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Filipe Ribeiro de Meneses

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Popularizing Africanism: The Career of Víctor Ruiz Albéniz, *El Tebib Arrumi*

Filipe Ribeiro de Meneses

The term *africanista* describes the generation of officers who, alongside Francisco Franco, participated in the military campaigns to ‘pacify’ Spain’s Moroccan Protectorate and who entered into a collision course with the Second Republic, which they eventually overthrew. These officers shared the conservative mindset typical of the Spanish army, but added to it an urgency that contrasted sharply with the more tolerant attitude of those stationed on the Spanish mainland. *Africanistas* distrusted civilian politicians, believing them incapable of meeting head-on the forces which allegedly threatened to tear Spain apart: anarchism, Marxism, regionalism, and atheism. Veterans of an unpopular and savage war that had claimed the lives of so many of their colleagues, *africanistas* viewed themselves as a breed apart, misunderstood men who were not afraid to take unpopular action to save their country. During the monarchy, *africanistas* had enjoyed the protection of Alfonso XIII, being thus officially celebrated as heroes; they regularly published memoirs and accounts of the fighting.¹ The Republican period saw a decline in their fortunes, and few accommodated themselves for long to the new regime’s institutions, or its view of the army’s role.

From 1909 to the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War there was a recurring theme in the writings of all those who dealt with Morocco: the fact that the fate of the Protectorate did not interest Spanish public opinion, becoming a preoccupation only when a military reversal took place. This article aims to examine the work of one man who devoted his life to overcoming that situation, using all means available to him to make the Spanish public appreciate both the intrinsic value of the Moroccan Protectorate and the efforts of the officers who had fought and died to pacify it, a stance that led him to carry out the most significant role in the Nationalists’ propaganda machine during the Spanish Civil War. This self-appointed mission led him on an idiosyncratic political odyssey, from republican to monarchist, from opponent to supporter of Miguel Primo de Rivera, and finally to unrivalled fan of Franco.

Correspondence to: Filipe Ribeiro de Meneses, Department of Modern History, National University of Ireland, Maynooth, Maynooth, Co. Kildare, Ireland. Email: Filipe.deMeneses@may.ie

Víctor Ruiz Albéniz (1885–1954) first went to Morocco to serve as a doctor in the Spanish-owned iron-ore mines at Beni Bu Ifrur, close to the city of Melilla. It was the attempt to explain the events which led to the 1909 Moroccan campaign that saw him cutting his teeth as a commentator on African affairs.² The mines were exploited by a large and well-connected consortium, the Compañía Española de Minas del Rif, and their exploration had been negotiated not only with the moribund Sultanate, but with the real powerbroker in the northern mountainous province of the Rif—El Rogui, a pretender to the Moroccan throne.³ Ruiz Albéniz, according to his own accounts, had immersed himself in his work in the mine. Among other duties, he dispensed medicine over a wide area. This led to the adoption of a pseudonym, *El Tebib Arrumi*—the Christian Doctor—which he would keep for the rest of his life.

In 1912, *El Rif (Estudio de un español en el Norte Africano)*, was published in Madrid. Ruiz Albéniz presented his contribution to the debate on Morocco in a modest tone:

Pero el libro es necesario. No éste . . . poco documentado, sin estilo, casi sin orden ni concierto, pero sí el que pudiera seguirle, producto de pluma más autorizada. Es necesario hablar mucho de ese interesante problema de Marruecos; hablar mucho y sin pasión, para encauzar, con la verdad por norma, elemento mucho más convincente que la predicación sectaria del político, a esa opinion ayer ignorante y hoy desorientada; porque la cuestión de Marruecos lo es todo, hoy por hoy, para nosotros; porque de ella depende el porvenir nacional, porque está en sus principios, pero ya no lejano el día en que el pueblo ha de emitir en momento decisivo para la patria sus votos sobre el asunto, y no debe de hacerlo sin completo conocimiento de causa . . . (Ruiz Albéniz 1912, p. 7)

In the first part of this autobiographical work, Ruiz Albéniz tried to bring the Rif to life in order to enthuse his readership, hoping to awaken a national desire for a consistent intervention in Africa. Descriptions fill Ruiz Albéniz's pages: of splendid Moroccan horsemen in full charge; of the working of the mines; of the miserable treatment of women; of El Rogui's *hareem*; of a Spanish renegade-turned-translator, Hamú, whose sole remaining Spanish trait was the devotion to the Virgen del Pilar. The people of the Rif, Ruiz Albéniz stated, based on direct experience, were not fanatics; theirs was a pragmatic version of Islam, in which religious observance was ultimately subordinated to profit. While ignorant, the Rifis were willing to learn from their betters. War and pillage were their natural lifestyle, but a remarkable change was being operated among the miners, who had begun to understand the relationship between work and the benefits of regular pay. The message was clear: given stability and an enforced peace, Spain's civilizing mission in Morocco could bear fruits among the population.⁴

The second part of the book brought action to the setting so carefully described. The 1909 war and its antecedents were discussed, with authorities in Melilla and Antonio Maura's government in Madrid criticized both for failing to see through the local tribes' appeals to the faraway Sultan for help against El Rogui (a ploy for international support) and for backing the pretender's strongest enemies, notably the Beni Urriaguel tribe, which created a power vacuum when El Rogui was forced to retreat. The Beni Urriaguel immediately began to intimidate pro-Spanish tribes, but the government

again failed to act, choosing instead to reopen the threatened mines (associated by hostile tribes with the pretender), which in turn led to an attack on the mines on 7 July 1909. This unfortunate event left a number of workers dead and finally provoked an ill-considered armed response by Spain. In this series of events Ruiz Albéniz discerned the search for a pretext for expansion on the part of Maura and General Marina, the local Spanish commander. Not only did Marina punish the tribes responsible for the attack, but he went further, engaging in a campaign of conquest. A generalized rebellion predictably broke out, with Marina and his forces being pushed back into Melilla. A series of suicidal Spanish attacks had to be carried out in order to retake strategic positions around the embattled city. Of these, the assault on the Barranco del Lobo was the worst: on 27 July 1909, over 1000 casualties were suffered for no territorial gain. The breakout from Melilla was managed only in September of 1909. Reflecting on the war, Ruiz Albéniz stated that:

Tal fué la guerra del nueve.

¿Gloriosa? ¿Simplemente provechosa? ¿Equivocada?

De todo tuvo a nuestro juicio; pero lo más interesante, lo que como epílogo de aquellas jornadas de sangre y dolor queremos nosotros señalar para que nos sirva de antecedente de lo que ahora ocurre en el Rif, es lo que sigue:

Después de seis meses de campaña, de muchos hombres perdidos, de mucho dinero gastado, y, sobre todo, después de la victoria obtenida, el país siguió mirando con indiferencia, cuando no con aversión, las cosas de Marruecos; los políticos no se preocuparon de hacer el problema asequible al conocimiento popular, y los militares sólo vieron en los campos del Rif el tablero de ajedrez en que se podían jugar partidas empeñadas, que condujeron, o a la muerte, o al ascenso. (Ruiz Albéniz 1921, p. 150)

Widely seen as a war to save the financial investments of a handful of powerful figures, the 1909 campaign led to a wave of popular protests that reached their peak in Barcelona's 'Tragic Week'. All those with colonial ambitions for Spain realized that they would have to do more to convince public opinion of the potential importance of Morocco. Henceforth Ruiz Albéniz would volunteer his experience every time that there was a serious crisis in Morocco. In his writings, moreover, he would urge the Spanish government to take a strong line in Morocco and the Spanish people to elevate Moroccan policy to a national concern, one over which there could be no argument. These were beliefs which, closely modelled on the initial views of Liberal leader (and investor in Beni Bu Ifrur) Álvaro y Figueroa de Torres (Count of Romanones),⁵ would colour Ruiz Albéniz's response to successive governments and regimes. From them he would never deviate.

Ruiz Albéniz readily acknowledged that the treaty of 27 November 1912 with France had left Spain with an inferior share of Morocco. It amounted, in fact, to about 5% of the country's territory. Nevertheless, the strategic importance of this zone was, for him, great, and might yet make it a possession of great value: public opinion had so far focused on the false question of how much the land in question was worth, when the real question was to what extent Spain would be affected if someone else controlled it.

