



## **The Volterra Papers**

Spain: A Historical and Cultural  
Guide in 111 Micro-Essays

Aurelio Pérez Giralda



### AURELIO PÉREZ GIRALDA

Born in 1946, the author of this book defines himself as an amateur historian and violinist, a professional diplomat and a vocational jurist. He studied Law at his hometown University in La Laguna (Canary Islands) as well as in those of Santiago de Compostela and Bologna (Italy). He has lived so far in Madrid and in several cities of Central Europe and the Americas, with a few tropical interludes. He wrote extensively about his previous experience as a professional diplomat and international lawyer in a book he titled “Legal prudence and external power” (2010). More on the rest of his life can be read between the lines of these notes that he calls micro-essays .

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FIRST PUBLISHED IN SPAIN IN 2016 BY  
ALMUD, EDICIONES DE CASTILLA-LA MANCHA  
C/ APDO DE CORREOS 137  
45080 TOLEDO, SPAIN

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COVER IMAGE: PRINCESS MARGARET OF AUSTRIA  
IN PINK DRESS (1654) BY DIEGO DE VELAZQUEZ.  
KUNSTHISTORISCHES MUSEUM WIEN.

ISBN: 978-84-942952-0-1  
D.L. TO 12-2016

PRINTED AND BOUND IN SPAIN  
BY: OPTIMA. DISEÑO E IMPRESIÓN

EDITS: ALMUD, EDICIONES DE CASTILLA-LA MANCHA  
[www.editorialalmudclm.es](http://www.editorialalmudclm.es)

DISTRIBUTED BY: [latorreliteraria@latorreliteraria.com](mailto:latorreliteraria@latorreliteraria.com)

Laurence  
Semper vivens



### **Preliminary remarks by the author**

**E.** Volterra is a fictitious personage, a figment of the imagination and a foreign observer through whom I have sought to place on record the history and culture of Spain with a certain light-heartedness, keeping myself at a respectful distance from his indulgent humour. This fact will explain to the quizzical reader certain anachronisms, mainly evident in the works instanced in the bibliography, in a great number of cases subsequent to the date on which the micro-essays were said to have been written. Quite evidently, any resemblance of Volterra's opinions to those of the author himself will hardly be mere coincidences.





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## FOREWORD

### The how and why of this guide

This book was not written by a historian, as any professional historian will soon discover. I worked in Spain for long periods as a correspondent and visited the whole country repeatedly. A lively interest in the surprises of historical knowledge prompted me to write down in short notes those aspects of the country's past and culture that I found most revealing and interesting. I left Spain at the beginning of the 1980s and forgot about these essays. They had been written without a definite purpose and they were the products of my own experience, a great deal of reading and frequent conversations with very knowledgeable people whom I encountered in my Spanish years. I continued to follow the events of Spain, this country I had learned to love, and now, re-reading these notes and encouraged by those friends, I have fallen into the temptation of offering them to the public and I present some of them here as they were written, with practically no changes other than some editing details.

I hope these micro-essays will be useful for the traveller who wants to understand Spain in more depth and in greater detail than is possible using a normal guide book. It is a guide, not so much of places as of events and persons, of those that drew my attention as I travelled and learned about the country. I have in mind the sense in which José Jiménez Lozano wrote his *Spiritual Guide to Castile*: it describes some moments of Spanish history and culture and invites the readers freely to continue in this way on their own, in search of any other moments that might take their fancy. Of course the book cannot seek to cover the whole story, but my hope is that these snapshots, when taken as a whole will help the reader to see the bigger picture, much in the way the apparently random daubs of paint in an impressionist painting become a recognizable scene. Although the book doesn't respond to a particular method or school, the reader will probably discern the reasons why I chose to stop to ponder certain topics and not others.

When I re-read these notes after so many years I discovered myself certain recurrent ideas which seem to have guided most of this imaginary historical journey.

The first is obvious: the story is told backwards. I ordered the notes, which had been written at random and at different times, and I put them into order, starting in the present. I wanted to awaken curiosity in the reader. I wanted the reader to question why things happened in the way they happened and not otherwise. I owe this idea to Giovanni Papini's book *Gog* published in 1931. At a certain point, an eccentric American millionaire encounters a no less eccentric Irish historian who explains his methodology to him: understanding history is possible only if you start with the proven facts of the present and look back, searching for their meaning, until the facts become less certain.

Another source of inspiration seems to have been a curious essay on *Luck and Bad Luck in World History* in which the German historian Jakob Burckhardt (1818-1897) defended the historian's right to express an opinion on whether certain historical events were the result of luck, good or bad. My own appears here and there in my notes more or less explicitly referring to certain features of the Spanish case according to this criterion: the geographical position of Spain, which favored the easy access of invaders from the South; certain decisions which oriented the direction of affairs, as when Castile decided to unite with Aragon and not with Portugal; the discovery of America, and so many others. I also wish to mention a thought that was frequently in my mind when writing on Spanish history. I owe it to Barbara Tuchman's book *The March of Folly* in which she developed the idea that, on certain occasions, a course of action is taken by the powerful in spite of the fact that even to contemporaries it is clear that it would have disastrous consequences.

Obviously I do not have to apologize for the complexity of the history of Spain. In Spain the "music of chance", another guiding idea that I took from one of Paul Auster's novels, has had an intensive influence on the succession of events and it would have been foolish, if not impossible, to present a simple narrative. That is why I have chosen, when editing these notes, not to delete all the inevitable repetitions, in the hope of making understanding easier. I have kept the original Eng-

lish in which I wrote, although it is not my mother language, thinking that the book would be useful mainly to the readers of this language. To be on the safe side, I had the text revised by my dear friends Laurence Schröder, Alan Robert Gilchrist and Paul House.

E. VOLTERRA  
*Bologna, Spring 2015*



## 1. SPAIN 1978 OR THE USES OF FEAR

The fact that fear is one of the most effective civilizers of nations is a surprising paradox of history. The notorious battle of Solferino took place on the 24<sup>th</sup> of June, 1859. It is the origin of a curious step in the development of the human race. At Solferino, France defeated the Austrian army, leaving over 30,000 soldiers lying unprotected on the battlefield, many of them dying from the wounds they had sustained in the battle. Henry Dunnant, a Swiss businessman and philanthropist, happened to witness this appalling horror and started the process that would lead to the creation of the Red Cross/Crescent and the Conferences of Geneva and The Hague which codified the International Humanitarian Law, the law of armed conflict. The great wars of modern times have brought about the great “peaces”. The Peace of Westphalia, the Peace of Utrecht and the Peace of Vienna followed the Thirty Years war, the war of Succession in Spain and the Napoleonic wars. Each time, the vanquishing powers tried to avoid new wars by rearranging their affairs, either through hegemony or through a balance of power. The 19th century took a step forward, because the limitations of classical warfare were cancelled by Napoleon’s invention of total war. Later, “progress” in the technology of killing increased the fear of war to such an extent that nations began to seek new ways of avoiding hostilities and to limit the harm done to belligerents and civil populations. If the two World Wars of the 20th century caused unprecedented levels of violence and fear, they also brought about significant progress in the development of International Law and the protection of Human Rights.

I mention all this because it has helped me to explain Spain’s most recent history. In fact, as happens in the relations between nations, fear is also at the root of the peace and reconstruction that follows civil wars and revolutions. The Constitution approved by the Spaniards at the end of 1978 is a prestigious example of this. The tragic civil war of 1936-1939 caused deaths, repression and exile but did not solve the historical problems of Spain, a very problematic country. They were merely silenced during the long dictatorial regime that followed and ended with the death of General Franco in 1975. The problems then



resurfaced, accompanied by a deep rooted fear lest the horrors of civil strife and the lack of freedom should reappear.

A strange transition in search of a democratic solution took place between 1975 and 1978. It required not only a strong will to achieve peace but also a remarkable capacity for legal fine tuning, even trickery. On the surface, it seemed impossible to achieve a radical change in the political system. In fact, the principles that inspired the main laws of Francoism were famously declared by one of them "...according to their own nature, permanent and unalterable". Were they, really? In fact, they weren't. They were permanently and completely altered in a very short time, although not without a period of tough bargaining, doubts and tension. After all, both sides of the civil war were still alive in spite of the length of time which had elapsed since the end of the conflict. By a law "for political reform" approved in 1977, the members of Las Cortes, the undemocratic legislative assembly of the Franco regime, allowed a surprising compromise. They couldn't and didn't abolish the previous Fundamental Laws, but they altered them substantially and returned sovereignty to the people in a new, this time democratic, system of parliamentary representation. This meant that a newly elected Cortes was able to approve the new constitution. In exchange, the Monarchy created by Franco with the intention that everything would remain unchanged, would have to survive this transition, because the King had the power to submit a new constitution to popular approval or not. This he did and everything changed very quickly.

And so it was that after the general election held in the same year, 1977, a parliament which wasn't in theory a constituent assembly created a radically new political regime in the matter of a few months. The Constitution of 1978 was thought to be almost a miracle, taking into account the balance of political forces in a very polarized country: the right wing parties plus the centre-right obtained 42.9% of the seats in the new parliament as opposed to 38.4% for the left plus centre-left. However, although it was hard it was not really a miracle. In fact, during the years prior to the end of Franco's rule, the Spanish people had started to evolve economically and culturally away from the traditions of the past, so that the urgency of a democratic way out for the future had become evident. In any case, it was necessary for difficult compromises to be made until a delicate consensus would emerge between right and left, with both sides having to renounce

some of their aspirations. The new constitution tried to address the main dilemmas that had been recurrent in the history of Spain and which tensions of various origins had prevented to solve: whether the monarchy was compatible with democracy or whether only a republican system would guarantee the people's participation in politics and civil liberties; whether the civil institutions of the state could recover the power that the military had acquired during a century of coups and protected by a monarchy that was excessively friendly towards the army; whether Catholicism would relinquish its traditional hold on society that neither revolutions nor militant laicism had managed to reduce; whether centralism and the national unity defended by liberal ideology would prevail over the centrifugal drive of nationalism.

All of these dilemmas received solutions of compromise, some of which were rather fragile. In the dilemma between the monarchy and a republic, the left wing forces, who had identified a republic with democracy, had reluctantly to accept the monarchy inherited from Franco's dictatorship. The King was deprived of full constituent power but kept the right of formally proposing a referendum on the text approved by the Cortes. On the political regime, a perfectly advanced system of civil democracy was established, similar to most of the models of Europe. It included parliamentary representation and the separation of powers, the rule of law and the judicial protection of human rights. The relations between the Church and the State were given an ambiguous solution. The Constitution declared that no religion would have official status, but it included express recognition of the Catholic Church and "the other confessions" existing in the Spanish society. On the disjunction between unity and diversity, centralism or regionalism, which had partly been at the root of the Civil War, only a provisional agreement was possible. The forces of the right had to accept a system of autonomy that treated the so-called historical regions, Catalonia, the Basque country and Galicia, differently from the other regions. Its legal development remained open to the future.

A Catalan member of parliament said at the end of the process: "with the Constitution, the (civil) war has actually ended". It is to be hoped that it has indeed ended for many future generations and that the old problems will not resurface, as has so often been the case in history, once the fears that made the constitution possible vanish.

## 2. TRIUNFO: DEMOCRACY WITHIN A DICTATORSHIP

In late 1962 I came across a weekly magazine at a press stand which had been recently launched with a very optimistic title: *Triunfo*, Triumph. I opened its pages and could not believe what I saw, or rather, I doubted if I was really in Madrid, Spain. What I had before my eyes was a colourful collection of articles and pictures on the most varied of subjects. They were all focused on the information and criticism of cultural news from Spain and the world, international politics and commentaries on the social and economic realities of the time, including articles on the Catholic religion following the guidelines given by the Vatican Council II that was taking place in Rome at that time. Many important writers of the time wrote articles for *Triunfo*, but most of the magazine was written by two journalists, Eduardo Haro-Tecglen, a specialist in foreign affairs, and Manuel Vázquez Montalbán, who wrote about varied subjects under several pseudonyms. Very prominently, *Triunfo* offered humour, in graphics and in printed articles. In a hilarious section called *Celtiberia Show*, written by the journalist Luis Carandell, the reader could find plenty of extravagant happenings, examples of the “greasy culture”, as he called it, of traditionalist Spain. It consisted entirely of authentic material, taken mostly from provincial newspapers, often contributed by the readers themselves. They challenged the most daring invention. One of them read: “Mister Thief, please give back the documents and the money you stole from my car (plate number). You can keep the wallet. Don’t be such a S. of a B.”

The first number of the renewed magazine I had in my hands had appeared in June 1962, but *Triunfo* was older than that. It had started in 1946 as a periodical specializing in the theatre and the cinema. These had always been the main subjects, but little by little the magazine began to explore foreign policy and even some internal matters, provided that the authors could find ways to circumvent censorship. From 1966 on, a relatively liberal Law for the Press permitted *Triunfo* to expand and breathe more easily. It had already become a very suc-

cessful project. By 1964 it was selling 56,000 copies and had more than one thousand subscribers.

Was it possible? Incredibly, yes, it was. *Triunfo* had started and was growing under the menacing eyes of the powers that be. They suspended its publication only twice and prudence obliged the writers to use a sophisticated meta-language in order to avoid attacks on the regime that the censors could consider too explicit. But *Triunfo* survived and provided Spaniards with a cultural and political reference point in a social and international environment that was creating the conditions for the eventual arrival of democracy. In 1962, the Franco regime was undergoing a profound economic transformation. After long years experimenting with “autarky”, an exotic economic system that only increased the poverty and backwardness of a country ravaged by the civil war, Franco put a new class of young technocrats and economists in power who convinced the dictator to adopt new policies of stabilization and development through a programme launched in 1959, which liberalised the economy and opened up the country to foreign markets. The result of this so-called stabilization plan was the end of traditional agriculture, urbanization, massive emigration to Europe and new habits of consumerism. Furthermore, as a result of new communications with the outside world, something that was seen as the most dangerous by the most reactionary forces in the regime was introduced: an ambitious project to promote tourism as a source of income for the State. It attracted millions of Europeans and Americans to Spain, all of them ready to enjoy the natural and cultural beauties of a country that was rich in both ...and also very cheap and pleasant to visit.

It was indeed a curious contradiction. The Franco regime, as military-ecclesiastic as ever, continued to be in control of law and order, with minor cosmetic adjustment to the political terminology of democracy. Its aim was, as ever, to suppress the traditional problems of Spain and take the country back in history to the imperial glories of the past, if not earlier. But the flow of new ideas brought by foreign visitors or by Spanish students who, thanks to this new prosperity, began to travel to study in foreign universities, created, under the always rigid surface, a new culture of freedom and paved the way for democracy. Why did democracy not come, once the conditions were

present? Why was it necessary to wait until the dictator died of illness and old age?

Several explanations have been proposed, starting of course by the external life-assurance the regime had been granted by the Western powers in exchange for Spain's collaboration in the cold war against Communism. Within Spain, sociologists compare the middle classes and the workers of late Francoism with those of the beginning of the 20th century and point out two important differences. The bourgeois-elite struggled after 1900 with a single aim: to bring about the end of the monarchy, which they identified with militarism and arbitrariness, and to establish a republic, which for them was synonymous with democracy. On the other hand, the anarchists, socialists and trade-unionists of 1910 and 1920 wanted simply to bring about a social revolution, no matter what the means. In contrast, in the last years of Francoism, the prevalent mood was one of moderation. Economic prosperity, an obsession with political as well as economic security, a vague fear of the terrible experiences of the past, all of that united the opposition to Franco a gave them a new language of democracy. It was not that the revolutionaries had disappeared (some of them continued to write in *Triunfo*), but they never succeeded in bringing about the end of the regime through mass mobilizations and a general strike, as they repeatedly promised. Franco went on until the end protecting the security of Spaniards, as the propaganda insisted, watching until late into the night from his palace in El Pardo, as one light that shone permanently from his window showed to his subjects. The dictator died "peacefully" in his bed and the transition to democracy had to respect formally the Fundamental Laws in force, more or less manipulated, if it was to happen without major disturbances. Some say there was a point of cynicism in the suspect moderation of the Spanish population. If society was prepared for democracy, they probably thought, why hasten the end of the regime?

(*Triunfo* lasted until 1983. It survived Franco and the transition but not the division of the forces that had united in its pages most of the broad spectrer of tendencies in its pages, from communists to Christian-democrats, all in opposition to the regime)

### 3. NO END TO HISTORY: FRANCO'S FAR FROM PEACEFUL FINALE

Franco's regime ended with the dictator's death following a long illness. He was 83 and had governed Spain for almost forty years. Political forces of the left regretted that he had died "peacefully in bed". That is, that they had not been able to finish off his rule by political and social pressure. They had tried very hard indeed, starting in the sixties when the dark years of repression and isolation gave way to economic prosperity and a certain cosmetic opening of the regime. Spanish society as a whole preferred to wait. But did Franco die "peacefully"? Not really, unless he was very foolish, which he wasn't, and did not realize the extent of his failure. His aim had been to simply efface the historical problems of Spain by sheer power alone, to bring about "The End of History". He tried to enforce total centralization of government, the obedience of the working class to a rigid system of vertical or corporative trade unions and to govern culture and education according to the doctrines of the Catholic Church. In his later years he saw this edifice crumble and, what was perhaps worse, he had to recognise that his policies had been partly the cause of this disaster.

To begin with, Spain had to open itself up to the external world as a result of the very economic policies that reality had imposed upon it, and the regime had accepted, since 1959. Thousands of workers had to migrate to Europe to search for jobs, many students started to travel abroad to study in foreign universities, tourists flooded to Spain in search of cheap sun, nice food and beautiful landscapes and monuments. The example of foreign democracies took hold in Spanish society and resurrected problems for Spain that had been there since time immemorial and effectively hidden by Franco's effort to ignore them. Clandestine trade unions of various, mainly communist, inspiration organized successful strikes, in spite of the risk of seeing their leaders imprisoned as criminals. The church, after the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) decreed *aggiornamento* and a limited opening to the world, started to distance itself from its previous close association with the regime, conveniently forgetting the definition of the civil war as a

Crusade, something which had been a decisive factor for the outcome of the confrontation. University students and intellectuals lost their fear and staged continuous protests demanding democracy. Some of the most eminent professors joined them in their revolt and were deprived of their chairs. In spite of repression by the feared police in grey uniforms (*los grises*), popular culture in various forms, especially the cinema and pop music with a political message, also cried out for freedom.

The assassination of Admiral Carrero Blanco by ETA in December 1973 had a dramatic effect. It reminded everybody that, beyond violent terrorism, the problem of nationalism, of the problematic structure of the Spanish state, remained unsolved. Carrero had been one of Franco's closest advisers since 1940. He had risen steadily in the hierarchy of the regime and been given the post of Prime Minister at the beginning of 1973. Franco was already gravely ill and wanted his most trusted aid to monitor the transition to the new Monarchy, making sure that the political essence of his regime was maintained. He wanted, as the phrase went, to leave everything well tied up and with no loose ends. Basque nationalism had its roots in history and was exacerbated by Franco's insurgent army. In 1937, he decreed the end of the *fueros*, the centuries-long special economic regime of the Basque Provinces, and expressly declared some of them "traitors" for not having taken the "right" side in the civil war. ETA's attack against Carrero was aimed at shattering Franco's plans for the future and destabilising any new power that might emerge from the end of the regime, even provoking the military into staging a coup, exacerbating the contradictions according to the Marxist-Leninist dictum: the worse the better. Born in 1958 as a dissident branch of the Basque Nationalist Party, ETA ("Liberty for The Basque Country") soon became a terrorist organization and started a campaign of attacks to achieve the independence of the Basque country and the setting up of a socialist state. This violent campaign went in crescendo until it achieved its most spectacular coup. A powerful bomb exploded under the car of the pious Carrero Blanco when he was on his way for his daily attendance at Holy Mass. The powerful explosion blew the car high into the air and it ended up falling into the courtyard of the church, being blasted over a building that was many stories high.

Franco was to suffer still another shattering blow before passing away. It came from the South, from another traditional problem he had been unable to solve: Morocco. A protectorate shared by Spain and France since 1912, Franco had been compelled to grant independence to its part of the territory in the North in 1956, following the example of France. Decolonization was the order of the day. Furthermore, Franco was internationally alone and isolated, and he wanted to win the support of the Arab countries for his regime. Apart from the enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla in the North, Ifni and Western Sahara remained in the possession of Spain after independence. But not for long. Ifni, a narrow strip of land on the Western coast, had to be given up by Spain after a short and humiliating war (1956-1958) with the newly independent Morocco. Western Sahara still remained Spanish. Against the claim of the Moroccans to annex this phosphate-rich territory, Spain defended the self-determination of what she hastily had declared a kind of Spanish province with an autonomous government. The International Court at The Hague confirmed the legality of Spain's position in an Advisory Opinion requested by Morocco. It was issued on May 22, 1975 but Morocco was not ready to accept its conclusions. With Franco terminally ill since the beginning of October, the Moroccans took advantage of the Spanish *power vacuum*. They launched a huge human march into the Sahara, the notorious "Green March", and forced the Spanish authorities to renounce the administration of the territory. Sufficiently concerned with the aftermath of the imminent demise of the dictator, the regime abruptly changed course and, forgetting self-determination, on the 16<sup>th</sup> of November signed an agreement in Madrid that in fact handed the territory over to Morocco and Mauritania. Franco died six days later. He was probably unaware of this final defeat.



#### 4. THE JOY OF FREEDOM AND LAUGHTER

No tyranny can change the character of a people in a few years, no matter how hard it may try. If such a thing as the Spanish character does exist, and I believe there exists not one but several ways of being a Spaniard, it is clear that they would do whatever it takes to enjoy life even under the harshest conditions. In the humour magazine *La Codorniz* the best writers and cartoonists, led first by Miguel Mihura and later by Alvaro de Laiglesia, started in 1941 to make fun of everything except apparently sex, football, the Church and the civil and military authorities. They especially made fun of the limits the censors tried to set to their humor. But in a subtle way it was possible to make people laugh even about the taboos of Franco's regime if you were clever enough to circumvent the strictures of censorship. If not, your magazine would be temporarily closed and fined, which happened often. And you would try again and again, as did *La Codorniz*.

A new generation took command of the laughter industry before Franco died, when the culture had already evolved and was impatiently waiting for the imminent arrival of democracy. The first issue of *Hermano Lobo* (Brother Wolf) was published in 1972. It was one of several new humorous publications, much more explicitly critical than the ones of previous years, although still subtle and careful not to pass too far over the official limits. The front page of issue one showed a bullfighter sitting with a very serious expression on his face, the flag of the U.S. hanging from his arm instead of the typical torero's cape (*capote*). No objection possible from the censors, as OPS, (the nickname of a very young Andrés Rábago, later called El Roto) the author of the cartoon, probably thought. Many young talents took part in this revival of critical humor, including some very worthy writers. I remember especially the cartoons of Forges, who popularized a surrealist and nonsensical language, mocking the excessive and old-fashioned Spanish bureaucracy, no less than the contrast between old time Spain and the mentality of young liberals.

Something similar happened in other fields of popular culture. Spain started to laugh thanks to the cinema and popular literature be-

fore censorship was abolished in 1975. In the late seventies, film director Luis García Berlanga (1921-) presented a trilogy of quite hilarious criticism of Francoist social mores. In one film, a Catalan industrialist joins the high society in a hunting party in order to obtain a business advantage from a member of the government who is also taking part. In another, a monarchist aristocrat (loyal, naturally, to Don Juan, the legitimate heir to the Throne according to dynastic rules) returns from exile thinking that the traditional Court is to be restored around the new King Juan Carlos. He is shocked to find his old palace in Madrid almost in ruins and occupied by his fiercely Francoist wife, entrenched on a floor that she has declared the “national zone”, like the territory occupied by the winners of the civil war. And so on. Pedro Almodovar belonged to the following generation but started to produce films very early. His criticism was as sharp and funny as that of Berlanga, but it began to look more urban and ironic, less “Spanish” in tone if not in subject.

This evolution was even clearer in literature. United by necessity in the opposition against Franco, the previous generation of writers had presented a certain thematic monotony, a rather repetitive obsession with the civil war and the shabby life of the following decades of poverty and repression. After 1975, readers’ demands changed, as did literary style and subjects. They wanted entertainment and the writers gave them precisely that, in many different styles. Manuel Vázquez Montalbán, born in Barcelona in 1939, is for me the best example of this evolution. A member of the clandestine Communist Party, but gifted with a benevolent sense of humor, he created a series of absorbing thrillers in which a very insightful chronicle of the society of the transition years was disguised as the adventures of a detective: Pepe Carvalho solved his cases while cooking highly elaborate dishes with his girlfriend, the recipes of which were given in detail. Vázquez Montalbán was, in his own words, a “generally prolific” writer, poet, essayist and journalist present in several newspapers and magazines, and the author of some very serious novels. As Almodóvar had done in the cinema, a young and brilliant Javier Marías took over on the literary scene and, in the late seventies, started to write novels of a universal, or rather European, nature, a far cry from the gloomy atmosphere cultivated by the previous generation.

Last but not least, I think it is worth mentioning the abundance and quality of pop singers and songwriters who in the last years of Franco's regime started to channel the aspiration for freedom of the young, under the influence of protest-singers from North- and South-America and from France. Some started to defy official prohibitions by singing in the languages of Catalonia, the Basque Country, Valencia and Galicia. So they added their voices to the demands for self-government voiced by the peripheral regions of Spain. Joaquín Sabina best represented the spirit of cultural uprising that would later be known as *La Movida Madrileña* (Madrid's Movable Feast). Sabina's life and success is a real marvel of invention and adventure. Born in Jaen (Andalusia) in 1949, he was the son of a police officer and was raised in religious schools until he entered the University of Granada to study Arts. His main activity there, though, was to join in the political protests organized by the still clandestine leftist opposition (after a demonstration, he was arrested by his own father!). He later fled to London with a borrowed passport because he could not obtain one of his own. In London he lived as a squatter, writing poetry and singing in bars and political meetings organised by Spanish exiles. When he went back to Spain, he developed a very original, postmodern and radical style, in which he personally is blatantly present in his songs: his private life, his friendships and tastes, his political principles. He faithfully reflected the joy of living and also the frustrations and aspirations of the new generation of Spaniards. Involved in the mass-consumerism of show-business, his success has been enormous and well deserved. The song *Pobre Cristina* is a good example of Sabina's spirit: *era tan pobre/ que no tenía más que dinero* (Poor Christine, she was so poor that she had nothing but money).

(Manuel Vazquez Montalbán died in 2003, Luis García Berlanga, in 2010).

## 5. WELCOME, MISTER MARSHALL

Villar del Río, a small Spanish village in the middle of nowhere, prepares to receive the provincial governor and a delegation of “Americans” who are coming to announce the benefits of the Marshall plan. In marvellously hilarious speeches, the mayor and the impresario of a flamenco singer encourage the villagers to prepare a welcome that will surpass what neighboring villages might do in order to obtain the great quantities of money that the Americans are supposed to be bringing. This sets the scene for one of the best films in the history of Spanish cinema, *Bienvenido, Mister Marshall* (Welcome, mister Marshall), presented in 1953 by film director Luis García Berlanga. The realistic picture of rural life in the very poor Spain of the immediate postwar years is surprisingly free for the time. The speeches mock the pompous style of Francoist leaders and there is in them a hint of anti-American feeling. The visitors deserve to be welcomed with songs and a beautified village, says the impresario, because they have “noble but rather childish minds”. Maybe this irony made the film acceptable to the otherwise very strict censorship, in spite of the critical undertones of the story. In the end, the “Americans” did not stop in the village. Spain, due to her position in World War II, was excluded from the benefits of the Marshall plan and the U.S. stayed for good in several military bases they obtained from Franco in exchange for very marginal economic assistance.

1953 was indeed a decisive year for Spain’s foreign policy. The conditions of the military pact signed that year with the U.S. were very onerous. Some military support was given to the Spanish army but the pact didn’t establish an alliance between the two parties and, as was later discovered, a secret article allowed the U.S. to use the bases in the event of “imminent communist threat” without previous consultation with the Spanish government. In spite of all this, and also by virtue of the Concordat signed in the same year with the Vatican, Spain freed itself from the isolation that followed the victory of the Allied powers in World War II and gained some degree of international respectability. The end of the Spanish civil war in 1939 had coincided with the start of the World War and the sympathies of General Franco’s incipi-

ent regime were clearly with the Axis powers. It had officially declared its neutrality but joined Nazi Germany, Italy and Japan in the Anti-Comintern Pact. One of the main components of the regime, *Falange Española*, was closely linked to Italian Fascism and one of its leaders, Serrano Suñer, was Franco's very pro-German foreign minister (and his brother-in-law). Franco personally met Hitler in 1940 in order to offer his collaboration but the demands of the Führer were too high for an exhausted Spain (he wanted, among other things, a military base in the Canary Islands). The discreet threats of the Allies probably did the rest. Afterwards, Franco limited his pro-German enthusiasm to some anti-American rhetoric and an army division he sent to Russia to support the German offensive of 1941.

Franco was extremely conservative but no ideologue, fascist or otherwise. When he saw the tides turning in the war and the Anglo-Americans in the North of Africa, he declared that "Spain neither was nor ever had been fascist". Hitler was indignant but Franco wanted to stay in power at all cost and he did what he had to do: he dismissed his pro-German foreign minister, reiterated his policy of neutrality and started discreetly to court the winning side. At the same time, he applied certain cosmetic measures to his regime in order to make it more palatable to the very reluctant Western democracies. In his foreign policy, he changed his tune and presented himself as the most ardent anti-communist, which he probably was. To no avail: Franco's was a very harsh dictatorship and nobody was quite ready to forget his initial leanings toward the Germans. After the Allied victory, he was seen as a loser, excluded from the United Nations and condemned by the Security Council in a resolution of 1947 that decreed the isolation of the regime and recommended the severance of diplomatic relations with Spain. Only Portugal, which had a similar right-wing regime, the neutral Switzerland and the Holy See maintained representatives in Madrid. It was really "a time of silence", as author Luis Martin-Santos aptly put it, and a time of poverty. Spain was left out of the European Recovery Programme (the Marshall Plan) and left alone in her strange policy of economic "autarky". It was hardly an attractive place for Western investment.

But the isolation did not last for long. The Cold War came to Franco's rescue and his proclaimed anti-communism was seen as a

useful tool for the U.S. policy of “containment” against the Soviet Union. The Americans and the British (after a notorious speech by Winston Churchill), who in the U.N. had already opposed specific sanctions against Spain, started to accept the idea of rebuilding the broken bridges. In Washington, the resistance of public opinion was countered by a strong lobby made up of Catholics, military chiefs and hardline anti-communists. Thus the Pact of 1953 was born. President Eisenhower travelled to Madrid in 1959 to embrace Franco and both the Pact and a long-term policy of support for the regime permitted it to last until the dictator’s death.

But the relationship was never a warm one. Leaving aside deeper grievances of the past (above all, the humiliating defeat of Spain by the U.S. in the Spanish-American war of 1898), the Spanish military resented the conditions of the 1953 Pact and together with Franco’s diplomacy tried once and again to balance its terms. The secret clause was deleted in subsequent Agreements, economic assistance was increased and control of the use of the military bases was shared, at least in theory, with the Spanish authorities. But neither the U.S. nor the Europeans agreed to consider Spain a fully-fledged ally. Not even in 1976, after Franco’s death, when the Americans agreed to frame the defense relationship in a full Treaty in order to support the faltering Monarchy of Juan Carlos I, was it possible to upgrade it. The U.S. Senate accompanied the ratification of the Treaty with a declaration that made this crystal-clear: “This Treaty does not expand the existing United States defense commitment in the North Atlantic Area or create a defense commitment between the United States and Spain”.

No wonder some of the people of Villar del Río, led by an old republican and the local teacher, were only half-hearted when asked to prepare a lively reception for the “Americans”.

(Spain joined NATO in 1982 and signed a modernized version of the Defense Agreement in 1988, reducing the American presence on military bases in its territory).

## 6. A LATIN-AMERICAN LITERARY BOOM

At the beginning of the 1960s a great cultural upheaval started to shake a Spain that was just beginning to recover from the lethargic condition of the post-war years. Was it Vargas Llosa with his 1962 novel *The Time of the Hero* (*La ciudad y los perros*)? Or was it Cortazar's *Rayuela* of 1963? The question about who was responsible for triggering the explosion was open to discussion, but not the fact that the boom had actually happened. The Spanish literary market was inundated with novels and stories by these writers, plus many others like Carlos Fuentes, Jorge Amado and Gabriel García Márquez. It was like a new conquest, but this time, Spain was being conquered by America.

They brought with them a new kind of literature. It was, as had always been the case in the New World, full of the landscapes and the colours of the different countries where the authors came from. But this time, they were inspired by the best European modern classics, Joyce, Proust, Mann or Sartre, and they broke with the traditional, rather provincial or indigenous, writings of former generations of Latin-Americans. Their subjects were strongly influenced by the political circumstance of the time, for, in the aftermath of the Cuban revolution of 1959, the dominant regimes in the Continent were military dictatorships: Argentina, Chile, Brazil, Peru, not to mention Central America. Their styles were avant-garde like the models they followed, and they made daring experiments in the use of language and the free treatment of time. They created a fascinating mixture of fantasy and reality which became their trade-mark. "Magic realism", as this new style was called, came to life mainly with the publication in 1967 of the enormously successful *One Hundred Years of Solitude* by the Colombian Gabriel García Márquez. With an astounding capacity for flowing narrative, the novel tells the story of a village in the middle of the Colombian forest, Macondo, and a family, the Buendía, who, through seven generations, witness the foundation, growth and decadence of their small world. To give just one example: the rain falls endlessly on the head of one of the old Buendía, who sits on the threshold of his house, waiting, he says, to watch his own funeral pass by.

In Spain, the young writers of the “boom” awakened a renewed interest in their precursors, the very valuable writers of the previous generation: Borges, Asturias, Carpentier and Uslar Pietri among others. And we should not forget that the Nicaraguan poet, Rubén Darío, had introduced Spain to the European aesthetics of fin-de siècle modernism with an exotic touch, in what many saw as a first re-conquest of Spain by Latin American culture. But the civil war had interrupted the sophistication of the so-called 1927 generation, inspired initially by modernism. Many good writers went into exile and wrote excellent literature. And within Spain too there was a revival in the years following the end of the war. After all, as the Mexican, Carlos Fuentes, has recalled, Franco did not succeed in “holding hostage the totality of Spanish cultural life”. A remarkable number of authors, like Camilo José Cela, Rafael Sanchez-Ferlosio and Miguel Delibes, recovered the tradition of the Spanish novel in the 1950’s, in a sort of neo-realism that rejected the pure aestheticism of modernist literature. Their subjects were, inevitably, the harsh conditions of life in poverty-ridden Spain, no less than the civil war itself and the questions as to how Spain could have fallen into such barbaric depths of fraternal violence.

Is it any wonder that, in this rather depressing atmosphere, the Latin-American “boom” would explode and have such a massive success? Spaniards of the 1898 Generation had not paid much attention to American culture. Perhaps the new countries had not been fully able to develop culturally in the decades after the wars of Independence. Perhaps their rural subjects were not of sufficient interest to a turbulent 19th century Spain. Perhaps, as some have malevolently suggested, a degree of resentment against the lost colonies was also present in the Spaniards of the 19th century. Who knows? It is certain that Valle-Inclán, after living in Mexico at the beginning of the 20th century, was the first to introduce the colourfulness of landscapes, the passion and the heat of the hotlands (*tierra caliente*) in his novels: *Tirano Banderas* is one more of the many novels depicting Latin-American *caudillos*, this time written, it is true, by a rather extravagant Spaniard. Ortega y Gasset too travelled to and lived in America and dedicated some interesting reflections to the new continent. In a philosophical vein, he delivered an important lecture in Argentina in 1939, under the title *Meditation of a Young People* (*Meditación del pueblo joven*),



which analyzes the colonial experience: how highly civilized people start a new life in territories with a less advanced culture. How these people have sophisticated means to solve the simplest problems of primitive life. How in the process they become “young”, a new people with a probably unjustified sense of superiority they had not enjoyed in their country of origin.

Nothing of this can compare with the fascination the Spaniards of the 1960's had with the flow of good literature that invaded the country following the famous “boom”. Why, one could ask? A first and probably sufficient explanation is the sheer quality of the works, mostly novels of the highest value, rich in invention and innovative in language. Then, I suppose, there is a special attraction caused by the change of scene, an exuberance of tropical shades of green, the colours of the flowers and the brilliant, endless skies. The Spaniards could not but receive all this luminosity with a sense of relief and enchantment which liberated them from the dreariness of their daily life. Their lives were poor not only economically but above all culturally, dominated as they were by the banal and prosaic propaganda of a dictatorship that tried to limit creation and keep it within the narrow frontiers of traditional Spanish values. Last, but not least, in what they found in these newly arrived novels they could read amply about dictators of a picturesque or cruel nature, or both. Something that was not possible to write about in Spain was supplied abundantly by the American authors. The Spaniards could project their fear or they hatred on to those sinister characters. Or they could, more dangerously, laugh at the most ridiculous among them: *El Señor Presidente* by Asturias, *Conversaciones en la Catedral* by Vargas Llosa, *El Otoño del Patriarca* by García Marquez, *El Recurso del Método* by Alejo Carpentier, *Oficio de Difuntos* by Uslar-Pietri are some that come to my mind. They form a remarkable collection to add to Valle-Inclán's ground-breaking *Tirano Banderas*.

