, receiving "instructions of the Superiority [sic.] and [executing] them with absolute independence." Further along the article, it was explained that: "When [the] circles are completely pacified, when it is impossible for their inhabitants to be exposed to a coup de main from other *kabylas*, it will be easy to substitute this political-military organization for the civilian one."<sup>112</sup> Another later article claimed that: "When [troops] are solely employed in the martial aspect, the result is more detrimental to the metropolis than to the subjugated country."<sup>113</sup> Perhaps more explicitly than before, the implication of troops in the running of the Protectorate is again defended in this quote. In other words, *RTC* supported a system in which the political was put on military hands, establishing a de facto martial state, and giving individual officers higher degrees of independence, without necessarily instruments for proportional accountability.<sup>114</sup> *RTC* did allow for an eventual civilian running of the Protectorate, but only once it had been completely pacified.<sup>115</sup> In sum, *RTC* positioned itself against colonialist newspapers, who argued for the separation between the civil

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<sup>112</sup> Francisco Patxot, "Una idea sobre la organización del Protectorado en Marruecos," *Revista de Tropas Coloniales. Propagadora de Estudios Hispano-Africanos*, year 1, no. 2 (February 1, 1924): 10.

<sup>113</sup> Ángel Rodríguez del Barrio, "Divagaciones sobre Marruecos," *Revista de Tropas Coloniales. Propagadora de Estudios Hispano-Africanos*, year 1, no. 3 (March 1, 1924): 10.

<sup>114</sup> A similar argument to that put forward by Patxot can be found in Francisco Franco, "Los Mandos," *Revista de Tropas Coloniales. Propagadora de Estudios Hispano-Africanos*, year 1, no. 1 (January 1, 1924): 5,6. In this case, Franco also asks for independence by lower officials from strict command lines, putting forward the idea of the unrestricted official, able to judge for himself the just and correct actions.

<sup>115</sup> Alberto Vela, military engineer argued that: "the officer of our Army [...] with high and serene patriotic spirit must yield the fighting posts to the civilian elements where [having weapons already played their role] the success of their peaceful work is easy." Alberto Vela y de Palacio, "Cordialidad y transigencia," *Revista de Tropas Coloniales. Propagadora de Estudios Hispano-Africanos*, year 1, no. 3 (March 1, 1924): 24.

and the military. This served to justify a military composition of the administrative apparatus of the Protectorate.

Lastly, *RTC*'s differentiation from other media also allowed for a new, more stereotyped symbolic depiction of the army, that countered the images associated with the 1909 and 1921 defeats. As can be expected, *RTC*'s argued that the absence, or lack of centrality, of positive martial qualities from other newspapers' previous reports of the war could only be explained by overt manipulation. In particular, *RTC* focused on showcasing the army as a courageous, even irrationally so, defender of national pride. On its first number, *RTC* included an article by Ramiro de Maeztu, a renowned journalist, titled "With the Army." In it, Maeztu claimed:

As long as the hostility of our intellectual classes towards heroism lasts, and as long as the army is the only Spanish institution where valor is honored, I will be a militarist, because I find beautiful and precious the role played by the army in imposing respect and sense of courage on our people.<sup>116</sup>

The idea of a cult of courage is also reflected in descriptions of the soldiers' psychology, especially that of the *Tercio* soldiers (also called *legionaries*), or shock troops, who became the embodiment of the *Africanist* self-depiction. However, in reality, the *legionaries* were known for their brutality on and off the battlefield. In fact, testimonies of sexual assaults on young Moroccan women abounded during the campaign among the Spanish officiality.<sup>117</sup> Social commentary on the conduct of this shock troops prompted *RTC* to publish an article on the relation between *Tercio* soldiers and indigenous populations. In it, it is stated that the indigenous peoples were distrustful of the *legionaries*, "in view of the repeated proofs of bravery given by the legionaries in the fields of the Rif [...] and the conduct observed in relation to the natives."<sup>118</sup> This instance represents

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<sup>116</sup> Ramiro de Maeztu, "Con el Ejército," *Revista de Tropas Coloniales. Propagadora de Estudios Hispano-Africanos*, year 1, no. 1 (January 1, 1924): 4.

<sup>117</sup> Macías Fernández, *Franco "Nació en África,"* 323.

<sup>118</sup> M.F., "El Tercio y la población indígena," *Revista de Tropas Coloniales. Propagadora de Estudios Hispano-Africanos*, year 1, no. 1 (January 1, 1924): 9.

overt example of *RTC*'s dissemination of falsities, as part of its uncontested defense of *Africanist* military culture.

Overall, a somewhat contradictory description of the Spanish soldier (in the Rif War) appears in these writings. On one hand, they (officials, in particular) must be balanced, people who prioritize "the vocation; the sense of apostolate" to temperamentality.<sup>119</sup> In that phrasing, we can see another reference to the civilizing mission of the army. But simultaneously, on the other hand, officials should show contempt of death. Baldomero Argente, a politician at the time, defined it in the following terms: "'Contempt of death' implies the voluntary acceptance of all risks and all discomforts for the sake of an ideal. And what more effulgent ideal than the greatness of the homeland and the development of civilization?"<sup>120</sup> The almost exclusively symbolic combination of balance and contempt of death is the last of *RTC*'s contradictions with respect to previous media, that is, the symbolic creation of a colonial army.