Ruiz Albéniz also acknowledged the validity of much of the criticism coming from the Left—including republican circles—regarding the Moroccan enterprise: how could the most backward country in Europe hope to be a civilizing force? How could Spain create a modern infrastructure in Morocco, when its own had been created, and was exploited, by foreigners? How could an illiterate people educate another illiterate people? How could Spain carry out such an expensive task, especially when the wounds provoked by the 1898 war were still open? All of this was true, Ruiz Albéniz conceded, but Spain was like a gambler who had been losing badly at a casino about to close, and who had enough money to make one last throw that might yet redress all previous losses. Spain's independence was not at stake, but the potential rewards were great. Emigration to French North Africa might be re-routed to a Spanish possession; there were magnificent mines to explore; and with a soil similar to that of Andalusia, northern Morocco might, in the hands of a rival power, emerge as a competitor of Spanish products, while its ports might put those of the Canaries in the shade and serve to minimize Spain's strategic importance.

Spain had won a war and received its part of the Protectorate. What was left to do? Everything:

En primer lugar orientar a la opinión. En segundo término hacerla ver como se piensa más en la dominación por la paz que en previsiones de nuevas guerras. Hasta ahora, España solo sabe que hemos mandado al Rif hombres con uniformes y armas, municiones y dinero para gastos de Guerra. Es ese un sacrificio tanto más molesto cuanto que el pueblo no quiere, ni debe querer, guerrear. De ahí la impopularidad del problema.

Pues es preciso tornarlo popular, y para ello lo primero que hay que hacer es orientar nuestra acción en África, en el sentido de una decidida política de paz, política atenta a la colonización por la vía civil y a la protección de la industria, del comercio, hoy en triste estado. ... (Ruiz Albéniz 1912, p. 326)

For the time being the Protectorate should continue to be ruled by the military, but in such a way as to stimulate civilian activity. In order to do this, good relations must be established with the indigenous populations, which could be done by stressing that their innermost convictions, notably their religious faith, were not under threat: '¡El día en que en Melilla se alzase una Mezquita, cuánta sangre cristiana nos ahorráramos!'. Once secure in his faith the Rifi, guided by his innate desire for profit, would associate himself with the actions of the Protectorate:

Médicos, ingenieros, maestros de obras, hombres de artes y oficios . . . esos son los que a estas horas deberían recorrer al Rif, llevando allí donde llegó la noticia de la bravura de nuestros soldados, las pruebas de que España es una nación civilizada, una nación que, como dijo el rifeño de la citada anécdota, 'su fusilla, su poder, lo lleva en la cabeza'. (Ruiz Albéniz 1912, p. 326)

If *El Rif* was Ruiz Albéniz's response to the 1909 war and the subsequent 1912 treaty, then 1921's *España en el Rif* was an immediate answer to the disaster at Annual, when once again the Spanish public's attention was turned, due to tragic circumstances, to the Moroccan Protectorate.⁶ The heaviest defeat ever suffered by a European army in

Africa, Annual raised doubts about the future of the Protectorate. Ruiz Albéniz struggled to be heard above the debate that immediately broke out in Spain, repeating his credentials for dealing with a Moroccan topic. He retold his interpretation of the Protectorate's history, stressing where Spain had erred. Here we find his standard description of the people of the Rif, but also of the regenerative powers of the Spanish presence in Morocco. Mines played an important part in the transformation of the country, with Western work habits being acquired by otherwise indolent Moroccans. These were traditional pro-colonialist arguments, as was the description of the continuing practice of slavery. But the Rif was not static, Ruiz Albéniz pointed out, and it presented Spain with a great opportunity. Money was the magical agent that was going to transform this province, money that its inhabitants fervently worshiped. To this was added the recognition on the part of the Rifis of the Spaniards' intellectual superiority, and therefore their right to rule. However, nine years had now elapsed since the creation of the Protectorate and little had been done, while the public's ignorance of all things Moroccan was still evident and was directly related to the 'Disaster'.

This wasted opportunity was described closely in chapter VI of *España en el Rif*, entitled 'La estéril actuación de doce años'. The King and his ministers had toured the newly conquered areas of the Protectorate, but to no avail. No investment was made and no step was taken that might signal a new turning point in the relationship with Morocco. This failure to act decisively had played a part in the Annual disaster, but Ruiz Albéniz was from the start adamant that General Silvestre, the military commander in the Rif, also had a decisive share of the blame for his ill-advised manner when dealing with the tribesmen and their leaders, notably Abdel Krim.⁷ Silvestre did not believe in negotiation, in the Moors' courage, and in their fighting abilities, and, favoured by the King, had wanted to capture Alhucemas Bay before his superior, High Commissioner Berenguer, or anyone else. Ruiz Albéniz put himself unashamedly on the side of Berenguer as the search for 'responsibilities' began. Writing in August 1921, he could not yet be sure of what had occurred, but invoked his special status as an authority on Morocco to hazard a guess. He presumed that Berenguer had warned Silvestre to slow down in a violent discussion aboard the yacht *Princesa*.⁸ He also claimed to benefit from a special source within the army who could not be named, but who told him that Rifi informers had warned Abdel Krim that there were no reinforcements in Melilla should Silvestre be cut off. This had emboldened and increased the Moroccan militia, the *harka*, whose final attacks proved irresistible and which for once was not content with booty, driving home its attack in order to cause the maximum casualties. What followed then was chaotic: officers fleeing to the French zone, wholesale massacres of surrendering troops, and the very real chance of Melilla falling to the *harka*.⁹ Ruiz Albéniz found the decision to appoint Maura as premier inexplicable, given his track record on Moroccan affairs, but nevertheless urged all Spaniards to rally around their authorities.

Ruiz Albéniz, like the whole of Spain, engaged in the search for responsibilities for the 'Disaster'. His criticism was redolent of Britain's Union of Democratic Control

during the First World War, being aimed at the practice of secret diplomacy and at the unquestioned authority of the military:

No se discute, no se puede discutir ni aun estudiar la política exterior de España. La diplomacia es sagrada.

No se discute, no se puede discutir, la organización y actuación del Ejército. La milicia es infalible.

Y nosotros decimos: organismo que no se discute, miembros de la vida nacional que no alcanzan jamás el purificador óleo de la crítica popular, infaliblemente se adulteran, se tuercen, se malean, se corrompen e inutilizan. (Ruiz Albéniz 1921, pp. 249–250)

Still worse was the fact that Spain's Moroccan policy was all secrecy and no vision. The government was to blame for Spaniards' lack of knowledge about Morocco. Ruiz Albéniz referred to its failure to use his own services as an example of this short-sightedness.¹⁰ For a long time serving in the Protectorate had been seen as a punishment in the army, and since the creation of shock troops like the Moroccan Regulars only the bravest—and not necessarily the best—officers served in the Protectorate. These men had set the tone for Spain's dealings with the Moroccans, since they saw themselves not as colonizers, but as conquerors:

¡Linda manera de *pacificar*, de *proteger*, de *colonizar*! De un lado nos negábamos sistemáticamente a estudiar el carácter, costumbres, psicología, idioma y organizaciones de los indígenas. De otra parte, nos encastillábamos en nuestras conquistas, y no nos aveníamos a dar a los vencidos la sensación de necesaria fraternidad y espíritu pacifista. ... (Ruiz Albéniz 1921, p. 261)

The Spanish army's politicized nature was also responsible for the crisis. Ruiz Albéniz attacked the influence of the Juntas de Defensa, established in 1917, claiming that they were detrimental to discipline and to decision-making, and that they enshrined duration of service as the sole—and absurd—path to promotion. The action of the Juntas was reprehensible because it had stopped the flow of officers—good or bad—who volunteered for duty in the Protectorate, and meant that the central concern of those who were there was to survive and return to Spain as quickly as possible. This had paralysed Spanish action in Morocco, with the consequence that the Rifis' contempt for the Spanish had grown. The Juntas' effect on discipline was reflected by the sordid life enjoyed by officers in Morocco, scarred by corruption, gambling, and prostitution. Soldiers paid for their superiors' folly. On the day of the disaster, the army at Annual was missing 200 officers who were not, for a variety of dubious reasons, at their post.

Despite these obvious failings and injustices, the militarist and anti-democratic spirit of Spain kept debate, and the search for the truth, at bay. What could be done? Morocco could not be abandoned, so that its conquest and the punishment of rebellious tribes remained an imperative. Once this process was over, however, it would be time to set a new course, with an enthusiastic Spanish public overseeing the material and moral development of the Protectorate and its people, and with a High Commissioner answerable directly to a body under the tutelage of the Prime Minister,

in order for quick reforming action to be undertaken. Democratic politics had to be reconciled, in other words, with a strong line in the Protectorate. Finally, Spanish and French action in Morocco should be coordinated in order to achieve maximum efficiency.

