

A Time of Triumph and Sorrow: Spanish Politics During the Reign of Alfonso XII, 1874-1885

Earl R. Beck

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This first study in English of the reign of Alfonso XII and the creation of a quasi-parliamentary monarchy revises the previously held estimate of the leadership of the frail young king, removing him from the shadow of his minister, the pragmatic Antonio Cánovas del Castillo, whom Spanish historians have credited with the accomplishments of the reign of Alfonso.

Turning to the diplomatic reports of German, British, and American envoys, Beck, an established German historian, shows that Alfonso and Cánovas worked together as a team and that their "triumphs"—the reestablishment of Spain's royal family, the adoption of the constitution which was to survive until 1931, and the stabilizing of an alliance of military factions into a nation—were offset by their "sorrows"—the complex factors of the king's ill health, the weight of tradition, national decline, and floods, earthquakes, and cholera, which were too great for human leaders to overcome.



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