(García Márquez received the Nobel Prize in 1982. Vargas Llosa in 2010)

## 7. “MOGAMBO”, OR MOTHER CHURCH IS WATCHING YOU

Seen by an outsider, Islam is the closest you can get if you want to understand the relationship of the Catholic Church with the Spanish State during the Franco years, 1936-1975. The Spanish bishops had been the most valuable support for the insurrection against the II Republic, which they proclaimed to be a “Crusade”, a religious war rather than a political or social one. Their support helped the military to win the adhesion of many decent Catholics who were terrified by the violence of radical anti-clericalism. General Franco wanted to make sure that the Church’s protection would continue to underpin his regime once the conflict ended. Starting in 1938, he began to legislate feverishly in order to restore the rights and privileges the Church had lost in the Republican Constitution of 1931. Tax exemptions, generous grants, modifications in the marriage laws, practically exclusive control over education... With all this, the regime in fact inserted the Church into the State, made it a substantial part of its essence: the Spanish State, according to a Decree of 1939, is “conscious that its greatness and unity rest on the foundations of the Catholic faith, the supreme inspiration for its imperial enterprises...”

This was probably the ideology of the most extreme faction of the insurgent forces and they acted according to their convictions. But we must remember the circumstances in which the world found itself at that moment: Franco was closely associated with Germany and Italy in the first years of World War II, whereas the Holy Church in Rome tried to strike a delicate balance between the Axis and the Allies. The Pope was not so eager to give open support to Franco and a new Concordat would not be signed until 1953, not by coincidence the very same year as the U.S. eased the isolation of Spain with a military agreement. To achieve the Concordat, Franco was obliged to court the Vatican very intensely. He even was ready to go to extremes. In 1941 his Ambassador to the Holy See signed an agreement on the appointment of bishops in which Spain renounced a privilege she had enjoyed since 1508, when the Pope, in the context of the evangelization of the New World, had given to King Ferdinand “the Catholic” the right to

appoint church dignitaries along with other privileges. This was the so called “Royal Patronage” that, in effect, had put the Church under the control of the Monarchy.

This system of so-called “Regalism” had been expressly confirmed by the concordats of 1753 and 1851 and only suspended by the republican constitutions of 1873 (which never entered into force) and 1931, which proclaimed: “The Spanish State has no official religion”. In the very spasmodic history of Spain in the 19th century, however, the union of Church and State was constant. The Cádiz constitution of 1812 went as far as to declare “the Catholic, Apostolic, Roman religion” the religion of the Spanish Nation and “the only true” religion. This was naturally a concession to tradition made to compensate for the obviously liberal character of the rest of the surprisingly modern system of 1812. The rest of the constitutions approved until 1931, confirmed the confessional nature of the State. Even in 1869, at the start of a revolutionary period, the constitution, without declaring Catholicism to be the religion of the Nation, accepted the compromise of economically maintaining the cult and the ministers of the Church. In the *Fuero de los Españoles*, a Fundamental Law of 1945, Franco went very far in this peculiar story: “The profession and practice of the Catholic religion, which is the one of the Spanish State, shall enjoy official protection”.

Yes, you may have observed that the word “nation” has been appearing from time to time, instead of “State”. This question deserves an explanation. The entrenchment of religion and power has deep roots in Spain. It goes back to the Middle Ages, when in 586 the Visigoth King Recaredo converted to Catholicism and granted to the Church practically the power to govern Spain through its councils of bishops. This alliance was strengthened in the centuries-long religious war against Islam and maintained in modern times, as we have seen, with the “Royal Patronage”. The idea of “nation” came later. It came from revolutionary France and was initially rejected by the Spanish Church as foreign and liberal, which it was. But in the century of nationalism it was not possible to reject this most appealing of political ideas. The Church, therefore, finished up by accepting the existence of a Spanish “nation” as long as it was identified with the Catholic religion. So national-Catholicism was born, which was another word for clericalism. It soon clashed with anti-clericalism, which was fashionable in France and Portugal at the end of the 19th century, but it was much

more aggressive in Spain than in those countries. Some very violent and destructive actions, including numerous burnings of churches and monasteries, took place in Barcelona in 1909 and led decades later to extreme polarization and civil war.

But let us go back to 1953. With his brand new Concordat, Franco obtained the full recognition of Rome and international respectability among Catholics worldwide. He also obtained some ceremonial privileges within the churches and the addition to the liturgy of the holy mass of a prayer for “ducem nostrum Franciscus (Franco)” (our chief Francis). In exchange, he gave the Church more privileges than it had ever had in the past, including a certain right to survey social morality. Censorship was the competence of the government but was executed according to the standards of the Church, sometimes peculiarly interpreted. I remember going to the cinema to watch *Mogambo*, John Ford’s movie precisely of 1953. Initially, I could not quite understand the plot in the Spanish version. At first I thought this was due to my deficient knowledge of the language but later I understood the reason for my confusion: the censors had changed the dialogues and cut some scenes completely in order to present the leading roles played by Clark Gable and Grace Kelly as brother and sister. To avoid the immoral spectacle of an open adultery they preferred to suggest incest.

As we have seen, in 1953 Franco also gave back to the Church the right to name bishops that the Spanish monarchs had enjoyed for centuries. Now, according to the Concordat, he would present three names for the Pope to appoint the one of his choice. Here he made a fatal mistake. After Vatican Council II in 1963 had decreed that the Church should open up to the world, the Spanish prelates and priests divided sharply between the ultra-conservatives and those who understood that times were changing and wanted to prepare the Church for the foreseeable transition to democracy. These found a leader in Monsignor Enrique y Tarancón, whom Pope Paul VI, no friend of Franco’s regime, had given the position of cardinal. The Pope chose him among the three names proposed to direct the Archbishopric of Madrid. Tarancón gave the old and ailing Caudillo a few headaches. He also unleashed the fury of the most recalcitrant ultra-rightists, who wanted him shot, shouting: *¡Tarancón al paredón!* (Tarancón to the firing squad!).

## 8. SPAIN GOES TO THE MOVIES: BUÑUEL, ETC

*Cinelandia* is an imaginary city in the middle of nowhere, surrounded by deserts and built in disparate styles: “it has a certain touch of Constantinople, with a mixture of Tokyo, a certain touch of Florence and much of New York”. Governed dictatorially by Emerson, the boss of the movie industry, all kinds of adventurers come to live there, hoping to build a career and become rich. This story belongs to a novel written by Ramon Gómez de la Serna (1888-1963). A prolific author, inventor of a special kind of surrealist aphorisms called *Greguerías*, he produced a great number of novels, most of them comic. He wrote the script for *Los Caprichos*, an early film by Luis Buñuel, and came into contact with Picasso and the Dadaist movement. But he was unique, “a unipersonal generation” as someone called him, fully immersed in surrealism, the de-humanized art of the time. *Cinelandia* is, of course, a parody of Hollywood, and the novel was published in 1923.

It was the era of silent films, which had created a huge industry everywhere; it was no different in Spain, where the people were, and still are, extremely fond of this kind of entertainment. The advent of sound films around 1930 caused the collapse of the cinema studios, mainly in Barcelona. A difficult new start was attempted at a time of economic crisis. It was also a time of enjoyment, when the II Republic, turbulent as it was in politics, gave the Spanish people a new sense of freedom and *joie-de-vivre*. The first talking picture produced in Spain was titled *I want to be taken to Hollywood* (Edgar Neville, 1931) and shows the fascination the American movies had for the masses. American competition made it difficult for the Spanish producers to make much progress, but in 1935 a total of 24 films were on the screens, some of them with great popular success. The civil war of 1936-1939 caused a new collapse and made the new start difficult. Due to the imposition of a clerical culture by Franco's regime, the forties and the fifties were, as theatre critic José Monleón called them, “an endless Holy Week”. The incipient industry produced mostly films adapted to the ruling ideology: plenty of religious films, lives of saints and miracles in convents, also patriotic and historic stories. General Franco was himself

a film lover and had written the script for one of them: *Raza* (race). For lighter entertainment the public was given numerous love stories featuring the pop singers known as *folklóricas*, Lola Flores, Carmen Sevilla, Antonio Molina, and many others.

Sara Montiel, for a time an exotic Hollywood star (“Vera Cruz” in 1954, “Run of the Arrow”, etc.), was a *folklórica* of a new kind. Frivolous and sensual, she specialized in a more cosmopolitan vaudeville reminiscent of the “roaring twenties”. Her time represented a new opening. As of 1962, the government started to subsidize the film industry to compensate for the overwhelming competition from the United States and also from the movies coming from France and Italy. Of course, censorship acted decisively to protect the morals of the Spaniards. Many good foreign films were simply banned, obliging film-lovers to travel to nearby France to watch them (Bertolucci’s *Last Tango in Paris* caused a massive exodus to Perpignan, which was very embarrassing for the Spanish authorities). Others were shown in Spain after being severely mutilated. Politics and progressive ideas were mostly suppressed, erotic scenes cut to a minimum. I remember seeing some of my Spanish friends reading film criticism in foreign magazines to learn what the movies were really about. Spanish filmmakers, in this atmosphere, had a hard time, but made very remarkable films. Of course they could not create in the modish French style of the “Nouvelle Vague”, but some neo-realistic films had quality and were very successful. They were really “virtuoso” in the art of circumventing censorship. Luis García Berlanga, to mention just one, developed a great skill in this kind of simulation. His films are a very faithful reproduction of the poor and repressed society he lived in, and their humor was lethal for the established prudery and the official optimism. But they contain many metaphors and hints which were difficult to denounce as political criticism, and are full of tender humor. Reality itself was the most effective parody of the social mores.

Of course, the great personality of Spanish cinema was Luis Buñuel, a true genius and an important figure in universal culture. From 1939 until the end of his life in 1983 he lived outside of Spain, in the U.S. and in Mexico, so that he did not have to suffer the limitations of censorship. He was free and thoroughly used his freedom. Born in 1900 in a small village in Aragón, poor and surrounded by dry fields,

he was the son of a rich businessman, a returning emigrant from the Americas (*indiano*), where he had made his fortune. He soon revealed himself as a natural leader and a person of powerful imagination. Intelligent and strong in mind and body, amateur boxer, violinist and hypnotist, he could not stand the repressive education of the Jesuits of Saragossa and went to Madrid to continue his studies. He was lucky. His parents found lodgings for him in the prestigious *Residencia de Estudiantes*, the meeting point of the liberal, educated bourgeoisie of the capital. His friends there were no less than the poet Federico García-Lorca and the painter (and writer) Salvador Dalí. He met Ramón Gómez de la Serna and other writers and embarked upon the provocation and challenge of surrealism.

He went, like so many Spanish artists, to Paris, where he learnt how to make films. He was determined to shock and insult the bourgeoisie and he started with a film he made together with Dalí: *Le Chien Andalou* (*The Andalusian Dog*), an improvised mixture of dreams and sado-masochistic images. In 1931 he went back to Spain and became involved in the politics of the II Republic. He enrolled in the Communist Party and did his best to free himself of the reputation of petit-bourgeois that was normally attached to surrealism. To this end, he made the impressive documentary *Tierra sin Pan* (*Land without Bread*), which crudely depicted the extremely poor region of Las Hurdes, in the North of the region of Extremadura. He served the propaganda of the Republican cause through cinema. In 1939 he was in the U.S. working in Hollywood and New York and could neither go back to Spain nor adapt to the American way of life. He then went to live in Mexico, where he spent the rest of his life. His best films were made in France and Spain in the sixties: *Tristana*, *Viridiana*, *The discreet charm of the bourgeoisie*. These and many others come to mind, together with their main characteristics: they use images taken from dreams and the subconscious mind, they give voice to the rebellion against religious taboos and sexual repression, they defend human liberty and compassion for the poor and the oppressed. Buñuel's style is very personal and unmistakable. Ingmar Bergmann once said: "Buñuel almost always made Buñuel films".

## 9. HISTORY IN EXILE: CLAUDIO SANCHEZ-ALBORNOZ VS. AMERICO CASTRO

During and after the civil war of 1936-39 many thousands of Spaniards had to abandon their country. Most of them were the defeated soldiers of the republican camp who managed to flee and so avoid the terrible repression that followed. Some were, or considered themselves, neutral. They couldn't identify themselves with one side or the other in the conflict, once these became both extreme caricatures of the civilized confrontation of ideas and interests that politics is supposed to be. Among them were many intellectuals, probably the best and the brightest. Outstanding Spanish novels and poetry were written abroad, the best scientific research was done in foreign universities, the best music and painting, the best cinema, were all born in exile. Also some of the best historians fled from Spain while the victors were busy constructing an ideological history, invented to strengthen their power.

These historians wrote about Spain with passion and nostalgia that were intensified by the feeling of having been forcibly uprooted. They also had a sense of distance, inspired by visions of the whole country that were larger than those they held as true when they lived in the middle of professional discussions or political struggles. Among these historians, Américo Castro and Claudio Sánchez-Albornoz played the leading roles in a far-reaching discussion on the essence of "being a Spaniard", on what made the Spanish people so "special", on at what point in time it could be said that a person started to call him or herself a Spaniard. I suspect that many peoples in the world consider themselves to be "special", not only the Spanish. But it is hard to find so much dedication to this subject, such an obsession with identity and the problematic nature of a nation as I found in Spain.

Castro (1885-1972) was born by chance in Brazil, where his parents were involved in business. His family went back to Spain and, after having studied in Granada and Paris, Américo became a professor of History of the Spanish Language in Madrid. He was sent by the Government of the II Republic as Ambassador to Berlin in 1931 and in 1938 went into exile in the U.S. where he worked as a professor for



the rest of his life. Claudio Sánchez-Albornoz (1893-1984) was born in Avila, versed himself as a successful historian and led a more public life than Castro in the years of the Republic. He became Chancellor of the University of Madrid in 1932, parliamentarian, minister and ambassador to Lisbon before he left for Buenos Aires in 1936. After the war, he was appointed President of the Republic in exile from 1962 until 1971 and went back to Spain to die in his native Avila. These were not the only historians who worked in exile, but they waged the most famous and bitter controversy over the history of Spain. They both wanted to write history and not philosophy or literature, as the writers of the 1898 generation had done, some decades earlier. But they were as concerned with the regeneration of Spain as their predecessors and they gave it a new sense of urgency. The civil war had enhanced the problem, and the failure of previous generations to solve it, with tragic undertones.

Castro was at the origin of the controversy when, in 1948, he published his book *Spain in her History (Christians, Moors and Jews)*. It was not a usual book of History but a series of sketches, as the author called them. He wanted to show when it was that Spaniards began to be Spanish, and what was so special about being Spanish. For Castro, a people is defined by its "vital abode" (*morada vital*), the horizon of possibilities that is presented to it, and by its "livingness" (*vividura*), that is, the way they have lived these possibilities, the choices they have made faced with the difficulties and opportunities they encountered. An idea reminiscent of Ortega y Gasset's definition: "I am myself and my circumstances". For Castro, a distinctive way of being that could be called Spanish didn't start to exist before the 8th century and was created by a strong attachment to religious beliefs in the interaction of three "castes": the dominant Christians, the Moors and the Jews. For him, this contexture lived on long after the massive conversions or expulsions of *Moriscos* and Jews created in Spain an appearance of religious uniformity. The Christians were the fighters and lived according to beliefs, whereas the other two castes had the ideas necessary to deal with practical life (another of Ortega's well-known propositions: "ideas are held but one is possessed by beliefs").

From Argentina, Don Claudio Sánchez-Albornoz reacted to these ideas with incredible, almost comical, fury. After a life spent writing

history, he said he had felt it a painful duty of conscience to prevent the ideas of Castro, his respected friend (!), from expanding among historians working in Spain. As his response, in 1956 he published a 1,500-page book entitled *Spain, a Historical Enigma*. It was a beautiful account of his ideas about Spain based on premises that were totally different from those that supported Castro's thesis. Well, not so different, since, as did Castro, he admitted that he did not want to write the history of Spain, but to understand it. This he tried to do working as a professional historian, supporting his ideas on the analysis of precise data and documents. Not on purely literary sources, as Castro, a linguist, had done according to him. He criticized Castro for despising the salient political and military feats, which for him were the real backbone of a people's history. Against what he calls an absurd and clumsy theory, he affirms that the Spaniards had already been Spanish long before the 8th century, since the time of Roman domination and even before. The Romans and Visigoths had unified the country for the first time politically, culturally and economically (Castro replied in a later version of his book with a new chapter titled: *the Visigoths were not Spaniards*). Finally, Don Claudio minimized the influence of Moorish culture on the development of the Spanish "character": Islamization was slow, he wrote, and it is not difficult to find pre-Muslim traces in Moorish Spain.

At the height of the argument, Sanchez-Albornoz had to defend himself against the accusation of Castilian imperialism coming from the Spanish periphery. He affirmed the preeminence of Castile in the construction of Spain but denied that it had subjugated the other Spanish peoples. He countered his critics with an interesting idea: the plurality of Spain is better explained through the study of the historical facts and sources than through nationalistic mythical inventions.

## 10. NIGHTS IN THE GARDENS OF SPAIN

In the spring of 1964 I attended a concert in Madrid in which Manuel de Falla's work *Nights in the Gardens of Spain* was performed by the Spanish National Orchestra. I have forgotten who the conductor was, but not the soloist: he was an elderly maestro José Cubiles, the same pianist who had premiered the work many years earlier, on April 9<sup>th</sup>, 1916. *The Nights*, as the work is usually called by music lovers, re-sounds with distant dances in the gardens in the evenings of Granada and Cordova. It doesn't precisely quote popular flamenco melodies, it is not descriptive but expressive. Orchestral colours, rhythms and impressionistic techniques are employed to "evoke places, sensations and feelings", in the words of Falla himself. The composer's inspiration came from two sources combined together: the songs of musicologist Felipe Pedrell *Nights of Spain* and the series of paintings by the Catalan painter Santiago Rusiñol titled *Gardens of Spain*.

Pedrell was Manuel de Falla's professor of composition in Madrid when the composer was 20 years old. Falla was born in Cádiz in 1876 and started an early and successful career as a pianist and composer. In Madrid he continued his studies and wrote music for the piano and several *zarzuelas*, light operettas in the post-romantic, nationalistic style of the time. His friend, the poet Gerardo Diego, called the compositions of this period "Pre-Manuel de Ante-Falla". Very soon, in 1905, Falla composed his first important work, the opera *The Brief Life*, a gipsy nocturne set in Granada's Albaicín district. Then, well advised by another friend and composer from Seville, Joaquín Turina, he went to live in Paris, as Spanish musicians and artists usually did. In the capital of impressionism Falla encountered the most important composers of the day, Debussy, Ravel, Dukas, Fauré...and soon assimilated their teachings. He also met Pablo Picasso, Igor Stravinsky and the leader of the Russian Ballet company, Serghei Diaghilev, who later staged one of Falla's ballets.

The start of the Great War in 1914 obliged Falla to return to Madrid, where he produced his most outstanding works under French influence: the *Nights*, and the ballets *Love the Magician* from 1915 and

*The Three-Cornered Hat*, finished in 1917 and premiered in London at the Alhambra Theater, with stage and costumes designed by Picasso. This brilliant and humorous ballet, based on a novel by Pedro Antonio de Alarcón, was a great success. Falla had evolved away from the local color and literal use of the folklore of Spain's nationalistic musical school. He thus achieved great sophistication and a personal style that transcended the popular sources of his music, seeking instead to achieve a synthesis similar to what the Hungarian composer Béla Bartok was doing with the songs and dances of the Gypsies of central Europe. Another friend, composer and outstanding musicologist of the time, Adolfo Salazar, beautifully described the way Falla abandoned the picturesque fashion: "It is not the character of the model that creates a work of art but the artist's purpose and the adequate realization of that purpose. Those nationalistic composers who sought values of greater transcendence have created an art which, deeply rooted in their native tradition, is nonetheless universal".

In 1920, Falla established himself in Granada and continued to travel, giving concerts and lectures on his music and flamenco. His ambition was high: he was a concert pianist but didn't write for performance as a virtuoso, in the style of Albéniz or Granados. In this period of maturity, his compositions experienced yet another evolution towards a certain neo-classicism similar to that proposed by Stravinsky. In *Master Peter's Puppet Show* from 1923, based on an episode of Cervantes's *Don Quixote*, the source of inspiration is more Castilian than Andalusian, and in the *Concerto for Harpsichord and chamber orchestra* (1926) Falla reaches the highest degree of economy of means, with only a few instruments and rather dry sonorities. In Granada, the composer frequented a group of artists and poets of the 1927 Generation. He became a close friend of Federico García Lorca, who in his poetry was experiencing an evolution similar to what Falla attempted in his music: from the popular songs and stories of the *Gypsy Ballads* he had evolved to the highly intellectual *Poet in New York*.

Manuel de Falla, in spite of his success as a composer and pianist, didn't have an easy life. It is said that Stravinsky would tease him for his obsessive religiosity and his lack of a sense of humour. He was often sick as a child and as an adolescent, suffering frequent nervous crises. He was an extreme perfectionist in his work and very ascetic in

his way of life. As a fervent Catholic, and in spite of his liberal views, he protested at the violent manifestations of anti-clericalism that became frequent when the II Spanish Republic was proclaimed in 1931. He protested equally at the imprisonment and assassination of García Lorca by the “national” insurgents soon after the Civil War broke out in 1936. After showing a certain understanding towards the Francoist uprising, at the end of the war in 1939 he did as other “neutral” intellectuals had done, who could not condone the violence of the two extremes in the struggle: he left Spain and joined a sister who lived in Argentina in the mountains of Alta Gracia, near Córdoba, where he stayed until he died in 1946. During his years in Argentina, he tried to finish a work he had started many years earlier, the orchestral oratorio *La Atlántida* (*Atlantis*). This was a rather strange and ambitious project, based on a long epic poem written by the 19th century poet Jacinto Verdaguer in the Catalan language. In it, stories related with the birth of Catalonia in mythical times, with the participation of Heracles included, were blended with the dream of Queen Isabella in which she anticipated the conquest of America for Christianity and the arrival of Christopher Columbus to the shores of the New World.

Falla worked hard for twenty years on this project, even learning the original language of the poem, which was his mother’s Catalan, but he could not complete it in his lifetime. He left the material to his disciple Ernesto Halffter, who finished the composition and it had its premiere in 1961 in Barcelona. *Atlantis* is undoubtedly a great masterpiece, but it has not attained the popularity of his earlier works. Perhaps because it doesn’t sound quite like Falla.

## 11. THE II REPUBLIC 1931-1939: SPAIN'S THIRD REVOLUTION

All revolutions are violent. They might not be bloody, but they must use enough force to achieve the change they want to bring about in the status quo. 1820, 1868, 1931 are the years of Spain's three attempts at radical changes in the social and political organization of the State. The three were violently interrupted. The II Republic was the only one of the three that was not launched by a military coup. It came about peacefully and even joyously. It had the hallmarks of a real revolution and in certain ways was an imitation of the French and Russian Revolutions of 1789 and 1917. It wanted to open Spain up to Europe, to break with the traditional monarchy, with clericalism, with centralism... A tall order, certainly. Before the municipal election of April 1931, which precipitated the ousting of the monarchy and King Alfonso XIII, a group of intellectuals and politicians had met to define the future of Spain. They wanted all the historical problems of the country solved at once. A new Constitution was approved, an advanced text inspired by the German Weimar Constitution (1919). The powers of the executive were restricted, Church and State were separated, agrarian reform promised. Too much to be accomplished by thinkers or politicians without any political experience, although brilliant and dogmatic. Inevitably, they met with formidable resistance.

The dictatorship of Primo de Rivera (1923-1929) had fallen due mainly to the Wall Street crash of 1929. The II Republic suffered from the deep world depression that followed. The State was poor. There was no money to redistribute land, to grant general public education, to pay compensation to the unemployed, to continue the policy of public construction of infrastructures that Primo de Rivera had started in times of economic bonanza. The intentions were good and the projects reasonable, but they were rejected by the powerful: large land estate owners, industrialists and bankers, and the Church. The frustrated masses became radicalized. Led by socialists, anarchists and communists they demanded a deep

and immediate social revolution, with frequent and often riotous strikes.

The separation of Church and State was also accomplished with little regard to the realities of power. Acting with naïve dogmatism, the government declared its purpose was to establish a public, secular system of education. This was going too far. It attacked the main privilege the Church had enjoyed for centuries, its main instrument for controlling Spanish society. Such a step would have required great prudence on the part of the authorities. On the contrary, they were taken in a provocative way that ignored the real power the Church still held over the people at large. Prime Minister Manuel Azaña, an otherwise civilized and able leader, declared: "Spain has ceased to be Catholic". As if wanting to confirm these words with hard facts, in May 1931 anarchist mobs set fire to numerous churches and convents in Madrid and Andalusia. They not only enraged the Church, they scared the many Catholics who in good faith had supported or at least tolerated the arrival of the republican regime.

Military reform was also on the table. A reduction of the forces and changes in the army's organization created irritation among the officers, already on rather unfriendly terms with the Republic due to their traditional alliance with the Church. On top of it all, the Constitution declared Spain an "integral state" but granted autonomy to the regions and very soon, in September 1932, gave an advanced statute of self-government to Catalonia. This was the main motive for the estrangement of the armed forces and the Republic. They saw these developments as a threat to the unity of the nation.

The Republic failed, as could be expected, after a short and turbulent life, a true "march of folly". Diplomat and historian Salvador de Madariaga lucidly summed up the reasons for this failure: a central body of political action, formed by republicans and moderate socialists, could not be formed. They were not prepared to abandon their particular interests and identities. Therefore, the only forces that were politically effective were the extremes, the revolutionaries and the fascists. In the middle, the Republic remained powerless. In 1934, the appearance of totalitarian regimes in Germany and Italy added an additional, external factor to the equation: the fear of fascism made the leftist forces still more radical. The government decided to bring the

army stationed in Morocco to quell the revolutionary strikes in Asturias and Catalonia, which they did with strong determination and many casualties. Their commander was General Francisco Franco. He would soon be coming back with the same troops, in 1936, starting Spain's civil war. On July 17, Franco issued a long *pronunciamiento* calling his companions in arms to rebel against the government of the II Republic. The reasons: what he saw as the threat of a communist revolution and impending dangers for the unity of the homeland. 300,000 fell in combat, half that number died of famine and illness, many thousands were imprisoned or exiled.

Within the two fighting camps, profound changes occurred in the course of the war. On the republican side, anarchists and communists struggled for control, the former urging an immediate social revolution, while the latter wanted to concentrate on winning the war first. In the end, the anarchists were eliminated but the Republic lost the war. In the "national zone", discipline was soon established. The generals had accepted Franco temporarily as the director of the war but in 1937 he performed what amounted to a coup inside the coup. He decreed the unification of all the factions, civil and military, that had supported him in a single party, the National Movement. The bishops declared Franco's war effort a "Crusade" and a new State was born. It was not the totalitarian solution the fascist Falange wanted. The Church, the military and the economic powers preferred a hybrid, a Military-Theocratic State which was more favourable to their interests. The Monarchy and the social revolution would have to wait. Franco, the temporary commander, was proclaimed *Generalissimo* for life and he ruled Spain indeed until his death, showing a remarkable capacity to adapt to the internal and external circumstances of each moment. The Caudillo, as he was usually called, installed a new Bourbon Monarchy. He sidelined the liberal legitimate heir to the crown, and his son, the future king Juan Carlos, was proclaimed heir to the throne solemnly in 1969. But he had to wait until "later".

How was it possible that Spain came to suffer such a tragedy? In a country torn by civil war one side has to win, but the country as a whole always loses. This was clearly what happened in the conflict that ended in April, 1939. The Spanish civil war was long, painful and complex because it consisted of various simultaneous confrontations:



an armed class-war, a religious war, a war between dictatorship and democracy, between fascism and communism, between Spanish and regional nationalisms. The suffering all this caused cannot be faithfully described. Picasso's masterful painting *Guernica* expresses it better than words.

## 12. PABLO PICASSO AND COMPANY

*Guernica*, Picasso's monumental painting, was being exhibited in the New York Museum of Modern Art when I first saw it in 1973. Picasso had wanted the work to be kept there until democracy was re-established in Spain. I was overwhelmed by the enormous size (3.5 metres high-7.8 metres wide) and the sombre shades of the painting, white, gray and black. I was able to look at it from a very short distance, almost touch it, in those times still free from the obsession with security. The message it conveyed was a passionate tribute to the victims of war, to the losers, that I found reminiscent of Goya's tribute to the victims of the Third of May of 1808 in Madrid. *Guernica* showed no specific reference to the Spanish civil war or to the bombardment of that Basque town by the German Luftwaffe in April, 1937. Picasso had had cold relations with politicians in general, including the leaders of the II Spanish Republic. Historian Salvador de Madariaga, who was the Ambassador of Spain in Paris in 1933, described the almost rude attitude of the genius when he met him to commission the work. This attitude changed when the Spanish civil war broke out. He was appointed honorary director of the Prado Museum and the bombardment of *Guernica* won over his reticence to contribute with a huge mural for the Spanish stand in the international exhibition held in Paris in 1937.

Another thing that caught my attention while admiring the painting of *Guernica* in New York was to realize that Picasso (1881-1973) had been born only fifty three years after the death of Goya in 1828. Goya was certainly original and an innovator in the technique of his art, which thanks to him made great advances towards impressionism. But he was part of a tradition of Western painting that had lasted uninterruptedly since classical Greece. Pablo Picasso, the son of a modest teacher of painting, was a child prodigy. Besides, he was born at a time of social and artistic convulsion. Europe and the world were heading towards the Great War of 1914-1918 and capitalism was to suffer the impact of revolution in Russia and the great crash of Wall Street in 1929. In the field of art the evolution seemed also to be reaching a

crisis point. In Vienna, Freud had discovered the subconscious and Schönberg was dissolving the established musical norms of tonality and melody. In Paris, the Dadaist poets were distorting the language and abandoning the expression of feelings and images in poetry. Cézanne and Matisse were experimenting with the extreme possibilities of impressionist painting.

Around 1900, Paris was the capital of advanced culture, the meeting point where Russian, Nordic and German thinking was made known to the world in French translation. Spanish composers and painters went to Paris to learn what was new in their art. Picasso too travelled there several times from Barcelona when he was in his early twenties. His energy and vitality were almost superhuman. His aim was not only to learn, he wanted to take the city by storm. Shortly after he had settled there, his large oil painting *Les Femmes d'Alger*, painted in 1907 and originally called *The Brothel of Avignon*, marked the beginning of the end of traditional painting. Picasso had a universal knowledge of the history of art and had many influences. In the Spanish classical school he rediscovered El Greco. He was also fascinated by the forms and significance of African art, then popular in Paris at the height of colonialism. He came into contact with the underground world that inspired the art of Toulouse-Lautrec. He learned it all and then set about destroying it. *Les Femmes d'Alger* was a first warning of his determination to shock everyone: deliberately ugly and disrupting, partly inspired by African masks, it announced the start of cubism that he would bring to maturity years later, in association with Georges Braque. Nothing would be the same in the old school of painting. From then on, avant-garde would continue to evolve toward the unknown, toward abstraction and a return to neo-classicism.

Pablo Picasso did not follow this logical development of painting towards dissolution in the abstract. He was too great to confine himself to a single tendency and practiced several styles simultaneously, including surrealism and cubism. At the same time, he was experimenting with sculpture, engravings and ceramics. He lived to be 93 and never stopped working, producing a huge amount of work. He collaborated with the Russian Ballets of Diaghilev, travelled to Rome and produced a series of engravings based on the Minotaur and mythology... Some critics have said that *Guernica* was the last real mas-

terpiece Picasso achieved, that it was the synthesis of all the styles he had practiced before. Whatever the case, he never gave up his formidable creative freedom.

Picasso's stature is such that one tends to forget that Spain has enjoyed a brilliant period in the plastic arts since the heroic times of *fin de siècle* Paris. The abstract painters and sculptors Zobel, Chillida, Sempere have the finest of their works in the Museum of Spanish Abstract Art in the city of Cuenca, literally "hanging" in one of those peculiar houses that overlook the valley. Also outstanding are neo-representational painters like Antonio López and Cristino de Vera. But I cannot but mention two names that impressed me and who had a direct connection with Picasso. Both are Catalans, both met the maestro in his early years in Paris and followed him wherever he went while under his influence. Both came back to Spain and developed independently towards some of the currents of avant-garde that Picasso had experienced without remaining in any of them. Joan Miró (1893-1983), starting under the inspiration of Catalan roman architecture, actively joined the surrealist movement in Paris. André Breton said that he was the most surrealist of the whole group. Later, his modest and quiet character made Miró turn back to his roots, trying to find a poetic image of nature in a "pure" style of painting based on flat surfaces with recurrent key elements: birds, stars, the moon, woman...

Salvador Dalí (1904-1989) was a little younger than Picasso and very different in character. He was the typical *enfant terrible*, always wanting to make a show of himself even at the cost of irritating everyone, for example his fellow Catalans, who rejected his somehow provocative proximity to General Franco and his entourage. He went to meet Picasso in Paris and adhered vehemently to the surrealist movement, even to the point of provoking an ironic comment by Sigmund Freud himself when they met: in art, he told the young painter, it is the conscious mind rather than the subconscious I am interested in. Dalí was all that and a very good painter. Trained in the art of drawing, he did something quite paradoxical: he depicted the chaos and the absurd images of the subconscious with photographic precision and beauty. Like Picasso, he travelled to Italy, returned "born again" and then continued to paint beautifully in the style of Raphaël and other painters of the Renaissance.

### 13. MOROCCO, A SPECIAL NEIGHBOUR

Browsing in my historical atlas, I realized with surprise the following: what we call Spain and Morocco today were in fact for many centuries the same “country”. Yes, they had belonged to successive empires or states: they were both Carthaginian, they were Roman, Visigoth and Muslim. Here the story seemed to end. But did it? When the Reconquest was completed with the surrender of Granada the historic impulse to keep the two halves together was maintained: to continue South across the strait of Gibraltar made sense from the point of view of a war of religious expansion. Long before, King John II of Castile had bestowed on the Duke of Medina-Sidonia feudal rights over the North of Africa (he occupied Melilla in 1497) and Pope Alexander VI had issued a Papal Bull giving Castile the benefits of a Crusade if they pursued their conquests South of Gibraltar.

The very Catholic Queen Isabella deeply cherished the idea of pursuing the conquest and taking Christianity into Africa. She wanted to go on converting infidels, certainly, but she also wanted to protect the peninsula from any temptation by the Moors to launch their own Reconquest, coming North through the Straits of Gibraltar. Why is it that she was unable to fulfil her dream? The Queen and her loyal, and rather fanatic, Cardinal Cisneros undertook the project enthusiastically, especially after the *Moriscos*, the Moors who had remained in Granada, launched a serious rebellion in 1499 from the nearby mountains of the Alpujarras. But the Queen died in 1504, and, although she had insisted in her will and testament on the idea of gaining an African empire for Castile, the circumstances had changed dramatically and Cisneros’s enthusiasm to comply with the will of his former Queen met with portentous obstacles. Isabella’s widower, Fernando, was regent of Castile but continued to be king of Aragón and therefore his interests lay rather in the possessions of his kingdom in the Mediterranean. Only in order to protect Naples and Sicily did he find any reason to attempt to control Tunisia and some other enclaves along the Northern coast of Morocco. As a consequence, he dismissed Cisneros and abandoned any idea of an African empire.

For a long time afterwards, Spain's concerns in the Mediterranean were centred on the repression of the Barbary pirates who harassed the Spanish coasts. They were dangerous. Attacks on the South and East of Spain came from the powerful gang of Barbarossa. He was acting on behalf of the Ottoman Sultan to assist him in his war against the Habsburg Empire and thus distracting Spanish forces from Central Europe for the defense of the coast. There were times of détente, as during the reign of Charles III, who signed a Peace Treaty with the Moroccan sultan in 1767. But the disturbances continued and the Spanish possessions in Morocco suffered continuous attacks. Some in Spain kept demanding action in what they still considered a transcendental African mission.

Meanwhile, other "missions" were surfacing in the minds of the European powers. Taking advantage of the war of Spanish Succession, in 1714 Great Britain had taken possession of the symbolic and strategic rock of Gibraltar. Thus, the geographical continuity of an imaginary Spanish-Maghreb empire was forever broken. Less than a century later, the "scramble for Africa" was unleashed. The European powers were eager to offer the advantages of "civilization" to African and Asian nations in exchange for raw materials and profitable trade. In the Conference of Berlin in 1885 they tried to put some order in this "gold rush", establishing areas of influence and rules for this highly profitable game. Spain was obviously not in the best shape to participate in the "scramble". She was merely interested in maintaining her possessions in the North of Morocco, while the "real" powers wanted to decide on control over the whole territory and its riches. France had established her authority in Algiers since in 1833 and also wanted to control Morocco, but here she found strong opposition. Great Britain also had important economic interests in the country and, above all, could not tolerate complete French control of the Straits of Gibraltar, the key to passage toward other British bases in the Mediterranean on the way towards the East, to Egypt and farther to the Indian subcontinent. The *modus vivendi* established at a conference in Madrid was satisfactory to Britain. France's predominance would be checked by the division of zones of influence with Spain, which later became full protectorates.