España en el Rif was written and published in the immediate aftermath of the Annual disaster. *Las responsabilidades del desastre*, which followed it, had the benefit of an extra year's revelations and disclosures. Weighing in at 539 pages, *Las responsabilidades* had as a prime objective the defence of General Berenguer, increasingly the target of much public resentment. As before, the defence of Berenguer was twinned with a criticism of both the action of successive governments and the imperialist spirit of conquest within part of the Spanish army. Moors, Ruiz Albéniz repeated, were not adverse to improvements in their lifestyle; this was verified, he argued, by the fact that there had been no destruction, in 1921, of the infrastructure which Spain had built in the Protectorate. Moreover, having collaborated in the defeat of El Rogui in the Rif, the Spaniards—and especially Silvestre—had deliberately obstructed the action of another strong man, El Raisuni, in Yebala (the eastern half of the Protectorate), and had, most recently, insulted and trampled on the reforming desires of Abdel Krim, leader of the formidable Beni Urriaguel. The choice of an unknown as Caliph, the highest indigenous authority in the Spanish zone, was another example of this misguided policy, which served only to turn strongmen, through whom efficient rule was possible, into enemies.

As far as Ruiz Albéniz was concerned, the whole of Spain shared in the responsibility for Annual. Berenguer's misunderstood policy had to carry out a mix of political and military objectives, winning over the Rif slowly but steadily by making the Moors desire the Protectorate rather than seeing it as an imposition. Not only did he have to fight indigenous resistance, he also had to face the indifference of Madrid, which did not increase the Protectorate's budget despite the gradual increase in the area controlled *de facto* by Spain. Tribes that had sworn to support Spain waited in vain for the promised improvements, and eventually despaired of them. Ruiz Albéniz also had praise for Berenguer's immediate collaborators, among whom we find some very significant military names, and who were described as men of action and not mere words: Sanjurjo, Vallejo, Serrano, Jordana, and Beigbeder. This was a new development in Ruiz Albéniz's thinking: not all *africanistas* were necessarily role models, but the best among them obtained results and concerned themselves genuinely with the workings of the Protectorate. Confronted by civilian indifference to Moroccan affairs, Ruiz Albéniz switched his hopes for a pacification of the Protectorate to these officers. Silvestre clearly did not fit the bill, advancing as he did across the Rif without any preparatory work, and it was on Silvestre's shoulders that Ruiz Albéniz pinned the ultimate responsibility for the Annual disaster. Intoxicated by his advance across the supposedly invincible Beni Said tribe's territory, Silvestre had grown contemptuous of the Moors and of those who, like Berenguer, urged caution. A coterie of supporters had emerged in Melilla to inflate his sense of infallibility. Silvestre also stood accused of seeing a dissolute lifestyle as an integral part of military

existence and, in conjunction with the Juntas, of allowing officers in Melilla to fall prey to alcohol, gambling, and prostitution, which hardly improved their reputation in the eyes of both the soldiers and the indigenous population. Strategically, Silvestre refused to heed the many warnings of Berenguer, his superior, and Coronel Morales, head of the Policía Indígena and one of the most knowledgeable officers on the subject of the tribes and their disposition towards Spain. Through his immoderate language and his clear contempt for the Moors, the increasingly arrogant Silvestre had pushed Morocco to the brink of rebellion. By exposing his army at Annual he made that rebellion—and its triumph—a certainty. The result was crushing:

Por triste que sea, hay que reconocer y que proclamar que en Annual y su línea los españoles éramos tantos en número como los moros enemigos, y aun los dobláramos, y en cuanto a recursos y armamento, aun siendo el nuestro escaso y deficiente, a nada conduce el sostener que los rebeldes lo tenían mejor y más abundante. (Ruiz Albéniz 1922b, p. 357)

The only artillery in the *harka*'s hands had been taken from a captured Spanish position. The first call for reinforcements was made too late by Silvestre, but still he advanced no details on the strength of the enemy and wrongly assured the surprised Berenguer that the tribes between him and Melilla remained loyal. This telegram caused Berenguer to suspend his own, successful, operations, and to send his best units—the Foreign Legion and the Moroccan Regulars—to Melilla. Silvestre's last hours were marked by indecision and contradictory orders. His lucky star had finally deserted him, and his constant improvisation finally took its toll. Ruiz Albéniz's verdict was damning:

El que no supo prevenir, ni con tiempo reclamar refuerzos, ni acertó a percibir hasta última hora lo grave de la situación, y se dejó aplanar por la magnitud del desastre, y no acertó a defender las vidas de aquéllos que a él estaban confiadas, y sólo supo morir, morir como valiente, pero provocando con su muerte la de miles de hombres, y con ello causando grave daño a la nación, no fué Berenguer, fué Silvestre, quien, por lo menos, demostró no estar a la altura de las circunstancias. (Ruiz Albéniz 1922b, pp. 382–383)

By pinning the blame for the disaster on Silvestre, who had died, it seemed, with bravery, Ruiz Albéniz was in effect hoping to put an end to the dangerous discussion on responsibilities which was dividing Spain and distracting it from the more important task, as he saw it, of conquering the Protectorate and bringing Abdel Krim to heel. In this he singularly failed and, as is well known, it took the intervention of Miguel Primo de Rivera to impose an uneasy silence over the issue.

During these years Ruiz Albéniz also turned his hand to fiction, publishing a novel and two short stories. Through these works he did more than just use the lure of the East and exotic customs to attract Spanish readers to the question of Morocco. He wove into them a running commentary on the nature of the Protectorate's population and on the way in which Spain herself was responsible for many of the catastrophes that befell her there, and which would not have occurred had Spain been properly governed and united behind the army in its Moroccan efforts. In 1914 a short story,

'La carga de Taxdirt', appeared. It concerned itself with a young Spaniard whose courage was doubted by all whom he knew. In order to impress his fiancée, and to match the achievements of his brother, he had joined the army, but as soon as he arrived in Africa he began to suffer from dysentery, which prevented him from fighting. The reputation of being a shirker attached itself to him, and at the same battle—Taxdirt—both brothers were killed, but while the older brother died a hero's death, shot through the heart while defying Moroccan snipers, the main character, involved in confused hand-to-hand fighting, was shot in the back, so that his reputation for cowardice was confirmed. The story was told not, however, as an anti-war tale, but rather as an appeal for selfless devotion to the *patria*, even at the cost of a tarnished reputation. That same year another short story was published: 'Bu Suifa (Copo de nieve)'. This was a more exotic piece, in which the main characters were Moroccan with one exception: a Spanish renegade who had escaped from his gaolers in Melilla and now lived among the tribes of the Rif. The story was divided into two parts: the first, set in 1901, saw the Spanish renegade winning the trust of a tribal leader, Fuma, by advising him not to resist the pretensions of El Rogui, and by saving his daughter, Bu Suifa, from El Rogui's marauders. The two married as the father began to reap the rewards of cooperating with El Rogui. The second part of the story allowed Ruiz Albéniz to make clear once again his viewpoint regarding Spanish diplomacy in 1909. Hamú, the renegade Spaniard (based on a character whom we have already encountered), had successfully advised his father-in-law to deal directly with the Spaniards over the mines, convincing them to withdraw their support from El Rogui. Hamú had not counted, however, on Fuma's greed and refusal to cooperate with the Spaniards, which led to war. Hamú was now torn between his loyalty to Spain, whose soldiers he was helping the Moors to fight, and his family, which included a son, Kadur, raised by his mother to hate all Christians. This was the real nub of the story: the impossibility of the renegade ever definitively turning his back on Spain. Seeing his son brought up a Muslim made Hamú all the more homesick, and having to wage war against Spain drove him over the brink. The story ended in apocalyptic fashion, with Hamú shot by his son and his heart ripped out by his wife.

A novel, *¡Kelb rumi! Un español cautivo de los rifeños*, was published in 1922. The central figure of the novel was a 35-year-old mental patient named Alberto, who had lost his speech while in the Rif and was now in danger of losing his mind. His sole words were '*kelb rumi* (Christian dog)'. This character's diary formed the basis for the narrative. Alberto had been a doctor in a military outpost in the Rif, and had done his best to improve relations between Spaniards and Moroccans. He had treated the son of a local chieftain, who became his friend, and treated as well his older half-sister, Nura, whose cataracts he successfully removed—this despite the worsening relationship between the Spaniards and the children's father, said to be coming under the influence of Abdel Krim. The friendship of the two youths saved Alberto's life when, after Annual, his military camp was stormed by the Rifis, subsequent events mirroring those that took place at Mount Arruit.¹¹ Of special interest in the novel is the long dialogue held between two officers in the doomed Spanish camp prior to its destruction, which

served to inculcate Silvestre for Annual and what followed (Ruiz Albéniz 1922a, pp. 80–90). Alberto was taken prisoner and held by the family he had done so much to help, a family whose women and children now attacked him on sight to the cry of ‘*kelb rumi*’. Tried by the tribe, he was saved as a result of his medical skill, and while an elicit love affair developed with Nura, he was put to work in Abdel Krim’s army, at the head of a primitive field hospital. Despite his skill, however, he was unable to save his captor’s life, and his situation deteriorated further after a Spanish plane bombed the village in which he was being held. Fortunately for Alberto the defunct leader’s children were still friendly, and planned his escape from the angry villagers. The end of the novel, like that of the previous story, was brutal: Nura insisted on staying with the Christian doctor once he had reached safety, but her brother would not allow it, threatening to kill her, which he eventually did. The doctor, meanwhile, had fled the bickering siblings, eager to return to the company of Spaniards, but tormented by the words of the girl who, seeing him run away, had shouted ‘Ah . . . ¡cobarde! ¡*Kelb rumi*! ¡*Kelb rumi*!’.