To sum up, in its singularization as the source of news for the Rif War, and consequently in its dissemination of the *Africanist* ideology, *RTC* pursued several objectives. First, in a group-delimitation process, it attempted to differentiate itself from the *Juntero*-backed peninsular media and ask for better retribution for *Africanist* officials. Secondly, *RTC* argued for a control by military troops of the administrative positions of the Protectorate, which essentially implied an effective constant state of exception in the Spanish possessions. Third, *RTC* also put forward a stereotyped image of the army members, who were described as both rational in their strategies, and irrationally courageous in their contempt of death. Through these methods, *RTC* manufactured a high level of social acceptance of the measures taken by the military in Morocco.

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<sup>119</sup> Víctor Ruiz Albéniz (known as El Tebib Arrumi), "Psicología de la oficialidad colonial," *Revista de Tropas Coloniales. Propagadora de Estudios Hispano-Africanos*, year 1, no. 2 (February 1, 1924): 12.

<sup>120</sup> Baldomero Argente, "El Desprecio a la Muerte," *Revista de Tropas Coloniales. Propagadora de Estudios Hispano-Africanos*, year 1, no.2 (February 1, 1924): 3.

### Chapter 3: Internment Practices

In the last chapter, I analyzed the discursive elements of the Spanish military culture in Morocco, understanding how it allowed a faction of military officials, the *Africanists*, to oversight news-diffusion from the Protectorate. This chapter turns to a particularly understudied aspect of the *Africanist* military culture: internment practices. But before doing so, I will return to Hull's conception of military culture, in its intersection with civil imprisonment mechanisms, and revanchist ideologies.

As a reminder, Hull understands extreme military culture as the structural normalization of not-rationalized violent practices for the end purpose of the complete defeat of a colonial foe. The European colonial army's cult of violence, reflected in military escalations, also affected their treatment of prisoners, and in particular civilian internees. Colonial armies (even when acting outside of the colonial realm, in European battlefields) considered war to be an existential struggle, that could not obey by the ideological borders of the civil and the martial. The civilian space also became part of the battlefield for these armies. Consequently, civilians that were thrown into war spaces were subjected to regimes of extreme order, violating their sovereignty through the imposition of martial law, and eliminating all barriers between military and civil spheres.<sup>121</sup> This cult of military order was expressed through reprisals taken against all considered adverse to the imperial war purpose. In the case of rebellion within occupied territories, the occupying army could impose, as part of the established martial law, harsh regulations on civilians. This became the case for example in both Germany's fight against the Herero people, and also Germany's 1871 War against, and subsequent occupation of, France. In this last example, the war of 1871, Prussian

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<sup>121</sup> Hull, *Absolute destruction*, 119-125.

laws for occupied France “made [French] civilians liable to collective punishment in case of sabotage and to service as hostages on threatened railways. It also suggested that requisitions could be raised regardless of the welfare of the occupied population.”<sup>122</sup> Collective punishment, forced labor and material requisitions were therefore normalized.

Following the same military logic, a structure of internment camps also became commonplace in many colonial wars. However, it is worth noting that in Hull’s conception of military culture, the utilization of internment camps does not respond solely to momentary military pragmatism, in other words, it represents a standardized, unquestioned practice as part of military instruction and practice.

In this chapter, I will analyze the evolution of internment practices, throughout the Rif War. To track this change, I will first start by presenting the first use of concentration camps in the history of the Spanish military, during the Cuban War, in 1896. Secondly, I will briefly touch upon internment practices in the Protectorate before 1921, and how the diffuse boundaries between civil and the military structures of power affected those imprisonments. Thirdly, I will track the history of Spanish prisoners after the ‘Annual disaster’ and how news from those prisoners drastically affected the Spanish society, but at the same time exposed them, in passing to the tactics that their own army was using against Riffian prisoners. Lastly, I will investigate the development of large-scale internment practices, in part as a revanchist strategy, after 1921. This evolution, which paralleled the larger evolution of military culture and practices during the latter phase of the Rif War, will result in a system of large-scale internment that systematically violated civil prisoners’ rights, and all due processes.

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<sup>122</sup> Hull, *Absolute destruction*, 119.



*The Cuban War: a precedent*

Spanish use of internment camps is first documented during the Cuban War, in 1896, between the Spanish Army and Cuban rebels. As explained in Chapter 1, the Cuban War was fought between an independentist guerrilla, that moved undetected throughout the island's countryside, and the Spanish army, unready for such a struggle. The stagnation of combat and the prevalence of tropical maladies among the Spanish troop led officials to consider exceptional measures to achieve a quick end to the fighting. General Valeriano Weyler "breached all accepted notions of 'civilized warfare'," by the standards of the time, by moving "half a million people, more than a quarter of the whole population of the island, to concentration camps. Over 100 000 are thought to have died of disease and starvation."<sup>123</sup> Weyler justified this decision on military principle, arguing that it was the only way of cutting local support for Cuban fighters living in the rural parts of the island. The camps worked therefore under the premise that civilian populations were an active part of the struggle, and thus could be subjected to practices of internment. It is debatable whether, when conceiving this measure, Spanish generals were fully aware of the high levels of mortality that it would entail, although it had been previously rejected by Spanish General Martínez Campos precisely because of its potential consequences on the health and nourishment of the Cuban population.<sup>124</sup> In this example, we can see an early instance of a military infringement on civil rights, through massive incarceration, and its nefarious consequences.