The "problem" of Morocco came to the fore dramatically when, once what was left of the Spanish empire was lost in 1898, the officers

and the troops came back from Cuba humiliated and depleted. They were not in the mood for new battles but found that they were needed again, this time in an impossible environment. The Moroccan tribes around the Spanish possessions in Northern Morocco were harassing the towns of Ceuta and Melilla and the other minor enclaves along the coast, ignoring the artificial and selfish arrangements of the Great Powers in their Conferences. Spain, in a state of dejection following the defeat in Cuba and the Philippines, had to prepare for a new disaster. Needing fresh troops, the government had to face serious riots when in 1909 it turned to Catalonia to enlist them. Worse still, a few years later an emboldened tribal chief of the region, Abd-el-Krim, attacked Spanish positions in the town of Annual and massacred an estimated 4,000 Spaniards and natives, either in battle or during their attempts to escape. In Spain, the politicians, who had taken radically opposing views on the Moroccan war, started to demand accountability for this new defeat, thus creating a strong confrontation with an already alienated army. In an investigation ordered by Parliament, one general Picasso blamed the commander at Annual. Some claimed the King Alfonso XIII, usually in touch with the army behind the backs of the government, had encouraged wrong initiatives on the battle-field. The political situation became intractable and the King put the power in the hand of a military dictator, General Primo de Rivera. Too many mistakes: they eventually provoked the fall of the Monarchy and the advent of the II Republic.

The French, who had remained aloof during the crisis, finally saw that the situation was threatening their own interests. They then joined forces with the Spaniards, disembarked at Alhucemas in 1925 and defeated the rebellious Abd-el Krim for good. The Spanish-French Protectorate was thus confirmed until the independence of Morocco in 1956. General Francisco Franco, who a few years later was to lead the uprising of 1936, had been one of the most ardent critics of the politics that led to the disaster of Annual.

## 14. *PLATERO AND I*, THE COLOURS OF MODERNISM

**P**latero is a little, silvery donkey. He is “small, soft and hairy; so soft to the touch as if he were made of cotton, boneless”. So starts the first of over a hundred chapters of one of the most widely read books in the Spanish language. Its author, the Nobel Prize winner, Juan Ramón Jiménez (1881-1958), published it in 1916, after having been long acclaimed and admired as a poet. The book describes his life and thoughts as he walks in the countryside in the company of his pet donkey, a friend who silently talks with him and plays with the children, who is livelier and “a better person” than some of the humans they encounter. Written in very simple lyric prose, *Platero* was greatly significant in the development of 20th century Spanish literature because with it Juan Ramón marked a turning point in his writing, moving away from the aesthetics of Modernism. Abandoning symbols and metaphors, he said, poetry had to reach the country of the intelligible. In opposition to the poet Luis de Góngora, who had taken “culteranism” to its peak during the Golden Age, for Juan Ramón in his new understanding the meaning of the poem shouldn’t be concealed behind a thick forest of myths and historical references, which exhaust the readers before they are able to discover their meaning. The poem must hide a poetic secret, certainly, but one must be able to arrive at it along open paths.

Rubén Darío (1867-1916), a Nicaraguan poet and diplomat, had initiated the literary movement called Modernism and introduced it in Spain and other Latin-American countries. Breaking with the dry academicism and the attachment to tradition of late 19th century writing, he produced poetry that was full of brilliance and verbal virtuosity. Widely travelled in Latin-America and Europe, ambassador of his country in Paris and Madrid, Darío abandoned the chant of local colours and the glories of independence which were so dear to his predecessors. He embraced cosmopolitanism under the strong influence of the French romantics and Parnassians, of Paul Verlaine above all. He turned to themes that were universal: Greek mythology, Italian



renaissance, Versailles' life of luxury...He wrote about them with a freshness, musicality and ingenuity that revealed his American origins and made him very appealing and successful. One of his most famous epic poems comes to my mind: in it, the distant sound of horses can be sharply perceived through the percussive rhythm of the verse: *Ya viene el cortejo, ya se oyen los claros clarines...* (Hark the bright sounding bugles of the arriving cortege...).

Darío's influence in Spain was decisive. He introduced his works there in the years around the disaster in Cuba, when the Spanish writers of the 1898 Generation were breaking with the 19th century's academic poetry, as Darío had done in America. Modernism offered them a new way of expression and was embraced by many poets and writers who saw it as an opportunity to free themselves from the cultural aridness of the recent past. Juan Ramón Jiménez, whom Rubén Darío himself loved and admired, was the main representative of modernist poetry, together with Ramón del Valle-Inclán, who used its techniques in the novel and the theatre.

There was, however, a difference in purpose, a certain spiritual tension between the new airs coming from Latin-America and France and the concerns of the Spanish writers. These welcomed the new forms of expression and the literary renovation it entailed, but were soon tired of the broad cosmopolitan and historical themes of Modernism. They were obsessed with the "problem" of Spain, and their purpose was to study it in all its details, both historical and cultural. Ortega y Gasset wrote frequently about them in the form of philosophical "meditations" and Antonio Machado and Azorín favoured popular, every-day themes or descriptions of the dry landscape of Castile. Unamuno reacted more vehemently against Modernism: he proclaimed "eternism" instead, to penetrate the depths of religion and history and abandon modern themes that would soon be outdated. This reaction to Modernism can also be seen in Juan Ramón Jiménez, the most significant exponent of this style in Spain. *Platero and I* was published almost at the same time as his *Diary of a Newly-Wed Poet* in 1916. Here in poetry, as in *Platero's* prose, he looked for perfection in his art, which for him meant the "spontaneity, the simplicity of an educated spirit". From then on, all the gaudiness of Modernism disappeared from Jiménez's poetry, he renounced colour, music and history in

search of a picture of external reality that reflected the movements of his inner world with clear precision.

The new spirit of this poetry was enormously influential in the next generation of poets, known as the 1927 generation. In fact it was its starting point. They wrote during the military dictatorship of Primo de Rivera in the 1920s and the tense years preceding the Spanish Civil War and World War II, and they lived to suffer their consequences and reflect them in their works. Poets like García Lorca, Miguel Hernández and Rafael Alberti, to name but a few, continued to explore ways of absolute freedom of form and metaphor, the expression of the subconscious mind following again the French model, this time that of “surrealism”. They went back to popular themes, rendering them with extreme sophistication, in a return to the most pure tradition of Spanish poetry that they sought in songs and romances like their ancestors of the Middle-Ages and the Golden Age. García Lorca was an outstanding poet and also a dramatist, author of very successful plays where extreme passions are portrayed against the background of his native Andalusia (*Blood Wedding*, *Yerma*, *The House of Bernarda Alba*, are some of his most famous, mature theatrical works). Pedro Salinas, another excellent poet and essayist has written that Lorca was an integral artist: you can find drama in many of his poems (*Gypsy Ballads*). You can likewise find lyricism in his dramatic works, the drama of everyday life, the destruction that passion causes in human relations, jealousy and violent death: the more generic an essential drama of human destiny.

## 15. THE CONSISTENT NEUTRALITY OF CONTEMPORARY SPAIN

The history of Spain presents the observer with this enigmatic paradox: after having practically ruled the world as the main empire in Europe, America and Asia, Spain had little to contribute to the peace of Vienna that sought to organize the affairs of the continent and remained aloof and neutral from every one of the many confrontations between European Powers since 1815. Why? The Spanish historian José María Jover has proposed the following explanation: if you review the history of Spain since the Napoleonic wars, you will find that every major international confrontation in Europe coincided in time with some major crisis in the very eventful 19th century. Those, mainly internal, problems were caused mainly by the disruption of the continuity of the State caused by the French invasion. They resulted in Spain being absorbed and polarized around these disruptions, which were given absolute priority over any external conflict. Let us examine these parallel stories.

In World War II, Spain was officially neutral. Thoroughly impoverished by the recent Civil War of 1936-1939, she could not afford to intervene or accept the conditions that Hitler tried to impose for her participation. Spain's neutrality, though, was somewhat inconsistent. At the beginning, the regime's sympathies were favourable to Germany and Italy for obvious ideological reasons. Later, her neutrality was reaffirmed and transformed into prudent abstention when the victory of the Axis powers was no longer credible. At any rate, it was a state of neutrality decided for Spain by Franco alone, without any opposition.

The situation in 1914-1918 had been different. Spain's neutrality in the First World War was declared from the very beginning of the hostilities and was maintained until the end. This time, Spain acted through democratic requirements: the government could not decide alone. The Prime Minister at the time, Eduardo Dato, explained the two fundamental obstacles to participation in the hostilities. Doing so, he said, "would ruin the nation and ignite a civil war". First: the na-

tion was already ruined: the economic and military means were poor indeed in a country which, after the defeat in Cuba in 1898, had been obliged to send half of its military to Morocco to wage wars which lasted until 1921. But the government's policy of neutrality had also profound political causes, and was unanimously accepted by all the political forces. Public opinion was divided sharply precisely along the lines of the old confrontation between right and left: the traditionalists took sides with the Germans, the liberals with the Allies. The social problems Spain was facing at the time, namely strikes in the North and anarchy in Andalusia, were sufficiently serious to explain Spain's determination to stay away from a conflict in which no vital interests of hers were involved. Fortunately, none of the belligerent powers sought the participation of a weak and divided Spain.

Similar reasons obliged Spain to remain neutral in the two most important conflicts that had taken place in Europe prior to World War I. The Franco-German war of 1870-71 caught Spain in the middle of the "sexenio democrático" (six democratic years) which had been ushered in by the "glorious" revolution of 1868. The primacy of the internal situation was here as clear as it would be in 1914. The country was poor and the regime was utopian and pacifist, therefore ideologically opposed to involving Spain in a war that confronted two authoritarian monarchies. Besides, Spain had grave internal troubles to attend to: an insurrection had erupted in Cuba that lasted a decade (1868-1878) and the third "Carlist" war (1872-1876) obliged the government to concentrate the scarce military means available in the Basque Provinces. Great instability was also being caused by the separatist revolution which culminated in the short-lived I Republic of 1873.

The Crimean war of 1856-1857 was also a European war from which Spain chose to stay distant on similar grounds. In this conflict, the British and the French fought on the side of the Ottoman Empire in order to prevent Russia from gaining free access through the Turkish straits to the British-dominated Mediterranean. It was far from being a priority for Spain's interests, which lay more than ever in the preservation of her marginal colonies in America and Asia and in the protection of her territorial integrity at the Southern frontier of the peninsula. At that time, a rather adventurous war in Morocco concentrated all the efforts of the revolutionary government of General O'Donnell.

It has not been uncommon to speak of Spain's "secular isolation". This cliché was fashionable after the 1936-1939 Civil War when Spain was indeed thoroughly cut off from the world. Those who used it probably wanted to conceal the initial rejection of Franco's Spain by the Europeans, trying to make believe that her isolation had started much, even centuries, earlier? But it is clear to me that isolation from Europe had never existed, although Spain had resignedly accepted a secondary role and a marginal position in a continent where the centre of gravity had passed to its geographical centre, to the "central powers". Even deprived of most of her colonies, Spain continued to be technically a world power until 1898. In such circumstances, how could she be isolated? Many circumstances could prove the intensive connection of Spain with her European environment. Let me just mention the European connection of the "Glorious Revolution" of 1868. The new regime was revolutionary and expelled the Bourbon dynasty, but its Constitution of 1869 was monarchic, and that obliged Spain to look for a king amidst the royal houses of Europe. The chosen one, Amadeus of Savoy, arrived in 1870, causing the irritation of the German Chancellor Bismark, who had offered a German prince as candidate. Tired of being entangled in the complex opposing political factions of Madrid, in 1872 Amadeus took refuge in the Italian embassy and abandoned the country.

Another interesting example is the European dilemma that King Alfonse XIII (1882-1941) faced in front of a continent divided between the liberal *Entente Cordiale* (France-United Kingdom) and the Triple Alliance (Germany, Austria-Hungary and Italy). His mother, and Queen Regent of Spain during his minority, was the imposing Austrian Duchess Marie Christine Habsburg-Lorraine. His wife, the charming English princess Ena (Victoria Eugenie) of Battenberg. Alfonso, a soldier-king of the old school of European monarchs, was very fond of intervening in politics and chose to lean towards the British not only for personal reasons. He had also to protect the interests of Spain in Morocco. She had lost Cuba and the Philippines practically abandoned by Bismark and the central powers. From then on, the Southern border, Gibraltar, the Canaries, Morocco, would be the main concern of a resentful and humiliated former great power.

## 16. CASTILE IN HISTORY AND LITERATURE

Travelling from Avila to Segovia the first time I visited Castile, a magical view made a great impression on me. From the sea of wheat there emerged a slim, elegant tower, rising from nowhere toward the skies. Then the whole cathedral of Segovia appeared, yellow and imposing, followed by the outline of the great city itself, against a background of snow-covered mountains. If you continue travelling in Castile, the same vision will appear over and over again: an endless, dry plain with towering castles, little villages and a small church in each of them. They are very old and dusty today, these villages, some look poor and decadent, some are completely empty but for a few odd chickens and dogs.

Yes, this is Castile. And what today seems so barren was once the dynamic heart of Spain, the engine for the birth of a strong, imperial monarchy. It started as a modest County in the kingdom of Asturias, the northern part of the peninsula that was out of reach for the Islamic occupation. It soon attracted men and families from the North, Basques, Germans, Visigoths, Gascons, Astures. Their vitality and spirit of enterprise made them arrogant and independent. In the year 930 their chief Fernan-González separated this county from the kingdom of Asturias-León and eventually absorbed it. Castile thus started a powerful drive to the South, first to populate the barren lands along the river Duero, later to dislodge the Muslims who still controlled the Southern parts of the peninsula. This formidable impulse had an unstoppable inertia. Once the kingdoms of Castile and Aragón were united and the reconquest completed with the fall of Granada, it pushed the Spaniards into the north of Africa and out into the New World.

After a century of splendour, history was merciless with Castile. Decadence started and continued until very recently. Many writers could not resist the temptation to explore the great contrast between the years of glory and the drastic fall into decay. This became the main theme of the authors and politicians who wanted to “regenerate” Spain in the aftermath of the humiliating defeat in Cuba and the Philippines

in 1898. Some had started before, because the crisis in the country's confidence goes back to the French invasion of 1808 and had become critical, after much turmoil, at the time of the monarchical Restoration in 1876. Miguel de Unamuno wrote in 1895 a major essay on the "problem" of Spain as a nation, where he analyzed the role of Castile in her heroic times, its drive to unify different peoples and to lead centralization and expansion at the time other mighty centres of power were appearing in Europe. Azorín (José Martínez Ruiz, 1873-1967) also wrote profusely, if in a more modest style of prose, on the history and the literature of Castile in order to explain through the past what had been happening, why decadence had started. He focused on literature: as the expression of the national "essence", it would be able to reveal the continuity between past and present and restore the virtues of Castile. José Ortega y Gasset as a philosopher and Ramón Menéndez Pidal as a philologist both insisted on similar ideas: the vitality of Castile gave Spain her true history and should be the key to Spain's regeneration.

Some of the themes developed by these writers appear in the poetical work of Antonio Machado (1875-1939), probably the most widely read and admired writer of the 1898 Generation. He was born in Seville and wrote initially with great insight about his solitude and spirituality. When Andalusia appears in his poems, he evokes not the festive and brilliant landscape of the romantics, but intimate patios and winding narrow streets. He lived in various parts of Spain after the usual formative stay in Paris. In Madrid, he came into contact with the bohemian lifestyle of the modernist poets, but soon rejected their quest for purely verbal beauty and ornament. As a teacher of the language French he lived for five years in Soria. There he married and very soon lost his young, beloved wife, and began to walk endlessly along the dusty roads. In the countryside around Soria he found his true voice as a poet. He wanted to transfer into his verses an objective view of things, landscapes and people, and his reaction to them according to his own inner emotions. In a very serious and grave mood, he wanted, in the words of Pedro Salinas, to express all of that in words, to transform "real reality" into "poetic reality". At the end of his years in Soria he published his most famous book of poetry: *Fields of Castile*, 1907-1917. In this collection there are many types of poetry,

including a long historical ballad. They are the result of a very quiet and solitary life, the life of, simply, “a good person, in the best sense of the word”, as Machado defined himself. The book is certainly on the landscape of Castile, but mostly as a literary vehicle. He reflects on the very palpable things he sees about him but his aim is “to look for the soul”. This poetry is moving and spiritual, beautiful in the most intimate way one can imagine.

Machado was a poet of the 1898 Generation and wrote under the influence of his friends Ortega, Azorín, Unamuno... Their ideas on the need to regenerate Spain, on the contrast between past glory and present dejection, surface from time to time in Machado's poems. These are more rhetorical than analytical and some critics believe that they are at a lower level than his sublimated, pure poetry. So, when he sternly admonishes: *Castilla miserable, ayer dominadora/ envuelta en sus andrajos desprecia cuanto ignora* (Castile, but yesterday so domineering, today wretched and low,/ wrapped in your rags, scornful of what you don't know. English translation by Patrick H. Sheering, Soria 2011). In his later years, our poet moved to Segovia and wrote in a more philosophical mood while the II Republic was crumbling. In 1939 he had to take the road to exile and died in France soon after crossing the border.

Many years after having read Campos de Castilla, I came across a book that places itself at the extreme edge of purity that Machado at times abandoned. This book was published in 1984 by José Jiménez Lozano, a writer whose modest simplicity brought to my memory the austere life of the author of *Fields of Castile*. Its title, *A Spiritual Guide to Castile* is sufficiently expressive. As he explains, his aim is merely to point out, as a guide, the monuments he sees, leaving the reader to freely continue his wanderings and meditations. His aim is not to propose ideas about the “essence” of Castile nor is it his intention to magnify the glorious deeds of the remote past. But he goes further than the political essays of the '98 generation, in that his book proclaims that Castile is, leaving aside everything else, an “Oriental” land, where the *juderías* (or Jewish quarters) and the Arabic features in the Romanesque Architecture of the churches bear witness to a society that for long periods was at the same time Christian, Muslim and Jewish.



## 17. THE “TRAGIC WEEK” AND THE CRISIS OF THE RESTORATION

Antonio Maura, the intelligent and choleric politician of the Spanish Conservative Party, made at least two mistakes: the first, using the military in Barcelona to break a general strike that had started on July 26<sup>th</sup>, 1909; the second, not to advise the King to grant a royal pardon to Francisco Ferrer. Morocco was again in the background. There had been serious incidents around the Spanish towns on the Northern coast and the government needed fresh troops to defend them. Barcelona was chosen as the boarding port and a series of units in which abundant Catalan soldiers were chosen for the mission. Spaniards in general were tired of wars and indignant at certain out-of-date social privileges: for example, that only those those who didn't have enough money to buy an exemption were obliged to go to war. The protest soon became a revolutionary movement that lasted six terrible days filled with unprecedented violence. The toll of casualties was high: 104 civilian dead compared to 7 military; 21 of the 58 churches of Barcelona and 30 of the 75 convents set on fire. Five of the organizers of the strike were sentenced to death and executed. Among them, a very extraordinary character: Francisco Ferrer y Guardia, pedagogue, businessman, anarchist and republican. He didn't organize the general strike because he was not the leader of any political force. But he encouraged and supported it and, due to his popularity, became a martyr of the repression. He was well known in Europe and there was a general outcry against his execution: *¡Maura, no!* was the indignant motto of the people. It united the usually incoherent opposition and was the end of Maura's government. He was, otherwise, a reformer but his reforms were not enough. They had come too late.

The social problems caused in Spain by a rather disorderly but quick economic development were not new. In 1840 serious riots, which occurred in the village of Casabermeja (Málaga), were the first of many proletarian agitations. The growth of industry in the cities of Catalonia, Asturias, the Basque country and Valencia had attracted masses of poor peasants, prone to unrest and violence. The poor countryside of

Andalusia joined in no less desperate protests against the landed gentry and the industrialists. All this happened more or less spontaneously at first, but soon the influence of the workers' movements of Europe was felt in Spain. The split of the International in 1879 between Bakunin and Marx caused a division in the still young proletarian organizations in Spain. Anarchism conquered mostly Barcelona and the South, socialism was prevalent in Madrid and the North. There tended to be more wild-cat strikes in the industrialized Catalonia, where the trade union CNT was under the influence of the French revolutionary Georges Sorel, who preached "action directe". The orthodox Marxists of Madrid tended to work toward a more authoritarian and organized model. The socialist trade union UGT ("General Union of Workers") was founded in 1888 and soon one of its members, Pablo Iglesias, created a strong socialist party, today's PSOE. Like the anarchists, they were republican, anticlerical and pacifist. Unlike them, they participated in the political life of the institutions and were capable of negotiating on workers' rights and ready to do so.

Unfortunately, neither the government nor the employers' associations saw at the time the advantages of having the workers organized in regular trade unions. Or perhaps they simply couldn't tolerate the anti-system platforms of some of them. They divided all associations into "dynastic" and "anti-dynastic" and only accepted the latter as legal. The result is exemplified by the tragic week of Barcelona. Two more grave confrontations are worth mentioning: in July 1917, probably under the impact of the revolution in Russia, the trade unions in Valencia called for a general revolutionary strike that paralyzed the region for seven days; in 1919, a strike in an electricity company, The Barcelona Traction (popularly known as *La Canadiense*), lasted 44 days and paralyzed 70% of the industrial production of Barcelona. The government was alarmed, something that, in the international context of war and revolution of those years, is not difficult to understand. Eduardo Dato, the then prime minister, started to woo the military and, in order to win their support, condoned their autonomy and their privileges in order to have them on his side in case a real revolutionary movement made it necessary to defend "law and order" by drastic means. Dato was murdered by an anarchist in 1921, the year Spain was defeated at the battle of Annual in Morocco.

Back in 1897, Antonio Cánovas del Castillo had also been murdered by an anarchist. He had been the author of the manifesto of Manzanares to give ideological substance to the revolution of 1854. At the end of 1874, he wrote another manifesto, this time in the Academy of Sandhurst (England), where the future king Alfonso XII was finishing his military training. After a coup had crushed the revolutionary experience of 1868, the new monarch returned to Spain to reign under the regime known as “Restoration”. A new constitution was approved in 1876 that harked back to the conservative and limited democracy of previous liberal periods. It was in force for 47 years, until 1923, an unheard-of length of time for a Spanish Constitution. Cánovas did his best to achieve stability and a certain modernization, approving a civil code which followed the French model, as well as new procedural laws that gave business and foreign investors much needed legal security. But his regime didn’t intend to go beyond certain limits and allow the arrival of full democracy. Gradually, suffrage was opened: limited at the beginning depending on the economic level of the voter, it was later made universal by a law approved in 1890. However, the masses had already started to rebel and did not accept the mechanism by which the moderate conservative and liberal parties had agreed to be called to power in turns (the so-called “peaceful alternance”, (*turno pacífico*) through elections that were shamefacedly fabricated by local bosses, the notorious “caciques” that we know so well thanks to the realistic novels of the end of the century.

In 1909, the “tragic week” of Barcelona marked the beginning of the end of this peculiar system of government. The cry “¡Maura, no!” led to a great polarization and division of the political forces. The divorce between the official parties and the illegal worker’s movements became more profound and violent. In 1923 King Alfonso XIII called Primo the Rivera, then the military governor of Barcelona, and handed over the whole power to him as dictator. He didn’t last long, and neither did the king. And the same happened to the II Republic that followed. But that is another story.

## 18. THE 1898 GENERATION

In the years after the defeat of the Spanish Army in Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Philippines, someone said that the heart of Spain was no longer beating. The frustration that was felt against the Bourbon monarchy of the “Restoration” burst out into a social crisis that was to dominate most of the 20th century. The government had been not only inefficient in the management of the Cuban crisis but also falsely optimistic and misleading, both as to the means available to Spain and as to the magnitude of the North-American enemy. With the help of some irresponsible press, it had awakened a provincial wave of rhetorical patriotism in the population that left the country in a state of shock when the news of the disaster arrived at the end of 1898.

As had been the case at the time of the “golden age” of the 17th century, the profound social crisis into which the country sank gave birth to a period of splendour in thinking, literature and the arts which is generally known as the 1898 Generation. In 1913, José Ortega y Gasset (1883-1955) defined the mood of this “generation” in rather dramatic terms: Spain has to be reinvented, because her history had suddenly been annihilated by the defeat. 1898 was the one relevant date for those who wanted to create. They found themselves deprived of a nation and without the possibility of a full personal life. Having nothing else to do, they devoted their work to criticize and this they did with immense talent and use of language in the diagnosis of “the ills of the fatherland”, in the discussion about the need whether to Europeanize the country or to find solutions in her ancestral traditions. Ortega was an extroverted Castilian. He belonged to the “haute bourgeoisie” of Madrid and was extraordinarily intelligent and brilliant. He wrote in clear and expressive prose explaining the most complex philosophical and social problems through expressive metaphors. When still very young, as professor of Metaphysics in Madrid, he brought the most recent philosophical productions that he had studied abroad to the attention of his countrymen. He proposed the idea of “vitalism”, anticipating the school of later existentialists: the “I” can only be understood in connection with his/her “circumstances”.

Ortega's own circumstance was obviously Spain in crisis and he dealt with it initially following the ideas common to the 1898 Generation on the "regeneration" of the country. Spain's decadence went back to the Middle Ages and was due first to the absence of strong feudalism, later to the lack of national leaders: in sum, Spain had never been properly "vertebrated".

It seems that the term "98 Generation" was used for the first time by José Martínez Ruiz, ("Azorín"), in a series of conferences given in 1913. It refers mainly to the writers and artists who were beginning to attract public attention when the national conscience was stricken by the Cuban disaster. Born between 1864 and 1876, the authors that are commonly ascribed to the group never formed a coherent "movement". But they met in literary cafés, knew each other well and had many ideas in common. They were all concerned with the identity, or the "essence", of Spain. Philosophically, they received the influence of the fashions coming from European irrationalism, of Schopenhauer, Nietzsche and the contemporary Russian and French literature. They created original styles in literature as well as in music and painting. They were all intensely political, although with different ideological leanings, from republicanism to anticlericalism to anarchism. The numerous authors who were gifted with this special state of intellectual grace are well known in Spain but, undeservedly, not so much abroad: they included novelists like "Azorin", Pio Baroja and Valle-Inclán, essayists like Unamuno, Ortega and Maeztu, painters like Zuloaga and Sorolla, composers like Albéniz, Falla and Granados... The sensibilities in such a heterogeneous group of course varied. They all agreed on the substance of the "problem": Spain in her present state of dejection was not acceptable. Regarding the solutions the proposals were radically divergent. For some, Spain was "essentially" Castile which they depicted in immortal poetic and essayistic descriptions, mostly pointing to the deeds of the distant past. Some were nostalgic for a history of power and glory, others were outright pessimists. On the periphery, Catalonia, better adapted to the prosperity of a modern commercial and industrial economy, proposed a positive or constructive solution, some would call it "bourgeois", which included ample political and cultural autonomy.

The precursor of this spirit and founder of "Regenerationism", Joaquín Costa (1846-1911), maintained that Spain had urgently to un-

dergo a new birth and accept the values and the culture of Europe at all costs. Costa had started his extreme brand of criticism on the eve of the 1868 revolution. Like a vehement preacher, he demanded that the legend of El Cid be forever “buried”, that all institutions that had brought corruption and poverty to Spain should be abolished, not only the power of local rulers, the so called *caciques*, but also a rotten parliamentary system that allowed political parties to alternate in power through rigged elections. By profession a lawyer and notary public, personally stubborn and prone to anger, he was not a successful politician. The same had happened to other somewhat naïve thinkers who thought that their theories were compatible with the practice of politics.

Miguel de Unamuno (1864-1936) was also a vehement preacher and one of the most interesting writers of the 1898 Generation. Deeply concerned with the “essence” of Spain, this passionate Basque, born in Bilbao, was completing his elementary studies when his city was besieged during the last Carlist war. As a very young professor of Psychology, Logic and Ethics, he started a long and brilliant career at the University of Salamanca, which he presided until 1936, when he was dismissed by the right-wing forces of the civil war. He was a deep thinker as well as a brilliant writer of very original novels, successful plays and excellent poetry. He was not a philosopher by profession but his character and his whole work were in themselves deeply philosophical. Influenced by European irrationalism and especially by Soren Kierkegaard, he dealt with his subjects with emphatic mysticism, inspired by *The Tragic Sense of Life* and *The Agony of Christianity*, as he titled two of his main works. He started to write about Spain in 1895 proposing the Europeanization of the country: Spain should reject the superficial glories of the past, full of false rhetoric, military deeds and religious intolerance. The essence of Spain had to be found in the depths of what he called “the ocean”, a beautiful metaphor about the inner or subconscious history of the people, mainly of Castile, where he lived most of his life. After a religious crisis in 1897 and the disaster of Cuba, he started to radicalize his preference for Spanish culture and popular traditions over those of Europe. In the face of the crisis of 1898, he at the end proposed to export traditional Spanish values to Europe and not vice-versa: “Let them Invent!”, he exclaimed.

## 19. MENÉNDEZ PELAYO AND NEO-CATHOLICISM

“Neo-Catholicism”, more recently called “national-Catholicism”, is how we name the strong reaction of the Spanish Catholic Church to what they considered excesses of the 1868 revolution and the I Republic of 1873. Allied with the aristocracy and the upper middle class, both also afraid of revolutions, the Church acted to re-establish pure orthodoxy and to maintain social control through education, which they saw threatened by pantheism and the doctrines of Krausism. The Catholic movement of reaction was financed by powerful industrialists, especially from Catalonia, who endorsed the organization of pious societies and massive religious gatherings. A fearsome Pope was behind these initiatives. Pius IX, the longest-reigning pontiff, was elected in 1846 and had to witness the unification of Italy and its consequences: the abolition of the Papal States and the end of the sovereign power of the Church. Prisoner in the Vatican inside a Rome that had become the capital of the Kingdom of Italy, he perhaps thought that extreme orthodoxy could win back the power of the Church. In his encyclical *Syllabus Errorum* (1864), he proclaimed that “liberalism is a sin” and went on to condemn, among other things, pantheism, naturalism, rationalism, indifferentism, socialism, communism, liberalism, and any autonomy of the civil society. In 1870, Vatican Council I confirmed all this and, furthermore, decreed papal infallibility. Pious IX didn’t even approve the conservative Spanish constitution of 1876 because, although it maintained Catholicism as the religion of the state, it allowed a limited tolerance for other religions.

Spanish neo-Catholicism had the good fortune to be reinforced by important intellectual supporters. The best known of them, Marcelino Menéndez Pelayo, deserves a special mention. Born in Santander (1856), he was a real prodigy. This prolific linguist, politician and specialist on the history of ideas had won a full professorship in Madrid when he was only 22 and two years later published one of his main works, *The History of Spanish Heterodoxy* (1880-1882). This enormous and beautifully written 1,800-page book covers the history of Spain

from Roman times until the end of the 19th century, reviewing the life and the thinking of all those Spaniards that didn't follow the strict teachings of the Catholic Church. The implicit thesis of the work was to prove that Spain had always been Catholic but for only a few exceptions, although the number of heretics covered by the book seems to deny it, since almost everyone who wrote something in Spain is treated there. The implication, from the perspective of national-Catholicism, was that these heretics were not true Spaniards. In fact, they had to be considered anti-Spaniards, because Spain's cultural history separated her from the European world of ideas. There was no distinction between the nation and the Catholic tradition. Menéndez Pelayo, in this early work, seemed to enjoy his at times truculent fanaticism. He really went to extremes when he wrote that intolerance is the true healthy thinking and that the only greatness of Spain had been her Catholic unity, to have been "the light of (the Council of) Trent" and "hammer of heretics".

This youthful enthusiasm of Don Marcelino, which condemned him to a perpetual cliché of intolerance and clericalism, was considerably tempered in later years, when he wrote his magnum opus on the *History of Aesthetic Ideas in Spain*, a modest title for what in fact was a complete treatise on aesthetics. He had started his prolific career as a writer participating in a long and rather abstruse polemic on science in Spain. He reacted to the thesis, defended mainly by Krausist writers, according to which political and religious despotism had deprived Spain of the scientific progress enjoyed by other European nations since the end of the Middle-Ages. Menéndez Pelayo argued pointing out the rich tradition of the literature in the Golden Years, which flourished in spite of the Inquisition, and, admitting that Spain had not produced geniuses like Galileo or Newton, he went on to rescue the names of many "modest and useful" scientists who dealt with subjects that did not touch the Catholic dogma.

In spite of his fame, the intellectual evolution of Menéndez Pelayo was profound and is little known, when not ignored in order not to devaluate the generally accepted cliché. In later essays he apologized for having "overstepped the limits of moderation" in controversy. He declared himself, under the influence of the Scottish philosopher Sir William Hamilton, a radical skeptic. This was not to be understood as



something negative in terms of religion: skepticism was for him necessary to practice the art of history as a philosophy of the relative and transitory. From Juan Luis Vives (1492-1540) he took the inspiration to practice according to a classical method: the *ars nesciendi*, the art of not-knowing, of approaching the historical wisdom without the dogmatism of the Krausists or the neo-scholastics. I found this a surprising reference because Vives was a Spanish-Jewish philosopher who had to flee from the Inquisition and take refuge in Belgium. When I read the History of Spanish Heterodoxy I realized that Don Marcelino treated some writers whom he defined as heretics quite respectfully when he saw in them prose of high quality and depth of thinking. This happened with scientist Miguel Servet (1511-1553), linguist Juan de Valdés (1509-1541) and other Spanish Protestants whose excellence was sincerely recognized by Menéndez Pelayo. This gives us a key to his true personality: a fanatic of beauty and good writing, gifted not only with passion and erudition but also with a sense of humor and personal goodness. He attacked the Krausists with almost comical ferocity. Of their leader in Spain he wrote: "it is humanly impossible to write worse than Sanz del Río; Salmerón (another Krausist) tried hard, but didn't succeed". On the other hand, he later reconciled himself with the "good" krausists and became a friend of Leopoldo Alas "Clarín", Juan Valera and other far from orthodox talents like Pérez Galdós.

Menéndez Pelayo was the best known leader of this late reaction of the Catholics against liberalism. He continued the tradition of the Catalan priest Jaime Balmes (1810-1848) and the politician and diplomat Juan Donoso Cortés (1809-1853), who in the 1840s had written against the "excesses" of romanticism, when the second generation of romantics had profited from the freedom brought by liberalism expressly to abandon strict obedience to the Catholic Church. Balmes had proposed that philosophy should be abandoned in favor of "common sense", which for him would lead to a return to traditional religion. Cortés, initially a liberal, underwent a dramatic conversion to the religion of his ancestors. Like Balmes, he wrote with moderation extolling the beauty of the Catholic responses to the problems of life.

## 20. CUBA: ADMIRAL CERVERA OBEYS ORDERS

If you happen to fly over the city of Santiago de Cuba and its surrounding waters, you will be surprised, as I was, by a very unusual sight. At the bottom of the clear sea you shall see an entire fleet that has been lying there since the third of July, 1898. Its Commander, the Spanish Admiral Cervera, had warned his superiors that if ordered to exit the narrow bay of Santiago where the fleet was anchored, the best Spanish naval force had no chance whatsoever of surviving. An overwhelmingly superior U.S. force of warships blocked the port, ready for battle. Cervera was given the order to break out of the harbour, the Spanish fleet obediently sailed out of the bay and was utterly destroyed by the Americans. In four hours, Spain suffered a bitter defeat: 350 dead, 160 wounded, 1600 prisoners. The American casualties were: 1 dead and 1 wounded. Admiral Cervera himself was taken prisoner after he saw his ship destroyed and had to swim for his life to reach the coast.

For the U.S this was the “splendid little war”, as someone called it, which launched the country to the status of a great power. For Spain it was the end of her long adventure as a world empire that had started in 1492 when Columbus discovered the New World. With the benefit of hindsight, it is difficult to understand how an old nation like Spain could have acted so foolishly as to produce such a humiliating finale. Cuba was the richest of all the Spanish colonies. At the heart of the Caribbean, it was at first the strategic staging area for the expeditions that followed her discovery, to Mexico and the rest of the Continent. Later, the industrial cultivation of sugar cane, helped by the massive importation of African slaves, helped it to prosper enormously. At the beginning of the 19th century, the island produced one third of the world’s demand for sugar. No wonder that the creoles who owned all this wealth, protected by Spanish law and order and the granting of free trade, were not interested in imitating the revolts that had led to independence in most of Central and South-America starting in 1808.