By 1927, Spain’s military occupation of the Protectorate was complete. During the dictatorship of General Miguel Primo de Rivera the army (largely thanks to French involvement in the conflict) had been able to occupy all of the territory belonging to Spain and to disarm the warring tribes. In April 1927 General Sanjurjo issued an order proclaiming the ‘rebellion’ in the Protectorate to be over. This process had been far from linear, since the dictator was initially an *abandonista*, someone who did not think that Spain had much to gain from the involvement in Morocco. Ruiz Albéniz’s thanks to the officers who had eventually accomplished the conquest and pacification of the Protectorate was immense, and his loyalty to them would never waver. His commitment to a democratic approach to the problems of Moroccan pacification had disappeared in the face of the success achieved by the military dictatorship. He was now concerned with strengthening Spain’s hold over the Protectorate through an increase in the number of Spaniards working and living there, and through a successful diplomatic resolution of some pending issues. In 1927, once victory over Abdel Krim had been secured, Ruiz Albéniz turned to the question of the international city of Tangier, whose status was resented in Spain, since it formed a significant enclave in the small Spanish zone. In *Tánger y la colaboración franco-española en Marruecos* (1927), Ruiz Albéniz examined Franco-Spanish negotiations taking place in relation to Tangier’s future, agreeing with the official Spanish line that the city should be placed under Madrid’s control. This work was dominated by a subject close to the heart of the *africanistas*: their selfless devotion to cooperation with France, which had never been reciprocated. Only General Pétain, who commanded the French campaign against Abdel Krim, escaped criticism. How could France make up for repeated insults towards the Spanish? By allowing for a Spanish take-over of the city of Tangier, whose international status made little sense now that the Protectorates were up and running. Spain’s claim to the city dated back to 1581, and it made little sense for the city’s supreme authority to be a representative of the French-backed Sultan, and not the Spanish-backed Caliph, when the city was so obviously in the Spanish zone.

Ruiz Albéniz's last great contribution to the debate on Morocco before the advent of the Second Republic was his presentation to a Rural Colonisation Congress held in Algiers, in May 1930, which was subsequently printed and published in Spain. This work led him to engage in a physical description of the Protectorate and its people, as well as of Spain's activity as the Protector nation. Ruiz Albéniz also detailed land-holding arrangements in the Protectorate and the consequences of the arrival of Spanish colonists in the territory. Interestingly, he spoke out against what he called 'gran colonización', the handing out of large swathes of territory to an individual or a company to develop, drawing a comparison between such attempts and the latifundary estates which, 'por desgracia', existed in southern Spain, and which 'no suelen ser modelos de buena organización agraria y adecuada exploración' (Ruiz Albéniz 1930, p. 142). He continued in this reformist vein (which no doubt many of his friends in the Spanish officer corps would have disagreed with):

Triste sería que en Marruecos, por cesiones del Majzen a los 'empresarios de gran colonización', se repitiera ese espectáculo doloroso, de las grandes extensiones de terreno puestas en una sola mano, mano que, con frecuencia, no suele preocuparse mucho de hacer producir la tierra, creando la obligada y natural riqueza en el país y entre sus pobladores. (Ruiz Albéniz 1930, p. 142)

In this work Ruiz Albéniz returned yet again to his favourite themes: how cooperation with the strong men of Morocco had worked and how the mines at Beni Bu Ifrur had provided the first taste, and the benefits, of regular labour for thousands of Moroccans. The wars that followed had led Spaniards to view the Protectorate as a barren and hopelessly poor region, which would never reward investment. Faced by public and private indifference, High Commissioners had done all in their power, pacifying and developing with scant resources. In this slow task, Annual had been a painful and bloody parenthesis, the result of both poor harvests exploited politically by an able leader and the inexplicable rashness of a military commander (Silvestre, who was unnamed). The process of colonisation was halted, and many colonists killed, their good work being undone. Spain, however, seemed to have woken up to her responsibilities, and from 1922 to 1925 much was done to attract Spaniards to the Protectorate, with the result that once Abdel Krim had been defeated, the action of the colonists began to be felt immediately. Ruiz Albéniz then turned to a racial definition of the Berbers found in the Moroccan zone, seeing in them kinsmen of the Spaniards, part of the 'gran raza libio-ibérica' (Ruiz Albéniz 1930, p. 57), modified by contact with Eastern elements, and presented a standard description of the inhabitant of the Protectorate along lines of racial science.¹² From this he moved to the Moroccans' moral characteristics, and while he stressed their ignorance and other alleged defects, he denied their fanaticism, adding that Moroccans were willing to learn and to improve their lives under the supervision of their Protectors.

Ruiz Albéniz saw the regeneration of the Spanish zone to be possible and easily achievable, and counted on Spanish colonists to contribute to this task. As he pointed out, North Africa had become an established destination for Spanish emigrants.

By 1930, and in the whole of Morocco (notably in the French zone), there lived and worked 100,000 Spaniards. Spanish administration was well accepted in the Protectorate, thanks to its respect for Islam and the way justice was administered through indigenous authorities, whose venality was checked by Spanish overseers. The Caliph had been made into a national figure in the Protectorate, and was now respected by his people, as was his chief minister, the Gran Vizir. Meanwhile, a more progressive Moroccan elite was being created through Spanish education. Ruiz Albéniz ended by expressing the reasons for his continued faith in the future of the Spanish Protectorate, in a clear demonstration of his new militarism:

Tenemos fé, porque desde el desembarco de Alhucemas, desde que aquel hombre, lleno de santa unción patriótica, que se llamó Miguel Primo de Rivera, rectificando sus propios errores crasos y perjudiciales, se decidió a ocupar todo el país, la política de España en Marruecos volvió a sus verdaderos cauces, a sus naturales proporciones, dejando de sentirse constantemente influenciada y codiciada por la política interna española, y quedando reducidos sus términos a los de una empresa dificultosa, pero no de imposible realización. (Ruiz Albéniz 1930, pp. 256–257)

Spanish policy in Morocco had obeyed a single and enlightened will from the moment that Primo de Rivera had decided to fight. Primo was gone, but his legacy was still in place, since General Berenguer was leading Spain and General Jordana, whose whole life had been dedicated to Morocco, was High Commissioner. Working with him were officers whose careers had been forever changed by the conflict in Africa:

Tenemos fé, en fin, porque en la gran obra de la colonización, están empeñados hombres de gran envergadura mental y conocimiento del país protegido, los mismos que año tras año han vivido las vicisitudes de nuestra actuación en el norte magrebino, laborando en la guerra como en la paz por el crédito y el honor de España, los hombres que se llaman Berenguer, Jordana, Sanjurjo, Saavedra, Goded, García Benítez, Millán Astray, Franco . . . los que, en fin, constituyeron y constituyen la envidiable falange de ‘técnicos africanistas’, que en el orden militar, como en el político y colonizador, demostraron siempre, y seguirán demostrando, la máxima capacidad, puesta al servicio del máximo afecto y devoción a la honrosa misión que España se ha impuesto en el Magreb. (Ruiz Albéniz 1930, p. 257)

With such men at her disposal, Spain could not fail. Through their leadership, and through the devotion they inspired among the Moroccans, they would turn the Spanish Protectorate into another Algeria. Under Primo de Rivera’s dictatorship—and, more precisely, after the dictator’s decision to return to the offensive through the landing at Alhucemas in 1925—Ruiz Albéniz became an adept of the military’s vision of a solution for the Moroccan problem.¹³ It was only among a select group of officers who understood and knew Morocco and its people that he found interest in the Protectorate. Ruiz Albéniz’s testimony flies in the face of recent historical work carried out into the nature of the Spanish army in Africa (Balfour 2002, pp. 157–164). The idea that men like Franco and Millán Astray entertained any enlightened notions about the Moroccan people is certainly hard to accept, given their very actions and writings, but to Ruiz Albéniz, it seems, interest in Morocco, whatever its motivation

and nature, was always superior to the prevailing apathy, especially when twinned with military success.