However, this first instance of the use of concentration camps by the Spanish army had a differentiating factor with respect to their later use during the Rif War. Particularly, the use of concentration camps during the Cuban War was routinely covered in press. General Weyler was

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<sup>123</sup> Jonathan Hyslop, "The Invention of the Concentration Camp: Cuba, Southern Africa and the Philippines, 1896–1907," *South African Historical Journal* 63, 2 (June 2011): 258.

<sup>124</sup> Hyslop, "The Invention of the Concentration Camp": 258.

very public about his actions, with the reconcentration policy announced by military Spanish media on September 16<sup>th</sup>, 1896, stating that “everyone found in the countryside will be considered an enemy or an enemy defender.”<sup>125</sup> When a similar measure was extended to some parts of the Philippine Islands (at the time also fighting for their independence), the military newspaper *El Correo Militar* also echoed the news, such as on December 29<sup>th</sup>, 1896.<sup>126</sup> References to concentration policies in this newspaper tended, in fact, to praise the strategy, stating that “[it] cannot but deserve our applause; [as] it reflects the experience acquired by General Polavieja in the Cuba campaign.”<sup>127</sup> The praising tone was not ubiquitous in Spanish media, with newspapers such as *El País* criticizing the lack of planning in the campaign and its terrible consequences. American media also condemned Spanish actions, and this international criticism pushed Spanish civil authorities in the peninsula to recall General Weyler and end the concentration camp policy. Contrary to the examples that we will later observe in the Rif War, Weyler’s reconcentration policy was somewhat public knowledge, and subordinated to civil authority. As such, these forced internment measures can be understood as part of normal military decision-making. These measures did not require either a state of exception as justification, or the manufacturing of a high level of social acceptance through a strong military discourse.

#### *Civil-Military Conflation. Normalized State of Exception*

A theoretical condition for the ideation of large-scale interment as a form of military repressiveness, particularly relevant in the example of the Spanish Protectorate of Morocco up until the 1930s, is the subordination of civilian rule to military rule. In other words, the existence

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<sup>125</sup> “Mundo Militar. Cuba,” *El Correo Militar*, no. 6257 (September 16, 1896): 1.

<sup>126</sup> “Mundo Militar. Filipinas,” *El Correo Militar*, no. 6345 (December 29, 1896): 1.

<sup>127</sup> “La Guerra,” *El Correo Militar*, no. 6345 (December 29, 1896): 2.

of the necessary conditions for unquestioned military treatment of civilians. This was an aspect of the Spanish protectorate present since its inception in 1912, because of the structural coalescing of military and civil responsibilities into a small series of positions. The main organism of Spanish government was the High Commissioner, a unitary figure that only responded, in theory, to the khalif, or the Sultan's representative. In practice, the High Commissioner dictated policy in the Protectorate through a structure of delegations: Indigenous Affairs, Treasury, and Development. In turn, each of these delegations coordinated their work through a net of *Oficinas de Intervención*, located in different subregions of the territory. Internment practices, especially those related to natives, were coordinated by the Indigenous Affairs Delegation, which controlled both information-gathering practices, by creating files on suspicious individuals, and the management of imprisonment sites. Simultaneously, the High Commissioner office was often held by the military Commander in Chief, except for a brief period in 1923. This implied that civilian rule and coordination was, for most of the early protectorate, in military hands. Detention, transportation, judgement and imprisonment of natives therefore were all processes coordinated by the Spanish army. obviously allowing for the use of civil internment systems as a military part of the war effort.

Before the 'Annual disaster' of 1921, that is, the collapse of the Spanish frontline and uncontested Riffian military advance, there does not appear to be a large internment apparatus in place by the Spanish army/civil system. This goes in line with what could be expected of a Spanish position that was politically frail, did not hold control of the whole territory, and often resorted to paying local leaders to maintain order.

Despite the internment system being small, internment was sometimes arbitrary, for political reasons, and utilized without referencing to a particular crime. According to a December 1922 report issued by the Subinspector of Troops and Indigenous Affairs of Ceuta (the second

largest city of the Spanish Protectorate at the time), there were only 15 indigenous Moroccans in the three jails and prisons of the city. Of these, the only person who can clearly be identified as a political prisoner is Hosaien C. Mohamed el Metuasi, who was sentenced in 1919 to life imprisonment “for his participation in the events of Malalien,” presumably referring to some heavy fighting occurred outside of the city of Tetouan in 1914.<sup>128</sup> This example already showcases the arbitrariness of internment conditions in the Spanish Protectorate, where no particular crime (e.g. sedition or rebellion) was linked to the sentence. Similarly, other two imprisoned persons in that same report were under the status “processed by the *Audiencia* [Hearing committee].” This seemingly transitory state (where no actual crime is stated) had presumably justified the detention of these people for almost two years. In fact, in an April 1923 report of natives imprisoned in Ceuta, we can still identify the two individuals (Arlei Ben Madami and Hamed B. M. el Anui), with no justification given for their internment.<sup>129</sup> Through this example, we can see how, at an albeit reduced scale and early in the establishment of the protectorate, the Spanish military-civil system adopted forms of prolonged imprisonment against dissidents without referring to a typified list of offenses and giving them due process.