The crisis that led to the Cuban struggle for independence followed the pattern of that of other colonies, including the British in the North one century before. After 1840 the international demand for sugar

started to diminish, the slave trade was disrupted and finally abolished, Spain tried to impose limits and demand taxes on Cuban trade. Inevitably, the fight for independence started, with the encouragement of the U.S., whose citizens were deeply involved in the Cuban economy as landowners and financiers. A long uprising lasting ten years started in 1868 and a shorter one soon afterwards. Both were put down by Spain, which had sent up to 200,000 troops for that purpose. The island was impoverished and the American interests threatened. The Spanish attempts to solve the problems by offering limited autonomy to the Cubans came too late or were misguided. In 1895, the writer and politician, José Martí, launched the definitive revolt and Spain responded with repression and a hopeless conventional war against a ubiquitous and invisible guerrilla force. Spain should have known better about guerrillas after her own war of independence against the French, but the Spanish public was misinformed about the situation and excited by a bellicose press against an enemy, the U.S., whom they grossly underestimated and despised. The order given to Cervera to fight without any chance of victory was purely political. Defeat was seen by the government as preferable to surrender, either to the Cubans or to the Americans. It turned out to be also dangerous for the monarchy and sowed the seed of restlessness in the Spanish Army, which complained about the foolish decisions of the government and demanded autonomy for the military within the State.

In the U.S., the war had also become unstoppable. A combination of factors led to the confrontation: powerful economic interests allied themselves with a popular ideological frenzy in favour of helping the Cubans against the Spanish colonial power, as they had done earlier against the British Empire. The press, no less bellicose than the Spanish, made negotiations impossible. The Americans, emboldened after the end of their own civil war and enjoying a period of intense economic growth and patriotic euphoria, started to think that their “Manifest Destiny” did not necessarily have to stop on the border. Spain, notwithstanding enormous pressure from Americans and Spanish-Cubans, refused to sell the island to the U.S. or to offer more autonomy and concessions to the rebels. For Spain, Cuba was, at least sentimentally, part of her territory, “the pearl of the Caribbean” and she wanted to keep it at all cost.

The European continental powers paid no heed to the Spanish petitions for aid. In the era of colonialism, they showed some sympathy towards Spain as a colonial power challenged by the natives. But no alliance existed that would oblige them to defend Spain militarily and, moreover, they were not very eager themselves to challenge the rising American star. The rest is well known: in order allegedly to protect American lives and interests, the battleship U.S.S. Maine was sent to the harbor of Havana in February 1898. An explosion sunk it there under mysterious circumstances. 268 American lives were lost. War was declared on Spain and it was won after a short campaign which ended with the destruction of the Spanish fleet at Santiago de Cuba.

Paradoxically, the war between Spain and the Cuban insurrection was won by the U.S. The new great power got rid of Spain in the Americas and, at the same time, deprived the Cuban rebels of having complete control of their new republic. By the treaty of Paris, signed in December 1898, Spain lost what was left of her empire: Cuba, Puerto Rico, Guam and the Philippines. As for the Cubans, their independence was formally recognized but the occupying American forces remained in place until they approved a Constitution in February of 1901. A few weeks earlier, the U.S. Congress had approved the “Platt Amendment”, a declaration that the Cubans had to accept expressly, under the threat of continuing under U.S. military occupation. It gave the Americans a right to intervention that practically reduced Cuba to the status of a protectorate. After many years of political and economic instability, the Cubans were able to abolish the Platt Amendment. They approved a democratic constitution in 1940 which remained in force only until Fulgencio Batista took power in 1952. Without too much difficulty and, it would seem, a certain passivity from the U.S. Embassy, he started a dictatorship that took the country to unprecedented levels of corruption and degradation.

Puerto Rico had been occupied by the U.S. forces in the summer of 1898 and was ceded to the Americans by the Treaty of Paris, together with the Philippines and Guam. In 1917, the Jones Act passed by the U.S. Congress gave the Puerto-Ricans American citizenship and in 1952 the status of “Commonwealth” was recognized to the island. In Cuba, just in case, the U.S. had guaranteed their perpetual presence by a Treaty of 1903 in which the base of Guantanamo, at the extreme

eastern tip of the island, was “leased” to the Americans for a symbolic yearly sum of 5,000 US dollars. The revolutionary government of Cuba has refused s payment since 1960 for what they consider an illegal occupation.

## 21. ISAAC ALBENIZ: NEW IMPRESSIONS OF IBERIA

The life of Isaac Albéniz (1860-1909) is almost as interesting as his work. It was short, adventurous and rich. In the final three years, although gravely ill, he was able to complete the four books of his masterpiece: the twelve pieces for piano he called *Iberia, new impressions*. In spite of their exuberance, there is nothing superfluous about them. Some pianists, not the best probably, have dismissed the work as unnecessarily difficult or complex. Alicia de Larrocha once told me that, since with her little hands she could not play the notes as written, at some points she needed to change some that belonged to the right hand to the left or the other way around. And so more recent editions of the work have confirmed. *Iberia* sounds and looks hard to perform indeed. But the result possesses a fascinating beauty. It tells of different places in Spain, mostly in Andalusia, in a way they had not been evoked before, and such aesthetic heights were never reached afterwards in the national music of Spain. The great Claude Debussy said that Albéniz “threw music out of the window”. The French master used to play these pieces in his later years, for his own pleasure and as inspiration for his own *Iberia*, an orchestral piece he composed some years later.

*Iberia* possesses a unique style that, in the words of Albéniz himself, aimed to “create Spanish music with a universal language”. His mature piano writing was the result of two encounters that took place long after he had been recognized as a prodigy and as a virtuoso pianist who commanded the whole classical repertoire and had written some light “salon” music of his own. In 1880 he had met Franz Liszt in Budapest, played for him and learned about his brilliant technique and his inspiration in popular Hungarian tunes and dances. Albéniz’s piano playing probably gained in virtuosity but continued to be written more in the sensitive style of Chopin, based on a subtle eloquence full of nuances: a poet of the piano more than a fiery orator like Liszt.

The second encounter took place when he was living in Barcelona around 1883. The young Isaac met and became the pupil of Felipe Pe-

drell, composer and theoretician of Spanish music. The Catalan master could not teach the already famous virtuoso all the intricacies of compositional technique based on traditional rules. He then advised him to forget the rules. However, Pedrell inspired in him an idea that he was trying to accomplish as a composer: to use Spanish popular music as a general background, abstracting the tunes and using the rhythms of popular dances as the backbone of free-flowing pieces. Albeniz followed this advice and invented his own personal folklore, an artificial creation that surpassed in beauty the highest and most authentic Spanish musical language

Paris was decisive for Albéniz's development as a composer. In 1889 he gave an enormously successful recital playing his own compositions and in 1894 he settled there to join the Schola Cantorum and teach piano as he studied composition with Vincent d'Indy, Paul Dukas and Gabriel Fauré. Thanks to them, Albéniz learned new means of expression and incorporated complex polyphonic techniques into his writing. He also took inspiration from the "renovators", who opposed the traditionalistic Schola and introduced the new "impressionistic" style: mainly, Debussy and Ravel. The result of all these influences was a very personal language that, using the methods of post-romanticism, allowed him to compose free and original music. More explicit at first, it ended by transmitting his impressions and feelings about Spain as if heard from the distance, evoking the landscape and the people with melancholy and vehemence in equal terms.

We can understand Albeniz's melancholy very well if we remember how adventurous and cosmopolitan his life was. Like Mozart's father, his own father tried to exploit the child prodigy getting him to play concerts from the age of four. Unlike the Salzburg genius, though, he rebelled very soon and left home twice: he wanted to live in freedom and be his own impresario. The first time, when he was only ten years old, he escaped and, according to legend, improvised a concert tour in several cities of Castile until some friends of the family recognized the child prodigy and brought him back to his parents. The second flight was even more astounding. Two years later he again toured, this time in Andalusia, but he did not stop there. He clandestinely boarded a ship in Cádiz bound for Buenos Aires, and paid his fare performing for the passengers. He was sent back to Spain and fled again, this time

undertaking an adventurous trip to Puerto Rico, Cuba, New York City and San Francisco. Imagine, he was only fifteen years old and had to endure poverty, fear and violence, often without a place to live. In San Francisco he managed to make a little money to travel back to Spain and so he settled there, more or less. From these extraordinary travels he brought back with him the highly intensified nostalgia of his land that can be perceived in his music.

Albeniz was as exuberant as his work. Generous and good natured, modest to an unusual degree for a performing artist, burdened with ill health and a profligate father, he was not so clever financially as he was musically. After having studied and concertized in Paris, Leipzig, Brussels and the whole of Spain, he had to settle in London, where a local patron offered him a substantial income in exchange for his music. According to the deal, he was to compose music for the librettos that his “protector” would write and convert them into full-fledged operas. He did so between 1893 and 1896, producing three substantial scores: *Merlin*, *Henry Clifford* and *Pepita Jiménez*, the latter based on the novel by Juan Valera. These works were not well received in Spain, in spite of their high musical quality and richness of orchestration. They were too complex for audiences that were used to enjoying the easy and popular zarzuelas. Envy did the rest. Albéniz’s operas were labeled as “foreign” and rarely performed in his homeland. Disappointed, he retired to the South of France to concentrate on his Iberia and was able to see it performed in concert with success before dying in 1909, when he was 49 years old. He left for us a real treasure of extraordinary inspiration and beauty.



## 22. THE CATALAN PROTEST

In the years prior to Franco's death, a protest slogan was almost unanimously cried out in the streets of Catalonia: *¡Libertat, amnistia, estatut d'autonomia!* ("Freedom, amnesty and a statute of autonomy!"). In 1923, Dictator Primo de Rivera had rejected a draft statute, or fundamental law of autonomy, that the Catalans had proposed. The II Republic gave Catalonia her first statute in 1932, and in 1979 a new statute was approved under the constitution of 1978. Even before that, the Honourable Josep Tarradellas, President of the Catalan government in exile (under the 1932 statute) was received in Spain with honours by Prime Minister Adolfo Suarez. In a referendum held in Catalonia, the 1979 statute received 88% support. But the abstentions were 40% and critical voices were soon heard asking for still more and, again, protesting. Why? Why, given certain specific differential facts such as language, history, economic structure, some regions and not others demanded that these facts should have a political recognition transforming them into a separate state? In the case of Catalonia, the question as to why protest and demands have been so prolonged and, at times, virulent is not easy to answer, except, I suppose, by the Catalans themselves. I found an interesting attempt in the excellent short history of Spain written by French historian Pierre Vilar. He saw the key in the weakness of the Spanish State as compared with the economic strength of Catalonia. Their radically different economic structures, according to Vilar, have created a double inferiority complex, due to the backward economy for the Castilians, and to the lack of political weight for the Catalans...

The origin of the Catalonian protest goes far back in history. Leaving aside the rebellion of 1640, in contemporary times it is to be found perhaps in the attempt made by the liberal regimes that governed Spain after the War of Independence from 1808 to 1812 in order to build on a conscience of Spanish nationality. The Catalans had taken sides against the French in the war and, later, many of them had embraced the anti-liberal "carlists", who fought for absolutism and Catholicism. But, as the years passed, new factors appeared that fueled the growth

of Catalan nationalism, which was diametrically opposed to Spanish, or rather, in the view of the Catalans, Castilian nationalism.

The first factor was cultural, a typical product of Romanticism, especially inspired by the German founders of nationalism based on the “*Volkgeist*” or spirit of the people. The Catalans discovered that they had a language and a history and started a cultural *Renaixença*, or renaissance, based on both. Catalan was a flexible and well developed romance language. It had produced a rich literature in the Middle Ages: think of the mystic Ramon Llull, the lyric poetry of the troubadours, the epic romance *Tirant lo Blanc*, quoted by Don Quixote as one of his favorite readings...Poetry contests in Catalan started to be celebrated as early as 1859. The language was systematically studied by philologist Pompeu Fabra (1868-1948), who in 1932 fixed it in the first dictionary of Catalan. For their part, historians wanting to project the concept of a Catalan nation into the past had abundant material. They started to study the glories of the Catalan past as a commercial power in the Mediterranean, the long history of resistance to complete integration in the Kingdom of Aragón first and in the unified Spanish monarchy later. They wanted to prove through the knowledge of Catalonia’s medieval institutions that between Catalonia and Castile there existed a different and conflicting national spirit. Poet-priest Jacinto Verdaguer went much further back, looking for the “essence” of Catalonia in mythical antiquity, when the legendary continent Atlantis had not yet disappeared and the gods were still around.

The “*Renaixença*” and Catalanism were a merely intellectual minority movement to which the masses were initially alien. But it soon became popular thanks to the support of the Catholic Church after 1876, when traditionalist and ultra-Catholic “*Carlism*” was definitively defeated by Alfonso XII and the Restoration. The Catalan clergy had to overcome a certain reticence on the part of the Holy See because Catalan Catholicism was inconveniently reactionary for that time: for example, the curious book titled “*Liberalism is a Sin*” was written in 1884 by the Catalan priest Félix Sardá. Pope Leon XIII was trying to strike up a delicate balance with European powers, including the government in Madrid, and feared an excessive political extremism from the Catalan Church. But no matter, as in the Basque country, the Church did not want to set itself against what had become a deep sense

of identity in Catalan society, it being easier to control the growth of this spirit from within.

And last, but not least, a factor that added to the impulse of the “Renaixença” was the economy. In Catalonia, a period of intense development of industry and commerce had started far in advance of the rest of Spain. It was accompanied by a clear demand to the central government to protect the Catalan economy against foreign competition. The triumph of free-trade ideas brought about by the Revolution of 1868 had met with fierce opposition from Catalan industrialists. And the loss of the markets of Cuba and the Philippines in 1898 (Catalan foreign trade had fallen 52% in that year when compared to 1897) caused a deep economic crisis. It turned into a growing resentment against the central government on the part of the same economic forces that had supported it in the war against the Cuban insurrection.

In this way, the alliance of culture and economic interests created a first Catalan front against Madrid and the system of the Restoration. The Catalans were united against the “peaceful alternance” (“turno pacífico”) of the national conservative and liberal parties which left the Catalan parties outside of the game. In the elections of 1901, a regionalist movement called *La Lliga* (the League) won the four Catalan seats in the Spanish parliament, thus breaking the bipartisan peace of the dynastic parties based in rigged elections. The Lliga was conservative and therefore suspect for the growing political forces of the left. In 1906, it became a broader movement, *Solidaritat Catalana*. Still regionalist rather than nationalist, its leader Prat de la Riba obtained from Madrid the creation of a commonwealth of local institutions, a first wholly Catalan institution outside of the provincial division of Spain created by liberalism. This evolution, in the atmosphere of social unrest of the times, continued in the foreseeable direction towards an alliance between catalanism and republicanism. The left won the local elections of 1931 by an ample majority and proclaimed the independent Catalan Republic soon after the II Spanish Republic was inaugurated. The statute of autonomy approved in 1932 calmed the waters for a few years but, after the civil war, the ultra-centralist Franco regime suppressed all traces of autonomy in Catalonia, including the language, until further notice... which came in the Constitution of 1978.

### 23. “LA REGENTA” OR SOCIETY IN RESTORATION SPAIN

Fermín de Pas, an ambitious preacher-canon, climbs the high tower of the Cathedral and, as is his habit, examines from a distance every detail of Vetusta, the town he despises and wants to dominate. Thirty years before Franz Kafka metamorphosed Gregor Samsa in his bed into a gigantic insect our canon sees the citizens of Vetusta transformed into beetles. They move around slowly and uselessly going in and out what they think are their palaces. From the tower, Fermín sees only dark huts and burrows. He despises his rich fellow Vetustans for having done nothing but receive their inheritances while he, Fermín, has conquered his position with work and sacrifice and has still higher mountains to climb. Will he or Vetusta win this unequal combat for power?

So begins *La Regenta*, published by writer Leopoldo Alas “Clarín” in 1885. It is to me the best novel written in the Spanish language. This long book is a precise and moving picture of a town which has the power to stop time, to negate progress, and thereby controls and suppresses any attempt by its inhabitants to lead a life that may contradict in the slightest detail the dictates of custom, convention and hypocrisy. The canon Fermín and Ana Ozores, *la Regenta*, married to a prominent if useless judge, have attempted something different for their lives. They aspired to a spiritual existence, a mystical union that flies much higher than the vulgar society and religion of the town. Vetusta won't allow it. The plural but unanimous chorus of Vetustans, crystallized in the truly vulgar Alvaro Messía, a provincial Don Juan, was to orchestrate an unbearable pressure and precipitate the main characters from mysticism to eroticism and from there to tragedy. All of this moves slowly, as do the insects Fermín sees from the tower, because “Clarín” minutely describes the different parts of the town and the different classes into which the numerous characters are divided in order to evoke the inexorable nature of their collective power over any dissidence. Through Vetusta and her ridiculous inhabitants, the decadent society of Restoration Spain is depicted with great precision,

along with the immobility of its structure and the cruel ruthlessness of its control over the lives of people.

Leopoldo Alas “Clarín” (1852-1901) was born in Zamora. A brilliant student, he finished the Law curriculum of the University of Oviedo, the real *Vetusta* of the novel, in only two years. But, characteristically, he wanted to know more, took additional courses, and was sent to Madrid to become a doctor of Law. His Doctoral Thesis dealt with “Law and Morality” and the dedicatee of it was Francisco Giner de los Rios, the prominent pedagogue of Krausism, the doctrine that had conquered the intellectual life of liberal Madrid. “Clarín” felt its influence strongly, though, as a result of his independent personality, he remained at a certain critical distance from it. His was quite a strong personality at that. While he carried out profound legal research, he wrote literary criticism with intelligence and bluntness when the conservatives and Catholic writers were the object of his analysis. And he suffered the usual consequences. He was vetoed by the conservative government at his first attempt to enter the university as a professor. The arrival of the liberals in 1882 allowed Alas to accede to a well-deserved professorship of Roman law at the University of Oviedo, where he lived for the rest of his life. His interest and profound knowledge of his specialty can be recognized in his literary works, most of all in *La Regenta*. Not only through the precise quotations or legal hints you can find here and there. It is more than that. The logic and the inexorable structure of the narrative, the construction as a whole of the slow but sure path that led Fermín and Ana to disaster is reminiscent of the complex construction of Pandectism, the German systematized version of Roman law that was studied in “Clarín’s” days.

Leopoldo Alas adhered soon to “naturalism”, the literary movement that had surfaced in Spanish literature in a novel of Pérez Galdós, *The Disinherited* published in 1882, when Alas was still living in Madrid. The admiration of our writer for Galdós made him join the movement enthusiastically, more so than his model, who only experimented with it occasionally. Naturalism was a French fashion, popularized mainly by Emile Zola after 1870. As such, it could not but influence the literature of Spain, always in close contact with the cultural life of the great country to the North. Naturalism went a step forward from realism. In realism, the writer tried to present people and

things as he or she saw it: an individual confronts the evils of society, tries, according to the values of individualism, to overcome them and, normally, succeeds. Naturalism observes the laws of nature and expects that any human conflict would be resolved by their mechanical functioning. Failure is not inevitable but it is likely, it depends on powers beyond human reach.

Naturalism was received in Spain in a rather moderate version. French positivism, the philosophy at its roots, was not suitable for a country with so deep an attachment to religion which, at the time, was under the strong influence of Krausism, a philosophy that preached compromise and tolerance. Between the spiritual and the material, the latter needs not to prevail: there can be a synthesis, according to Hegel's dialectic. The main representative of Spanish naturalism was Doña Emilia Pardo-Bazán (1851-1921). A Galician novelist and professor of literature, she was a close friend of both Pérez Galdós and "Clarín". She was a Catholic aristocrat (not very fervent, I suppose, judging by her works of fiction) and introduced Zola in Spain in an essay she published in 1883, *The Burning Question*. In it, while criticizing the excesses of naturalism, Doña Emilia explained it in such detail that it couldn't but become known and influential on Spanish writers. It certainly was present in Pardo Bazán's own excellent novels, which depict life in her native Galicia with virile crudeness and all the ingredients of the natural life.

By the 1890s, "Clarín" had already rejected the sectarian or extreme naturalism of Zola. A certain stench of German spiritualism, even of Russian mysticism "à la" Tolstoy is discernible in this change. But Pardo-Bazán, friend and admirer (and for some time mistress) of Pérez Galdós remained faithful to her belief in the irrepressible forces of nature. According to Don Benito, "nature, as mother and teacher, rectifies the errors of her mistaken children", as in "Fortunata and Jacinta". On the contrary, Doña Emilia finished her novel, *La Madre Naturaleza* (mother nature), with a desperate cry from the hero: "Nature! They call you mother...step-mother is what they should call you!".

## 24. SPANISH AMERICA RE-DISCOVERED

The conservative powers that formed the Holy Alliance after defeating Napoleon didn't like the revolutions which struggled for independence in the American colonies of Spain. Assembled at Troppau (today Opava, in the Czech Republic) in 1820, they had agreed on a doctrine of non-recognition regarding "changes brought about by illegal methods", that is to say, to any government issuing from a revolution. The particular revolution they were referring to was taking place in Naples (Italy), but Spain belonged to the Holy Alliance and was also facing rebellion. Therefore, the same principle applied. Three years later, a liberal revolution erupted in Spain herself, and France agreed at the Congress of Verona to send troops to her neighbour to help King Ferdinand VII to restore absolutism. Great Britain was not very happy with this policy of interventionism and when the French king suggested that some of the 100,000 Sons of Saint Louis might be sent to America to help reestablish Spanish rule, the British opposition and its motives became express and firm. They rejected the methods of the Holy Alliance and formulated a new doctrine of recognition.

As early as 1822, the United States had opposed any intervention of the European powers in America: "we should consider any attempt on their part to extend their system to any portion of this hemisphere as dangerous to our peace and safety". Thus was the famous Monroe doctrine born and the Republics of Central and South America recognized. Such defense of independence was of course coherent with the ideology that had created the United States...and also with powerful commercial interests. The British, after centuries fighting for access to the huge American markets, would not be long in following suit and started to extend recognition to the new republics. Spain protested, arguing that she had not yet definitively lost control of these countries, something that indeed only happened officially in 1824, after the defeat of the Spanish armies at the battle of Ayacucho. Lord Canning, the British foreign minister, responded to the Spanish government with a comprehensive new idea. For him Spain's claim that she

controlled the new countries was not credible according to the known facts: “the total irresponsibility of unrecognized States (was) too absurd to be maintained” and “the treatment of their inhabitants as pirates or outlaws (...) too monstrous to be applied to a large portion of the habitable globe”. Recognition would therefore be extended provided certain conditions existed: the new government had to have publicly notified its independence; it had to control the whole country with reasonable stability; and it had to have abolished the slave trade. Do not forget that the abolition had become the main instrument of the British Empire for maritime domination. It was also the main criterion for a country to be considered as fulfilling the minimum standard of “civilization”.

How did Spain take all these developments? Understandably, very badly at first. The absolutist government of Ferdinand VII had tried to reestablish its power militarily, with an army of 10,000 well-equipped men under one General Morillo, who was momentarily successful in the Southern Caribbean until Simón Bolívar defeated him in 1817. Bolívar then started an accelerated campaign for independence coming from the North of the continent, while the Argentinian general San Martín took over with a no less prodigious expedition from the South. King Ferdinand VII and the absolutists simply wanted to restore his absolute and unified power, upset as they were by the idea of republics emerging in the former dominions, revolutionary and irreligious at that. But neither were the Spanish liberals quite happy with the new situation. They believed in the philosophy of the Cádiz Constitution. Equality of rights for Spaniards “of both worlds”, yes, but within a united and liberal Spain. After 1814, when Napoleon handed the crown over to Ferdinand, they had to go into exile themselves in Paris or London and neglected the problem of the Americas, busy as they were trying to restore liberties in Spain. The Americans resented this indifference and responded with great hostility to Spaniards of all colours. This attitude was coherent, by the way, with the general ideology of independence, which included the usual complaints by the rebels about the horrors of colonial rule. The criticism was inevitable and partly just, but it is interesting to remember that, in this and other cases, the rebels were not the original inhabitants of the American lands: they were the creoles, descendants of the Spanish “conquerors”.



Therefore, the fight for independence, like the war against the French in Spain, had also an important element of civil war.

This atmosphere of hostility lasted until the end of the 19th century, if not longer. Official recognition, however, had happened relatively early, as soon as a liberal government was in place in Madrid. Recognition by the Anglo-Saxon powers and the *de facto* situation in the Republics made it inevitable for Spain if she did not want to be completely isolated from countries that, after all, belonged to the same cultural family. There were also important interests on the part of the commercial cities in Spain that were then rapidly developing: Cádiz, Barcelona and Bilbao. And, last but not least, there was a strategic interest for Spain in gaining at least the neutrality of the new countries as long as she remained in Cuba and Puerto Rico. As a consequence, an act approved in 1836 permitted the Spanish government to enter into treaties with the American republics. In them, Spain renounced sovereignty or any territorial claims and defined the bilateral relations in generous and friendly terms.

The “hispano-phobia”, so characteristic of these years of emancipation, came back in force when, under the government of General O’Donnell, Spain embarked on some rather foolish foreign interventions. In 1861, Spanish troops were sent to Mexico in support of an attempt by Napoleon III to establish the influence of France in the region under the form of a “Latin-American” empire, comprising all the countries with languages derived from the Latin including French Canada. It was at this moment when Spanish America or “Hispanoamérica” started to be called Latin-America, an idea first formulated in 1856 by José María Torres, a poet born in Colombia. He was quite successful, in spite of attempts by Spain to re-establish the denomination Spanish or, at least, Ibero-America, which would include Portugal and Brazil. In spite also of the North-American’s preference for euphemisms that included them, like “the Western Hemisphere” or “The Americas”.

## 25. CUBA AND THE ABOLITION OF THE SLAVE TRADE

Spain was a “world power” until she lost Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Philippines. I mean this only in a technical sense: a world power but not a great power. In less than a hundred years the country had suffered a French invasion and two civil wars, had lost most of her colonies in Central and South America and was torn by social unrest and separatist movements in her rich peripheral regions. However, she continued to be an empire and, in spite of all, had to act as such. That means that it was absolutely necessary for the country to maintain her freedom of movement on the oceans to make communication possible with her overseas possessions. Spain had dominated the seas for centuries, while she was the main world power. Now, in the 19th century, the British Empire had taken over this role and was consolidating it through a peculiar interpretation of the traditional principle of the “Freedom of the Seas”, first proposed in 1609 by the Dutch lawyer Hugo Grotius, which was precisely to oppose the Spanish monopoly she claimed on ocean-wide maritime trade. According to the British interpretation, the principle was not an abstract thing. Freedom only existed if it was guaranteed by the only naval force capable of doing so: the imperial British Navy. They achieved this by force as well as by subtle argument, while other countries like Spain tried to oppose the British version of the freedom of the seas.

Slavery and piracy were the conceptual tools used by the British to build a system that ensured them (almost) complete control of maritime traffic. In 1815, the Congress of Vienna had approved a Declaration condemning the slave trade as “inconsistent with civilization”. This principle had been proposed by the British and had met with strong resistance: France, Spain and Portugal were reluctant to give the U.K. a mandate to implement the principle on the open seas and in time of peace. The Declaration, however, was not binding, and therefore another subterfuge had to be found by Britain: the agreement of the other countries to sign bilateral treaties where the slave trade was made equivalent with piracy under the name of so-called

“quasi-piracy”. Now, pirates had been considered since time immemorial *hostis humani generis* (enemy of the human kind) and the Law of Nations allowed universal jurisdiction to repress this crime even on the high seas. In 1817 many countries, starting with Portugal, Spain and the Netherlands, accepted a reciprocal right to visit ships suspected of transporting slaves. The British Empire was, of course, the only maritime Power capable and willing to implement this new norm and so it achieved the maritime domination it was after.

Why were the British so stubbornly insistent in the fight against the slave trade? Although slavery itself was abolished in England only in 1834, a bill against commerce with slaves by British ships had been passed as early as 1807, following a similar initiative taken by the United States back in 1794. Humanitarian motives were paramount, of course, and they were strongly promoted by Christian activist members of the Quaker Sect until they won ample support from writers and politicians. “Sound Policy” was also defended as a rationale for the fight against the trade. Behind this pious terminology you can easily read the important economic interests that were involved in the abolition. According to an interesting theory proposed by the German historian F. Hochstetter, after the independence of the colonies in North America, the abolition disrupted the triangular flow of trade (England-Africa-America) of sugar, goods and slaves. Exchanges between the British West Indies, the U.S. and Canada were affected. Competition with the colonies of other countries like Spain and France in the Caribbean met with obstacles due to the impossibility for the British to obtain slaves, which were abundant elsewhere. That is why the abolition of the slave-trade had to be extended to all competitors at all costs in order to eliminate any comparative advantage among the colonial powers.

Spain had certainly profited from the slave trade. Not as a main supplier during the 16th and 17th centuries, because the sources of recruitment in West-Africa were monopolized first by the Portuguese and later by the Dutch, French and British traders. Nevertheless, Spain had obtained substantial gains through the so-called *asiento*, that is, the concession to certain companies of the monopoly for the transportation of African slaves to her possessions in Central and South America for sale to her own colonies, or to other countries or compa-

nies. This monopoly was enjoyed successively by the Portuguese, the French and the British until the trade was liberalized by Spain in 1789. Afterwards, trade grew substantially thanks to the general opening of the trade, which in turn coincided in time with the movement for the abolition in England and elsewhere.

Also in Spain, the criticism against slavery, based on French ideas of the Enlightenment, had a tradition and took the foreground in the voice of politician-writers like Juan Valera and the conservative Antonio Cánovas, in the years around the revolution of 1868. But the international offensive against the trade coincided with a period of intense growth in the sugar plantations in Cuba, based on a strong international demand which required ample supply of slave work-force if production was to satisfy the demand. According to certain accounts, 800,000 slaves were smuggled on to the island in the 19th century. Spain had reluctantly adhered to the British-led international crusade in favour of abolition, but the authorities in Cuba, under pressure from Spanish and North-American sugar planters, had been secretly tolerant towards the clandestine traffic carried out by private companies. In Spain, the pressures for abolition started late and, on account of important political and economic interests in Cuba, were hesitant. Only the end of the U.S. civil war, fought by the Northern States under the banner of the suppression of slavery, renewed the political pressure and contributed to a sharp fall in demand. Slavery was finally prohibited in Cuba in 1886.

## 26. CARMEN OR ROMANTIC SEVILLE

Jan Morris is just one of the many writers who have enjoyed the art of defining Spain and the Spaniards after a few visits. She wrote that “for half the world the image of Spain is the image of Andalusia- the huge slab of country, mostly mountainous, that begins where the tableland is bounded by the southern sierras...Andalusia is romantic Spain, popularized by Gautier, Merimée, Bizet and Washington Irving, and still dangerously bewitching”. There is some truth in this generalization or cliché. However, it can mislead those who limit themselves to reading travel books or to visiting just the South of Spain, which is, it is true, full of beauty and charm. Spain hides many different landscapes and wonders that have belonged to the history of Europe since Roman times. And with such an eventful history as that of Spain you should expect to find many characters, and not only the Moorish or Gipsy dancer or bullfighter. Anyway, the identification of Andalusia with Spain is real and worth considering. It is not a product of yesterday, it started in the Golden Age of Spain’s richness and culture. Much of this richness and culture was concentrated there and, more precisely, in Seville. Don’t forget that *Don Juan* was set in Seville by the many authors who wrote about this notorious character: Tirso de Molina, first, then Lord Byron, Zorrilla, and so on. Molière is the exception: he set the scene in Sicily. But Seville appeared again in the works of Beaumarchais. He travelled to Spain in 1764 and, without visiting the town, created two of the most typical stereotypes: Figaro and the Barber of Seville, also the main characters of the well-known operas by Mozart and Rossini.

Morris is right, however, when she places the popularization of Andalusia as the mirror of Spain in the travelling writers of the Romantic times. Spain was in turmoil. Occupied by the troops of Napoleon and deprived of a legitimate monarchic power, she was trying to organize the resistance against the French invaders and to create a new State. The circumstances obliged the improvised authorities to start from the South, the area still free from foreign occupation. The nation’s provisional capital was established in Seville, and then moved to Cádiz,

when Seville was captured by the French. The rest of Spain was in chaos, overrun by guerrillas of various colours, and patriotic passion. It is not surprising that many writers, inflamed with the spirit of Romanticism, were seduced by the historic opportunity of witnessing a war of independence, no less than by the justified fame of Seville and Andalusia for their beauty and “*joie de vivre*”. These writers and other travellers left ever more colourful and dramatic accounts of the excitement of those moments. They received the help, it is true, from the natural pride of the native Sevillians and from a certain ingredient of narcissism in the enjoyment of life by the legendary Andalusian, a mix of light humor and mocking cheerfulness. A Sevillian poet, Fernando Villalón, went far when he wrote that the Romans found nothing to civilize when they came to Seville, that they benefitted from the previous and superior Turdetan culture, inherited from the legendary kingdom of Tartessos.

The most influential contribution to the creation of the romantic reputation of the Andalusian capital came undoubtedly from the French writer Prosper Mérimée. He travelled to Spain in 1830 and, using his experiences there as inspiration and making use of a popular tale he heard, he wrote a short novel he entitled “*Carmen*”, a very common first name in Spain. His plot contained “most” of the ingredients of the supposedly Spanish mix: flamenco, bullfight, contraband, Gypsy passion and violence, personal freedom, death. *Carmen*, a worker at the tobacco factory in Seville, seduces a soldier, Don José, and makes him, victim of desperate love, abandon his service and join a band of smugglers in the nearby mountains. After falling herself passionately in love with the popular bullfighter Escamillo, *Carmen* rejects Don José’s love and treats him with contempt. The tragic consequences that follow can be imagined.

A few years later, another Frenchman, the composer Georges Bizet, decided to use this story for an opera. His libretto writers added, for the sake of theatrical marketing, a few more clichés (the pure sister Micaela, in the role of unsuccessful redeemer, etc.) until the action contained not most but “all” the ingredients to launch a legend of Seville, and by extension of Andalusia and Spain, of irresistible charm and dramatic thrill. Spaniards in general were not very happy with the cliché and the rather unfavourable description of their character as

people, which made practically all of them bullfighters, smugglers and fickle women. Not long ago, a popular song could be heard in which a nationalist singer protests: "I am the Carmen of Spain, not the Carmen of Merimée...". To no avail: Carmen became inevitable, with the help of a good theatrical plot and a wonderful musical score, full of rich melodies, a colourful orchestration and a variety of rhythms that are mostly Spanish.

Leaving aside its qualities, the fame of Carmen received an impulse from an unexpected quarter. The German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche was, as is well known, a frustrated musician. He wrote some nice songs that belong to a minor genre. Initially a friend and worshiper of Richard Wagner, he in later years rejected him and what he started to consider abstruse and decadent Music Drama. Following first the light music of second-rate composers like Peter Gast and the French operetta, he then fell in love with Bizet and his Carmen. He saw the opera, which he considered the "anti-Tristan", more than twenty times and, naturally in French, proclaimed: *Il faut méditerraniser la musique* (Music must become Mediterranean). "With Carmen, he wrote, we take leave of the damp North, of all the mists of the Wagnerian ideal. This music possesses the limpid, dry atmosphere of warmer climates".

In this way, more than a literary character, Carmen became a myth or a legend that could be reinvented without limit, in other places, times and vehicles of expression, also later in the cinema. Witness the numerous films that use the story as a vehicle for the new form of art: starting with Ernst Lubitsch, there followed Josef von Sternberg, Charles Vidor, Francesco Rossi, Luis Buñuel. They created, with their no less famous actresses (Pola Negri, Marlene Dietrich, Rita Hayworth, Sara Montiel, Dorothy Dandridge, Angela Molina...) many different versions of Carmen, in different settings: a Roman from the Trastevere, a black Carmen and so on...All have contributed to making Carmen a more universal myth than the mere provincial original invented by Merimée-Bizet.

## 27. INDEPENDENT CARTAGENA AND THE “GLORIOUS REVOLUTION”

It is not true that, as the legend goes, General Manuel Pavía personally assaulted the Spanish Cortes on horseback. On the early morning of January 3rd, 1874, he remained outside the Cortes, probably on horseback, and sent his troops into the parliament building to interrupt the session, dismiss the deputies who were trying to elect a new Prime Minister and abolish the I Republic of Spain. Thus ended the six years of a democratic experiment that had started with the so-called Glorious Revolution of 1868. They were quite eventful, those years, short but intense. They had started in Cádiz by a “pronunciamiento” which was different from so many others: it was a “naval” coup and was staged this time not by one but by three generals, Juan Prim, Francisco Serrano and Juan Bautista Topete. They represented a broad coalition of military officers and a number of rather heterogeneous political forces. Their aim was to topple the incumbent Queen, Isabella II, and to establish a constitutional monarchy under a new dynasty and a new ideology. It had to be a really new regime with fully democratic institutions, without the limitations of “doctrinaire” liberalism. Everything you could imagine seems to have happened in those six years: a new Constitution was approved in 1869, a new king had to be found and was chosen in 1871, the abdication of the king one year later brought about the I Republic, a revolution of the cantons provoked real chaos in the whole country and ended with the intervention of the military. General Pavía invaded the Cortes determined to start restoring a much needed rule of law and order.