Ruiz Albéniz's support for the army and his distrust of civilian control of the Protectorate became obvious during the lifetime of the Second Republic. These years found him working for the increasingly conservative Madrid newspaper *Informaciones*. Under his usual pseudonym,¹⁴ Ruiz Albéniz maintained a steady stream of articles concerning Morocco. The deteriorating relationship between the Republic and the army and the direct attacks made by politicians against some of the more noted *africanista* officers led him to criticize violently the new regime and to warn that, as a result of the distancing of these men from active service in the Protectorate, a wave of violence could break out. The articles written during the Republic can be broken down into a number of categories. The first was an attempt to keep Spanish readers interested in Moroccan affairs through a description of life in the Protectorate. These articles included judgements on the performance of successive High Commissioners as well as descriptions of political, social, and economic developments in the Spanish zone. Since the Protectorate slipped in the priorities of Madrid, where domestic reforms were constantly being debated, Ruiz Albéniz's apprehension mounted. This was especially true in the first period of the Republic's existence, which led to a deep distaste on Ruiz Albéniz's part for Manuel Azaña and those to his Left.¹⁵

On 23 April 1931 Ruiz Albéniz praised the appointment of General Sanjurjo as High Commissioner for the Protectorate. This was a decision that implied continuity, the lack of which had been the cause of many Spanish disappointments in Africa. On 5 May 1931 Ruiz Albéniz reported disturbances in Tetuán, complimenting Sanjurjo on his energetic response. Ruiz Albéniz also blamed Moroccans from the French zone and 'bad Spaniards' for the turmoil, which was modelled, he claimed, on the intra-Spanish disturbances that had greeted news of the Republic's proclamation in Tetuán. The warning was clear: in order to keep peace in Morocco, all Spaniards living there had to preserve their unity. These initial events remained a source of concern for Ruiz Albéniz. On 6 May 1931, Sanjurjo's action now and in the past, when he had masterminded and carried out the disarmament of the tribes, was again the source of praise; Ruiz Albéniz added that it was imperative that the Protectorate be freed from the presence of communists and other troublemakers, who could break the unity on which tranquillity depended.¹⁶ Finally, on 22 May, Ruiz Albéniz recognized that there were now Moroccan nationalists in Tetuán. This was not necessarily bad, he added, but the Spanish government should not place great store by their support for Spanish action and criticism of the French, since this was born out of political necessity. Cooperation with France must come first; Spain should not listen to the siren song of Moroccan nationalists trying to split the Protector nations.¹⁷

From here onwards, however, the situation deteriorated. Bad harvests in the Protectorate posed problems for Spain, since spending cuts had led to a drying up of public works projects (*Informaciones*, 20 August 1931); Spanish colonists were feeling the effects of an adverse economic situation, which led them to dismiss their Moroccan workers (*Informaciones*, 30 November 1931); there was a renewed call for investment in health

services in the Protectorate (*Informaciones*, 21 October 1931); Islamic militants were emerging as a possible threat to which Spain and France had to respond in a coordinated fashion (*Informaciones*, 4. November 1931); and the transition from military to civilian rule was taking place too quickly, a potentially volatile situation being thus created. On 9 January 1932 Ruiz Albéniz renewed his warning. Politics were proving ever more divisive among Spaniards in Morocco. The result was that Moroccans were taking advantage of these divisions, as shown in the rise of pan-Islamic currents. The peace of the Protectorate was at risk. On 2 February 1932 Ruiz Albéniz returned to this theme. Intrigue was undermining the work of the administration, which led to a lack of trust among Moroccans. Moreover, the situation in the Spanish zone was being closely monitored by the French, who were increasingly worried. At the end of the following month, on 31 March 1932, Ruiz Albéniz commented on a speech on Morocco made by Azaña in Parliament. Glad to see the Prime Minister addressing the Moroccan issue for the first time, Ruiz Albéniz nevertheless delivered a strong criticism, arguing that since the state was not investing enough money in the Protectorate, private enterprise would not believe in its future, and would therefore stay away. In the summer economic concerns returned to the fore. On 21 July, Ruiz Albéniz pointed out that his earlier warnings about the need to secure markets for Moroccan produce had gone unheeded but that now, when, for the first time, there was a bumper harvest in the Protectorate, there was nowhere to sell the food, so that there was a new state of emergency. Moroccans, he added, had traded the rifle for the plough, and they had to be rewarded. On 23 May 1932 the Caliph, Muley Hassan, was praised for visiting Madrid for the first time, and *Informaciones* paid great attention to this visit. In August and September 1933 a long series of articles appeared examining the historic and diplomatic aspects of Spanish claims on other parts of Morocco—Río de Oro and Ifni (formerly known as Santa Cruz de Mar Pequeña). December 1933 and January 1934 were taken up with a very different theme—the performance of the departing High Commissioner, Juan Moles, who had just tendered his resignation. *Informaciones* claimed that Moles had worked hard, with few means, to overcome the personal politics and intrigue that had plagued the Protectorate for two years, stating as well that the resignation should not be accepted. On 15 January Ruiz Albéniz pointed out that more time would be lost as yet another High Commissioner was forced to learn the ropes. Two days later he hinted that Moles had been undone by a number of hidden forces that he could not destroy. The incoming High Commissioner must be made aware of these plots, which would affect his authority and prestige. Ruiz Albéniz added, mysteriously, that Moles had accepted this situation, and by 18 January the turnaround on Moles was complete: during his tenure there had been scandals aplenty, with low Spanish morale in the Protectorate paraded before the Moors. The selection of native authorities had also caused much resentment, with enemies of Spain being rewarded and old friends ignored, all because of personal politics. The basic mission of the Protectorate had been completely ignored. It is hard, without detailed studies of the Republic's Moroccan politics, to assess the claims about Moles made by Ruiz Albéniz on this subject, but the latter was certainly engaging in political chicanery. Moles was a prominent Republican figure, being reappointed High Commissioner by the Popular Front government in 1936 before going on to serve

in the Casares Quiroga cabinet. Moreover, the kind of article in which dire predictions were made about the future of the Protectorate disappeared from the pages of *Informaciones* once Azaña fell from power.

A second category of article by Ruiz Albéniz during this period dealt with the state of the army in Morocco. It was his view that poor economic conditions were coinciding with a reduction in Spain's military presence in the Protectorate, which could only lead to difficulties in the future. On 6 May 1931, when Ruiz Albéniz welcomed the new High Commissioner, López Ferrer, to his post, he also reflected on the worsening relations between the Republic and the army. The recent decree on promotions on the battlefield would have a devastating effect on Morocco, since the most knowledgeable officers would be stripped of their current rank, and would have to be replaced by those ignorant about Morocco. The Republic was thus re-creating the catastrophic situation of 1921. He returned to this theme on 12 June 1931. The list of those officers most affected reads like a *Who's Who* of Nationalist Spain. Ruiz Albéniz's message was clear: tremendous ingratitude was being displayed to men who had risked all for their country. The following day he added that there was no reason to suspect that illegalities and injustices had hitherto been committed in the promotion process. Annuling promotions would not only be absurd, it would also be dangerous for Spain and the Protectorate. After a brief hiatus, Ruiz Albéniz addressed the continuing army reforms on 1 July 1931. Manuel Azaña had amended the legislation, which now stated that those officers with 'questionable' promotions who wanted to keep their rank and its equivalent pay should retire. For Ruiz Albéniz, this measure meant depriving the army of its best elements, and made sense only if Azaña wanted to pull out of Morocco. On 20 August 1931 he claimed that the military reforms had destroyed the army's morale; worse still, the military presence in Morocco was smaller, with units of Moroccan Regulars being disbanded. This left loyal soldiers without jobs. The importation of arms was a realistic fear, since naval patrols had been reduced. A poverty-driven rebellion at a time when Spain was divesting itself of a well-oiled machine capable of keeping the peace was thus being predicted. According to Ruiz Albéniz, Spain's civilizing mission was being abandoned and the Protectorate, as a result, might just revert to its formerly violent self. In order to pacify it anew, much more money would have to be spent.¹⁸

Commenting, as we have seen, on the speech on Morocco by Manuel Azaña, Ruiz Albéniz stated that more troops were needed in the Protectorate, adding that the decision to disband the Foreign Legion was a serious mistake. The prestige of Spain in the Protectorate demanded that the Legion be preserved. Military concerns would be expressed continuously. On 29 December 1932, for example, Ruiz Albéniz claimed to be worried by the continuing drop in the number of European soldiers in Morocco, who thus formed a lower proportion of the overall forces. A significant new departure was made on 31 March 1933, when he quoted Franco's article, 'Ruud ... Balek', published in February 1933 in the military review *África*, which Ruiz Albéniz had helped to found. Franco expressed the usual security concerns, and while it is clear that he had a much more negative view of Islam and Moroccan culture than Ruiz Albéniz,

the latter was not willing to enter into an argument with Franco on these points. Franco was worried, like Ruiz Albéniz, that Spanish moves were helping their enemies in Morocco, and that once the right conditions were in place, an ambitious man would be able to set the Rif alight. The quality of Spanish troops was poor; the Legion had been cut down to 4000 men from an earlier 8000, and so Spain would have once again to rely on conscripts, whom he dubbed 'soldaditos'. Franco also expressed doubts that the right officers were in the right place. On 4 May 1934 Ruiz Albéniz returned to a familiar theme. Recruitment for the Foreign Legion must begin again. The actual numbers of this vital force were only one half of what existed on paper, and the situation was becoming critical. The Legion was Spain's ultimate source of authority and power in Morocco: it must be cherished and protected.

