

## CANOVAS DEL CASTILLO – PRIME MINISTER AND PROMOTER OF PASEO DEL PARQUE

Cánovas Del Castillo was one of the most important of Spain's nineteenth century politicians.

He was born in Malaga in 1828 and educated in the city. Then, following the death of his father, he moved to Madrid to live with his uncle, the writer Serafín Estébanez Calderón.

He studied law at the University of Madrid, but showed rather more early interest in politics and Spanish history.

His active involvement in politics dates from the 1854 revolution led by the General Leopoldo O'Donnell (of Irish ancestry, and later three times Prime Minister of Spain). This led him to write the 'Manifiesto de Manzanares', a document which accompanied the military overthrow of the sitting government and laid out the political goals of the revolutionary movement.

During the final years of Isabel II, he served in a number of posts, including a diplomatic mission to Rome, governor of Cádiz, and director general of local administration. This period of his political career culminated in his being twice made a government minister, taking the interior portfolio in 1864 and then the overseas territories portfolio in 1865–1866.

After the 1868 Glorious Revolution (Revolución Gloriosa), he retired from the Government, although he was a strong supporter of the restoration of the Bourbon monarchy during the First Spanish Republic (1873–1874) and, as the leader of the conservative minority in the Cortes, he declaimed against universal suffrage and freedom of religion.

He returned to active politics with the 1874 overthrow of the Republic by General Martínez Campos and the elevation of Isabella II's son Alfonso XII to the throne.



He served as Prime Minister for six years, starting in 1874 (although he was twice briefly replaced, in 1875 and 1879). During this period, he was a principal author of the Spanish Constitution of 1876, a document which formalised the constitutional monarchy that had resulted from the restoration of Alfonso XII, and restricted electoral suffrage in order to reduce the political influence of the working class.

Cánovas Del Castillo played a key role in bringing an end to the last Carlist threat to Bourbon authority by merging a group of dissident Carlist deputies with his own Conservative party. And after 1881 an artificial two-party system designed to reconcile the competing militarist, Catholic and Carlist power bases led to an alternating prime ministership with the progressive Práxedes Mateo Sagasta.

He assumed the functions of the Head of State during the regency of María Cristina following Alfonso's death in 1885.

However, by the late 1880s, Cánovas Del Castillo's policies were under threat from two sources.

First, his overseas policy was becoming increasingly untenable. A policy of repression against Cuban