He did. For the time being, he handed power over to General Serrano and went on to Cartagena, on the Eastern coast of the peninsula, where the canton, self-proclaimed on July 12<sup>th</sup> 1873, was fiercely resisting the assault of the army, as none of the many other cantons had resisted. Cartagena had started to function as an independent state. It was a fortified city, difficult to conquer, with an important naval base where four of the best frigates of the Spanish Navy were anchored. A cantonal government was formed, an 8,000-strong army



was created. The new authorities seized the warships and used them to raid several neighbouring ports for supplies, until they in turn were seized by German and British vessels. Madrid had declared them officially “pirates”. The Cartagena government had enforced new taxes and planned to create a separate currency. They shortly administered justice (in a previously forbidden divorce suit) and started to entertain diplomatic relations with other independent cantons and with the consular corps accredited in Cartagena. In a few months, General Pavía forcibly ended this extraordinary experiment.

The coalition that supported the Revolution of 1868 was too fragile. It comprised generals and monarchic and republican parties of various political colours. In 1869, they approved a constitution which was very advanced for those times in terms of full popular sovereignty, personal freedoms, separation of Church and State, etc. But the military demanded that the system should continue to be monarchic and that the constitution guaranteed the unity of Spain. On the first question they won. A king had to be found and there was initially no agreement on the choice. In the end, General Prim proposed a liberal king, Amadeus I, who was a member of the house of Savoy and ready to take on the mantle. Full of good intentions, in the end the new king pleased almost nobody. The Catholic Church accused him of belonging to franco-masonry and resented that Spain had chosen from the royal family that had also brought about Italian unity and abolished the Papal States. Neither were most of the republicans happy, either with the new monarchy or with the centralized Spain imposed by the military. Federalism had become fashionable, many in the popular classes felt it as the only true expression of democracy. As had happened when the French invaded Spain in 1808 and again after the uprising of 1820, local “juntas” had taken power in 1868, at the beginning of the revolution. The situation was, therefore, very confusing and almost impossible to control. On top of the separatist pressures, there was a Carlist rebellion in the north, an uprising in Cuba, social upheavals in Catalonia. Too much for poor Amadeus. He took refuge in the Italian Embassy and abdicated in February, 1873. The I Republic was immediately proclaimed by the Cortes.

It lasted just one year and had four presidents, no less. Francisco Pi y Margall was the first: in previous years he had introduced the

federalist theories of French anarchist Pierre-Joseph Proudhon into Spain and inspired a project of constitution that organized Spain into federated states, which coincided with the ancient kingdoms of the Spanish Monarchy. This constitution never entered into force, there was no time. The army was restless and the most fanatic federalists in the provinces could not wait. The people associated the republic with federalism and decided to build a political system created from below, from the local institutions. They could not wait for Pi y Margall's fine constitution and started to declare independence in the cantons. The last of the four presidents of the republic, Emilio Castelar, used almost dictatorial powers to restore a certain order, but it was too late. Pavía was ready to stop the experiment and another general, Martínez Campos restored the Bourbon dynasty at the end of 1874.

Why had all this turbulence happened? Emilio Castelar, a prestigious professor of law and history was precisely the leader who ignited the 1868 revolution and the (provisional) end of the reign of the Bourbons. A very reactionary government of Queen Isabella II had expelled him from the University, and provoked a first student protest that spread into many cities and was brutally repressed. Isabella had given power basically to the military and enjoyed a certain stability at times, but in general her reign was rather disastrous. Her personal behaviour was not exactly exemplary, to put it mildly. She followed with blind devotion the advice of a certain Sister Patrocinio, a hyperactive nun who periodically pretended to suffer open wounds like those of Jesus. The Queen's political talents were also non-existent. She used the ample powers that doctrinaire liberalism reserved to the monarch to imprudently manipulate the legislature and made ample use of the notorious custom of *borbonear* one general to put another in his place. Above all, she ignored the social changes that had been brought about by economic development and refused to let the party of the "progressives" participate in the institutions. As a consequence, republicanism grew and a deep economic crisis in 1866 did the rest. The 38 year-old Queen was resting at the beach in San Sebastian in the summer of 1868 when the Glorious Revolution surprised her. She took a train, went into exile in France, only a few kilometres away, and lived there until she died in 1904.

## 28. KARL CHRISTIAN FRIEDRICH KRAUSE AND EDUCATION

Karl Krause? I dare say very few people outside of Spain have even heard the name. Certainly, very few have read his works, even in his native Germany. Nevertheless, he was enormously influential in the evolution of education in Spain and Latin America. He was also an important factor in the perpetual conflict between the Church and Spanish society. Little did he know! Born in Eisenberg in 1781, the son of a Protestant pastor, he soon felt attracted to philosophy and went to the University of Jena, where he attended the classes of Hegel, Fichte and Schelling. He was not quite convinced by the doctrines of these German patriarchs of philosophic wisdom and went on to Göttingen, where he attempted to create a system of his own. He wrote many works which include a treatise on metaphysics, a guide for the conduct of the spiritual life and some masonic studies. His prose was full of neologisms, and quite difficult to understand even for Germans. The result amounted to something close to mystical pantheism. God, according to him, is not a person but an all-inclusive being who absorbs nature, spirit and mankind in a unified whole, a harmonious organism. And so on. He also wrote on natural Law and had the great Arthur Schopenhauer as a student. Nevertheless, he failed in his attempt to become a full professor of philosophy and finished his life teaching music in Dresden. He died in Munich in 1832, practically unknown to his fellow Germans.

A Spanish friend of mine used to say jokingly that Krause was the first philosopher of Spain and the fifth of Germany, like the emperor Charles. How was it possible for him to have become so influential in Spain? Some say it was by chance, others see deeper reasons. Julián Sanz del Río (1814-1869), himself something of a mystic, was a Castilian philosopher and jurist. In 1843 he received a grant to study in Germany and was led to the discovery of Krause by a French colleague, Victor Cousin, and a disciple of Krause, Heinrich Ahrens, a prominent Law philosopher. In Heidelberg, Sanz del Río became a passionate admirer of the work of Krause and decided to introduce it into

Spain. In 1861 he translated Krause's *Das Urbild der Menschheit* (The Model of Humanity), a kind of gospel for the practical application of "pantheism", the name Kraus had given to his doctrine, instead of using the normal name "pantheism", to avoid problems with censorship. He was very successful and formed a group of faithful "krausists" in several Spanish Universities. Two of them, Salmerón and Castelar, became presidents of the short-lived I Republic in 1873. Contrary to the common idea that Krause's thinking arrived in Spain by chance, Luis Araquistain, a socialist politician of the II Republic, has called attention to the fact that Krause's pantheism connects directly with the Spanish brand of mysticism that flourished in the 16th century, the mysticism of Saint Teresa, Saint John of the Cross and many others. In this way, it gave the liberal Spanish élite a rationalistic doctrine which, however, conserved a profound link with religion, an ethical imperative without sins and punishment.

All these interesting developments took place as the Glorious Revolution of 1868 was approaching and the confrontation between clericalism and anticlericalism had become a fierce struggle by the Church to keep its privileges and to prevent any change in the traditional union between Church and State. Krausist professors were expelled twice from their positions at the Universities in 1865 and 1878 and an attempt they made to create a private, secular University failed. After all, the works of Krause had been included by the Vatican in the Index of forbidden books. Then a second generation of krausists, under the leadership of Francisco Giner de los Rios (1859-1915), took over and followed a new path. They centred on the education of the young people according to methods that were more or less derived from Krause's ideas although deprived of their more radical philosophical and theological implications. Giner founded the *Institución Libre de Enseñanza* (Free Institution for Learning) and other institutions that had considerable influence, above all on the educated minority of the liberal Madrid bourgeoisie. It proposed the abandoning of education based on mere memorization, to defend intellectual freedom and to promote the moral self-improvement of the individual. Many important writers and politicians received the influence of this movement which lasted through the years of the 1898 Generation to the II Republic and exile after the civil war. The movement aimed at the transformation of the

individual, hoping that this would bring about a change in society. They didn't seriously propose important changes in the management of the economy or in the institutions. As moderates and pacifists, its members could not join the two extreme sides in the confrontation that led to civil war: they considered themselves "neutral" and many left Spain after 1936.

Although Krausism, an elitist cultural movement, never percolated down to the masses, the Church would not allow any challenge to its own authority without resistance. And this struggle was waged with great passion during the regime known as the Restoration that started in 1876. After a past of radical conservatism and intolerance, the Church had only been pacified by the Concordat of 1851. Scared by the invasion of foreign ideas that arrived in Spain brought by the troops of Napoleon, it had not accepted the liberal aspects of the Cádiz Constitution of 1812. The majority of the clergy was relieved when Ferdinand VII restored absolutism and, when he died, took sides with the Carlists. They were defeated and had to adapt to the moderate version of the liberal governments: in spite of the "desamortización" of Mendizabal, which seized part of the Church's property, however, most of the traditional mixture of functions of Church and State had been maintained. Queen Isabella II renewed the top episcopal hierarchy and demanded more attention from the Church to its pastoral mission and less to politics. In the 1851 Concordat, the secular clergy was given economic support and the monarchy conserved the *Patronat* or right to name the bishops. In compensation, the Church retained the most important weapon for social control: education continued to be in its hands or had to be taught according to Catholic dogmas.

The irruption of Krausism and its advanced methods based on freedom of thought and religion put the Church on guard. The reaction came, among others, in the form of furious attacks by the "neocatholics" led by Menéndez Pelayo. It was he who maintained that Krausism had arrived to Spain "by mere chance".

## 29. PEREZ GALDOS FALLS IN LOVE WITH MADRID

In 1862, a youngster of seventeen stepped off a train in Atocha, the station at the South of Madrid, after a long trip from Las Palmas (Canary Islands). He started to walk up the Paseo del Prado, past the Botanical Gardens and the famous Prado Museum and by the time he reached the statue of La Cibeles he had fallen in love with the town, if such a thing is possible. Born in 1843, Benito Pérez Galdós spent the rest of his life there, walking, writing and participating actively in politics. He apparently forgot about his birth place: no character or situation in his enormous literary production refers to his Canarian origins. Why this drastic and voluntary forgetfulness? It is a mystery. He never wrote about his own life in his formative years and the little that is known about those years doesn't point to any strong reason for this estrangement. His father was a military officer, born to a local family, his mother a rather strict matron of Basque origin. Young Benito wasn't perhaps the exemplary or virtuous son she would have desired. He was fond of playing and started writing for newspapers while still very young, but that was all. He finished high school and had to travel to Madrid to continue his studies because the University of the Canaries in La Laguna (Tenerife) had been closed since 1845. Naturally, he never finished his training in law, he was too busy getting to know the capital and too busy writing.

In 1870, he published his first serious novel, *La Fontana de Oro* (The Golden Fountain), after the name of a well-known café in Madrid at the time. It was a political story set in the years of the liberal revolution of 1820, already identifiable as a product of the school of realism. Practically no narrative literature of quality had been written in Spain for the previous ten years. The strong roots of realism in the 17th century, when Cervantes and picaresque novelists had produced their masterpieces, was resurrected in Pérez Galdós following the rather modest literature of Spanish neoclassicism and romanticism. Some writers of and about Madrid, like Ramon de Mesonero Romanos (1803-1882), had successfully cultivated the narrative of *costum-*

*brismo*, or depiction of local customs. A curious traveller and translator, Galdós received the strong influence of Balzac and Dickens early and created a rich world living in Madrid or seen from Madrid. The revolution of 1868 had given new life to the confrontation between traditionalist and liberal Spaniards and the philosophy of Krause had started to influence progressive thinking. Galdós was in the middle of it all, and launched one of the most fertile periods of Spanish literature. He was accompanied by high quality authors of various kinds: among them were the conservative José María de Pereda, who portrayed the mountains of Cantabria, in the North, and exalted the values of tradition; Juan Valera, an illustrious diplomat of Andalusian origin, who wrote novels and criticism with great elegance, and so many others. But “Don Benito”, as Pérez Galdós soon started to be called, towered above them all.

In his very long and productive life (he died in 1904) he went through different periods and influences, including naturalism. But he was always loyal to his realist method. As he defined it, the aim was “to reproduce everything, both physical and spiritual, that we are and that surrounds us”. He was initially a fervent believer in the incipient middle-class, and in his first novels he wrote to promote its values against the traditions defended by the Catholic Church and the oligarchy. This was the idea behind his huge collection of historical novels, the *Episodios Nacionales*, in which he surveyed Spanish history, starting at the defeat at Trafalgar in 1805, until his own days at the end of the 19th century. In them, Galdós mixed fact and fiction, adding a plot and imaginary characters to the detailed account of the historical events that crowded the turbulent times of contemporary Spain. In his later years, after Spain lost her last colonies in 1898 (our author was a liberal member of parliament for Puerto Rico), he declared himself disappointed with the role the middle class was playing in the country. It had not been up to the responsibility that Galdós expected it would assume: to make Spain progress and become a more developed and just society. His pessimism and bitterness led him to attempt a minute description of the extreme poverty of the proletarians and beggars in the streets, not without a late tendency to refer to the spirit or directly to religion. Heroic Christian charity can be found in characters like “Benina”, in the short novel *Misericordia* (1897). She steals and begs to

help the poor...and, paradoxically, also to help her boss, Doña Francisca, a conceited bourgeois lady who has lost her position in the social scale due to poverty.

Pérez Galdós excels most in the novels of his middle period, historical novels of the present time in which Madrid appears omnipresent not only as background, but as one more of the real characters of the stories, even as the main character. The writer is obviously fascinated by the capital and projects into it his conception of Spanish history through the lives of more than 8,000 dramatis personae. Relatively small compared to the main European capitals, Madrid had grown to become an immense village where all the passions of the human race were staged. Galdós saw it all with extraordinary vividness and absorbed the spirit of the different social classes, ideologies and lifestyles, high and low. He portrayed all of it with accuracy, as a good realist “presenting the reality he sees as if he were not there”, as the French poet Baudelaire put it. He did it sometimes bitterly but in general with understanding and even tenderness for the human weaknesses of his characters. Nowhere did he do that better, in my opinion, than in his masterpiece of 1887, *Fortunata y Jacinta*. The two main characters of the novel are women of very distant social milieu: Fortunata belongs to the popular class and is portrayed as spontaneous and vital, while Jacinta is the typical middle-class lady, restrained and conventional. Both are married and live peacefully until Jacinta’s husband falls in love with Fortunata in an irresistible and instinctive way where we see the traces of “naturalism”. The action takes place mainly around Madrid’s beautiful Plaza Mayor, where Fortunata lives. From the two intertwined conflicts, the conjugal within the two married couples and the social due to the class distance between the lovers, a complex and moving drama is developed in several sub-plots that examine all the possible facets of the human predicament. Long as it is, the novel never loses its fascinating depth and rhythm. Madrid and 19th century Spain come to life in its pages.

Rich and famous, Perez Galdós was received into the Spanish Royal Academy in 1897. According to his new ideas about Spanish society, he abandoned the Liberal Party and allied himself with the emerging republican socialists. He aspired to the Nobel Prize of Literature without success.



## 30. TALES OF THE ALHAMBRA: THE ROMANTICS IN SPAIN

Washington Irving (1783-1859) was already a famous writer and a rarity for the times, an American who wrote good English, when he made a mistake that was his bad and our good luck. He invested part of his fortune in some mines in South-America and lost heavily. He had been living in Europe for some years and had good connections. One of them was Alexander Hill Everett, the then U.S. Minister to the court of Ferdinand VII of Spain. In 1826 Everett extended an invitation to Irving to attach himself to the Legation in Madrid and gave him a rather pleasant assignment: he was to investigate the documents and books of the Embassy and translate and write on Spanish historical subjects, mainly related to the discovery of the Americas. This he did with gusto during the two most productive and happy years of his life. He published a biography of Christopher Columbus in 1828 and, a year later, a *Chronicle of the Conquest of Grenada*. Irving had written fiction and history before, not in the scientific mood of the late 19th century, but mixing fact and phantasy, very much in the romantic taste, relishing in tales of the Orient and the Middle-Ages. He was a life-long friend of Sir Walter Scott and with his rich cultural background our writer-diplomat travelled to Granada in 1829. He lived for some time in the fabulous Alhambra, the royal palace of the last Moorish kingdom in Spain. The buildings that make up the palace were in a state of pitiful decay, inhabited by numerous “sons of the Alhambra” as he called them: beggars, gypsies, poor people who had inherited the Oriental taste for story-telling.

The result was a delightful collection of tales published in 1832 under the title: *The Alhambra. A Series of Tales and Sketches of the Moors and the Spaniards*. The book included a long introduction in which the author narrates the arduous trip on horseback that took him to Granada across the mountains and valleys which surround the magical city. I was surprised to read how vivid the memory remained of the War of Independence against the French, and the complete anarchy and insecurity in which the country lived still fifteen years after it had ended. Even

more surprising was how the “sons of the Alhambra” still lived with the Moorish heritage in their veins and their imaginations four centuries after their ancestors had been expelled from the Alhambra. Washington Irving still had time to write a history of the conquest of Mexico before he continued his travels and went back to his native New York City in triumph as the first bestselling American author. He later went back to Spain, appointed Ambassador of his country in 1842. He had a good life, he couldn't complain and, so far as I know, he never did.

In Irving's books Spain is frequently presented as a “romantic” country. He had not been the first writer of Romanticism to be attracted to Spain. Chateaubriand and Lord Byron had been there around 1806 and enriched with a deep emotional vision what had in previous centuries been mere curiosity for a country with such an eventful history, so beautifully evoked in the plays and novels of the Golden Age, when memories of the Moors and the battles of the Reconquista were still recent. After Irving, many were the travellers who came to Spain: Victor Hugo, Théophile Gautier, Alexander Dumas and Prosper Mérimée are the best known among the French, who seemed to enjoy travelling South to meet the mysterious Orient close by, without having to endure long journeys. They all fell in love with the beauties of Andalusia, creating a rather artificial picture of Spain as an exotic country full of mystery. Something which she certainly is but which, further to the treasures of culture left as heritage of the Arabs, the country contains a much greater variety than just that.

A curious traveller who wrote on Spain from many angles was no writer or orientalist, but an employee of the Biblical Society of London: George Borrow (1803-1881). After converting from atheism to active Protestantism, this peculiar linguist went to Spain with a mission: to spread the knowledge of the Sacred Scriptures without the interpretations which the Catholic Church usually added to the text. He left Spain after living the most incredible adventures imaginable in his dealings with the people, the government and the clergy. He left his memoirs in a delightful volume, *The Bible in Spain* (1847), which was very appreciative of some virtues of the Spaniards that are not so well known in Europe.

One exception in this general Oriental enchantment is worth mentioning: George Sand. The French writer, whose real name was Aurore

Dupin (1804-1876), was not happy in Spain. In her book, *A Winter in Majorca*, she complained bitterly about the people, the insecurity and the general backwardness of the island. She travelled there with Frederick Chopin in the winter of 1838-39, looking for new airs that could help him with his poor health. She expected Parisian luxury and mild weather in the beautiful island only to find humidity and cold and all the inconveniences of a country in the middle of a civil war (the first Carlist war, 1833-1840). One can understand other reasons for her bad feelings: her love affair with the famous composer was not succeeding and she was a difficult lady all the same. Russian writer Ivan Turgenev, who knew her well, wrote: "What a brave man she was...!"

And what a contrast with the patriarch of the lovers of Spain, François-René Vicomte de Chateaubriand! He loved Spain so much that in 1823 he proposed to his king Louis XVIII to undertake the latest French invasion of the country, with an army of 100,000 "Sons of Saint Louis". Back in 1807, he had broken off relations with his formerly much admired Emperor Napoleon I and momentarily ended his political career as ambassador to several European courts. He began travelling *From Paris to Jerusalem* and had a final stop at Granada. According to gossip, he had started a very passionate love affair (one of so many!) with a lady, Natalie de Noailles, whom he had given a "rendez-vous" at the Alhambra. She didn't turn up at the appointed time but the disappointed lover took advantage of his quick visit to Grenada and wrote one of his most beautiful novels, conceived in a light and simple style, a great pleasure to read. *Adventures of the last of the Abencerrajes* is a romance full of the required oriental exoticism mixed with nostalgia of the European values of ancient chivalry. A pure love between a Christian girl and a Muslim man ends in tragedy due to the difference of religious creeds and the acute historical resentments alive since the fall of Granada. Blanca, the Christian girl, faithfully mirrors, according to contemporary witnesses, Chateaubriand's beloved Natalie. The book was written in 1809 but appeared only in 1826. The reason for such a long delay is easy to understand: it depicts the Spaniards in highly admiring colours at a time when, with the help of the British troops led by the Duke of Wellington, they were winning their war of Independence against Napoleon.

## 31. MANY CONSTITUTIONS, ONE MONARCHY

When I first went to live in Spain, I perceived with surprise a shade of paranoia among the Spaniards concerning the “instability” of Spanish political life in the 19th century, and before. They seemed to think of the rest of the world and, above all, of Europe as a peaceful and civilized world. I pointed out to my friends that, with the exception perhaps of the United Kingdom, the rest of Europe was in continuous turmoil for most of the 19th century. Starting with the Napoleonic wars and the social revolutions of 1848, France changed regime more than once, Germany and Italy were fighting for their national unity, the Austrian Empire fought wars with Prussia and the Balkans, the Ottoman Empire was starting to collapse, the United States underwent a long civil war...

If we turn to Spain, we see much of the same thing: two civil wars, the loss of the American colonies, many attempted or successful *pronunciamientos* or coups. I mean, much of the same thing as in the rest of a world in transition. Then, what is the origin of this common impression that Spain suffered worse from instability and that she was therefore somehow “different”? I think this impression may have been created by the unusual number of constitutions that were approved in a relatively short period of time. Seven from 1812 to 1931, leaving aside several bills that never came into force: an average of one constitution every 17 years amounts indeed to a lot of constitutions. You can say that there was constitutional instability. But the political instability was not as deep as that of the rest of Europe. In fact, when I read those constitutions I could see a rather long period in which Spain was ruled by the same political system. Certainly, this period was interrupted by three moments that were revolutionary, in the sense that they attempted a real change, a break with the past. These were the constitution of 1812, which was applied only from 1820 to 1823; the constitution of 1869, which lasted until 1873, and the constitution of 1931, in force until the end of the civil war in 1939. The interruptions were, as can be seen, short: in all, fifteen years of revolutionary experience in a total of 119 years. During this time, Spain was governed by a *liberal* regime,

inspired by the *liberal doctrinaires* of France, the party that in 1830 imposed the bourgeois monarchy of Louis Philippe of Orleans and dismissed the Bourbon dynasty for good (in France, that is). Under the guidance of writer Benjamin Constant among others, they sought a medium term between absolutism and revolution, a “nationalized monarchy” that would govern according to the liberal spirit in a “royalized” France. This regime lasted until 1848.

In Spain the ideology that inspired this brand of liberalism was seen as useful and it remained in power practically until 1923, when the dictator, Primo de Rivera, was called by King Alphonse XIII to lead the government . It was reflected in the Royal Statute of 1834 and the constitutions of 1837, 1845 and 1876. They were all fully constitutional texts, technically, but all presented themselves as mere amendments of the fundamental Cádiz Constitution of 1812. With slight differences, the aim of these texts was that of “moderating” or limiting the liberal principles through mechanisms taken from the tradition of the absolute monarchy. So, sovereignty did not belong to the nation because the constitution was approved by the king or the queen together with Parliament. The theoretic explanation given for this was that the “written” constitution was a mere transcript of the “historic” Hispanic constitution, which gave the monarch certain sovereign rights, as a fourth “moderating” power. Parliament was divided into two chambers: one was hereditary or monarchic, reserved for the aristocrats; the lower or popular chamber was elected according to the economic means of the voters: this was considered to be the criterion for a person to be sufficiently “civilized” to vote and to be elected. The right of suffrage was extended gradually after the constitution of 1876 but for the rest the system remained the same. Presiding over a centralized administration, the king or the queen made ample and frequent use of their powers, especially that of dissolving the Parliament and dismissing the Prime Minister, a hobby for which the Spaniards invented a curious verb: *borbonear* (to bourbonise).

The nature of this long-lasting regime is reminiscent of the traditional Spanish Monarchy, which had been integrated gradually by the union of different kingdoms since the Middle Ages and lasted until 1700, when King Charles II, the last Habsburg, died without succession. Curiously enough, whereas in the 19th century liberalism was

limited by certain residual powers of the monarch. In the traditional monarchy the opposite was the case: the power of the king was considered to be of divine origin and therefore to be absolute, but was limited by the rights of the traditional Cortes and the cities. The Habsburg dynasty respected the old institutions and liberties of the territories assembled under the unified Crown and had to govern through a permanent and tense negotiation with those territories in order to receive the means it needed for its expenditure, for wars and other adventures. Sometimes, as in 1640, these tensions became actual rebellions and came close to bringing about the total collapse of the monarchy itself.

Only after the war of Succession brought the French Bourbon dynasty to the Spanish throne were the kings able to rule Spain with absolute power. They abolished the liberties of the kingdom of Aragón, including, of course, Catalonia. Philip V, the first of the Spanish Bourbons, considered that the support given by the Catalonians to the Austrian pretender cancelled the constitution of the old monarchy, based on an implicit “pact” with the nobles. He and his successors imported absolute monarchic sovereignty from France and tried, for the first time, to unify the State, legally and politically, extending the Castilian laws to the whole monarchy. They were not quite successful, as can be seen by the periodic resurrection of local nationalism opposed to the central rule of Madrid. These centrifugal tensions appeared soon after the Napoleonic invasions were contested by local powers in arms. They resurfaced in the revolutionary intervals of the 19th and 20th centuries. They reappeared again in the Constitution of 1978. History is stubborn.

## 32. ZARZUELA, THE SPANISH OPERETTA

When, out of curiosity, I inquired into the names of Madrid's streets, I was surprised to learn that a remarkable number of them were named after composers of Zarzuelas: Barbieri, Bretón, Gaztambide, Arrieta, Chueca... This is not surprising because the Zarzuela, a kind of Spanish *Singspiel* or ballad opera, sometimes presents regional or historical stories but, at its best, it is the picture of the life of the people of Madrid.

According to historians, the Zarzuela was born in 1629, then died and was reborn again around 1850, when Asenjo Barbieri premiered his *Jugar con Fuego* (Playing with Fire) and the popular *Pan y Toros* (Bread and Bullfighting). This rebirth was not easy. Imagine a country ruined by the French invasion of 1808 and the subsequent political instability, looking for a national way of artistic expression, as many European countries were doing. Spain was still dominated by the Italian opera brought in in 1703 by the first Bourbon King, Philip V. He did not speak much Spanish and was married to an Italian, the influential Isabel de Farnesio, who didn't speak Spanish either. When, at the beginning of the 19th century, the Spanish musicians were trying to get rid of Italian influences, they had to fight the strong competition of the great Giacomo Rossini. He came to Madrid in 1831 and took the city by storm. It was very difficult indeed for the Spaniards to find a proper national voice and get rid of Italianism, which was favoured by the court and the aristocracy.

But they made it and their inspiration came from Paris and Vienna, where Offenbach and Johann Strauss had invented the operetta. Midway between *Opéra Comique* and Vaudeville, the operetta was pure popular entertainment. The composers often made parodies of serious opera, as did Offenbach with his hilarious *Orphée aux Enfers*. 19th century-Europe was in social turmoil and divided by nationalism and revolution: in the operetta, it had discovered a way to entertain the masses with humour, light music and some social and political criticism about the events of the day. Although somehow late compared to France and other European countries, Spain soon joined this form

of national and popular musical theatre. At the beginning the struggle was hard. The composers of the 1830s started to nationalize their pieces using Spanish tales taken from the rich national literature and history. They included some music based on folklore, but they continued to compose following the Italian model, they simply did not know other ways of writing music after more than a century of Italian predominance. Besides, they could not compose great masterpieces if they wanted, at the same time, to attract the attention of wide popular audiences.

The change towards a real national theatre was brought about by two composers who were, at the same time, musicologists: Asenjo Barbieri (1823-1894) and Felipe Pedrell (1841-1922). They were very different composers: the popular and enterprising Barbieri had founded Madrid's "Teatro de la Zarzuela" and written more than 70 zarzuelas where the French influence started to be felt; more intellectually minded, Pedrell also composed extensively, but sought to introduce the Wagnerian operas, something for which the Spanish public was not quite prepared. Both Barbieri and Pedrell, however, geared their studies towards the traditions of Spanish music prior to the Italian "invasion" and unearthed a great number of vocal works of the Renaissance for publication: Tomás Luis de Victoria's music and the collection of profane songs called the *Cancionero de Palacio*, among others.

These discoveries and teachings on Spanish music gave the composers broad opportunities and the strong popular demand for light entertainment received ample response from the composers, who produced zarzuelas in great numbers. The term came to signify the mixture of spoken, sung and danced numbers in the same theatrical work. The so called *género chico* (*The Lesser Genre*) was thus born: short one-hour works mostly with tunes and dances from Madrid or other regions of Spain, dealing with all kinds of subjects, from the local and picturesque of Bretón's *La Verbena de la Paloma*, for me the jewel in the crown, to the historic and legendary. Some of them were even biblical, like the hilarious parody of the story of Joseph in *La Corte del Faraón* (The Pharaoh's Court), a vaudeville of 1910. This period of the resurrected zarzuela enjoyed sixty years, more or less, of success, until the nationalistic school of Spanish pianists and orchestral composers took off and gave real works of merit to the classical music world: Al-



béniz, Granados, Turina, Falla, to mention only the most prominent from a brilliant group of composers.

And why do I speak of “resurrected” Zarzuela? Because, before the Spanish musical scene was conquered by the Italian school of opera, the Zarzuela had been invented by the most prominent authors of the Golden Age of Spanish literature. The first known zarzuela, a play entirely sung or accompanied with incidental music was written by Lope the Vega in 1629: *La Selva sin Amor* (*The Loveless Forest*). Lope was not very happy with the introduction of songs into his plays, a practice that was common in order to give variety to short works where the loves of shepherds and nymphs were portrayed. Music was introduced to complement complex stage machineries like those brought to Spain by Italian engineer Cosme Lotti. Calderón de la Barca liked these novelties better than Lope and started to write many of these musical plays, sometimes with liturgical motives. The music became progressively more and more present and was combined with the drama. Calderón admitted the incipient influence of Italian “opera in music” that Claudio Monteverdi (1567-1643) was composing at the same time. In 1660, he wrote *Celos Aún del Aire Matan* (“Jealousy, Be It Only of The Air, Kills”) with music by the composer Juan Hidalgo. A play performed entirely in singing, however, was boring for the popular audiences, who preferred the combination of songs and acting that later became known as the Zarzuela.

And why this peculiar name? The explanation is that these plays were staged for the amusement of the royalty or to commemorate royal weddings and other festive occasions. They were mostly performed at the so called “Fiestas de la Zarzuela”. This was, and still is, a small palace north of Madrid where the King of Spain has his residence nowadays. It was built for Prince Ferdinand, the brother of King Philip IV, in order to rest after hunting in the surrounding forests. For lovers of etymology, the word “zarzuela” is a diminutive of *zarza* (in English, bramble). They gave the palace the name, which, in turn, the palace gave to the Spanish operettas, for these bushes abounded in the vicinity of the grounds on which the palace was constructed.

### 33. “COME BACK TOMORROW!” (MARIANO JOSÉ DE LARRA)

“I was desperate many times in my life... how is it that I never hanged myself? It was always due to laziness!” This sentence about desperation and suicide is romantic enough. The romantics abandoned the moderation of 18th Enlightenment and expected extraordinary things from life, both individual and social. Not being able to achieve them, they either fled with their imagination to the Middle-Ages or to the Orient or else committed suicide. It was fashionable: the sentence above would not be very extraordinary except for the fact that the man who wrote it shot himself four years later, when he was just 27 years old. His name was Mariano José de Larra, born in 1809, and he was one of the most valuable writers in prose of the Spanish Romanticism. The article that contains the sentence, written in 1833, had nothing to do with desperation or suicide. It comes out of the blue at the end of one of Larra’s typical pieces about the malfunctioning of the Spanish administration, one of his favorite subjects. He often denounced the slowness, inefficacy, carelessness and corruption of bureaucracy with bitterness. In “Come Back Tomorrow!” the writer receives a visit from a foreign friend who wants to resolve a legal question in a couple of weeks (he is comically called *Sans-Delai*, *Without-Delay*). After the visitor has spent six disastrous months waiting and trying, the embarrassed author, who had warned his friend, declares ironically his own laziness for everything imaginable, even to commit suicide.

Larra’s education was French. His father was a doctor in the Army of the puppet-king, José Bonaparte, and had to emigrate to Bordeaux and then Paris in 1813. They went back to Spain in 1818. The boy was 9 and, after having finished his studies, he had started to write and to complain in vehement articles about everything, the administration, culture, social mores (he was courageous enough to write, at that time!, against the so-called “national” entertainment of bullfighting). His vehemence and his life were totally romantic but his subjects and ideology, even his style, were anchored, understandably, in the French Enlightenment. Reading his articles, I have often wondered whether

this intelligent young man was aware of the context in which he wrote against the defects of the State and its bureaucrats. "Come back tomorrow!" was published in 1833, at a time therefore in which many things were happening in Spain. King Ferdinand VII died on that year and his wife, the Italian Princess Christine de Bourbon Dos-Sicilias, was appointed regent. The first Carlist war started immediately and divided the country in two halves. The North, controlled by the absolutists, became a state within the State and was governed solely with the war effort as its task. The "Christine" or liberal government also had to concentrate on winning the war but, at the same time, was trying to consolidate liberalism as a political system for Spain.

In many ways, a revolution was being attempted. The creation of a new State, based on French Enlightenment ideas and on the principles of the Cádiz Constitution of 1812, which, since 1814, had been suspended by Ferdinand VII. In the Christine camp there were powerful, if minority, forces, who worked for absolutism and, even in the liberal camp, the differences between moderates and progressives were marked. Worst of all, many of the changes in the administration proposed by illustrious lawyers and politicians like Javier de Burgos or Alejandro Oliván were enacted into laws but could not be implemented, since the little money there was had to be used for the war. The country was in a state of real anarchy. The central government was so weak that "Juntas" and all kinds of autonomous powers were formed, including military ones, as had happened during the war of Independence. In such a situation, was it fair to ask perfection of an administration which had no means and no tradition? True, it had no tradition. We must not forget that two French invasions, in 1700 and 1808, had left Spain practically in chaos, with power atomized and without any proper law enforcement. The continuity of the efficient Spanish bureaucracy, which harked back to the times of the Catholic King and Queen and to the Habsburg monarchs, was broken and there had not been enough time to reconstruct it. This would be a slow process, based ironically on the principles of the same Napoleonic administration which had disrupted its functioning. It would become reality (on paper at least) only in 1852, during the government of Prime Minister Bravo Murillo. The problem was not only that laziness and incompetence slowed down all procedures. To top it all, initiative for

change was nowhere to be found. Administrative law specialist, García de Enterría, has applied the so-called Gresham's economic law ("Bad Money Drives Good Out") to the Spanish bureaucracy of Larra's time: "daily routine prevents innovation and progress". And not even the daily routine was done with promptness and efficiency.

Mariano José de Larra, it is clear, had enough reasons to be irritated with the slowness of the Spanish administration. But perhaps he exaggerated a little turning his irritation into romantic "desperation". He was Frenchified (*afrancesado*), a very educated young man with a passionate temper, which he lost frequently when confronted with the disorder and the backwardness of the Spain he found after a quiet and promising childhood in Paris. Being a perfectionist in 1833 Spain, even later, was dangerous for one's health; moreover, for the reasons I have explained, it was probably unjust. Larra moved in an environment where a different kind of "Romanticism" was predominant: that of the extremists who had come from exile after absolutism, who had absorbed the best of French or British Romanticism. Early on, he had tried to write after the medievalist fashion of the time: a drama based on a troubadour called Macías, whose love ends in a tragic and violent death. Was this a premonition of Larra's own end? It is impossible to know, but one thing is certain: his private life adapted perfectly to the Romantic cliché of excessive expectations in love and crushing disappointment following failure. He had lived an unhappy marriage (which he pathetically depicted in his article "On Marrying Soon and Wrong" of 1832) and fallen in love very young with his father's mistress. Finally, he had an affair with a married woman which ended in an abrupt dismissal. He committed suicide by shooting himself on the very day the lady pronounced the final verdict.

## 34. FINDING A GENERAL BEHIND EVERY BUSH

*Espadones* (big swords) is the name that the Spaniards used to give, good-humoredly I suppose, to the top military brass that in contemporary times found themselves at the summit of government so often. The most recent are well-known: General Primo de Rivera, who precipitated the end of the Bourbon monarchy in a short dictatorship, from 1923 to 1929, and, of course, Generalísimo Francisco Franco, who toppled the II Republic and remained in power until his death in 1975. There are also more distant precedents: another generalissimo, Manuel Godoy, was, at the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries, the strong man with King Charles VI and the Queen's favourite. And one must not forget Captain General Rafael de Riego, who, in 1820, invented the "pronunciamiento", a proclamation demanding a change in government and explaining the reasons. A long series of these took place during the 19th century, mostly to restore "order" in the liberal spirit of the Constitution of Cádiz.