### *The Annual Disaster: Spanish Prisoners and Social Trauma*

The ‘Annual disaster’ brought the question of prisoners and internment practices back into public discourse, in particular because of the rescue efforts of Spanish prisoners under Abd-el-Krim. After the surrender of several front-line Spanish positions under Riffian attack, which

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<sup>128</sup> “Subinspección de tropas y Asuntos Indígenas de Ceuta. Relación Nominal de los indígenas presos en los calabozos del Tabor, cárcel del Bajá y fortaleza del Hacho” December 23rd, 1922. 15)013.001 81/01073 – ‘Intervenciones militares del Rif. Presos y detenidos. Años 1928-1931’. AGA. Culture and Sports Ministry, Spain.

<sup>129</sup> “Subinspección de tropas y Asuntos Indígenas de Ceuta. Relación General de los indígenas presos en la cárcel del Bajá y calabozos del Tabor” April 10th, 1923. 15)013.001 81/01073 – ‘Intervenciones militares del Rif. Presos y detenidos. Años 1928-1931’. AGA. Culture and Sports Ministry, Spain.

caused about 8,000 deaths on the Spanish side, there were a considerable number of Spanish soldiers taken prisoners by the Moroccan army.<sup>130</sup> Already by July 1921, while there was still fighting taking place in some frontline positions, the Commander in Melilla issued a telegram reporting on the health of the Officials held captive by enemy troops, stating that “they [captives] seem to be taken care of rightly,” and that “their freedom could be achieved through the exchange of some prisoners held at Melilla and some money.”<sup>131</sup> A later telegram, in November 1921, from the Spanish Consul at Uxda reported “[an] improvement of the situation of the prisoners and the desirability of sending a doctor to attend to several of them who are ill.”<sup>132</sup> By January 1923, a year and a half after the Spanish surrender, the Spanish army accounted for 44 Generals, Chiefs, and Officers held prisoners.<sup>133</sup> This clearly did not account for privates and other potentially unidentified foot soldiers, although another contemporary report on missing Spanish people did include a nurse and a school teacher.<sup>134</sup> From this evidence, we can infer that a substantial population of Spanish soldiers, mainly of higher ranks, was imprisoned for years by Abd-el-Krim.

As news about the Spanish prisoners spread without any successful effort to negotiate their liberation, there was a generalized reaction of criticism against the military in Spanish public discourse. This reaction reached the point of public altercations in the city of Melilla (historically under Spanish rule, but located in the Northern coast of Morocco), reported on November 1921 by the General Commander at the city, who stated: “I have found in Melilla the unpleasant spectacle of the closing of stores and an imposing pro-prisoners demonstration that has disturbed public

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<sup>130</sup> Macías Fernández and Silva, eds., *A Cien Años de Annual*, 221.

<sup>131</sup> July 26th, 1921. Est.1, Body 1, Tab. 1, Leg. 3, Folder 20. *AGMM*. War Ministry, Spain.

<sup>132</sup> “Telegrama del Cónsul de la Nación en Uxda.” November 1921. Est.1, Body 1, Tab. 1, Leg. 3, Folder 20. *AGMM*. War Ministry, Spain.

<sup>133</sup> “Relación nominal de los Señores Generales, Jefes y oficiales que se encuentran prisioneros en este territorio.” January, 1923. Est.1, Body 1, Tab. 1, Leg. 3, Folder 20. *AGMM*. War Ministry, Spain.

<sup>134</sup> “Relación nominal de los Cautivos cuyo paradero se desea saber.” 1922. Est.1, Body 1, Tab. 1, Leg. 3, Folder 20. *AGMM*. War Ministry, Spain.

order to such an extent that I have ordered forces to come out, repress it and to prevent them from setting fire to Moorish houses as I am told they have done to some stores in the Mantelete.”<sup>135</sup> In Melilla, the rage of the disturbances was directed towards local Islamic populations.

However, in the Spanish peninsula, where the war effort was seen as distant, all inquiries were directed at the Army itself. Especially poignant are the letters sent by the mothers of captive Spanish soldiers, inquiring about their sons’ situation. In December 1921, we already find in military archives correspondence about a “petition by several mothers of soldiers killed and missing in Morocco for news on the situation of their sons and the release of all prisoners held by the enemy.” Their insistence over the years led the King of Spain himself to answer in a March 1925 letter that he “had requested to inform the interested parties that the release of the prisoners is a matter of priority so that they may soon be reintegrated into their families.” However, in December 1925 we still find a letter directed to the King from a group of mothers expressing the “deep sorrow and grief that overwhelms their hearts when they are deprived of the sight of their beloved children during the Christmas season.”<sup>136</sup> Through this example, we can gather a sense of the levels of social distress generated by the prolonged detention of Spanish soldiers.