A third category of articles attempted to remind Spaniards that their involvement in Morocco was not limited to the Protectorate. In August and September 1933 a long examination was made of the historic and diplomatic aspects of Spanish territorial claims over other parts of Morocco, notably Río de Oro and Ifni. Ruiz Albéniz returned to this theme on 9 April 1934 after the seizure of the tiny territory of Ifni. There was fulsome praise for the Lerrox government, which had taken this step, undoing an embarrassing anomaly for the Spanish government—that of repeatedly claiming Spanish rights over Ifni but never enforcing them. Ruiz Albéniz, while discounting the possibility of mineral wealth in the territory, praised Colonel Capaz, who led the operation, and who had been driven away from service by political intrigue two years previously. Two unsigned articles followed, detailing the operation and Azaña's schemes against Capaz. The last article was extremely violent. On 18 April a description of Capaz's seizure of Ifni was made, with great praise again heaped on Capaz. Ruiz Albéniz could not resist, however, giving advice: disarmament of the local population should be the next step. Capaz tended to believe too much in the Moors' promises; that was his only fault. Leaving the local population with no weapons, and indigenous troops with inferior armament only, was the key to stability. Ruiz Albéniz's views on Moroccan high politics were the subject of the next articles. On 16 May 1934 he argued that Ifni should be run by a delegate of the High Commissioner in Morocco, and not, as had been said, as a dependency of the Canary Islands. All the dealings with Moors, including the government of Ceuta and Melilla, should be concentrated in one pair of hands. In order to avoid damaging splits, moreover, the need to coordinate action with France remained imperative. This last point was alluded to once again five days later, with a warning that precise knowledge of borders was also essential. On 18 July 1934 Ruiz Albéniz warned that the French colonial lobby was raising problems regarding the borders of Ifni; Spanish negotiators had to be strong in order to uphold Spain's historical claims in the area. On 19 January 1935 he called for more administrative resources to be made available to the High Commissioner in order to facilitate his actions, but the question of Ifni was still paramount in his mind; three days later, again in reference to the question of Ifni's borders, he called on Spain to understand the importance of what was at stake and pointed out that France could not be trusted on the matter. The same arguments

were sketched out again on 29 January. The borders, not only of Ifni but of the whole Protectorate, were the subject of a longer article on 22 February 1935.

The fourth category of article, and the one which, in the highly charged atmosphere of Republican politics, was most significant, dealt exclusively with the state of the Spanish army as a whole. As we have seen, Ruiz Albéniz deplored Azaña's attempt to reform this institution, seeing in it the cause of future revolt and ruin in the Protectorate. For this reason, Ruiz Albéniz made clear his support for Gil Robles as Minister of War, stating that he was sure that under Gil Robles positions of responsibility would be awarded on the basis of competence, not politics. The first contacts of Gil Robles and military commanders, Ruiz Albéniz asserted, had left a good impression on all concerned; describing Gil Robles' words, he wrote that:

... el ministro habló. Habló no para exponer al detalle sus planes de reorganización, pero sí para subrayar muchas de las manifestaciones de los generales y marcar la orientación general de sus planes. Y para pedir la colaboración de todos. Esto fué, sin duda, lo más destacado y lo que quedó más patente. Con la sola premisa, obligada, de hacerlo con convicción y entusiasmo, de todos fué reclamada la colaboración en bien del Ejército y para resolver sus agudos y hondos problemas, agravados de algún tiempo a esta parte por la desdichada acción trituradora de una política que no queremos personalizar en nadie, pero que tuvo la desgraciada eficacia de conmover hasta en lo más íntimo y respetable la organización y el espíritu del Ejército español. (*Informaciones*, 14 May 1936)

The change for the better was confirmed by the appointment of Franco for the 'trascendental puesto' of Chief of the General Staff, a move longed for by the whole of the army. The praise heaped on Franco in this article was spectacular. His military record knew no better, but his life away from the field of battle was equally impressive. One thousand times he had been asked to become involved in politics, but he had always refused to do so:

Porque ante todo y sobre todo, antes, incluso, que bravísimo e iluminado caudillo marcial el general Franco es un hombre de estudio, y, desde hace muchos años, vive en la asidua labor de conocer y desentrañar los problemas militares de guerra y paz tanto de España como del extranjero. (*Informaciones*, 18 May 1935)

Beginning on 23 May 1935, Ruiz Albéniz called for a number of changes in the life of the Spanish army: the abrogation of Azaña's law on retirements from the army, which meant that those who had been retired—for most who had left, according to Ruiz Albéniz, had felt forced to do so—should be allowed to return to the ranks; the reconstitution of Franco's general military academy (*Informaciones*, 10 June 1935), in order to provide officers with a common education, discipline, and morality; a reform of the reserve officer system (*Informaciones*, 17 June 1935); and the creation of military education before national service was carried out, preparing all male children for military life (*Informaciones*, 3 July 1935).¹⁹ In September a very exhaustive examination of recent military reforms was carried out, expressing, unsurprisingly, complete approval. The basic aim of these reforms was to reinforce the military

potential of the armed forces and increase the number of men capable of bearing arms effectively without worsening the country's finances. Attention was being paid to questions such as the status of volunteers, military instruction and manoeuvres, and the creation of new units and the reorganization of others.

With the invasion of Ethiopia by Italy there began a new role for Ruiz Albéniz: the systematic denigration of the former so as to justify Mussolini's actions. Justice, the treatment of women, witchcraft, education, religion, health, slavery, food: all served to present a picture of a country that did not deserve to exist. This was Ruiz Albéniz's last campaign. On 2 March 1936 his resignation from the paper was announced, as was that of *Informaciones'* director, Juan Pujol. The reason for this move was a decree published by the Popular Front government ordering the re-hiring of all workers who had been fired as a result of their participation in the general strike of October 1934.

Ruiz Albéniz had moved steadily to the Right as a result of his support for the army and for Spain's military presence in the Moroccan Protectorate. It comes as no surprise, therefore, to find him in the Nationalist camp during the Civil War. What does come as a surprise, however, is the scale of his contribution to the propaganda battle, hitherto ignored in the historiography of the conflict. He became the principal figure in the struggle to legitimize the actions of the army and, of course, of Franco. He made regular radio broadcasts and published endless articles in the Nationalist press. These were collected and published throughout the war. In addition, he wrote a number of popular biographies of leading military figures and wrote a history of the war, as well as war-related fiction, for children (Ruiz Albéniz 1939b, 1940, 1942). His radio addresses, in sheer numbers, far outweigh the much-better known tirades of General Queipo de Llano, whose aggressive style was avoided.²⁰ Ruiz Albéniz's main concern in this enormous output was to bring to life the Nationalist war effort by allowing his readers and listeners access to the mind of not only the commanders, notably Franco himself, but also of the front-line troops. Among these he had a special predilection for his 'old friends' in the Legion and the Moroccan Regulars, the very units that bore the brunt of Republican accusations of atrocities and which had thus to be humanized.