There is a period in between those mentioned in which the kind of general I am referring to became the typical feature of power in Spain. This happened during the long and agitated reign of Queen Isabella II from 1840 until 1868. These generals were not necessarily dictators, but rather improvised politicians who, due to the circumstances, were called to the top responsibilities of government. Two of them occupied the dignity of Regent: General Baldomero Espartero at the beginning, during the minority of the Queen; General Francisco Serrano at the end, when the "Glorious Revolution" toppled the Queen from the throne. The others alternated as Prime Ministers. I became familiar with their names in Madrid when I wondered about the streets of the capital, little knowing whom they referred to: Narváez, Bravo Murillo, O'Donnell, Martínez Campos, Prim, Pavía and again Serrano, after whom one of the most elegant avenues in town is named (*Esparteros*, a small street right in the centre of the town, is not named after General Espartero. It was one of those gremial places where the traders in esparto grass used to open their shops).

But leaving aside the anecdotic, we must find the answer to two serious questions: first, why were there so many generals in civilian positions of power? and second, what was their political creed? For the first question, historians and thinkers agree: they refer in general to the weakness of the Spanish State, especially after the French invasion of 1808 and the long and turbulent years that followed. First came the long and disruptive War of Independence, then the first restoration of the Bourbon monarchy and the fierce struggle between traditionalists and liberals. All these circumstances created a state of affairs that made it very difficult if not impossible to maintain a normally functioning administration. Bureaucracy was nonexistent because the historical roots it may have had in modern times were cut by the War of Succession in 1700 and the War of Independence a century later. Everything had to be improvised, mostly importing, not always with success, foreign administrative techniques. The politicians, for their part, were too sharply divided in ideological terms to organize a working bureaucracy. Besides, the middle-classes were not strong enough to provide stable political organizations, capable of guaranteeing a strong government. In her weakness, the Queen turned, of course, to the military. The Spanish army was poor, like the country itself at that time of transition. But it was better organized than any political force and had long experience in battle. They had fought against the French, against the insurgent republics in America, against the absolutists in the first Carlist war 1833-1840. The military were ready and eager to serve as the only force able to fill the vacuum of power that the Queen found at the beginning of her reign in 1840.

The second question, about where the military political leanings used to be, has had a unanimous response: they were "liberal", or at least constitutional. They had been formed in a popular war of liberation against an invader, they had suffered the humiliation of being invaded again, this time by a French army acting for the conservative system of monarchies of Europe, they had mostly taken the side of the liberal Queen against the absolutist pretender Carlos V (from which the term "Carlist" wars comes).

Yes, Spain was liberal at that time as were, with more or less enthusiasm, her generals. One wonders, then, when did they become so conservative and authoritarian, and, above all, why? Here the interpre-

tations are not unanimous. The one I found the most interesting was given by Salvador de Madariaga in his long essay on contemporary Spain entitled simply *España*. He suggests that there was initially a strong opposition between the liberal-minded army and the extremely reactionary Catholic Church. As the years passed, however, the situation changed and a slow convergence of interests began to emerge. Public opinion was very rudimentary and moderate at first but, with time, it developed towards more radical views. Anarchism and social extremism created commotion among the military. In the dilemma between “law and order” they started to be more worried about order and to consider law as something secondary. The newly found freedom of speech and the differentiation of economic interests among the regions gave rise to nationalism, which the military saw as contrary to their sacred mission of preserving the unity of the nation. Finally, the advocacy by the left of a republican system hurt the traditional adherence of the generals to the monarchy, fostered by the monarchs themselves, who abused their role as King/Queen soldier and promoted direct complicity with the generals.

In this way, the military stood at a distance from society and sometimes reacted with outright indiscipline when faced with the decisions of the political authorities. After the defeats in Cuba in 1898 and Morocco in 1921, this gap yawned wide and dangerous. The population grew tired of wars and neglected the needs of the military as an organization. These, in turn, isolated themselves, attempting to form a state within the State. They demanded and obtained exclusive jurisdiction for certain political crimes perpetrated by civilians and started to defend their privileges and their autonomy with methods that were similar to those of the corporative trade unions. They, in words of Ortega y Gasset, became “de-nationalized” and, feeling themselves outside the nation, were tempted to see her as one more possible target for their war-like lust.

## 35. THE FORCE OF DESTINY: ROMANTICS OF SPAIN

Romanticism of a high quality came to Spain late: Gustavo Adolfo Bécquer (1836-1870) and Rosalía de Castro (1837-1885) are variously considered as post-romantic or pre-modernist, but Bécquer wrote his poetry under the influence of German Romantic lyricism, once the poems of Heinrich Heine had been translated into Spanish by a friend of his, Eulogio Sanz, in 1857. Sanz had been sent as a member of the Spanish Legation in Berlin around 1854, the time of the military rebellion known as la “Vicalvarada”, and spent his time there getting acquainted with what was new in German literature. More works of Heine and other German poets were introduced to the élite of Spanish writers afterwards, and they left a deep imprint on their creations. Bécquer’s *Rimas* are the main product of this influence. They abandoned the technique and themes of the first Spanish Romantics, the long narrative poems, the pompous nationalistic songs of glory, the political propaganda. A new type of ballad of subtle colours took over, filled with the evocation of musical tones and extremely sensitive feelings of nostalgia, even melancholy. Bécquer was born in Seville and was also influenced by the popular songs of Andalusia. Being weak of health and a certain decadent taste envisages the modernist colours of Rubén Darío and the Cuban José Martí. Under the influence of Heine again, elements of the fantastic appear in his beautifully written *Leyendas*. I remember the breathtaking impression I received when reading *Maese Pérez El Organista* for the first time. In a modest convent of Seville, Maese Pérez, a very old and ailing organ player refuses to stay at home on Christmas Eve. He desperately wants to play during the midnight mass as he has done all his life. That night he falls on the keys of his organ and dies at the precise moment of the “elevation”. But the organ doesn’t stop, the heavenly sounds keep ringing ...And every Christmas Eve thereafter the same magical prodigy repeats itself at the same sacred moment.

Another, less sophisticated kind of Romanticism had arrived in Spain earlier, more or less at the same time as it appeared in the rest of



Europe and for the same reasons. The unity of European culture had been created under French influence during the times of the Enlightenment and Napoleon wanted to impose it by the force of his armies. That unity was broken everywhere by the violent national reactions against the French invaders. Starting in Spain, the people fought for independence and, opposing the European standards marked by French Enlightenment, they claimed recognition for their local diversity and culture. In Spain, the return of absolutism in 1814 slowed down the process, but the ideas of the German precursors of Romanticism Johann Gottfried Herder and Friedrich Schlegel were already known. Together with the translations of Sir Walter Scott and Chateaubriand, they soon acquainted the Spanish élite with the conservative brand of the movement: strongly Catholic and reminiscent of epic battles and heroes of the Middle-Ages. Young writers influenced by the new patriotic and revolutionary airs surfaced during the brief liberal period of 1820-1823, but the new French armed intervention and the return of absolutism sent them into exile in France and England. There they became familiar with the great Romantics of progressive ideology, Lord Byron, Victor Hugo, etc. Alongside the aristocratic version of previous decades, a new middle-class Romantic movement had become the cultural and ideological hallmark of the French bourgeois revolution of 1830. It was the year of Victor Hugo's *Hernani*, the tragedy of a bandit of Aragón (Spain) in which the writer declared war against the laws of neo-classical theatre and poetry.

In 1833, Ferdinand VII died and a liberal regime was inaugurated in Spain under the regent Christine Bourbon Dos-Sicilias. The emigrants, political and literary, went back to Spain from exile and Romanticism took the country by storm, ushering in a revival of the long dormant national literature. *Don Alvaro o la Fuerza del Sino* was premiered in 1835 with great success and would later inspire Giuseppe Verdi for his opera *La Forza del Destino*. It was written by Angel de Saavedra, Duke of Rivas (1791-1865) and published with an introduction by another exiled author, Antonio Alcalá Galiano, which presented a complete manifesto for the new theatre and poetry of Romanticism. Don Alvaro possesses all the ingredients of the genre: passionate love, duels, honour offended and nuns seduced. Of course, no classical rules of "unity" are respected, prose and verse, pathetic and

comical scenes and all kinds of historical contrasts and anachronisms are mixed in a brand new kind of popular entertainment.

José de Espronceda, however, was the author who took over the leadership of the invasion of Spain by the new Romantic culture. Like Rivas, he had come back from exile but possessed none of the aristocratic moderation of the author of *Don Alvaro*. He was enormously gifted as a poet of sonorous and colorful verses of great effect. Like Mariano José de Larra, he also had a remarkable talent for misfortune in his personal life and also died very young. Like Larra, he was strongly motivated politically and took sides with the most radical branch of Spanish liberalism. “Freedom is my God!” is the war cry of the pirate captain from his ship as he sails close to Istanbul. “The Song of the Pirate”, obviously inspired in Lord Byron’s style, is, in fact, a poetic manifesto of individualism and rebellion against social convention. Popular traditions were the basis of Espronceda’s long narrative poems, as they had been for the Duke de Rivas’ “Historical Romances” of 1841. José Zorrilla (1817-1893), some years later, closed the cycle. He is best known for his popular version of *Don Juan Tenorio*, in which he created the character of Doña Inés and solved the tragedy inventing “salvation through love”, in order to give the middle class a more palatable end to an otherwise quite transgressive story. He completed the nationalization of Spanish Romanticism and exhausted its possibilities in his rather truculent *Leyendas*, narrative poems literarily modest but full of eventful suspense.

I have not forgotten Rosalía de Castro (1837-1885), a poetess who, for a long time, was unjustly ignored or under-rated in Spain. The reasons for this oblivion are not difficult to understand, although surely more difficult to condone: she was a woman, a pre-feminist at that, she wrote in the Galician language and gave voice to the anti-Castilian complaints of her region. She was socially and politically advanced and wrote probably the best lyrical verses of 19th century Spain. Like her friend Adolfo Bécker, she was a pure lyricist and gave expression to a disturbing bitterness about life, religion and the cloudy landscape of her native land. Her vision was, like her life and her temperament, ultra-sensitive and depressive, at the same time clear and enigmatic. Someone has written that Miguel de Unamuno may have inspired himself in Rosalía when he wrote about “The tragic Senti-

ment of Life". Far from the pompousness of the Romantics, this tragic, unhappy woman was only one step ahead of Antonio Machado and all the outstanding poets of the 20th century.

## 36. THE BLACK LEGEND OF SPAIN

Emilia Pardo Bazán is supposed to be the first writer to have used the expression “Black Legend” to refer to the systematic attacks suffered by Spain for her performance as a great power. She was speaking in 1899, with the vivid memory of the most recent and virulent propaganda effort made against Spain, this time by the United States in the context of their support for the independence of Cuba. The Legend was old, as we will see, and so were the attempts by Spanish writers to counteract it, starting with Francisco de Quevedo, who wrote “Spain Defended” in 1612, when his country’s predominance in Europe and the world was beginning to be contested by the emerging powers, France and England. More recently, the defense had been a frequent theme in the works of the Spanish thinkers of the Enlightenment: Feijóo, Cadalso, Jovellanos, etc. They were responding mainly to the version of the “legend” popular with French writers of the times prior to the Revolution. These used the poor image of Spain, for a long time then a power in decadence, as a weapon in their struggle against the Ancien Régime. Montesquieu added to the old accusations of brutality, arrogance and tyranny a new theme. In his *Persian Letters* (n. LXXVIII) the character of the Spaniard is described giving preference to new traits: their artificial gravity, their pompous pride, their abhorrence for work. By the way, Spain gave both to Montesquieu and Voltaire ample opportunity to deal in depth with the subject of tolerance.

The concept of “Black Legend” was developed by the writer Julian Juderías in 1914 as a case in the study of the use of propaganda in international relations: at the height of Spanish expansion and power, the subjected peoples and the emergent great powers created a legend, based on facts that were exaggerated or simply invented, in order to challenge Spanish predominance, at the same time ignoring or distorting their own behaviour or that of other imperial nations in similar circumstances. Against Spain, typical weapons of propaganda were used: there was an appeal to the senses, or sensationalism, and a manipulation of stereotypes through the presentation of an “atrocious story”, in our case

tyranny and obscurantism in Spain and oppression of innocent peoples abroad. It is interesting that this moral judgment was made, not only about present circumstances, but also as a method of presenting historical precedents to reinforce the case for the accusation.

The legend about Spain had many sources: the Swedish historian Sverker Arnoldson has contended that its remote origin was the resentment of the Italians at the expansion of Aragón and Catalonia into the Italian peninsula and Sicily as of the 13th century. It was later expanded to include the scandals of the notorious popes of Spanish origin, Calixto III and Alexander VI, and the sacking of Rome by Charles V in 1527. In Germany, Martin Luther attacked the Emperor as the main enemy of Protestant Reform and included criticism of the Spaniards in general as suspicious of being mixed with Jews and Moors. For their part, the Jews expelled from Spain in 1492 took with them, understandably, a very negative image of their native country to the whole of Europe. And very important and negative from the point of view of the image of Spain was the criticism expressed by many missionaries in America regarding the inhuman treatment of indigenous peoples by the Spanish conquerors.

These and other elements were very eloquently summarized by Prince William of Orange when he took the leadership of the Dutch rebellion against the Spanish (shouldn't we say, more precisely, Habsburg?) dominance of the Low Countries and he presented his "Apology" in 1581, a written defense against his proscription by King Philip II. The atrocities committed by Spanish soldiers and other mercenaries in the sacking of Antwerp (1576) were generalized and magnified and new subjects were added. The Spanish King was presented as morally abject: bigamous, incestuous, and the murderer of his own son, Charles. The cruelty of the Inquisition in Spain and the Netherlands was revived, focusing now on the persecution of Protestants. The subject of the Indians in Spanish America was added to the impressive list of grievances that was the "Apology". (The dubious story of the assassination of Don Carlos would soon be popularized in a play by Friedrich Schiller and in the opera by Giuseppe Verdi, *Don Carlo*, composed in the context of the movement for Italian unity).

A powerful printing industry helped the propaganda effort in the whole of Europe. And, last but not least, the help of the British added

strength to the anti-Spanish front, since not only England but also France and the Netherlands, themselves active trading nations, were challenging the monopoly in controlling commerce in the Atlantic previously reserved for Spain and Portugal by the Holy See. So many ingredients; no wonder the legend of the Black Legend could not but be invented.

This is a confusing theme and I must say the moral judgment of past actions lends itself normally to prejudice and self-righteousness. To reduce all this material to “one” Black Legend is wrong; there have been many different more or less accurate narratives. Also, one gets the impression that Spain is the victim solely of foreign condemnation, whereas much of the substance of the Legend originated within the country itself. To begin with, the criticism of Spanish behaviour in the Americas was used by Spain’s enemies but it had strong internal sources. Fray Bartolomé de las Casas published his *Brevisima Descripción* (A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies) in 1552. It was promptly translated into Dutch, English and French, and given ample diffusion as a general attack on Spain, even including manipulations to the text where necessary. As far as the personal depravity of King Philip II, Antonio Pérez, his secretary and confidante fallen into disgrace, was the author of some of the most vitriolic and, it seems to modern historians, exaggerated criticism. Pérez fled to Aragón in 1590 and his reports were soon translated and distributed all over Europe. Lastly, there is confusion in the attacks between Spain as such and both the Habsburg Empire and Castile. Most of the actions for which Spain was blamed were initially undertaken in the interest of the European part of the Habsburg Empire in The Netherlands. As for Castile, she was certainly the richest and most dynamic component in all of Charles V’s inheritance, but, until the 18th century, only a kingdom loosely united to the rest of the Spanish Monarchy. That also explains why the nationalisms of Spain’s periphery have produced some of the most acerbic rejections of Spain, purposely confusing it with Castile. The Catalans rebelled in 1640 against the monarchy and to this day some of them want their land to be compared to the rebellious Dutch of former times.

## 37. NATION-BUILDING IN SPAIN

Spain is complex. Many other countries are, of course, for a variety of reasons. Spain is complex, above all, because her history has brought about a plurality of nationalisms. After a century of liberal governments, two territories, Catalonia and the Basque country, opposed their own nationalism to Spanish nationalism, so there were several nationalisms coexisting in the same territory. Catalans and Basques did everything necessary to search out ancient myths and heroic histories to prove their separate identity, language and culture, as opposed to those of Castile. They tried and are still trying what nationalisms have always tried: to justify their separation and the creation of a new state for their “nations”. This kind of territorial confrontation is difficult enough, but in Spain the complexity goes further because there is not one but two Spanish nationalisms, one liberal and one conservative, radically opposed to one another and to those of the peripheral territories. How could this have happened?

Nationalism is a product of the 19th century. It began in Germany and had a very strong intellectual foundation and a no less formidable political strength. It was a powerful force aimed at achieving the unification of the many principalities, autonomous towns and bishoprics that constituted the German lands into a single state. Linguist-philosophers, like Johann Gottfried Herder and August Wilhelm Schlegel, discovered that each nation has a “spirit” and that you can find this spirit if you study its ancient language and literature. The Grimm brothers created the first dictionary of the German language and compiled hundreds of folkloric tales that had been transmitted through the centuries orally. Later, writers and artists of all kinds joined in the search for a popular German identity. Wagner unearthed the long forgotten German mythology to create a new kind of event to which he contributed music and poetry, what he called “Musical Drama”. Also to give impetus to the nation-building effort, something similar was being done in the North of Italy, where, under Austrian occupation, Italian patriots used Giuseppe Verdi’s operas to give coherence and strength to the national struggle for freedom and, later, unification.

In Spain, the nationalistic effort was not so strong at the beginning. After all, Spain had for centuries been a unified state within stable borders and saw itself, at the time of the first European nationalism, not so much as a nation but as a world empire, which she was until 1898, when her last colonies were lost. But something happened that changed the panorama completely. Napoleon invaded the country in 1808 and dismissed the Bourbon dynasty. A general popular reaction followed, in which the Spanish people acted more or less spontaneously against their French invaders. This war, which years later was called “The War of Independence”, became, in the age of liberalism, the ideal foundation for inventing a Spanish Nation in the contemporary European (and American, North and South) sense of the word. The war was not simply a typical war of liberation. First, because there were two imperial armies on Spanish soil, the French and the British and the struggle would be decided for reasons that were not exclusively Spanish. Also, because the rebellion opposed two kinds of Spaniards: on the one hand, the liberals who underlined the struggle for national sovereignty against the foreign invader, although they did it according to the ideas of the Enlightenment coming from France; on the other, the conservatives who were fighting to defend not any abstract nation but religion, tradition and monarchy. Surrounded by French troops in Cádiz, however, the fathers of the first Spanish constitution reached a compromise and accepted the idea that sovereignty belonged to the nation and not to the king. Thus was Spanish nationalism born. Its dramatic birth was the war of Independence and its foundational myth was found in the Middle-Ages. It consisted of a more or less real tradition of “pactism”, of a monarchy limited by ancient laws and representative institutions.

The Church and the conservative forces were not ready to accept this kind of nationalism without a fight. The German ideas of romantic nationalism had been imported early into Spain by a German writer, Juan Nicolás Böhl de Faber, who lived precisely in Cádiz, the cradle of the liberal constitution. In 1814 he published the works of Schlegel on Calderón de la Barca and the Spanish Theatre of the Golden Age. In them the German philosopher saw the true spiritual essence of Spain, the profound historical connection of the Spanish monarchy with the Catholic Church. For the latter, the war against the French was not



merely against a foreign invasion. It was, moreover, the struggle of good Spanish Christians to defend their country against the foreign ideas of the French revolution and the Enlightenment. They abhorred the concepts of “nation” and popular sovereignty. For them, authority came from God and, on His behalf, from the king. It is even said that priests sent the faithful to fight against the French crying “For our Religion! Death to the Nation!” Gradually, though, the Church started to understand the rallying force of the idea of nation and finished up by using it for its own purposes. The Spanish nation could only be understood as an entity that was inseparable from the Catholic religion. The foundations of Spain were not to be found in the Middle-Ages but rather in the union of Church and state imposed by the Catholic monarchy of Ferdinand and Isabella, who had expelled the Moors and the Jews, excluding any other religion from their kingdoms. Later, the task had been completed by Charles V and Philip II and their attempts to eradicate Protestantism from Europe. At least they succeeded in Spain.

This kind of militantly religious nationalism prevailed in the end. The Church lost part of its lands but in exchange was able to prevent the liberal state from going so far as to declare the complete separation of church and State, something that didn't happen even in the revolutionary constitution of 1869. The Church also obtained the monopoly of education in the Concordat of 1851, and this privilege was challenged only by the secular “Institución Libre de Enseñanza” (Free Institution of Education), with unequal success.

## 38. THE FOREIGN ADVENTURES OF GENERAL O'DONNELL

What is nowadays the district of Tetuán (and a Metro Station) was, in 1860, still in the countryside North of Madrid. In February that year, a victorious army had come back from Morocco after having occupied the city of that name, defeated the tribes that were harassing the Spanish town of Ceuta and won other concessions for Spain in what was pompously called the “war of Africa”. The troops were camped as they waited to enter Madrid in a triumphal parade. The parade never took place, but they stayed so long that a little village started to develop around the soldiers, with small shops and other services to provide for their needs. *Tetuán de las Victorias* was its initial name. It had been truly an important if modest victory, the first successful incursion of Spanish troops abroad for a long time. The control of Tetuán was renounced by Spain but the Moroccan Sultan officially recognized Spanish sovereignty over the enclaves she already occupied in North-Africa. It was also a success in gaining the support of the population for the Army and the Monarchy in an unusual wave of patriotism that the official propaganda wanted to be reminiscent of the Reconquest against the Moors. As a consequence, Spain was provided with some of the prestige she needed among the powers of Europe.

The Commander of the victorious forces was General Leopoldo O'Donnell (1809-1867), who was Prime Minister of Spain from 1858. He belonged to a military dynasty with Irish origins and had behind him a brilliant career as an officer and as an amateurish but powerful politician. He had participated in the first “Carlist” war on the side of the liberal army and was later sent to Cuba as governor, where he managed to keep law and order from 1844 to 1848, pitilessly crushing several slave revolts. Back in Spain, he led one of the many *pronunciamientos* by which the Spanish generals used to make the direction of politics change course every now and then. His action turned out to be a real coup d'état, popularly known as *La Vicalvarada*. It started in the Summer of 1854 rather confusedly in Vicálvaro, a village near Madrid, and set up a progressive government that obliged Queen Isabella II to

usher in a period of administrative modernization and adherence to the constitutional order. O'Donnell himself, after sharing power with another famous general, the leftist Espartero, presided over a very long government for the standards of the time: from 1858 to 1863.

The international environment was, for a change, favourable for Spain. Although the revolution of 1854 was a distant echo of the European uprisings of 1848, the actual disorders that had also started in that year in Spain were ruthlessly suppressed by yet another general, Narváez. So Spain had won a certain favour with the Austrian Empire and Prussia for her adherence to law and order. She had also broadened her international links, up to that time limited to France, Great Britain and Portugal in the "Quadruple Alliance". The Holy See had been pacified by the Concordat of 1851 and the United States was involved in its own civil war and had been obliged to lessen the pressure on Spain in Cuba. Finally, the Crimean war (1853-1856), in which Spain did not participate, had very beneficial effects for the Spanish economy, which was then starting a long delayed industrialization and timid agrarian reforms.

General O'Donnell felt emboldened by all these circumstances and embarked on a number of outlandish foreign interventions with which he wished to enhance his success in Morocco. Two of these adventures were undertaken in collaboration with France and Great Britain: their aim was to defend interests that were supposedly common, although favoured rather less those of Spain, leaving aside the newly acquired international respectability. The first of these interventions took place in the neighbourhood of the Spanish Philippines, starting in 1857. Spain joined France in an expedition to the region of Cochinchina (South of present-day Vietnam), where some French and Spanish missionaries and local Catholics had allegedly been harassed. The operation was launched from Manila and was presented to public opinion as a sort of modern crusade. Saigon and several territories in the region were occupied, but no territorial gains were claimed for Spain. The benefits, leaving aside the obvious "image" aims, were mainly for the French.

In México, the leftist and anti-clerical government of Benito Juárez had refused to pay the foreign debt contracted by a previous administration. France's Napoleon III promoted an intervention and in 1861

Spain and Great Britain sent troops from Havana under the command of yet another Spanish general, Juan Prim. He obtained a satisfactory agreement on the debt from Juárez and retired his troops. Prim was prudent enough. He refused to support the French in their disastrous attempt to impose Maximilian of Habsburg as king of Mexico. The French, the British and the Americans, who had not participated in the military operations, recovered their money. So did Spain, but not without suffering very negative political consequences. Her attempts to rebuild the relations with her former Central- and South-American colonies were discredited and delayed. To add to the trouble, O'Donnell sent yet another expedition to Chile and Perú in 1863 to show off the powerful newly built Spanish fleet. The results were the same: the money of the debt was paid and Spain's prestige was somehow increased in Europe... but lost in Spanish-America.

All of these adventures were foolish and unproductive, the result of the inexperience of *espadones* desirous to increase their power and influence at all costs. The cost was certainly high. In terms of human lives, an estimated 45,000 dead or wounded. But, paradoxically, O'Donnell's "long" government" is remembered as a positive period in the turbulent history of 19th century Spain. He had founded a new party, the "Union liberal" that represented an attempt to reconcile different interests, placing itself at the center of two extremes: right-wing traditionalists (the so-called *moderados*) and the left-wing republicans (the *progresistas*). Interestingly, the regime born of the "Vicalvarada" had its ideological basis in a Manifesto written by a young historian close to O'Donnell. His name, Antonio Cánovas del Castillo, was to appear again in 1876 as the father of yet another constitution and of a new period of relative stability, known as the Restoration. O'Donnell's "long government" was, thus, a foretaste of what was to come after a new short parenthesis that broke out with the Revolution of 1868. His life was not precisely boring. One can imagine that he only rested in 1866, when, facing a serious economic crisis and social unrest and fallen in disgrace with the Queen, he was forced to resign. He went into exile and died in Biarritz (France).

## 39. CARLISM, THE LONG CIVIL WAR

When the victory in Spain's War of Succession gave the Spanish throne to the French side, one of the obvious conditions demanded by the British and their allies in the pro-Austrian coalition was that, at all costs, a union of the crowns of France and Spain should be prevented. The result would have been an excessively great power, incompatible with the "balance of power" they sought for Europe. This commitment was written into the treaty of Utrecht in 1714, and the new Spanish king, Philip V, fulfilled France's international compromise. Apart from that, he imported the French regime of absolutism into Spain, including the ancient prescription of the Salic laws that excluded women from inheriting the crown, or at least (the so called semi-Salic) gave preference to the male descendants, even to the king's brother. A later Bourbon king of Spain, Charles IV, abolished this rule in 1789 and his son Ferdinand VII confirmed the abolition in the Pragmatic Sanction of 1830. He had a daughter, Isabella, born that same year and he wanted to ensure that, in due course, she would become queen.

But he also had a brother, Carlos María Isidro, who didn't agree with this clever manoeuvre and started to conspire against Ferdinand, invoking his right as brother to succeed him. This happened, ironically, as soon as the French army of "the 100,000 sons of Saint Louis" invaded Spain in 1823 and helped Ferdinand to restore absolutism. Some, together with Prince Carlos, did not consider that the Bourbon restoration was sufficiently absolutist. A party called "The Apostolics" was created by some bishops and nobles, who had expected that Ferdinand would have gone even further in his reactionary policies and blamed him for not having restored the Holy Inquisition. They wanted to give the throne to Ferdinand's brother, according to Salic law, and proclaim him as Charles V. He certainly was the right man for that purpose, extremely religious, conservative and austere ("rara avis" in the Bourbon family). He wanted to be a theocrat like the monarchs of 16th century Spain and fight liberalism the way his predecessors had fought the doctrines of Luther. He was so fully legitimist that he even preferred to wait until his brother's death to succeed him. When

this happened in 1833, he unleashed the first Carlist war against the three-year-old Isabella II and her mother Christine, who was to act as Regent until the queen came of age.

This war, the first in a series of attempts, was more than a discussion about legitimacy and inheritance. It was, in the words of British historian Raymond Carr, a classic form of counter-revolution. The Carlists represented a considerable part of those Spaniards who were unable to adapt to the changes that modernity was necessarily bringing to their country. They opposed anything new, they did not see any difference between the liberal revolution of their century and the, according to them, atheistic ideas of the 18th century. They even thought that it was necessary to combat Protestantism and other heretical dangers that they suspected everywhere. But it was not only a question of religion. The absolutists also fought against the centralization of power imposed by the first Bourbons and maintained by liberalism. They aspired to recover their local and regional special laws, the so called *Fueros* in the Basque country and Navarre, the ancient autonomous institutions in Aragon and Catalonia. Finally, their struggle was that of the very conservative villages, strongly controlled by the Church, against the towns and their liberal politicians and military officers, influenced by the freemasons.

The first war lasted until 1840 and at times the Carlists, under legendary leaders like general Zumalacárregui, controlled significant parts of the Basque Provinces and came close to challenging Madrid in 1837. In the end, both parties were exhausted. It was a war between rural guerrillas and a regular army, impossible for either of them to win. With the country ruined, peace negotiations were inevitable. They led to a compromise and the end of the war. Charles V was sent into exile in France and the *Fueros* were restored. Afterwards, there were still more Carlist pretenders, all called Charles, and they were all involved in new attempts to give the throne to the, for them, “legitimate” Bourbon branch. In 1846-49 they unleashed a rather anarchic guerrilla in Catalonia, similar to the social rebellions that frequently happened at the time. In 1860, the Captain-General of the Balearic Islands, Jaime Ortega, tried a *pronunciamiento* in favor of Charles VI, which was short and unsuccessful. In 1872, it was the turn of Charles VII and then things were much more serious. For the ultra-conserva-

tives, the Glorious Revolution of 1868 had gone too far. It had established religious freedom, it had recognized the kingdom of Italy and, therefore, the end of the papal states, it had elevated the “atheist and mason” (and foreigner) Amadeus of Savoy to the Spanish throne, it had ended in a chaotic I Republic... The Pope was not happy at all and didn't mind condoning another Carlist crusade in Spain. This, like the first, was a real war. It took place mainly in the Basque Country and again set countryside against towns, including liberal Bilbao, which suffered a siege in 1874. Two years later, the newly restored Bourbon, Alfonso XII, won the war militarily and, as punishment for the rebellious Basques, again cancelled the “Fueros”, as his predecessor Philip V had done in 1714.

This decision was what made Sabino Arana, at the time only 21 years old, abandon Carlism, the party of his family, and become the founder of Basque nationalism. I suppose he thought that there was no way to preserve the Basque religious and conservative “essence” inside liberal Spain and decided to fight for the secession of his country. He studied history and invented a Basque nation made of a secular tradition, glorious battles won or lost, even a biblical hereditary connection with no less than the patriarch Noah. Arana created the Basque Nationalist Party, which absorbed most of the former Carlists, while the Catalan branch of Carlism joined the conservative regionalist “Lliga”. Only the Carlists of Navarre remained loyal to the legitimist pretenders. They formed a Carlist party, first piously called “Traditionalist Communion”. Active in the far-right opposition during the II Republic, their paramilitary force the *Requetés* joined the (Spanish) nationalists in the civil war. If they had a last hope to promote their pretender to the Spanish throne, they were soon disappointed. Due to General Franco's scarce disposition to share power, they were “unified” with the rest of the rebellious factions in 1937 and disappeared from the political scene. Some recalcitrant nostalgics occasionally remind us of their past claims. As did the latest pretender, Hugo Carlos of Bourbon y Parma, a peculiar Carlist who was also a socialist and federalist. After marrying a Dutch princess, he went to live in Spain in 1956, but was expelled by Franco in 1968.

## 40. THE GEOPOLITICS OF SPANISH AMERICAN EMANCIPATION

The prospect first and later the reality of the separation of most of the Spanish Empire from the mainland couldn't but provoke a drastic reorganization of the whole world in terms of power. After the Napoleonic invasion in 1808, the power vacuum had caused, both in Spain and in America, an atomization of power in local *Juntas* or *Cabildos* (local councils). In some places, the confrontation of opposing ideologies and interests caused actual civil wars: between Spaniards, between Americans and between Spaniards and Americans. Everybody tried to manipulate the course of events in their favour, starting with the Spanish authorities. Assembled in Cádiz, the Cortes that drew up the 1812 Constitution had in mind a liberal but unified Spanish monarchy and sought in this way to stop the movements for independence that were already underway in the different viceroyalties. The French monarchy installed by Napoleon in Spain had no authority to control the situation either in Spain or in the colonies. But the Emperor, at war with the British Empire, tried to prevent the takeover of America by the British for their commercial interests. He sent all kinds of adventurers and *agents-provocateurs* to the incipient republics in order to incite rebellions and to guide them in the direction of traditional French "Anglophobia".

The crisis caused by American emancipation has been compared with the vacuum created in Europe by the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire, usually known as the "Eastern Question". Unlike what happened there, in America no major international armed conflicts were waged, but the frantic manoeuvres of the great powers of the time were such that one could speak of a "Western Question", meaning the attempts of the relevant actors to divide the spoils of the Spanish defeat among themselves. Starting in 1814, this dangerous game changed its nature. Once Napoleon was overthrown, the absolutist Ferdinand VII was restored to the throne of Spain and his cousin Louis XVIII became the king of France. Ferdinand resorted to repression once he was convinced that the American rebels would no longer recognize his



authority, not even with offers of limited self-government. Attempts at mediation by other powers like Russia also failed.

France, ever apprehensive of a total British hegemony in the Atlantic after Napoleon's defeat, was now allied with the conservative powers of continental Europe in the so called Holy Alliance, to which Great Britain was only loosely associated. France tried in various ways to establish a favourable outcome for her interests, or at least, a certain balance. She failed in the attempt to create an international coalition against the British, which would include Russia and the United States. After 1823, she tried a middle course, neither recognition nor repression, in order to keep the new American countries under her influence: new monarchies of the house of Bourbon, if possible of the French branch, would be installed in America. This was unsuccessfully attempted for Rio de la Plata (Argentina) in 1818, but the idea survived even after France had officially recognized the young republics. Napoleon III launched his intervention in Mexico in 1860 with a similar project in mind.

What about the British themselves? There is little doubt about their intentions. They had been trying for a long time, at least since the Treaty of Utrecht, to gain access to the huge American markets and were surely resentful of the role that Spain, allied with France, had played when they lost their own colonies in North-America. They were masters of the oceans after they had defeated the Spanish-French fleets at the battle of Trafalgar in 1805, and it is well documented how, after the revolutionary Francisco de Miranda failed in 1806 in his attempt to disembark in Venezuela with the help of the U.S., he had turned to the British for assistance. He obtained a commitment from the Duke of Wellington to provide him with 10,000 men for the same purpose, a fresh attempt on Venezuela. But then the circumstances changed. Great Britain had joined forces with Spain in the war against Napoleon and couldn't openly betray her new ally for the sake of her interests in America. When the British withdrew their support and informed Miranda, the Duke tells us in his memoirs, the Venezuelan response was, understandably, "loud and angry". In other words, the British wished that the Spanish colonies gain their independence as long as they could achieve it by indirect means. They could not position themselves clearly against the principle of monarchic legitimacy

by supporting the revolutionary governments of the young republics but intended to maintain the favourable status quo which allowed them to have free access to trade with Spanish America. They worked hard to prevent the restoration of Spanish rule by allowing the recruitment of volunteers for the insurgent armies in their territory. They also opposed any attempt by the conservative monarchies of Europe to mediate in favor of Spain, let alone to intervene militarily as France was tempted to do in the aftermath of her recent invasion of Spain in 1823. For this same purpose of avoiding an active European involvement, Britain postponed the diplomatic recognition of the republics, which the Holy Alliance would have taken as a provocation.

In favour of this policy aimed at keeping Europe out of the conflict they were helped by the government of the United States, whose president Monroe had proclaimed the famous doctrine "America for the Americans". The U.S. was as interested as the British in extending its sphere of influence towards the South, all the more so since they had a long land frontier with the former Spanish possessions. The temptation to carve a substantial part of the spoils by simply annexing Mexico, Florida, Texas and Cuba was strongly felt. But the war of 1812, which opposed the two Anglo-Saxon Powers was still recent. A prudent course of action in order to avoid a military response by the U.K. was very much to the point. That same war had revealed to the U.S. the strategic importance of Florida for the control of New Orleans and, with it, of all trade in the Mississippi River valley. This explains the rather moderate approach taken by the U.S. regarding the "Western Question". They preferred to negotiate the legal purchase of the state of Florida with Spain, which they did starting in 1818. In 1821 the deal was made and the U.S. recognized Latin American independence. The British waited a little longer, but they did the same in 1824.

## 41. CHATEAUBRIAND AND THE SIXTY THOUSAND SONS OF SAINT LOUIS

François-René de Chateaubriand (1768-1848) had a long life which was driven by passion. In his marvellous “Memoirs from beyond the Grave” he described in minute detail to what extent he was passionate in everything he did, including his turbulent private affairs. As a writer he was the precursor of Romanticism with his novel “René”, appropriately subtitled “the effects of passion”. In his agitated participation in politics, he applied his passionate conservatism to the defense of the Catholic Religion and absolutist monarchy. Last but not least, as a lover of Spain, he was one of the first romantic travellers of the 19th century and described the beauties of Andalusia with forceful passion. He passionately wanted for Spain what was for him paramount: the preservation of religion and absolute monarchic power.