This social trauma can also be traced by looking at Spanish civilian detainees, and particularly through the then renowned case of Carmen “Carmencita” Ubeda. Carmen Ubeda was 16 at the time of the ‘Annual disaster,’ and her family worked in the ‘La Alicantina’ mines, near the city of Melilla. Her capture, along with other families, by the Riffian troops was announced by the newspaper *El Sol* on October 4<sup>th</sup>, 1921.<sup>137</sup> It was later published that she had been sold as a

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<sup>135</sup> “Conferencia telegráfica celebrada con el Comandante General de Melilla, al Alto Comisario.” November 30<sup>th</sup>, 1923. Est. 1, Body 2, Tab. 10, Leg. 29, Folder 29. *AGMM*. War Ministry, Spain.

<sup>136</sup> “Correspondencia sobre Prisioneros.” 1922, 1925. Est.1, Body 1, Tab. 1, Leg. 3, Folder 20. *AGMM*. War Ministry, Spain.

<sup>137</sup> “Las Familias de ‘La Alicantina,’” *El Sol*, year V, no. 1296 (October 4, 1921): 1.

slave (presumably between different Riffian tribes), and that she had to be recovered by Abd-el Krim.<sup>138</sup> Some newspapers explicitly informed readers that they would not reproduce Carmen's testimony, given its graphic nature. *El Globo* stated, in December 1921, that she had been driven around Annual in a car by a "moor."<sup>139</sup> She was also reported to have been sick, with a gastrointestinal infection, and was finally liberated on January 29<sup>th</sup>, 1922.<sup>140</sup> This story became symbolic of the treatment of Spanish detainees to a great extent because it fed off racial and social stereotypes. Carmen became the archetype for a defenseless Spanish girl, abused by barbarous Riffians. The prevalence of this narrative can be seen in that, once Carmen arrived back in the Spanish Peninsula, one of the interests of the press was knowing whether her boyfriend at the time would want to marry her, knowing that she had been a victim of sexual abuse.<sup>141</sup> Carmen would go on to become a renowned *cuplé* singer. Her story encapsulates the avid social need for news from the Spanish prisoners.

News about Spanish prisoners also allowed the public to have a glimpse at their own military's practices. The example of Luis de Oteyza's expedition and graphic reporting on the conditions of interned Spanish soldiers in the summer of 1922, including his interview with Riffian leader Abd-el-Krim is particularly illustrative. Luis de Oteyza was the director of the newspaper *La Libertad*, which had been critical of the Spanish intervention in Morocco after the 'Annual disaster', and consequently had been severely censored. In fact, a Spanish journalist in Morocco working for *La Libertad* had been detained following orders from the High Commissary, accusing them of revealing secrets.<sup>142</sup> From August 6<sup>th</sup> until August 14<sup>th</sup>, 1922, Oteyza published a series of

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<sup>138</sup> "Nuestra Acción en África," *La Correspondencia de España*, no. 23.141 (November 25, 1921): 2.

<sup>139</sup> "Nuestro Protectorado en África," *El Globo*, no. 15.726 (December 12, 1921): 3.

<sup>140</sup> "Las espantosas escenas del hambre," *La Correspondencia de España*, no. 23.510 (January 30, 1922): 1.

<sup>141</sup> "Después del rescate de los cautivos," *La Voz*, year IV, no. 810 (January 31, 1922): 4.

<sup>142</sup> Luis de Oteyza, *Abd-el-Krim y los Prisioneros (Una información periodística en el campo enemigo)* (Melilla: Ciudad Autónoma de Melilla. Consejería de Cultura. Servicio de Publicaciones, 2000), 22.

pieces that detailed travelling to the residence of Abd-el-Krim and talking to prisoners there. The reporter described the state of the prisoners (some of which he identifies as possibly sick) as “not that bad now. They receive[d] the supplies and clothes being sent [by the Spanish].” However, he also describes how conditions were worst in the months after the Spanish debacle, when all communications with the Spanish were cut, and some soldiers died “of hunger and cold.”<sup>143</sup>

Oteyza’s story had as its centerpiece his interview with Abd-el-Krim, in which the Riffian leader recalls his story of imprisonment at Spanish hands and establishes conditions for the liberation of Spanish soldiers. Abd-el-Krim narrates that he had spent 6 months in a Spanish prison, explicitly by order of the Commander in Chief, General Jordana. His official charges were “errors and malice in a deal [he] had made with the indigenous police captain Siste.” Abd-el-Krim also states in this interview that the military judge “had acquitted him,” and yet he had been left in prison.<sup>144</sup> Oteyza directly blames military governors for these paralegal actions, that in his view were a direct cause of the whole rebellion. Later in the same interview, Oteyza discusses with the Riffian leader conditions for the liberation of Spanish prisoners. Abd-el-Krim asks for a payment of four million Spanish *pesetas*, and the liberation of all Riffian peoples under Spanish internment. The Riffian leader explicitly asks for the liberation of common native criminals, as he judges them to be similar to Spanish aviators, “who kill unarmed women and children, [...] are worse criminals.”<sup>145</sup> Through this testimony, received negatively by a Spanish society that saw in Abd-el-Krim their biggest enemy, we see how Spaniards were exposed to the forced internment practices of their army. However, the stories of Spanish prisoners desensitized the Spanish public

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<sup>143</sup> Oteyza, *Abd-el-Krim y los Prisoneros*, 103-104.