Ruiz Albéniz's value as a correspondent and a propagandist was made clear in the prologue to the first volume of his wartime chronicles, *El cerco de Madrid*, written by the founder of the Foreign Legion, Millán Astray. Millán described Ruiz Albéniz as a veteran of Morocco, a companion in arms from the very beginning of Spain's involvement in the Protectorate, an expert on the territory whose contribution to its development was unrivalled, and a personal friend of all those officers who had dedicated their careers to the pacification of Morocco. Millán added that

... sus crónicas, todos los españoles y, sobre todo, todas las mujeres españolas las conocen y las ansían a la hora en que la radio oficial las transmite, como complemento del Parte Oficial del Cuartel General del Generalísimo, por gozar Ruiz Albéniz del bien ganado privilegio de estar encomendado por el Alto Mando, en la dedicada y patriótica misión de comunicar a los españoles el detalle y la impresión veraz de lo que cada día va sucediendo en los frentes de batalla. (Ruiz Albéniz 1938a, p. 10)

Millán also referred to the recent loss of Ruiz Albéniz's son, a founder of the Falangist movement who had been killed in Madrid at the outbreak of war. It was to this son, Alberto, that the first volume of his chronicles was dedicated.

In his wartime biography of Franco, Ruiz Albéniz presented, as before, the image of a soldier whose unrivalled success was the result of careful study. This was evident during his years as a cadet, when he would unerringly predict the successes and failures of the army in Morocco; it was kept up while in Morocco, so that each campaign became a triumph thanks to careful preparation. More important, however, was the divine protection that accompanied Franco, and of which Franco himself was aware. Wounded in combat, it was believed by his doctors that he would soon die, but 'entre la vida y la muerte paró el capitán Franco varias semanas sin que en la tremenda lucha entablada con la "descarnada" perdiera ni por un momento su proverbial optimismo, ni su confianza ciega en la protección Divina, que había de salvar su vida para bien de España' (Ruiz Albéniz 1937, p. 11). This belief in his invulnerability led to a number of reprimands from his superiors, exasperated by Franco's insistence on riding a white horse at the head of his troops. Thanks to officers like Franco, Spain was able to conquer the Protectorate, re-establishing her prestige. Later in life Franco had wanted to share his experiences with the next generation, proposing the creation of a general military academy capable of providing moral unity for the whole army. Primo de Rivera had backed the plan, hoping to see the conquering spirit of the Legion being preserved. The success of the experiment led to its closure by Republicans as soon as they were in power, since they were, at heart, enemies of the army. Refusing to be sucked in by intrigue and petty politics, Franco had responded to this attack by travelling across Europe, bringing himself up to date on the latest military developments in order, when called upon, to save the Spanish army. This is what began to happen once Gil Robles became Minister of War and Franco Chief of the General Staff, and the reforms carried out had allowed the army to survive the return of the Popular Front, and of Azaña, to power. Exiled to the Canaries, Franco retained his sense of decorum and obedience—as witnessed by the famous letter to Casares Quiroga—until he could take no more, rising to save Spain.

In his chronicles, Ruiz Albéniz presented Franco as the beloved leader of his soldiers and the veterans of Morocco as the leaders of a Francoist cult. He himself, as an *africanista* without rival, also performed this mission, telling soldiers firsthand of Franco's feats in Morocco and then recounting the scenes, including the soldiers' reactions, in his chronicles. Ruiz Albéniz also expressed the sorrow that Franco, above all else a soldier, felt over having to take on the role of statesman:

De todos los méritos que se conciertan en el Caudillo para merecer la gratitud que le otorga España entera, para mí ningún título como éste de haber sabido sacrificar su temperamento, enderezar su sabiduría, frenar sus ímpetus y castigar sus aficiones para mejor servir a la necesidad de la Patria, separándose de sus soldados, del contacto diario e íntimo con la guerra y olvidándose de su deseo de ser sólo jefe militar, conductor de tropas, ganador de tierras, cosechador de victorias bélicas. Este sacrificio nunca se lo pagaremos al Caudillo. (Ruiz Albéniz 1938d, p. 73)

This sacrifice was all the greater for the death of five of the six potential leaders of the movement: Sanjurjo, Primo de Rivera, Calvo Sotelo, Goded and Mola. All of these men were to have worked together, pooling their efforts to save Spain. With the death of Mola in 1937, only Franco remained:

Quedó Franco sólo. Franco, Jefe de Estado y de Gobierno, y Hacendista, y Juez Supremo, y Organizador infatigable de la vida social, industrial, fabril, comercial; Generalísimo del Ejército y de la Marina y primera figura del Estado Mayor de nuestras Fuerzas; Legislador enciclopédico, Diplomático, Jurisperito, Regidor de la Cultura, Político avisado y diestro. Son tantas las facetas de su actividad y de sus talentos en este año, ¡que no cabe ni enumerarlas! (Ruiz Albéniz 1938c, pp. 24–25)

Ruiz Albéniz also attempted to link Franco to José Antonio Primo de Rivera, thus reinforcing Franco's supreme political authority within the divided Nationalist camp. This was done through the medium of a remembered conversation held between Ruiz Albéniz and Franco in the Canaries, shortly before the *pronunciamiento*. Ruiz Albéniz was in the Canaries to meet his son Alberto, returning from Spanish Guinea. Both called to see Franco, who advised Ruiz Albéniz, and all good Spaniards, to make themselves known to the Guardia Civil so that, when the time came, they might supplement its ranks. Franco then asked Ruiz Albéniz what he made of José Antonio. Ruiz Albéniz's answer was enthusiastic:

Creo, mi General, que de todo cuanto existe en nuestra España de hoy, fuera del Ejército, el único que merece verdadera atención es José Antonio. Tiene cualidades sublimes de excelso patriota, de hombre de mando, de político honrado, de sociólogo moderno, despierto. Tiene, sobre todo eso, la gran virtud de saberse hacer, no ya querer, sino adorar de cuantos le tratan y oyen una sola vez. ¿Te acuerdas, mi General, del don divino de Millán cuando daba espíritu a la Legión. . .? Pues algo, no ya como eso, sino quizás superior a eso, porque José Antonio ha operado sobre una masa tan inerte, tan fría, como es la generación de jóvenes españoles de ahora, frívolos, adocenados, sin pulso ni ideal siquiera, y ha hecho de ellos, en pocos meses, una FALANGE con alma y cuerpo, corazón y voluntad de titanes, de héroes. . . (Ruiz Albéniz 1938d, p. 106)

Franco listened to this answer smiling, and replied: 'tengo exactamente la misma opinión que tú'. He added that the work left unfinished by General Primo de Rivera—saving Spain—would be finished by his son. In the future, Franco expected, great reliance would have to be placed on José Antonio, as a result of which he wanted to know Primo de Rivera's thought down to the smallest detail. And, he added, since Ruiz Albéniz was going to Lisbon, he might pass on Franco's thoughts on the subject to General Sanjurjo. José Antonio, of course, died in Alicante, but Ruiz Albéniz wrote of the dictator's son and of Franco that 'eran dos hermanos en el santo Ideal de una España Grande, Honrada, Una y Fuerte. Y con esa comunidad en lo esencial del Credo no podía haber nada esencialmente separador de sus dos inteligencias, sus dos corazones y sus dos voluntades' (Ruiz Albéniz 1938d, pp. 107–108).

In Nationalist war propaganda an attempt was made to portray the Moroccan Regulares in a positive light. As can be expected Ruiz Albéniz was at the forefront

of this effort, asserting that Moroccans fought in Spain because they knew, trusted, and admired the generals who led them—especially Franco.²¹ Military service was a normal form of employment in the Protectorate, and it was with the greatest of ease that the Regulares crossed the straits of Gibraltar to come and fight alongside their beloved officers in a cause that concerned them both. Ruiz Albéniz was able, in his writing, to humanize the Moors, using them to convey propaganda about the enemy. He did not, for example, deny that they looted. Looting and war were, to Moroccans, intertwined, but their capacity for theft was mentioned only to draw a comparison with that of the ‘Reds’, Spanish or otherwise. As one Regular said to another, while they discussed the subject of looting:

... estás ‘tontón’ de la cabeza. Nunca registres a los milicianos, a los de mono azul. Esos pobretes no tienen más que piojos. Tienes que elegir bien y cuando veas uno de esos hombretones grandes y gordos, o un rubio de esos de cara redonda, busca bien y encontrarás billetes; ¡y de los grandes! Esos no se fían y lo llevan todo encima . . . los milicianos no tienen ni una peseta; ¡entre los rusos y los franceses se lo llevan todo!
(Ruiz Albéniz 1938a, p. 120)²²