Ferdinand VII, the Bourbon king reigning in Spain, had been restored to the throne by Napoleon in 1813, at the end of the long war of Independence. He immediately abolished the liberal Constitution drawn up in Cádiz in 1812 and went back to the despotism his predecessors had applied before the French Revolution and the Napoleonic invasion. He ruled the country with ultra-conservative policies and sent many of the politicians who had tried to establish liberalism into exile. Finally, he made a desperate and disastrous attempt to reverse the independence of the American colonies by military force. Add to all that a deep economic depression and the result was inevitable: Ferdinand's mistakes brought about the first military *pronunciamiento*, the Spanish (and American) brand of a *coup d'état*. In 1820, a certain general Rafael del Riego and his officers launched the first of many such uprisings. After an initial declaration, they proclaimed the rebellion in the provinces, then marched on Madrid and toppled the absolutist government. Riego re-established the Cádiz Constitution and took the King hostage in Seville, where he had fled for safety.

This kind of development was what the European monarchs, victorious in their wars against Napoleon, had set out to avoid at all costs. At the Congress of Vienna in 1814 they had restored the European

countries to the borders that had existed prior to the Napoleonic wars. Inspired by the mystic Russian Czar Alexander, they had created a Holy Alliance with Austria and Prussia that would “instill the divine right of kings and Christian values in European political life”. According to the preamble of the Treaty, they were inspired by “the necessity of settling the steps to be observed by the Powers, in their reciprocal relations, upon the supreme truths which the Holy Religion of our Savior teaches”. A year later, France and a reluctant United Kingdom joined the party to form the Quintuple Alliance, creating a system of congresses of these Powers, which were designed to deal with any situation that might upset the religious and political principles of the new European order.

In 1820, grave disorders in Sicily and the liberal uprising in Spain triggered the meeting of one of these congresses. It took place in Verona (Italy) on October 20<sup>th</sup>, 1822, and it passed a Resolution in which the High Contracting Powers, referring to Spain, declared themselves “fully persuaded that the representative system of government is as incompatible with the monarchic principle, as much as the idea of the people’s sovereignty is opposed to the principle of divine right”. In consequence, they set about using all their means “to destroy the system of representative government (and the freedom of the press) of any government of Europe where it may exist...” Russia and Austria supported this decision against the objections of the British, who were opposed on principle to any general right of intervention and saw with benevolence the ideas of freedom that would help to bring about the independence of the American republics. France was reluctant at first and, in case of intervention in Spain, wanted to act alone: she did not want to see Austrian or Russian armies crossing her territory again. But this resistance didn’t last long and was the unique opportunity for the Viscount of Chateaubriand, who dreamed of applying his passion to Spain and to absolutism. He had entered politics to support Louis XVIII, the restored Bourbon who succeeded Napoleon, and he was his Ambassador in London when the intervention in Spain began to be discussed. He managed to be sent to Verona to represent France at the Congress. There, he applied all his many talents to circumvent the British opposition and to secure Russian and Austrian support. After a long discussion, the Powers decided on a mandate for France to send

her troops to Spain to restore order, with a subsidy of 20 million francs per year.

In January 1823, Louis XVIII solemnly announced: “100,000 men are ready to march, invoking the name of Saint Louis, to safeguard the throne of Spain for a grandson of Henry IV of France” (the first French King of the Bourbon dynasty). Thus, less than twenty years after the Napoleonic invasion of 1808, he resumed a long tradition of French military interventions in Spain that had started, at least, with Emperor Charles the Great in the Middle-Ages, as narrated in the famous *Chanson de Rolland*. It seems that the actual number of invaders was “only” 60,000, but that was enough for their purpose. They entered Spanish territory in April under the command of the Duc d’Angoulême and, after a short campaign, defeated the Spanish armies. In September, Cádiz surrendered, King Ferdinand was liberated and a force of occupation of 45,000 men was deployed in Spain. They stayed there until 1828, giving Ferdinand enough time to abolish, as he had done in 1814, the Cádiz Constitution. Angoulême had advised him to act with the same moderation as his French cousin, Louis XVIII, but Ferdinand didn’t pay any attention and started a period of authoritarian and extremely conservative rule that became notorious for the Spaniards as “the ominous decade”

An exultant Chateaubriand considered this to be his personal success. He had wanted the war. He thought it would discourage other revolutionary movements in Europe. He also hoped in this way to contribute to unifying the French military which had been divided by the Revolution and to consolidate the restored Monarchy. He was really proud of his prowess and wrote: “Striding across Spain, succeeding where Bonaparte had failed...achieving in six months what he had failed to do in seven years. Who could have expected such a miracle?” As a reward, he became French Foreign Minister, but after a short time was dismissed, due to the intrigues of his many enemies. He was too passionate to be a good politician.

## 42. THE REBELLION OF SPANISH AMERICA

What happened in Spanish America from around 1810 to 1826 was a great revolution, or rather a number of different revolutions. Mexican author Octavio Paz has pointed out their similarity with the French revolution. They were rebellions for a change of the political and social system. They were, he wrote, different from the rebellion of the Thirteen Colonies in North America, where there was secession but not really revolution, because the movement for independence there was consequent with the British ideas and institutions transplanted to the new world. Spain simultaneously faced the struggle for independence in addition to the rejection of the Bourbon monarchy and its absolutist regime.

Now, all secessions and all revolutions are by definition illegal; they fight to break off with the existing order and its laws. This is why they normally try to avoid the legal argument, which tends to be favourable to the status quo. I was surprised, therefore, to learn about the pains the Spanish-Americans took to find a legal basis for their uprisings. In Caracas (Venezuela) where these movements started, jurists were summoned to construct a legal edifice that could justify the revolution. In other terms, the creole patriots did not want it to appear like a revolution. The peoples of America, they argued, were not the subjects of the Spanish nation. They were directly linked to the Crown of Spain through the *capitulaciones*, the conditions that were agreed by the Kingdom of Castile with the conquerors and original settlers. Between them there was no "State" in the modern sense but rather a feudal relationship. Once the Monarchy, one of the partners in the deal, was abolished by the Napoleonic invasion, the link was broken and the Americans recovered their original freedom. This was a clever argument, if rather farfetched, because it seems to suppose that those Spaniards who entered this covenant with the Crown had already been "there", in America, which was not the case. Nevertheless, the idea went almost literally into the solemn Declaration of Independence signed in Caracas on July the 5th, 1811. Similar texts were proclaimed in the rest of the colonies and thus started the long and arduous process of separation.

It is curious to observe how closely the events in America mirrored those that were taking place in Spain. The Venezuelan Declaration mentions what had happened in Bayonne (France) on May 5, 1808, as the key reason for separation. Once the Iberian Peninsula was invaded by Napoleon, the King and Crown-Prince had abdicated and the Emperor had handed over the crown of Spain to Napoleon's brother Joseph. To the Americans, this action was against the law. They didn't recognize any authority either to Napoleon or to his brother. In consequence, they considered the monarchy as having ended. In these circumstances, and regardless of the many grievances they held against the Bourbons, they simply could not remain loyal to Ferdinand VII even if they wanted to. He was gone. They did what the Spaniards of the mainland had done. They formed Juntas and started to govern themselves locally. So, for example, did the Junta of Caracas until it broke with the Metropolis and proclaimed the first Venezuelan Republic. In 1814, once the War of Independence had ended in Spain and Ferdinand had come back from France and restored absolutism, he attempted to do the same in America and sent a powerful army for the purpose. But, in spite of initial victories, it was too late: Spain had to fight a long war against the insurgents and was eventually defeated.

In the North of the subcontinent, an impressive leader took over from the First Republic of Venezuela, which had been in turn defeated by realist forces in 1813. Simon Bolívar was a military and political leader of enormous charisma. From Francisco de Miranda, the precursor of the revolution, he had inherited the idea of a united Spanish America. Born in Caracas in 1783, the son of a rich landowner of Spanish ancestry, his training was military and he soon started to organize the conquest of the continent from North to South. He first had to fight a rather anarchic insurrection in Venezuela led by a Spanish captain, José Boves. Then he had to contend with General Pablo Morillo, the commander of the forces sent by Ferdinand VII to crush the rebellion. Bolívar won numerous battles across incredible expanses of territory. Like Miranda, he wrote extensively. In the middle of dangerous battles he dictated political proclamations and even the laws and constitutions of the lands he wanted to unite to form his great American power. Unamuno, who like other Spaniards resented Bolívar's hatred of Spain, compared him to Don Quixote, perhaps wanting to

imply doubts about his mental health. The idea was suggested by one of the many famous sentences he dictated: "If nature opposes us, we will fight against it until we win". Indeed, he did win a battle against nature when he marched across the Andes with his troops and arrived in the vicinity of Peru, the last stronghold of the Spanish royalists.

General José de San Martín (1778-1850) had done something similar. He had crossed the Andes coming from the South in an almost unbelievable expedition. He was a prestigious officer from Argentina, where a movement of independence similar to that of Venezuela had started early. Buenos Aires had been attacked by the British, taking advantage of the chaos in Spain, and they were valiantly rejected by an army of local patriots. Creole pride and nationalism was quick to provoke a Declaration of independence by the *Cabildo* or *Junta* of Buenos Aires. The Spanish viceroy was expeditiously dismissed and the army under San Martín was entrusted with the task of expanding the revolution towards the North. Like Bolívar, San Martín arrived in the vicinity of Peru and the two caudillos met at Guayaquil in 1822 to discuss the future of the continent they were set to liberate. San Martín, more an army man than a visionary politician like his Venezuelan colleague, preferred to retire from politics and left the leadership to Bolívar.

Spain was not able to pursue her war effort after 1820 when the liberal coup d'état led by General Riego abolished the absolutist policies of Ferdinand VII. In fact, the army that was ready to sail from Cadiz to America refused to embark and was the one that performed the revolution. Instead, they marched northwards to take Madrid. Bolívar finished his job with a decisive victory at Ayacucho in 1824 and the conquest of Callao (Peru) in 1826. Victorious and famous, he called an all-American congress in Panama where all his dreams of a united American homeland, of a Great Colombia, were shattered. The different republics had grown autonomous and were too distant geographically from each other. They were not ready to accept the authority of their impulsive "liberator". Some, like Chile and Argentina, didn't even attend the congress. Mexico and the Central American provinces had also gone their own way. Abandoned and persecuted, Bolívar died in poverty and disgrace at Santa Marta (Colombia) in 1830. His sad end was beautifully narrated by Gabriel García Márquez in his novel, "The General in His Labyrinth".



### 43. IN VIENNA, SPAIN DOES NOT DANCE

When the victorious European powers in the wars against Napoleon assembled a Congress in Vienna (1814-1815) designed to impose a conservative, monarchical and Christian order on the continent, Spain had abruptly become a secondary power. She had been the dominant power for almost two centuries, had acquired a world empire and kept her prestige as a fearful enemy intact. What had happened? Many things had happened. Like other countries, Napoleonic France invaded her in 1808 provoking a long war of liberation on her own soil that left her impoverished and disorganized. The power vacuum on the mainland had triggered the struggle for independence in her American colonies, drastically limiting the extension of the empire. When the war ended, the new king imposed by Napoleon, Ferdinand VII had restored absolutism and suppressed the liberal reforms of the Cortes of Cádiz. These were the circumstances in which the king had to send a representative to Vienna in order to negotiate the conditions for Spain with the great powers of the moment in the new situation. Ferdinand VII chose Don Pedro Gómez Havela, Marqués de Labrador (1772-1850) as his representative. He seemed to be the right person for the job, a typical aristocrat-diplomat. He had been ambassador to the Holy See and to the Kingdom of Etruria (Tuscany), Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Cádiz Assembly...Who would have expected that the Duke of Wellington, British representative in Vienna and former liberator of Spain from the Napoleonic invasion, would call him "the most stupid man I ever came across?"

The instructions Labrador was given by the king for the Vienna Congress were certainly ambitious, if not "foolish", as someone called them. The main purpose of the Congress was the restoration of the frontiers of Europe to where they had been in 1790, before revolutionary France and then Napoleon had disrupted the continent with their invasions. As was to be expected, the main powers, Great Britain, Russia Austria and Prussia, imposed their law on the assembly. They had decided the aims, the venue, the rules of procedure and the date of the Congress. The distinction between different categories of participants

was made clear. They had signed the Treaty of Paris on May 30, 1814, in which they had already established the main territorial rearrangements. They had just invited the secondary powers, including Spain, to confirm their decisions

This was, in short, the atmosphere in which the Marquis of Labrador found himself when he arrived in Vienna. On behalf of his king, he demanded, first of all, that Spain be counted among the principal powers, something the others were not prepared to grant. As for the substantial matters of the Congress, he presented two rather daring demands. He proposed that King Ferdinand's sister be restored to the throne of Etruria, Parma, Piacenza and Guastalla, or that another throne in Italy were found for her. He also wanted to reverse the "Louisiana purchase" and recover the territory for Spain. Imagine: Louisiana had first been French, then since 1763 partly Spanish, then French again in 1800 until Napoleon sold it to the United States in 1803! All Spanish demands were rejected: they were illusory taking into account the correlation of power, which King Ferdinand didn't seem to understand. A last question added to the troubles of the Spanish delegation in Vienna. Labrador had gone to the Congress with strict instructions to resist the pressure of the Powers in their request that Spain renounce the district of Olivenza, taken from Portugal in the War of Three Oranges in 1801 with the support of Napoleon. If this was a just or unjust request is still a pending question between Spain and Portugal. But the Spanish position in 1814 was clearly contrary to the spirit of restoration and the main purpose of the Congress: to bring Europe back to the borders of 1790. Spain refused to adhere to the Final Act of the Congress, which she did only two years later, in 1817, with a reservation on the question of Olivenza at that.

Even the finest negotiator would have been fighting against awesome odds to achieve such a tall order. And Labrador, it seems, was not the most appropriate person. We have already seen what Wellington thought of him, probably out of resentment for his stubbornness in the problem with Portugal, Britain's ally. Palmela, the Portuguese minister and representative in Vienna said of Labrador: *he duro como uma barra de ferro* (he's as hard as an iron bar). Historians have not been more benevolent with him. Harold Nicolson, himself a diplomat, reflects the British irritation with Labrador when he pictures him

as “the most tiresome of all the plenipotentiaries (in Vienna)” ... acting “with almost inconceivable maladroitness”. Paul Johnson calls him “a caricature Spaniard who specialized in frantic rages (and) haughty silences”. Spanish historians and colleagues have also been harshly critical of Labrador. To quote only one of them, diplomat and historian, Marquis of Villa-Urrutia, wrote about his lack of good judgment, his confusion and his informality, to finish with this sarcastic condemnation: “Born in Extremadura and educated in Salamanca, he was not destined for export”.

Labrador committed the worst possible capital sin at a moment and in a place that required much grace and patience. Vienna was a small town of 200,000 inhabitants enclosed in ancient walls, happy to accommodate and entertain 100,000 visitors of all ranks, including the Czar of Russia and several Kings. In a frenzy of balls, dinners, theatrical shows and love adventures, all were supposed to have great fun and use the meetings for their diplomatic purposes. Labrador, it seems, did not participate in any of this and remained aloof most of the time, shut away in his residence at the Palais Palffy. Poor Don Pedro! His King had given him a task which was impossible to accomplish and no money to entertain, let alone a salary. Perhaps it was too much to ask of a human being, even of a diplomat.

#### 44. CADIZ, CITY OF LIGHT AND ENLIGHTENMENT

Cadiz had the privilege of being the first Spanish town to be enlightened when the 18th century rediscovered the goddess of Reason, and this did not happen by mere chance. She had always been full of light herself, a luminous white island at the entrance to the Atlantic Ocean, barely joined to the Mainland by a slim corridor. This ancient City was the first to be founded in the Iberian Peninsula, in fact, in the West of Europe. The Phoenicians dared to go beyond the legendary Pillars of Heracles, which symbolized the end of the known world. They supposedly extended trade to the Atlantic coast starting with the exchange of goods between the Mediterranean countries and the interior of Andalusia. Gades, as the Romans called the city, grew with commerce and fell into oblivion in times of insecurity. In 1493, Christopher Columbus sailed from there for his second journey, as it was considered the most convenient port for trade with America. Later, the monopoly of this trade was granted to Seville and, in 1717, this privilege passed to Cadiz. The city lived then an 18th century of both economic and cultural prosperity, her "Golden Age" of affluence. The population grew and attracted an ample colony of foreign merchants. Together with Barcelona, she favoured the development of the first commercial and cultural middle-class in Spain, just what was needed to absorb the new wealth of European ideas called the Enlightenment. These ideas came first from Madrid, where a liberal faction of the Bourbon Monarchy was fighting to introduce timid reforms in a still very traditional Spain. Later, they came from the great Revolution of France, in spite of the belated efforts of the Spanish monarchy to seal the country against its influence. They came, finally, from North and South America, effervescent in those years with the struggle for independence.

Cadiz was the obvious choice to play a key role in the drama that was unfolding in Spain at the beginning of the 19th century. It had all started in 1807 with the entrance of Napoleon's armies in Spanish territory. In their violent and unanimous reaction, the Spanish people

acted, for the first time, as a national actor and started a long battle for Independence, waged first as a conventional war supported by the British and later in a new, informal fashion that immortalized the word *guerrilla*. It was first merely a war of liberation against the French but soon became a revolutionary movement against absolutism. Very soon after the invasion was unleashed, a new improvised power emerged in Spain, the “Juntas”, which organized the war and the government, first at local level, then as a national authority. This authority summoned an Assembly in January 1810 that was to govern the country until the end of the war and agree on the rules for a new political order of Spain. The representatives to this Cortes, as the Assembly was named using the traditional Castilian term, were to be elected in the provinces that were not yet occupied by the French. The election took place, although in rather disruptive circumstances, and the deputies tried to assemble first in Aranjuez, near Madrid, then in Seville. However, due to the progress of the French advance towards the South, Seville was also threatened. It could only be Cadiz, practically the last bit of Spanish territory not yet under occupation. This was an historic stroke of luck: Cadiz, besieged and under the threat of the French bombs, was nevertheless the ideal place. With her background of prosperity and cultural progress, its inhabitants received the deputies who could reach her by land or sea with warm hospitality: sixty three came from America, representing what were still officially Spanish “provinces”. For those who missed the chance of coming, the citizens of Cadiz offered themselves as replacements and joined the Cortes. There were priests in abundance, but also civil servants, intellectuals and both foreign and national traders.

They all gathered in 1810 at the Oratorio de San Felipe, a solemn church where they held endless sessions lasting two years. They organized themselves into a single chamber, contrary to what had been the intention of the original summons, which had planned for a popular chamber and one reserved for bishops and nobles. The Cortes thus became a democratic body. They discussed a Constitution for Spain, a new concept that was rejected by some. Even enlightened writers and politicians like Gaspar de Jovellanos defended the argument that Spain already had a constitution formed by the fundamental laws which had traditionally distributed power between the king and the people. The Cortes also legislated abundantly in order to dismantle the social and

economic structures of the Monarchy, based on the absolute power of the King and feudal and religious privilege.

The debates on the Constitution, once this format was decided, were extremely complex, because the Cortes included a majority of liberals, but also many representatives who wanted to preserve the institutions of the “Ancien Regime” as intact as possible. In the end, they promulgated a long and detailed text on the 19th of March, 1812, after having reached a very peculiar compromise. On the one hand, the substance of the Constitution was clearly liberal. Its major innovation was that it transferred national sovereignty from the king to the Nation; it established the separation and independence of powers, with the legislative residing in “the Cortes with the King”; it also decreed the independence of the judges and respect for liberty and human rights. On the other hand, in order to strike a balance, the confessional character of the State was preserved, and the Catholic faith was declared to be “perpetually” the religion of the Spanish Nation and “the only true” faith. Besides, a long Prologue defined the new regime as a continuation of the traditional “democracy” of the old Kingdom of Castile. Obviously, the liberals wanted to protect themselves when they accepted this strange ideological hybrid. They did not want to appear excessively inspired by French ideas and be classed with the *afrancesados*, while at the same time they were fighting French troops and had declared eternal hatred to Napoleon.

The Constitution of 1812 is historically very relevant. It was the third written Constitution to be promulgated, after that of the United States of 1787 and the French one of 1791. It was very influential both in Europe and, above all, in the Latin American countries that were declaring and trying to organize their independence. Unfortunately, it had a very short life. In March 1814, King Fernando VII arrived in Spain once restored to the throne by decision of Napoleon. Two months later, he abolished the Constitution, disbanded the Cortes and sent the liberals to jail or into exile. A turbulent 19th century had started for Spain. The Cadiz constitution was applied by the revolutionaries in the liberal parenthesis of 1820-1823. It became a myth for Spanish democrats and many of the constitutions approved later claimed to be mere modifications of the text of 1812.

## 45. JOSEPH BONAPARTE, KING OF SPAIN?

“You are mistaken...your glory shall collapse in Spain”. These ominous words were written to the Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte on the 16<sup>th</sup> July, 1808 by his eldest brother Joseph, only a short time after he had been placed on the Throne of Spain by imperial concession. He was right, but this is the story of too many mistakes...

In the war between Napoleon's France and the British Empire, Spain was torn between the fear of her powerful neighbour in the North and the traditional enmity toward the British. The Spanish Monarchy, in spite of its rejection of the Revolution first and of the aggressive policies of Napoleon afterwards, decided to maintain the French alliance. It seemed to be, I suppose, the lesser of two evils and, after all, it was a continuation of the Bourbon family pacts that had united the two countries and had constituted the main pillar of Spanish foreign policy during the 18th century. It is said, in addition, that Napoleon had promised a kingdom to Godoy, King Charles IV's strong man. So, in spite of the terrible defeat of the Spanish-French fleet at Trafalgar (1805) and other obvious signs of danger, the Spanish Government, or rather Godoy, decided to trust Napoleon, or rather, to put themselves under his “protection”. We know now that this was a great mistake. The Treaty of Fontainebleau, signed in October 1807, allowed the French army a right of passage through Spanish territory on their way to invade Portugal, a key ally of the British. This was understandable in the logic of the war between Britain and Napoleon but, to the surprise of the Spaniards, the French not only soon started to use this right of passage, but also to occupy the North and the other parts of Spain they were passing through. The misuse of the treaty became quite plain when General Murat directed his troops to march on Madrid. Napoleon then took advantage of the quarrel between King Charles IV and Ferdinand, his son, the Crown Prince, who had led a rebellion against the king in Aranjuez. He summoned them to Bayonne (France), in what, in fact, turned out to be the kidnapping of the whole royal family. Instead of mediating in their quarrel, the Emperor obliged them to

abdicate in favour of his brother Joseph. They could do nothing but comply and went into exile in France.

Napoleon's scheme for Spain was to establish a "puppet regime" there, a monarchy that would be a mere satellite of his Empire: "Your Monarchy, he wrote to the Spaniards in a manifesto, is old and I want to renew it..." For this he had a number of adherents in Spain. They were the so-called *afrancesados* (Frenchified), liberals who in the previous decades had been attracted by the ideas of the French Enlightenment and by the Revolution. They joined Joseph Bonaparte in Bayonne and drafted a Statute for him that reorganized the Realm. It was not quite a constitution in the modern sense, because it was "given" to the Spaniards by the King and not voted on by the people or its representatives. The monarch, as in the Ancien Régime, continued to be the centre of the whole system, but the text included some very radical political and social changes in comparison with the traditional Spanish Monarchy, which was built on monopoly, on power by the King and the privileges of Church and Nobility.

The Emperor also made a mistake like the Spaniards had made. His mistake was to believe that the latter, of whom he seemed to have known very little, would accept this scheme peacefully or at least passively. After all, he seemed to think, he was just replacing a foreign dynasty by another, a Bourbon by a Bonaparte, and both were French. He was wrong. To his surprise, Spain reacted violently and almost unanimously, in a fight that momentarily united the patriotic liberals with the traditionalists. The people of Madrid took to the streets in open rebellion on the 2nd of May, 1808, when they realized what the intentions of the French were. The repression of the uprising by the forces of Murat was brutal and murderous, as Goya testified in his dramatic paintings. It provided the spark that would ignite what was to become a long war of independence. What remained of Spanish power was organized locally and the invention of the "guerrilla" turned the war into a nightmare for an invading regular army. The massive help of the British did the rest. It obliged Napoleon to attend to two far-distant fronts, Russia and Spain. It would be the beginning of the end of Napoleon's adventure.

Joseph Bonaparte was right in warning his powerful brother. He was an educated man and had quite an impressive political back-



ground in Napoleon's regime: lawyer, politician and diplomat, he was member of the legislative body called the *Cinq-Cents*, ambassador to Rome, Plenipotentiary in the Treaty of Friendship signed by Napoleon in 1800 with the United States...he was even crowned king of Naples from 1806 to 1808. His letter to his brother, quoted at the beginning, shows a man of good judgement. He condemned Murat's excesses in Madrid and, contrary to the naïve belief of the Emperor about the Spaniards, wrote to him: "My position is unique in History, I have here not one man in my favour...(only) a nation of twelve million enemies, brave and exasperated to the extreme".

Poor Joseph, despised by the Spaniards, who gave him the nickname "Pepe Botella" (it appears that he appreciated Spanish wine very much), his brief reign was ineffective and short, rather a fiction than a reality. His Spanish experience was not very brilliant, to say the least, but even in the best of circumstances, he would have had to contend with two insurmountable problems: first, he lacked the minimum means to govern a country which had revolted against him and was destroyed by the war. Second, he incurred the mistrust of his famous and all-powerful brother. After a premature defeat of the French in the battle of Bailén in August 1808, Napoleon went to Spain with an army of 250,000 to make sure that his brother would keep his throne. He met him in the village of Chamartín and was surprised by what he found: a country that was richer and more substantial than he had imagined. He feared that his brother José, as other monarchs of his dynasty had done in the kingdoms he had created for them, would try to consolidate himself as a real king, sovereign and independent from Paris.

After the disaster suffered by Napoleon in Spain and the collapse of the Empire, Joseph had to abandon his ephemeral "kingdom". On his way to Paris, he was still to be defeated by the Duke of Wellington in the Basque town of Vitoria. According to rumours, he was obliged to leave the jewels of the Spanish Crown that he had taken with him behind. He must have kept some of them: he settled in the United States where he had an impressive mansion built in Point Breeze (Philadelphia), full of antiques and works of art and surrounded by an ample park, artificial pond included. He finished his life quietly in exile.

## 46. FRANCISCO DE GOYA AND THE DISASTERS OF WAR

In 1814 Francisco de Goya (1746-1828) was commissioned to commemorate the tragic events of May 1808 and he produced two of his most impressive masterpieces: “Charge of the Mamelukes” and “The Third of May”. He depicted the riots and the executions of Spanish patriots by the French troops with such force and reality as to make you wonder if he was not actually there. In fact, he was. He was able to watch the revolt of the people against the French troops on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of May from the window of his house in Madrid, and he also witnessed the brutal repression by the forces of General Murat and the massive and indiscriminate executions that took place in the early hours of the following day at the nearby hill called “La Moncloa”.

The Mutiny of Aranjuez on the 17<sup>th</sup> of March was the beginning of the process that culminated in the massacres of May. Crown Prince Fernando had consented to lead a conspiracy against his father, King Charles IV, and his (and the Queen’s) right-hand man Francisco Godoy. This intrigue, unprecedented at least in Spanish monarchic history, had several causes. The nobles disagreed with the absolute power given to Godoy by the king and the shameless favours he received from the queen. The Church was upset by the first, although timid, measures Godoy had taken against its privileges as a large landed estate owner. The Prince, impatient to accede to the throne, was under the ill influence of a sinister character, the priest Juan Escóiquiz, a resentful enemy of the queen and of Godoy. Fearing the advance of the French troops on the capital, the members of the royal family had abandoned Madrid for Aranjuez and were ready to abandon the country. All these ingredients gave the conspirators the opportunity they were seeking. They excited the mobs, took Godoy prisoner and obtained the abdication of Charles IV and the accession of Fernando to the throne. By that time, Napoleon had occupied the North of Spain as far south as Salamanca, taken the king hostage in Bayonne and ordered Murat to occupy Madrid to install his brother Joseph on the Spanish throne. When, under the pretext of reconciling father and son, Fernando and

the rest of the royal family were also transferred to the French border, the people of Madrid reacted unanimously and violently. A war of liberation and a social revolution had started.

Goya witnessed all this events when he was 62 years old, long after he had been appointed court painter to Charles VI in 1789. Born to a modest family in a small village close to Saragossa, he had followed the long road of success that was required of artists of the time. After having been a pupil of local painter José Luzán and spent some time in Rome, he moved to Madrid and studied with Mengs and Bayeu, painters close to the royal family. He developed his art slowly and made progress painting numerous portraits of all kinds of people, including the nobility and, finally, the royal house. He matured slowly. At first a correct artisan, his intimate personality full of fire and passion emerged after, as a court painter, he entered into contact with the aristocrats and intellectuals that were trying to lead Spain towards the modernization of her old institutions according to the ideas of the 18th century (mostly French) Enlightenment. He then started to develop an urgent aspiration for truth in his art. He had become rich and famous and could afford to bear witness to the realities of his time with unprecedented liberty. He accordingly depicted the contrast between the incipient changes and the deep seated superstitions and violence of his countrymen. After 1808 he was able to witness the horrors of war personally, especially in his native Aragón, and produced one of his most famous series of prints, known as “The Disasters of War”. Perhaps, the contrast between his modest origins and exposure to the highest life of the Spanish court together with the brutality of the fight for independence might explain certain madness in the themes of some of his works, especially the “Caprices”. In 1816, he published another series of engravings on the bullfight. It is not clear what his intention was when he produced these truculent images of what some call “the national feast”. He might have tried to continue expressing his horror faced with crude violence, because he painted them during the years of the war. He certainly did it perhaps unconsciously when he chose to portray ways and practices which were no longer used in his time. Some of them I found quite disgusting, like the one that depicts a bullfighter sitting, chained to a chair, awaiting the attack of the beast. Practices such as these and the many deaths and injuries they

caused had obliged King Charles IV to temporarily forbid the *corridos* in 1805.

Goya tried all kinds of techniques old and new and made his art advance to a new stage of expression which already heralded the vision of the impressionists. His main achievement, though, was to reflect what he saw with astonishing reality. He transmitted the anguish of the events of May 1808 with the same accuracy as he depicted the delicate and sweet figure of the Countess of Chinchón. The chapel of San Antonio de la Florida, in the South of Madrid, contains what many consider the pinnacle in Goya's religious art. Commissioned by the king in 1798, the frescoes that cover the dome of the church seem to me a synthesis of the maestro's work. In the open landscape of Madrid, Anthony of Padua performs a strange miracle: after been transported by angels to Lisbon (!), he resurrects a man so that he can testify in favour of Anthony's father, who had been falsely accused of a crime. The angels are feminine and rather lacking in expression, the main interest of the scene lies in the people watching the miracle: a mixture of admiring or indifferent bystanders mostly of popular extraction, including some beautiful women in the typical dress of the *majas* of Madrid and children playing, unaware of the holy happening they were witnessing. All realized in bright colours and subtle vividness and humour.

If the frescoes of San Antonio were the culmination of Goya's religious painting, in what is probably his absolute masterpiece, "Charles IV of Spain and His Family" of 1800, he summed up his superior art as a portrait artist. His frank realism morally demolished the representatives of the Ancien Regime. Goya probably had no intention of ridiculing his masters. He objectively and beautifully described what he saw in a scene full of life and movement. The royals appear simply as what they really were, most of them rather ugly, all absentminded.

## 47. JOSE BLANCO WHITE, OR THE OUTCAST

*Letters from Spain* is, for many reasons, an interesting book. Following the fashion of describing a supposedly exotic country in letters, the author, José Blanco White, writes about his own country, under the pseudonym Leucadio Doblado, a fictional Spaniard who has supposedly lived in England for more than ten years. At the start, he argues that the many travellers who have written about Spain, especially the French, have made many mistakes portraying a country whose language they usually knew only superficially or not at all. They describe what they can see but cannot penetrate in the meaning of customs and beliefs that require a deeper understanding of the social and political characteristics of the people they are visiting. They usually fall into the temptation of offering a definition of the Spanish “national character”, disregarding the fact that Spain contains many peoples and cultures and it is impossible to generalize, to “incorporate the features of millions in a single abstract being”.

Blanco White (1775-1841) wrote these Letters in perfect English in the years 1822-23, after having lived in London for more than ten years. They were first translated into Spanish only in 1972. Yes, one hundred and fifty years later. The III Letter may give us the key to this strange and prolonged silence around one of the best Spanish writers at the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries. In it, the fictional author pretends to transcribe and translate a document he has received from a friend, a priest from Seville, in which he relates his education and the circumstances that led to his abandoning the Catholic faith. The letter is obviously written by Blanco himself and is an extremely interesting account of a religious “de-conversion”, from fervent adherence to Catholicism to the opening of his mind to free thinking and then to doubts about the dogmas of that religion. François Fénelon’s *The Adventures of Telemachus* and the works of Benito Feijóo against popular superstition in Spain are presented as the sources of such a drastic change. The young José Blanco tells us about an incident at school when he was only a child. He had said something that vaguely revealed that he was thinking independently, that he had doubts. He

was immediately punished with the reputation of being odd, different, suspect. And so began a long life of estrangement and persecution.

Blanco was born in Seville, his mother a fine and sensitive lady of good family, his father a Catholic Irishman of the many who had fled from British persecution. They were both fervent Christians and philanthropists and wanted their son to continue the prosperous trade of the father. José was obliged to attend the office-work and copy the accounts, but he spent most of his time reading. He finally convinced his parents that he had a religious vocation. He was ordained a priest, in 1799, and soon took on quite an important position as canon in the cathedral of Seville. There, he preached many long sermons while continuing to suffer religious doubts and an intolerable tension with his professed priesthood, including the law of sexual abstinence. In 1805, he obtained permission to live in Madrid, where he taught literature and wrote his first poems under the influence of Manuel María de Arjona and Alberto Lista, two prominent poets of the Seville School. When Napoleon invaded Spain in 1808, Blanco joined the patriotic rebellion against him, not without doubts because he was by that time an ardent adherent to the ideas of the French Revolution. Nevertheless, he became the chaplain of the *Junta Central*, the national authority in occupied Spain, and fled with its members to Seville and then Cadiz, when Madrid was seized by the invaders. His political ideas were advanced and his religious crisis did the rest. He started to criticize the politics of the *Junta*, too attached for him to the Church, and had to flee to England. He converted to Anglicanism and led a long life as a writer both in English, as soon as he dominated the language, and in his native Spanish. His defense of political change in Spain and his support for the incipient emancipation of the American colonies led the Spanish authorities to declare him a traitor, to banish his works and to condemn him to ignorance and contempt. Blanco joined forces with the British movement against the slave trade and so won for himself a personal, vitriolic “black legend” from Spain.

There is no doubt about this: Blanco White was an outstanding writer, both in English and in Spanish. The ominous silence which has surrounded him in Spain was only interrupted by Menéndez Pelayo (of all critics!) He devotes more than twenty pages to him, almost a whole chapter, in his *History of the Spanish Heterodoxy*. Our ultra-

conservative maestro administers his usual diatribe on Blanco: anti-Catholic and anti-Spanish, a “weak soul”, “a pilotless ship in the rough tempest”. But we know our critic well enough to be able to read, in his treatment of Blanco, praise that amply outweighs condemnation. The prose of the *Letters from Spain* is declared by Don Marcelino to be the most elegant and rich ever produced: “never before have the customs of Andalusia been written of with such freshness and colour, with such a mixture of popular naïvety and aristocratic delicacy”. Their picture of Spanish scenes is compared with the engravings and paintings of Francisco de Goya. His poetry is also given the approval of the critic, who goes as far as to transcribe the whole of Blanco’s translation of Hamlet’s monologue. Blanco White wrote a lot, on politics and religion mainly, and was harshly critical of what was happening in Spain. He didn’t believe the liberals could counter the overpowering presence of Catholicism and he attacked the Cadiz Constitution of 1812 for maintaining the confessional character of the monarchy. He contended that his *Letters from Spain*, written after the liberal revolution of 1820, were not anachronistic because, according to him, nothing had changed in the substance of the Spanish clerical culture.

I must confess that I am at a loss as to understand this peculiar character. He was, clearly, one of those persons that are enslaved by their own judgment and cannot accept being part of a dogmatic religion or political party. Normally, this kind of personality leads to skepticism and a certain distance from the mainstream of society, and society usually resents this as a sign of contempt or superiority. Blanco White was something far more extreme. He abandoned the Catholic faith with passionate rejection... only to join even more passionately, a Protestant denomination, Anglicanism, which seems to be almost as hierarchical as Rome’s Church and whose dogmas differ only slightly from those of Catholicism. He was intolerant against intolerance and dogmatic every time he changed his beliefs. Only in his last years did he abandon Anglicism to join “Unitarianism”, a kind of liberal, naturalistic version of Protestantism which rejected the historical content of the Gospels and accepted only its moral principles. Even here he went too far and was declared a “heretic” by the Anglicans. He was a competent violinist and turned to music for solace until he died in 1841, hopefully in peace for a change. He had never been back to his native Spain.