<sup>144</sup> Oteyza, *Abd-el-Krim y los Prisoneros*, 125.

<sup>145</sup> Oteyza, *Abd-el-Krim y los Prisoneros*, 127-128.



which, along with harsher censorship and greater military secrecy, allowed for an upscaling of paralegal military internment practices in the Protectorate.

### *Post-1921 Military Culture of Internment*

After the ‘Annual disaster’, Spain started explicitly targeting civilians for internment at a substantially larger scale, in a retaliatory imbalance that extended the conflict deeply into the Moroccan social sphere. According to a civil report from the Subinspection of Troops and Indigenous Affairs, between February and April 1922 there were a total of 83 new internees in the prisons of Ceuta, 70 of which were detained between February 6<sup>th</sup> and February 28<sup>th</sup>. There is no cause given for the detention of any of the above, using the formula “At General Castro's disposal” as a motive.<sup>146</sup> These civil internees came from about 15 different *kabyles*, or tribes, and thus point at a large-scale coordinated effort of interning potential civil dissenters. In fact, the motives for interning are stated explicitly in a June 1924 military report from the Hacho fortress at Ceuta. In that report, natives Mohamed Ben Abselan Hamudan, Si Mohamed Ben Hachmi Ben Abderrahaman, Si Amar Ben Aix, and Si Mohamed Ben Ali Leserak, all from different kabilas, were all detained on March 26<sup>th</sup>, 1923, following orders from the Commander General in the Territory. The reason behind it was that they were considered “dangerous,” and that their detention was meant to “[force] families to return,” admitting that civil internment was justified to extort rebel fighters to turn themselves in.<sup>147</sup> Another interesting example of this tactic can be seen in a May 1925 internal report by the Spanish military, explicitly titled “Nominal list of the families of natives that joined the enemy.” In it we can find 82 women and children (some only months old)

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<sup>146</sup> “Relación Nominal de los indígenas presos en los calabozos del Tabor, cárcel del Bajá y fortaleza del Hacho” December 23rd, 1922. AGA.

<sup>147</sup> “Fortaleza del Hacho. Comandancia Militar” Ceuta, June 23rd, 1924. 15)013.001 81/01073 – ‘Intervenciones militares del Rif. Presos y detenidos. Años 1928-1931’. AGA. Culture and Sports Ministry, Spain.

related to enemy fighters from the kabila of Beni-Said.<sup>148</sup> On May 16<sup>th</sup>, these families were carried to the Island of Chafarinas, with the idea of using women to work as “handmaidens,” as stated by the Military Commander of the position. However, against this prospect, the Commander argued that “in the desperation of these [women], they could starve themselves to death.”<sup>149</sup> In the following months, up to October 1925, we can read telegrams and reports indicating the acquisition on part of the military of clothing and food for the internees, hinting at an arbitrarily prolonged internment, with potential forced labor conditions.

The post-1921 increase in internment violence is correlated with a general upsurge in extreme military conditions, as explained in the first chapter. In 1925, Spain began massive aerial bombing campaigns, amid the destabilization of Riffian positions, and coinciding with the belligerence declaration on the part of France and its support for Spain. The scale of the bombing campaigns was unprecedented in Spanish military history. By the beginning of 1926, the Spanish Air Force possessed, only at their Melilla headquarters, more than 3300 TNT bombs, about 1500 incendiary bombs, and more than 800 C5 bombs, known to have been equipped with chemical gas.<sup>150</sup> Based on another report from January 1926, we can infer that a normal rate of bombing was around 100 bombs a day against civil populations at different positions.<sup>151</sup> This heightened level of violence was accompanied by a mobile style of quasi-guerrilla warfare, by which small columns would surround and attack villages until their surrender, often carrying out summary executions

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<sup>148</sup> “Intervención Militar Jalifana de Beni-Said.” Kadia, May 15th, 1925. Est. 3, Body 1, Tab. 1, Leg. 427, Folder 3, 1925. *AGMM*. War Ministry, Spain.

<sup>149</sup> “Telegram to the Lieutenant Colonel.” Chafarinas. Est. 3, Body 1, Tab. 1, Leg. 427, Folder 3, 1925. *AGMM*. War Ministry, Spain.

<sup>150</sup> “Artillería. Taller de Gases.” January 3rd, 1926. Est. 3, Body 2, Tab. 2, Leg. 500, Folder 6, 1926. *AGMM*. War Ministry, Spain.

<sup>151</sup> “Aviación Militar. Servicios Efectuados durante las últimas 24 horas.” January 3rd, 1926. Est. 3, Body 2, Tab. 2, Leg. 500, Folder 6, 1926. *AGMM*. War Ministry, Spain

and taking prisoners.<sup>152</sup> Reports of these actions allow us to understand the larger internment numbers as part of a general evolution in military culture.