In a January 1937 article Ruiz Albéniz told the story of Legionnaires and Moors who, searching for food in the university city’s National Hygiene Institute, came across an unexpected bounty: live rabbits, guinea pigs, chickens, and cats. All of these found their way into the troops’ cooking pots, but, as it turned out, they had been inoculated with typhus, plague, cholera, and other diseases. Not one of the soldiers fell ill: ‘¿Bacilitos a la Legión? ¿Vibrioncitos a los Regulares? Vamos, vamos, formalidad, señores, ¡formalidad! Se trata de “hombres”, de verdaderos hombres, a los que, afortunadamente, ¡no los parte ni un rayo!’ (Ruiz Albéniz, 1938a, p. 147). Ruiz Albéniz described episodes of courage and of humour, with the Regulares fighting, resting, or recuperating from their wounds in hospital.²³ They were just another—albeit more exotic—element of the Nationalist army; the task that they were participating in was so obviously just that there was no need to account for their presence in Spain. One may disagree with, or distrust, Ruiz Albéniz, but here was one author who viewed the Moors as individuals and who attempted to bring them to life for his audience; they were ‘old friends’ with whom he always found time to drink tea in the front lines; they were also an integral part of the Spanish army and not ‘foreign volunteers’ (Ruiz Albéniz 1938c, pp. 51–52). While Republicans published stories of Moroccan troops being paid in worthless pre-inflation German marks, or being about to rise in revolt, and while the Popular Army’s political commissars were given instructions on how to provoke desertions among the Moroccan troops facing them (*El Comisario*, 18 December 1936), Ruiz Albéniz presented a completely different view—of men who wanted to fight for Franco. This notion would be kept alive for years to come.²⁴

The value of Ruiz Albéniz’s wartime chronicles to Franco’s war machine is hard to estimate; studies on Civil War propaganda tend to focus either on the Republican side or on the more extreme elements within the Nationalist camp. But what is not surprising is that in order to explain their actions, the *africanista* officers who led the 1936 coup should have had recourse to Ruiz Albéniz, whom they viewed as one of their

own. He had been defending their actions and pressing their claims for over two decades, subsuming any political beliefs he might once have held into the task of protecting Spain's presence in North Africa. Now that these officers were striving for power in Spain itself, driving out all of his old opponents, Ruiz Albéniz could not but lend his aid.

Notes

- [1] For the most famous of all of these works, see Franco (1922).
- [2] Sebastian Balfour calls him 'a notable Arabist and a proponent, along with the mining companies, of a neo-colonialist strategy of not interfering with the existing power balance in the Rif' (2002, p.17).
- [3] His real name was Yilâlî Mohammad el-Yusfi el-Zerhûnî.
- [4] For all of his paternalism, and in spite of some extremely harsh verdicts, Ruiz Albéniz's attitude towards the people of the Protectorate was at odds with that presented in countless military accounts of the 1909 and subsequent military campaigns: 'Se trata siempre del mismo adversario, del "moro", al que se considera todavía enemigo hereditario, "los crueles enemigos de nuestra sangre", con un resto de admiración caballerescas hacia su coraje y bravura y espíritu de independencia, aunque el homenaje al enemigo, que lo sitúa en un contexto histórico, desaparece casi siempre bajo la avalancha de frases injuriosas para caracterizarlo, con lo que la eliminación del infrahombre así descrito se convierte entonces en una obra de salubridad nacional' (Bachoud 1988, p.131).
- [5] For a summary of Romanones's view on the ideal policy towards Morocco, see Youssef Akmir, 'Reflexiones sobre la sociedad marroquí precolonial', in José U. Martínez Carreras (2000).
- [6] There is an ample bibliography covering events at Annual. Some useful recent works are Juan Pando (1999); Manuel Leguineche (1996); and C. R. Pennell (1986). The list of published accounts of the battle is enormous, as was the polemical literature that it gave rise to in a shocked Spain.
- [7] The best account of Abdel Krim's intentions is to be found in de Madariaga (2000, pp. 475-502).
- [8] Balfour (2002) is easier on Silvestre, drawing attention to humanitarian, if paternalistic, concerns for the welfare of the people of the Protectorate. In this he largely follows Pando (1999). Leguineche (1996) is closer to Ruiz Albéniz.
- [9] Only the fear of non-Spanish European intervention restrained Abdel Krim. See Abdelmajid Benjelloun (1988, p.78).
- [10] 'Ved un ejemplo. El que estas líneas escribe, vivió antes que ningún español en el interior del Rif, auxilió a nuestras columnas en la campaña del nueve con sus datos sobre el terreno . . . publicó dos obras acerca de nuestra acción en el norte africano y del problema indígena e internacional; como redactor de *El Liberal* y de *Diario Universal* ha escrito cerca de 600 artículos (aparte los de la Guerra del Nueve) acerca de los problemas de España en Africa, y de España y Francia en Marruecos. . . . Pues bien; todo este alarde (que a algunos parecerá vanidoso y autobombástico), toda esta labor, no mereció jamás la menor atención de los hombres políticos y del gobierno de España' (Ruiz Albéniz 1921, p. 251).
- [11] Mount Arruit was the scene of the greatest massacre of surrendering Spanish troops during the campaign.
- [12] In this surprising equation of Spaniards and Moroccans as racial equals Ruiz Albéniz was not alone. An extraordinary thesis was advanced by José Varela, Franco's Minister of War (1940, pp. 25-26). See also Juan Beigbeder's words in Morocco in 1939: 'Y ya que hablo de cultura árabe, es evidente que España, por donde pase, tiene que arabizar. Es algo que llevamos

- en la sangre: la cultura, la civilización y la arabización son para nosotros lo mismo' (*Discursos...*, p. 8).
- [13] In a praiseworthy review of a book by General Goded, *Marruecos: etapas de la pacificación* (1932), Ruiz Albéniz claimed to have been arrested for writing against Primo's policy of withdrawal (*Informaciones*, 3 May 1932).
- [14] Another pseudonym was Chispero, which Ruiz Albéniz used when writing about Madrid life and customs.
- [15] What is most remarkable, of course, is that the Republic was viewed by the Moroccans as a great disappointment, precisely because it continuously frustrated their aspirations (Miguel Martín 1973, pp. 106-143). Mohammad Ibn Azzuz Hakim writes, after charting the Republic's action in Morocco, that one of the reasons why the army chose Morocco for its rising was 'el tener la certeza de que el pueblo marroquí no se pondría del lado republicano, dado el descontento general que existía contra la nefasta política marroquí de la República' (Hakim 1997, p. 23).
- [16] According to Ruiz Albéniz, rumours in the French Zone concerning the internationalization of the Spanish zone were extremely harmful. Many French blamed Spain for the spread of communism in Morocco, but the truth was quite different: the leading 'troublemakers' came from either the French zone or Algeria. Cooperation between France and Spain, rather than mutual recriminations, was vital (*Informaciones*, 18 May 1931).
- [17] For details on the emergence of nationalism in the Spanish Protectorate, see John P. Halstead (1968), and Benjelloun (1988).
- [18] Ruiz Albéniz would later repeat the theme of the lecture, providing additional figures (*Informaciones*, 3 December 1931).
- [19] Ruiz Albéniz had already outlined a plan to ensure that deserving soldiers would be allowed to serve the state, and be protected by it, during their lifetime. His central concern was to make sure volunteer soldiers would go on to serve in Spain's various police forces, described by the Minister of the Interior as a 'counter-revolutionary army' (*Informaciones*, 12 February 1935).
- [20] For a comparison, see Ian Gibson (1986).
- [21] See also the comments of French General Jouart: 'Dès son baptême du feu devant Melilla, en 1912, il s'affirma d'un courage exemplaire devenu vite légendaire parmi ses Regulares et son tercio qui l'adorent, et dans tout le Maroc où il est vénéré' (Jouart 1938, p. 14).
- [22] In a radio broadcast made in December 1936, Ruiz Albéniz claimed that one skilful Regular, in his examination of Republicans killed in battle, had found 11,000 *duros* (Ruiz Albéniz 1938a, p.123).
- [23] See Ruiz Albéniz's description of the relationship between wounded Moors in a military hospital and their favourite nurse, Carmen: 'A Carmen la hacen comer con ellos una manzana. Y luego, muy despacio, esconden su "Lalla [saint] Carmen" [her photograph] entre los pliegues de su chilaba. Miran en silencio, con mirada infinitamente niña, pura, la blancura de su tez, la negrura de sus ojos, y... con una unción mística, de inefable devoción del alma, tocan con sus dedazos rudos la frente de la niña, y los dedos van a perfumar sus labios con un beso de infinita gratitud. Y ya sumisos como corderos, a todos diciendo adioses cordiales, se alejan diciendo: – Estar hermanos, estar hermanos. Español y moro, ¡¡kif, kif!!' (Ruiz Albéniz 1938b, p. 159).
- [24] See, for example, *Discursos pronunciados por el Alto Comisario de España en Marruecos, Coronel Beigbeder, y por el eminente filósofo libanés Prof. Amin Er-Rihani* (1939).

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