This upscaled extremist military culture, with little accountability or civil oversight, is also reflected in the poor, irregular practices that characterized civilian internment in the Spanish Protectorate. Among the observed practices, we see a lack of knowledge on the part of authorities about the penitentiary population. On September 9<sup>th</sup>, 1923, after being asked to liberate two detainees through a telegram, the warden at the Tetouan prison had to inform back that “there [was] no individual incarcerated called Mohamed ben Kasen Maguz el Jamtixi. There [had] been one called Mohamed ben Kassen Senhayi, who was liberated on August 27<sup>th</sup>, 1923.”<sup>153</sup>

Furthermore, we also find instances of natives being wrongly detained, such as Hamud Ben Mohamed el Aimrani, whose liberation was processed on June 20<sup>th</sup>, 1923, after having been imprisoned since May 4<sup>th</sup>.<sup>154</sup> Similarly, three other Moroccans detained in Tetouan were also liberated on October 15<sup>th</sup>, 1923, after being wrongly accused of participating in “the night of shooting in the military camp in the city,” but having been proved to be “trustworthy people.”<sup>155</sup> Another poignant example, because of its magnitude, was the detention of eight natives by Spanish police on August 27<sup>th</sup>, 1923, on charges of being undocumented. On September 5<sup>th</sup>, the General Commander at Ceuta inquires through telegram on the motive for that detention. On September 7<sup>th</sup>, the Inspector General responds that “no one had informed [him] of that detention,” and it is not until September 11<sup>th</sup>, that a complete list of detainees and the charges against them is

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<sup>152</sup> Sebastian Balfour, *Deadly Embrace*, 116-117.

<sup>153</sup> “Expedientes de Presos Políticos y Comunes Indígenas de Tetuán. Años 1922-1923.” September 8th, 1923. (15)003.004 81/00692 – ‘Justicia’. Exp. 8. AGA. Culture and Sports Ministry, Spain.

<sup>154</sup> “Expedientes de Presos Políticos y Comunes Indígenas de Tetuán. Años 1922-1923.” June 20th, 1923. (15)003.004 81/00692 – ‘Justicia’. Exp. 8. AGA. Culture and Sports Ministry, Spain.

<sup>155</sup> “Expedientes de Presos Políticos y Comunes Indígenas de Tetuán. Años 1922-1923.” October 15th, 1923. (15)003.004 81/00692 – ‘Justicia’. Exp. 8. AGA. Culture and Sports Ministry, Spain.

produced.<sup>156</sup> By November 2<sup>nd</sup>, these eight people were still detained in the Baja jail, where “they were poorly treated, as they barely eat and almost all are sick.” Approval for their liberation was given on the following day, although there are no other documents confirming its effectiveness.<sup>157</sup> Through these cases, we can clearly establish that Spanish internment methods were arbitrary and irregular, characteristic of the increased levels of violence, and the lack of civil oversight.

Wrong detentions, increased in numbers because of the lack of a due process with criminal charges against the detainees, were known to be common in the Protectorate’s society. A particularly curious case in this regard occurred in September 1923. According to the official Spanish report, “Al-lux Ben Amar Tensamani, denounces that there are in Ceuta many Rifians, who in spite of being working in the service of Spaniards, speak very badly of Spain.”<sup>158</sup> This led to the detention and imprisonment of Amar Ben Mohamed Tanyauí, Hamud Ben Md, Urriagli, and Mohamed Ben Amar, on charges of pernicious propaganda.<sup>159</sup> However, when the detained Rifians were interrogated weeks later, the Spanish *Intervención* workers realized that they were wrongly imprisoned. Al-lux Ben Amar had tried to obtain twenty *duros*, the Spanish currency, from Amar Ben Mohamed. When the latter refused, Al-lux Ben Amar had filed a false complaint with the Spanish *Intervención*. Certainly, from these episodes of wrong detentions, we can see that the internment system of the Protectorate was able to correct mistakes, albeit after slow processes. However, and most importantly, they also point to a practical state of exception, in which Rifians were assumed to be guilty of all presented charges.

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<sup>156</sup> “Expedientes de Presos Políticos y Comunes Indígenas de Tetuán. Años 1922-1923.” (15)003.004 81/00692 – ‘Justicia’. Exp. 8. AGA. Culture and Sports Ministry, Spain.

<sup>157</sup> “Expedientes de Presos Políticos y Comunes Indígenas de Tetuán. Años 1922-1923.” November 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1923. (15)003.004 81/00692 – ‘Justicia’. Exp. 8. AGA. Culture and Sports Ministry, Spain.

<sup>158</sup> “Detención de un trabajador al servicio de españoles.” September 5<sup>th</sup>, 1923. (15)003.004 81/00692 – Justicia. Exp. 7. AGA. Culture and Sports Ministry, Spain.

<sup>159</sup> “Detención de un trabajador al servicio de españoles.” September 5<sup>th</sup>, 1923. (15)003.004 81/00692 – Justicia. Exp. 7. AGA. Culture and Sports Ministry, Spain.

This state of normalized extreme levels of violence cannot be directly linked to a temporary military measure, but rather should be explained by looking at deeper changes within military thinking. This shift can clearly be seen when looking at internment practices after 1926, once peace had been effectively achieved in the Spanish Protectorate. At that time, the civil-military structure of the Spanish Army undertook a campaign of ‘pacification.’<sup>160</sup> Sebastian Balfour’s research shows that the Spanish military continued repressive war tactics in the years up to 1930. In his own words: “it seems that many officers charged with pacification behaved with the same brutality they had practiced in the war.”<sup>161</sup> Forced detentions and torture seem to have been commonplace during this period.

In fact, when reviewing the evolution of civil internment in the Protectorate, we do not observe a substantial shift after the theoretical end of the war. By reviewing several prisoner files, and making use of the fact that the Subinspección started chronologically numbering internees, we can establish that between August 1927 and August 1929, more than 300 Moroccan natives were detained by Spanish authorities. Among these, there were several cases of, at best, extremely arbitrary detentions. For example, in his file, Dris Ben Mohamed Uld el Kadi, was described as an individual “without political prominence”. He is accused of having resisted his arrest, but the report also includes Dris’s own testimony: “it was an incident provoked by an error of some legionnaires who wanted to enter the house [...] the men who were in it opposed, because there were women inside.” In other words, his opposition to Spanish troops is stated to be purely for religious and not political reasons. Later in the Spanish report, it is stated that: “even if the indigenous version is not true, it can be considered an episode of war, without political

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<sup>160</sup> I use the term ‘pacification’ in imitation of the work of other historians such as Sebastian Balfour. However, it is worth considering the ideological load of using such a term, especially considering how it was far from being a peaceful period.

<sup>161</sup> Sebastian Balfour, *Deadly Embrace*, 118, 119.

transcendence.”<sup>162</sup> There are other elements that reveal the arbitrariness of violence during the pacification period, in this file. Dris is said to be arrested on May 29<sup>th</sup>, 1926, coinciding with the incident with the legionnaires. There is no news on file about his whereabouts until August 6<sup>th</sup>, 1926, when he is interned in the Alfonso XIII Hospital, without stating the causes for that medical visit.<sup>163</sup> On the following day, August 7<sup>th</sup>, he is transported to the Nador prison, and at some later point, to the Rostrogordo fort. He was still imprisoned there in May 1930, despite his explicit lack of political peril, and demands for his liberation by the local *kaid*, or religious leader. Through this example, we can clearly see the irregularities in internment measures on the Spanish Protectorate, even after the end of the armed struggle, signifying the extremist military culture that imposed a paralegal state of exception in the Protectorate until the 1930s.

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<sup>162</sup> “Intervenciones militares del Rif. Presos y detenidos. Años 1928-1931.” 15)013.001 81/01073. Exp. 480. AGA. Culture and Sports Ministry, Spain.

<sup>163</sup> Visits to the Alfonso XIII hospital are not predominant but still common among post-1926 prisoners. Despite their cause not being stated, and given the testimonies of physical violence against internees, these hospital visits could point at torture or more generally, physical punishment practices within the process of internment.

## Conclusion

Along this thesis, we have explored the material and discursive military culture that allowed for the creation of a large-scale system of internment in the Spanish Protectorate during the 1920s, as part of the Rif War. In the first chapter, we situated both the Spanish army and the Rif War historically, by tracing the connections between the 1898 Disaster and the later Spanish military interest in Morocco. We also described in that chapter the state of the Spanish army, to explain why the war in the Rif became such an important struggle for it. In the second chapter, we presented the creation of a singularized military discourse, dominated by the *Africanists*, the officials serving in the Rif War. We started by reviewing pre-existing Spanish media that informed on the evolution of the Protectorate and analyzed how *Revista de Tropas Coloniales* positioned itself against that colonialist media and utilized state-sanctioned censorship to push forward its message regarding the Protectorate. Lastly, in the third chapter we analyzed the development of mass internment practices in the Spanish Protectorate. We studied its historical precedence during the Cuban War, and the structural elements of the Protectorate that made it possible. We then reviewed the effect of the ‘Annual disaster’ on military culture, and how it normalized practices of internment that went against local civilian populations. We reviewed some examples of these practices, that showed contempt for human rights and a complete lack of accountability on the Spanish part.

In fact, an original intention of this thesis would have been to include a fourth chapter, on the intersection between military discourses and internment practices. That is, a chapter analyzing how the system of imprisonment of Riffian civilians was referred to in Spanish periodicals. This method was meant to try to provide a second guess, on top of the review of primary documents from Spanish archives, about the nature and scale of the interment system. However, there are no

articles or mentions of Riffian prisoners neither in *Revista de Tropas Coloniales* nor in any civil press after 1926. Previous mentions of indigenous prisoners were always brought up in the context of Spanish or French prisoner exchanges. The combined structural effects of military culture, as we have shown, allowed for the simultaneous creation, or upscaling, of a concentrationary repressive system while completely silencing it from public criticism. Through the described methods, the *Africanist* ideologues turned an important group of colonized peoples into forgotten prisoners.

Hopefully, as I hinted at in the introduction of the thesis, there is a larger story to be told using other sources, and specially from the perspective of those who endured imprisonment. In the meantime, I hope this work serves as a first step in honoring the memory of these forgotten prisoners, and potentially inspiring further research into their lives.



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