## 48. ECHOES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

“The fire that started in France is growing and could overspread the border like the plague... The bishop of Urgel informs me with great alarm of many Frenchmen who slip through there sowing the seeds of liberty so agreeable to all. It is necessary to create a *cordon sanitaire* in order to stop this plague that grows day by day, gathering on the border as many troops as possible”. These words, freely translated, do not belong to a political thriller, they belong to the preamble of the Royal Order of June 15, 1792, by which Jose Moñino y Redondo, Count of Floridablanca, the Prime Minister of King Charles IV, organized the deployment of military means of defense at the border with France. Their mission: to prevent the entry to Spain of ideas or news related with the revolution that had started in 1789, only a few months after the new Spanish king had acceded to the throne. The reforms that Charles III and his ministers had been implementing according to the doctrines of Enlightened Despotism were abruptly suspended. A year before, the very Floridablanca had forbidden the entry of all French periodicals or books. He had also reversed the campaign of the Bourbon kings aimed at limiting the interference of the Inquisition in public matters. Instead, the government used its help to unearth any publication seen as dangerous and to convince Spaniards of the dangers of France and of progress.

Charles IV had good reasons to fear the contagion of unrest coming from the powerful neighbour to the North. The Revolution had obliged his “cousin” Louis XVI to sign the constitution of 1791 and, also against his will, to declare war on Austria. The French leaders made this decision prompted by the suspicion that the major European monarchies were forming an armed coalition to combat the revolutionary threat. They had practically held Louis hostage, together with Queen Marie-Antoinette, when they surprised and detained them in Varennes as they tried to escape. The Spanish monarch, justifiably concerned about Louis, used all his diplomatic means to preserve his and his family’s lives. The Spanish Embassy in Paris was busy with this mission. The Ambassador, the Count of Fernán-Núñez, was often



received by the king and the queen, isolated in the royal palace, and he kept his superiors in Madrid informed in detail. He wrote to them about the humiliating return of the royal couple to the Tuileries Palace after they were arrested. He had witnessed it personally from the windows of his Embassy. He acted as a go-between between the king and his European “cousin”, as they called each other, and also between Marie-Antoinette and her brother the Habsburg Emperor in Vienna. Charles IV was the second ranking member of the Bourbon dynasty and as such had been the recipient of a secret letter from the French King to all his European colleagues, protesting at the assault on “royal dignity” he and his family were enduring. For these reasons, that is, to protect Louis and also to avoid a potentially dangerous and unequal war with France, Spain decided to maintain her diplomatic channels open while other European countries were retiring their missions from Paris. Floridablanca and his successor, the Count of Aranda, who had been Ambassador to France and was friendly towards the French, proclaimed neutrality in the war between France and the European monarchies. They did not want a confrontation between the Spanish and French fleets that would give Great Britain the long sought after predominance in the Mediterranean and, above all, in the Americas.

This delicate balance broke down when, after a trial for treason, the revolutionaries guillotined Louis XVI on January 21, 1793. The *Pacte de Famille* that had been signed in 1733 was cancelled as a matter of fact by Godoy, who had become the new strong man in Spain. War was declared on France in March that year and soon afterward a treaty of defensive alliance against the French was signed with Great Britain. As Floridablanca and Aranda had feared, the hostilities against the revolutionaries were disastrous for Spain. France occupied parts of Catalonia and the Basque provinces and, in 1795, Godoy had to negotiate a rather humiliating peace which a year later became a true defensive alliance, the Treaty of San Ildefonso. With no “family” to justify it and associating former enemies, the traditional *Pacte de Famille* was nevertheless resumed. It had worked, mainly in the common confrontation with the British, during most of the 18th century, and was based on dynastic solidarity and a common adherence to enlightened absolutism. Now the pact was born of a purely pragmatic calculation, regardless of differences of ideology and political structures.

Spain suffered the consequences of this policy. The new alliance was rejected by the European monarchs threatened by the French revolutionaries and brought about the indignation of the Count of Provence, who was to become king of France as Louis XVIII after the defeat of Napoleon. Once she took sides with the common enemy, Spain was treated as an outcast. The confrontation with the British resumed and the Spanish Navy was defeated by them at the Cabo de San Vicente, near Cadiz. As a consequence, Spain lost the island of Trinidad and saw Menorca temporarily occupied by the British, again. Napoleon obtained an important prize: the territory of Louisiana, at that moment in the hands of Spain. Finally, the combined Spanish and French fleets were destroyed in the battle of Trafalgar in 1805. Two years later, a treaty was signed in Fontainebleau by plenipotentiaries of Godoy and Napoleon. The two countries would jointly invade Portugal, an ally of the British, and divide its territory into three parts, of which one would be handed over to Godoy as a kingdom. The French occupation of Portugal started, but soon, in 1808, it turned out to be the occupation of Spain by France. It would be the second in little more than a century and would not be the last. Soon, in 1823 the 100,000 Sons of Saint Louis would continue the tradition.

Floridablanca took an active role in the war of Independence as organizer of a Junta in his native Murcia and was appointed president of the Junta Suprema, the national authority of the resistance. He died soon, in the same fateful 1808, after years of silence and persecution. He was a modernizer and wanted to change the Spanish model of administration based on councils to make it more efficient and executive. He came up against the opposition of the vehement and more traditional Count of Aranda, who replaced him in November 1792, only a few months after he had issued the Royal Order against the entry of French ideas quoted at the beginning. Dismissed by the king and arrested at his home, he was accused of corruption and abuse of power and sent to jail in Pamplona.

## 49. LUGUBRIOUS NIGHTS, THE FIRST ROMANTIC NOVEL

In 1771, after a life of literary, military and amorous adventures, José Cadalso (1741-1782) fell madly in love with María Ignacia Ibáñez, a young actress of 25. After only a few months of true and fulfilling passion, María died, victim of typhoid fever. Cadalso, as the legend goes, was so utterly desperate that he conceived a very truculent idea. He planned to unearth his mistress's body and burn it, throwing himself into the flames. He couldn't accomplish this terrifying project. The authorities banished him from Madrid and sent him to Salamanca, where he used the idea to write the first romantic novel ever written: *Noches Lúgubres* ("Lugubrious nights. Imitating the style of those written in English by Doctor Young"). The honest admission by Cadalso of his debt to *Night Thoughts*, published by the British poet Edouard Young in 1742, conceals the great distance that separates the two works. Young was a Court poet, religious and moralistic. He evoked the sombre and lugubrious atmosphere of a cemetery at night and included a character named Lorenzo, the undertaker. But the similarity stops there: a cemetery and the name Lorenzo. Cadalso goes much further. He proceeds to develop a frightening tale in the form of a dialogue between Tediato, the lover, and Lorenzo, the undertaker whom Tediato asks to help steal his beloved's body from its grave. A secondary episode, in which Tediato is erroneously accused of a crime, prompts the intervention of a judge, the prison executioner and a few other characters.

I found this story gloomy, disturbing and interesting. This short novel, divided into three chapters, one "Night" each, can be considered to be truly "Romantic", indeed the first work of fully Romantic character, not so much for the lugubrious atmosphere as for a subject that had never been touched on before in literary fiction: namely, suicide. Goethe wrote his *Werther* later, in 1774, after Cadalso had read part of his *Noches Lúgubres* to friends. Besides, writing about suicide, a mortal sin, was especially risky in Spain. One must not forget the overwhelming influence of the Catholic Church and the vigilance of the Inquisi-

tion. The novel was not published until 1789 and was prohibited years later for containing “expressions that are scandalous, dangerous and inductive of suicide...and a general hatred of all mankind”. This latter accusation refers to what poet Meléndez Valdés called *fastidio universal* (universal annoyance) and was a central theme of pre-romantic times: *Weltschmerz* in Germany, *Mal du Siècle* in France. In Cadalso’s *Nights*, Tediato feels rejected by God and his fellow men and speaks with extreme bitterness on many subjects familiar to the Enlightenment: the absurdity of wars (Cadalso had taken part in more than one and would die in the siege of Gibraltar), the arbitrariness of Justice (while in jail, our hero overhears voices that suggest a secret execution), scandal over extreme poverty (that of Lorenzo’s family is minutely described). Suicide became a frequent subject in Romantic literature and some desperate youngsters followed the Tediato or Werther’s example. Mariano José the Larra used the theme in one of his articles and took his life in order to be consistent.

Such a detailed description of the absurdity of life, including the tragic love for María Ibáñez, could be said to correspond in certain ways to the eventful life of Cadalso himself. He was born in Cadiz and entrusted to a Jesuit uncle for his education. His mother died in childbirth and his father lived abroad and only met his son when he was thirteen. He encountered him in Paris, where his uncle had sent him to study, and then they travelled together all over Europe: England, Germany, Italy, Holland... Back in Spain, he didn’t like what he saw in comparison to those countries. In contrary to his father’s desire that he become a priest or a public servant, he chose to be a military officer and participated in one of the strangest wars of the time: the “Fantastic War” against Portugal in 1762, so called because no battles took place. Gifted for literature and fond of writing, he started his career in this field with a tragedy in 1771 (*Don Sancho García*) and a book of verses inspired by his love for María. He wrote essays very much in the mood of the Enlightenment. In one of them, *Violet-perfumed Erudites*, he ridiculed the pedantry of falsely educated people, giving detailed instructions, in seven lessons, on how to seem knowledgeable without effort or study. One of the lessons contains a curious invective against the Law of Nations, once dictated by Spain when she was the dominant power, in Cadalso’s time under the control of France and

the British Empire. Like other writers of the Spanish Enlightenment, he wrote his criticism out of love for his country and was explicitly patriotic in an early pamphlet he wrote in *Defence of the Spanish Nation against the Persian letter LXXVIII of Montesquieu* (1768).

Cadalso's best known work was his *Moroccan Letters*. In them, following other illustrious examples of the 18th century, Cadalso expressed his opinions about the life and customs of Spain, giving voice to a visiting foreigner, a Moroccan. The author's travels and broad culture give the letters a touch of cosmopolitanism which was lacking in the works of other writers who dealt with the problems of Spain. Cadalso was very active in the literary and cultural movements of his country. He participated in an informal literary club which gathered in Madrid at the *Fonda (inn) de San Sebastián* in which a conspiracy for the introduction of the neo-classical aesthetics was orchestrated by writers like the Iriarte brothers, Samaniego and Jovellanos, the painter, Francisco de Goya, and other scientists and historians. The most important playwright of the time, Leandro Fernández de Moratino, also took part in this movement and among the poets, Juan Meléndez Valdés (1754-1817) is worth mentioning. He was the leader of the school of Salamanca, a group of writers who undertook the renovation of Spanish poetry through the lightness of Anacreontic verses and heavier poems dealing with the themes of the Enlightenment: justice, humanitarianism and progress among them.

Cadalso had become a close friend of Meléndez Valdés during his exile in Salamanca and exerted a great influence on him. He developed a very personal touch of sentimentality which, like Cadalso's, strongly heralded the arrival of Romanticism. In a poem dedicated to the rising sun, he went back to the theme of "night" in the laments of a young person who feels neglected and orphaned: "I want to love you more, oh sombre night, than the annoying light of the sad coming day".

## 50. SPAIN AND THE INDEPENDENCE OF THE UNITED STATES

I recently read a fascinating book written by the U.S. historian Barbara W. Tuchman. The subject: on how governments sometimes pursue policies that are contrary to their own interests. She deals with four examples in history: the war of Troy, the Protestant Reformation, the loss of North-America by the British and the Vietnam War. In the introduction, Tuchman elaborates on the common features of these cases and gives two keys to understanding her theory: first, the wrong decision was a choice between several available courses of action; second, the policy adopted was “perceived as counter-productive in its own time, not merely by hindsight”. The result is *The March of Folly*, as Tuchman entitled her book. This idea can be applied to the loss of the Spanish colonies in Central- and South-America and equally in connection with the help Spain offered to the rebels in the Thirteen British Colonies in their fight for independence. Many voices in many places had warned against the example such a policy of support to a revolution would set for Spain’s own colonies. Taking revenge on England for the losses of the Seven Years War did not sufficiently justify the breaking of dynastic solidarity with King George III. The courts of Austria and Prussia were against it. In France, Marie-Antoinette didn’t want to have anything to do with a people that hated the mere words “King and Queen”. But the French government was determined to weaken the enemy power in their struggle for influence in North America. She needed and demanded the solidarity of her main ally at the time: Spain, which was bound to France by a very firm Family Pact.

José Moñino y Redondo, Count of Floridablanca (1728-1808), was a lawyer of middle class origins, with a brilliant career in the Council of Castile, as Ambassador to the Holy See and as Secretary of State. He was, at first, a moderate enlightened politician but very soon understood the dangers of the revolutions that he foreboded were coming, in France as well as in America. He became the leader of those in Spain who opposed an open intervention supporting the rebels. He

was most probably interpreting the conservative apprehensions of his king, Charles III, a decent but not very far-sighted monarch, according to his critics (Menéndez Pelayo called him “a man of very limited understanding”). Floridablanca was a convinced reformer as far as the Spanish economy was concerned and didn't want to distract funds from the many reform projects he and other ministers had envisaged for the country. When the American Congress sent a representative to Madrid to plead for assistance, he had a hard time making his voice heard. This envoy, John Jay, arrived in Cadiz in 1780 and initially was not even allowed to reach Madrid. He was received in Burgos, at a low level at that, under the pretext that the rebels had not been diplomatically recognized by Spain. But pressure from France and the progress of the revolutionaries obliged Floridablanca to listen to Jay and agree on the concession of a limited financial support. In exchange for the formal treaty that the Americans wanted, Spain negotiated and finally obtained free navigation on the Mississippi River. Jay left Spain in a rather bitter mood, calling the Spaniards “short-sighted”.

That is precisely what the Embassy of the Count of Aranda in Paris was insistently telling the Court in Madrid: that they were short-sighted. Unlike Floridablanca, Pedro Pablo Abarca de Bolea (1719-1798) belonged to a noble family from Aragón. He was also a military man, with important services in war and as Captain-General of Valencia, and he had been ambassador in Poland and Portugal. In Spain he had held, among others, the position of President of the Council of Castile. Hyper-active and rather stubborn, he was one of those leaders who preferred to be wrong in tireless and aggressive action rather than to risk being accused of being “soft” after failing in the more subtle ways of diplomacy and compromise. Ambassador in Paris since 1773, he was soon visited by Benjamin Franklin, commissioned by the American Congress to seek the support of France and Spain for their cause. Franklin found Aranda “well disposed”. Indeed he was convinced not only of the triumph of the revolution but of the future of the United States as a great power. He thought that the American Revolution was a fact and a danger, being an example for the Spanish colonies, with or without Spanish help. In case the Spaniards had not fully understood, Franklin warned them that, should they not support their cause, the future U.S. would not be able to help in the event of rebellion in the

Spanish colonies. Aranda was convinced. It was better, he thought, to have one enemy than two, so he advised the government to grant military support to the Americans and thereby contribute to the defeat of Great Britain.

This impulsiveness was contrary to Madrid's instincts. Aranda's activism was seen with apprehension and he was instructed to discontinue his contacts with Franklin and his open espousal of military intervention. Charles III preferred to try diplomacy and initially gave only discreet support to the rebels: just money, equipment and free access to Spanish ports. He then told the British he would act as a mediator with France and the rebels, but his offer was immediately rejected. Now, both France and Britain pushed Spain into war. And war was declared in 1779. It included important, if little known, contributions by Spain to the victory of the rebel American colonies. Spain attacked Pensacola, in Florida, thus distracting British forces from the main front, and allowing George Washington and the rebel cause to make important progress in the war. The Peace Treaty of 1783 was not altogether unfavourable to Spain. The Floridas and the Bahamas were won back and the strength of Britain was diminished.

Anyway, it seems clear that the independence of the Spanish colonies wasn't a consequence of the lukewarm support given to the British colonies by Spain. The decision "against self-interest" in the sense used by Barbara Tuchman, was the same that had brought about the rebellion in the North: a by-product of the so-called Seven Years War (1754-1763). Ruined by the war effort, both Britain and Spain were in desperate need of money. They tightened up the mercantilist system of trade-monopoly with their respective colonies and levied heavy taxes on the colonists. Without representation or voice in these decisions, the distance between the mainland and the creoles widened, the bonds of sovereignty loosened. In the end the result was, in both North and South America, independence.



## 51. ALEXANDER VON HUMBOLDT MEETS JOSE CELESTINO MUTIS

He fell in love with the bougainvillea. With the flower, not with the French botanist Louis Antoine de Bougainville, who discovered the plant in Brazil and gave it his name. Alexander von Humboldt (1769-1859) had discovered his vocation as an explorer and observer of nature early. He had travelled up the Rhine, in Switzerland and Italy, studying their mountains and flowers, when he arrived in Paris in order to prepare an expedition to Africa. There he met Bougainville... and the bougainvillea, and decided to explore America instead. This romantic story was probably made up. I read it in a beautiful prologue to one of Humboldt's books written by the Colombian writer, Germán Arciniegas. There were other reasons why he had to change routes. Be that as it may, in 1799, he was in Marseille and started to seek the permission of the Spanish authorities to travel to South America with all his scientific instruments. He went to Madrid, studying every mountain and plant that he found on his way through Catalonia and Valencia. He met King Charles IV in Aranjuez and then this compulsive Prussian explorer, who Charles Darwin called "the greatest scientific traveller who ever lived", set out for an expedition that started in Tenerife (Canary Islands), where he studied and praised the majestic 3,700-metre high volcano "Teide". Humboldt landed at Cumaná (Venezuela) and set out to explore most of the Northern part of South America. From 1799 to 1804 he visited and studied Colombia, Ecuador, Cuba, Mexico and the young United States, where he met President Jefferson. The results of his explorations were published in Paris in 1807: a marvelous account in words and pictures of his *Travel to the Equinoctial regions of the New Continent*.

After exploring the Orinoco (and discovering a possible connection with the Amazon River at their sources), Humboldt went to Cartagena de Indias on his way to Quito. But instead of taking the easy road, bordering the range of the Andes, he explored the mighty Magdalena River and climbed the high mountains leading to Santa Fe (Bogotá). Why this detour, defying the most unfriendly natural areas in surely very

primitive conditions? Because he wanted to meet José Celestino Mutis (1732-1808), a Spanish scientist and professor at the *Colegio del Rosario* in today's Bogotá. Mutis must have been a very well-known scientist to justify the interest of the great Humboldt. He was also an inquiring, restless character and they got along very well. After studying medicine in Cadiz and Seville, Mutis had worked as a doctor in Madrid and become interested in botany. He managed to be chosen as the personal physician of a newly appointed Viceroy in the region of New Granada (today's Colombia) and accompanied the Viceroy to Santa Fe in 1760. He was an enlightened researcher and was soon teaching the theories of Copernicus and Newton, at the risk of being prosecuted by the conservative Dominican Order and the Inquisition. As far back as 1763, he had started to apply to the Court in Madrid for permission and funds for a scientific enterprise: the royal botanic expedition of the viceroyalty of New Granada. Obtaining permission was not easy. It came in 1783, after other navigators like Antonio de Ulloa in Peru had convinced the Court about the economic and scientific importance of getting to know the nature of the American continent in depth. Mutis's expedition outlived him: it lasted 33 years and he had died in 1808. The Botanical Gardens in Madrid display the dazzling result: more than 6,000 drawings that recorded all the plants and flowers discovered by Mutis's team of scientists and artists. Once you have seen these marvellous drawings you'll never forget the name Mutis.

When Mutis left Spain in 1760, interest in science was beginning to reappear after long decades of neglect. The situation Mutis found in Santa Fe was not very different from what he had witnessed in his country of origin, since the general decadence of 17th-century Spain had started. The universities were under the control of the Church and limited their teaching to Aristotle, Law and the Scholastic doctrines. In a period of renewed expansion, economic and military needs demanded a change that the new Bourbon dynasty undertook decisively by means of certain new devices that left the old system of teaching unchanged. They tried to attract foreign scientists and sent young Spaniards to study abroad. They created new institutions: centralized academies, specialized institutes and a peculiar Spanish invention, the Royal Economic Societies that, beginning in the Basque Country, encouraged the studies needed for the development of the different sec-

tors of the economy locally. The purpose of all these initiatives, as stated by the politician, Campomanes, was not highly intellectual. What were needed were practical skills to accompany economic progress. At the beginning, science was “militarized”: the navy asked for modern methods based on the discoveries of mathematics; the new industries and mines in the Northern provinces needed to apply the new chemical advances; the management of great towns demanded new measures to ensure public health; for the same reason, research into medicinal plants was promoted with expeditions like the one Mutis had long been seeking.

In his book, Humboldt praised the progress made by Mutis in the study of “china” or “cinchona”, a medicinal herb the American Indians had used since time immemorial. He also praised the Spaniard for his progressive attitude and his influence on the American youth in the direction of the ideas of European Enlightenment. He noted a spiritual effervescence there that he thought was lacking in Spain, a will “to get rid of the monk’s chains”, as he put it. Humboldt admired Mutis so much that he included an engraving of him dressed as a priest in his book. Yes, he was ordained in 1772 when he was 40, for reasons unknown, but which may have had something to do with his conflict with the Dominican Order: I find no explanation for this intriguing point in any of Mutis’s biographies.

Humboldt is himself remembered by his admirers in Venezuela and Colombia as one of the various European travellers who contributed to the liberation of their countries from Spanish rule. During his stay in Caracas, he met the young Andrés Bello, who, some years later was to become one of the leading intellectual and political actors in Venezuelan independence. They climbed the mighty mount Avila together, probably talking about science and politics. When Humboldt’s American expedition ended and he went back to Paris, he met Simón Bolívar, who he wanted to convince of the need for strong leadership in the New World. Seeing what happened a short time later, he must have been very persuasive. Or perhaps he was talking to a very determined Bolívar who had already decided to be the “liberator” of the whole continent. Although I don’t think Bolívar needed much encouragement.

## 52. BRITISH HAVANA, 1762-1763

In March 1762, the 3rd Earl of Albemarle was sent with a powerful fleet to the Caribbean. His mission, which was to seize Cuba for Great Britain, was accomplished successfully by August that year. A long siege of Havana with a superior force and with the help of an epidemic of yellow fever obliged the Spanish Captain General to surrender the town and the Western part of Cuba, the “pearl of the Caribbean”, as the Spaniards used to call it, including the impressive military port of the Spanish New World, until then considered impregnable. It was a long and difficult siege. Havana was a walled city and was defended by the fortress of el Morro at the entrance to an enclosed bay. The Spanish fleet was trapped inside the bay and the Morro was heavily bombarded. An amphibious landing from the rearguard could not be held off. Prado and his military colleagues were sent to Spain, where they were condemned for negligence in preparing the defense of the island. Albemarle was appointed Captain-General and Governor of the island and readied himself to make of Cuba one more of the British dominions in the West Indies, cutting its links with the Viceroyalty of Nueva España (Mexico) and therefore with Spain. The local creoles, mainly landowners in the sugar business, soon accepted the British presence. They expected to obtain advantages in their conflict with the “peninsulares”, the Spaniards, until then in charge of the government of the island. The Cubans were given the choice of leaving for Spain or of becoming British subjects. They were allowed to remain Catholic if they so chose, although the new authorities reserved for themselves the right to veto the appointment of a priest by the bishop.

This peculiar experience only lasted from August 1762 to February 1763, when the Treaty of Paris ended the Seven Years' War and obliged the British to give Cuba back to Spain. The occupation would be a good subject for a novel in the style of “magical realism”: just imagine life in the most Spanish of Spain's colonies under such circumstances, so suddenly and drastically changed! Anyway, this Seven Year War (1756-1763) was indeed a serious affair. A general conflagration that has been called the “real” first world war, it involved practically all the

European powers and was at the same time a struggle for predominance in Central Europe (Prussia-Austria) and the continuation of the showdown between France and Britain in North and Central America. It also had ramifications in the Indian subcontinent and other parts of Asia: Spanish Manila, in the Philippines, was taken by the British at the same time as Havana. But this occupation was also brief. It lasted only until the Treaty of 1763 ended the hostilities. At the end of the war, Great Britain consolidated her control of the seas and gained important territories: Quebec from France, Florida from Spain, some Caribbean Islands, Senegal, advantages in India...It was evident that the decline of Imperial France had started.

In the middle of this general readjustment of borders and possessions, Spain could not remain neutral, as she had managed to do during the rather uneventful reign of Ferdinand VI (1746-1759). When Charles III assumed the Spanish crown in 1759, the war had been going on for three years and had very directly affected the position of Spain in North America, where the British colonies were trying to expand toward the West and France wanted to keep control of Canada and the Mississippi valley. Charles III, who had been king of Naples and witnessed from there the dangers derived for Spain from the British-French confrontation, proposed that a system of "balance of power" like the one achieved for continental Europe by the Treaty of Utrecht be transferred to the Americas. But it was too late. This "Indian Balance" was too rational to be feasible, too typical of a classical enlightened diplomacy at a time when an unstoppable system of "power politics" was imposed by the expansion of the British Empire. And it was not agreed in Utrecht, which only referred to balance in Europe. In these circumstances, Spain was driven to sign the 3rd "Family Pact" with France (1761) and resume the traditional Bourbon solidarity, trying, with French help, to defend her positions in America and, if possible, recover Gibraltar and Minorca from the British. She failed with Gibraltar and suffered disastrous consequences in America and the Atlantic: the loss of the Floridas was only one of them.

The Seven Years War ended but the consequences of the Family Pact continued. Spain followed the French in a dubiously useful revenge joining forces with her in 1776 to help the North American rebels in their fight for independence from Britain. Also, the promise

of French help, which didn't materialize, was at the origin of the great siege of Gibraltar, which lasted from 1779 until 1783 and was yet another failure. The alliance was interrupted when Spain and Britain, the traditional "enemies", joined forces against the French Revolution. However, the Family pact -and the war with England- returned in 1803 and ended with the destruction of the Spanish fleet in San Vicente (1804) and Trafalgar (1805). Too many wars, I think, not to speak of the War of Jenkins' Ear and the many naval battles caused by the British challenge to the Spanish trade monopoly with her colonies.

The only consolation for Spain that I know of amid all these setbacks came in the summer of 1797, when the already famous Admiral Horatio Nelson tried to capture the Canary Islands for the British Empire (or, according to the official British version, to seize a cargo from a Spanish treasure ship then at anchor in Santa Cruz, the port of Tenerife). It was the third time they had tried to take this crucial strategic outpost on the route to the Americas, starting back in 1657, with a new attempt in 1706. With the Spanish fleet trapped in Cadiz after a first defeat at the Cape of Saint Vincent, Nelson sailed with an important fleet and tried to disembark in Santa Cruz. The Spanish commander, General Antonio Gutierrez, had prepared strong artillery defenses and repelled two attempts by the British. Decimated but stubborn and courageous, the third expedition landed in Santa Cruz. They met with strong opposition from the few Spanish military stationed on the island and a popular militia assembled by Gutiérrez on the spot. The invaders had to take refuge in a convent and surrendered after short resistance. Nelson was not with them in person... He had retired to his ship after losing his right arm when leading the landing. The islanders of Tenerife still proudly show visitors the actual cannon that injured the famous admiral. It is known as "The Tiger".

## 53. THE ROOTS OF FLAMENCO

If we say that Flamenco is the music of Andalusia, we are telling the truth, but we are saying little. As an outsider who encountered Flamenco for the first time, I didn't expect to be confronted with so many surprises. The sounds one hears have an Oriental air that is alien to the music that is heard and played in most of Europe and the West. Flamenco can be found in three different forms, chant, dancing and guitar and these are used in many combinations. Furthermore, two separate worlds of culture can be discerned within this micro-cosmos. One of them responds to an etymology of Flamenco (one of several possible) that sees its origin in the "flame", the fire in the night of endless *juerga flamenca*, the joyful dances and songs of the more popular version of Flamenco, rhythmic and contagious. Sevillanas or Peteneras belong in this category. The other is a very serious matter, the *Cante Hondo* that is sung at its most authentic in the caves of Sacromonte, in Granada or in Seville's district of Triana. This is music that has nothing to do with the Western tradition, be it classical or popular. It is monophonic, it flows without a definite rhythm and so is not suited for dancing; it uses strange scales and flourishes; it sings of tragic love, of oppression and death: no *juerga* or revelry at all. Is all this just Gypsy folklore? Is it art?

One wonders, above all, why such a special world of sound, of passion and colour, had to flourish precisely in the far Western end of the Mediterranean, in Andalusia. The roots of Flamenco are manifold: they all come from the East and were never influenced by European "classical" music. The Andalusian composer Manuel de Falla, who created his own music under the spell of Flamenco, wrote a study on the *Cante Hondo* in which three main components are identified as its sources. The first is the liturgical music of the Spanish Church, that is, of the rites and practices developed by the Spaniards since the time the Gothic king Recaredo I declared the conversion of Spain to Christianity. The liturgy of that national Spanish Church, Falla tells us, was gradually formed under the influence of the Byzantine civilization. The music had its origin, in turn, in Persian and Indian chant and included important elements of Jewish rituals. Spain adopted the Latin

liturgy in the eleventh century and from then on used the Gregorian chant. But the old traditions remained alive in popular culture and some features of Gregorian chant can also be identified in the *saetas*, some *siguiriyas* and other Flamenco chants of religious inspiration.

The second source is, of course, Arabic music. The presence of the Arabs in Andalusia and the rest of Spain for seven centuries (711-1492) could not fail to change the pre-existing local customs and so directly influence the music of Al Andalus with Oriental traditions. The roots of Arabic music were, in a certain way, common with those of the Byzantines: India's sacred rituals can be traced in Flamenco dancing, and the Persian tradition and technique of singing was brought to Al-Andalus by a master singer from Baghdad, a certain Ziryab, who lived and taught at the court of the caliphate of Cordoba. Some elements of the contemporary Hebraic liturgy, like the funeral ritual Kol Nidrei, can also be identified in certain forms of Flamenco monodial chanting.

The third and most important root of Flamenco, however, is Gypsy folklore. The Gypsies, with their own music, came from the East too. They travelled toward the West around 1400, probably from India, taking different routes. One wave arrived and settled in central Europe and left there the imprint of Gypsy music which we can hear in Hungarian folklore. The other travelled first to Egypt (from where they took their name: Egyptians-Gypsies), and from there reached the South of Spain with the last Arab migration to arrive in the peninsula. Their nomadic style of life, and especially their connection with the Muslims, couldn't be well received by Catholic Spain that was completing the Reconquista against the "Moors". So the Gypsies lived a clandestine life in Spain for centuries, enclosed in ghettos called *gitanerías*, similar to the *juderías* of the Jews. As a secluded caste, they continued to develop the music they had brought from the East and mixed it with that of their new environment, both Christian and Arabic. Flamenco was the astonishing result of this synthesis. It remained a secret, hidden art, and was not well appreciated by the most traditional Spaniards. Only in 1783, when King Charles III allowed the Gypsy community to integrate into Spanish society, did Flamenco start to be played, danced and sung in public, both the *Cante Hondo* and the lighter branches of Andalusian folklore influenced by Spanish popular traditions.



A century later, classical composers in Europe, under the banner of nationalistic movements in music, started to pay attention to the peculiar music of Andalusia. This happened first of all in Spain, where composers like Falla, Albéniz, Granados, Turina, Rodrigo... were inspired by the soul of the Flamenco dances (the monodic and a-rhythmic *cante hondo* was harder to adapt to the techniques and harmonies of classical music). But not only in Spain: composers from other countries were inspired by this exotic music, so dear to the Orientalist fashion of Romanticism. Some of them belonged to the usual travellers in 19th century Spain and they took the cliché of Andalusian dancing to their own countries, presenting it as the music of Spain. Interestingly, one of the earliest of these was the Russian Mijail Glinka, who visited the country in 1845 and popularized a famous “jota” (a dance from Aragón and Navarre, which has nothing to do with Flamenco) as his own musical version of Spain. He then encouraged other colleagues of the nationalistic school to try some imitation of Flamenco: Rimsky-Korsakov’s *Capriccio Espagnol* is an example of this simplification, and the same can be said of others. The French Emmanuel Chabrier paid a long visit to Spain in 1883 and produced a beautiful account in his rhapsody *España*, a touristic mix of Spanish tunes and French orchestral techniques.

Others went deeper into the mystery of Flamenco music. Maurice Ravel, of Basque origin, also tried, a *Rapsodie Espagnole* at a higher level. Claude Debussy never travelled to Spain, which he much regretted, but he had met Isaac Albeniz and Manuel de Falla in Paris and listened to some guitar music from Spain at the International Exhibition of Paris in 1889. That was enough for the great French genius. With these elements he composed some of the most beautiful Spanish music using “invented” or subjective folklore: *Iberia*, a set of orchestral images written between 1905 and 1912, and, better still, some short piano pieces specifically inspired in the Alhambra of Granada. The evocation of Andalusia is here subtle and imaginative: you can hear the guitar and smell the aromas of the summer evening in the background of *Una soirée dans Grenade* (An Evening in Grenade, from *Estampes*, 1903) and other miniatures.



Picasso - Gernika



Picasso - Les demoiselles d'Avignon



Picasso - Niña comiendo



Joan Miró - Ramblas





Luis Buñuel



Segovia



Salvador Dalí



Dalí - El Cristo



Sevilla



La Alhambra de Granada





Goya - El tres de mayo



Goya - La familia de Carlos IV



Goya - La condesa de Chinchón





Goya - Jovellanos



Velázquez - Conde Duque de Olivares



Velázquez - Las meninas





Zurbarán - San Serapio



El Greco - Toledo



El Escorial



Madrid - Palacio Real



Francisco Bayeu - Paseo de las delicias





Juan Pantoja de la Cruz - Carlos V

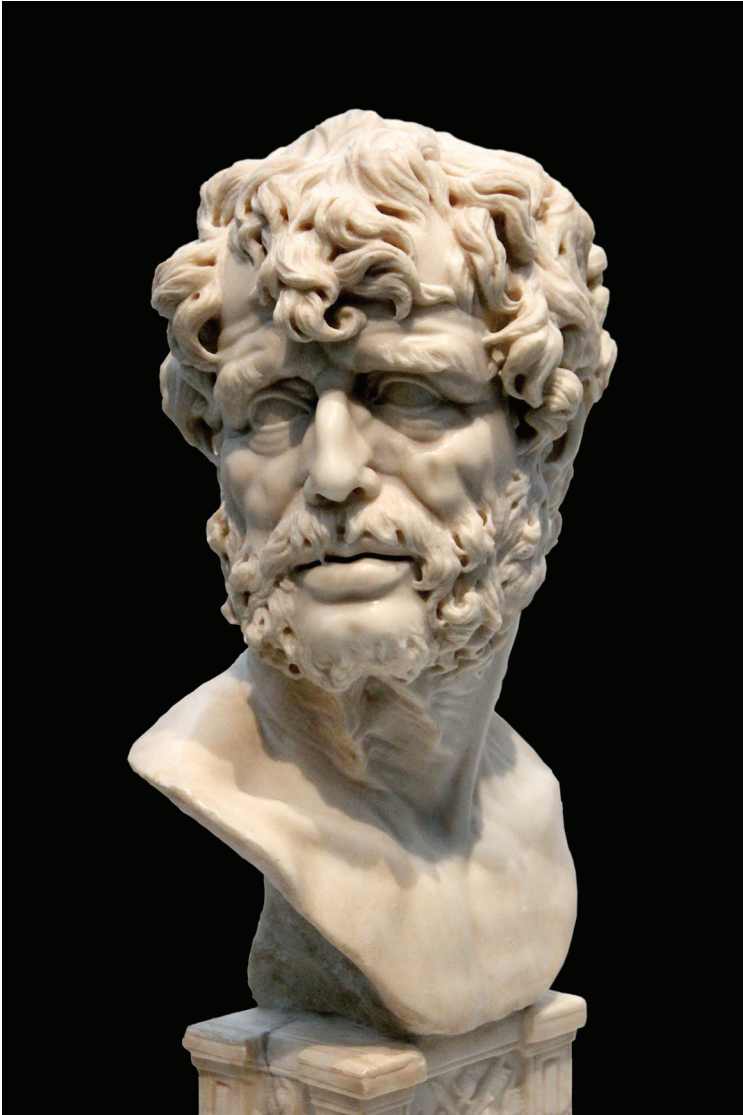


La mezquita de Córdoba



Pórtico de la Gloria en la Catedral de Santiago de Compostela





Séneca

## 54. GIBRALTAR'S GREAT SIEGE, 1779-1783

Historians, mainly the British, tell the history of Gibraltar following the sixteen sieges the Rock suffered over many centuries. These sieges started in 1309, when the Spaniards tried repeatedly to recover Gibraltar from the Moors, who had occupied it since the year 711 A.D. This lasted until 1669, when Franco closed the gate that separated Gibraltar from Spain and suppressed the ferry service with the neighboring port of Algeciras. It was probably Fernando María Castiella (1907-1976) who inspired this decision that culminated years of tension and disagreements between Spain and the United Kingdom. Castiella was Minister for Foreign Affairs for 12 years and 8 months and was jokingly called Minister of "the Foreign Affair" due to his obsession with Gibraltar. From 1965 on, a confusing discussion has developed with Britain, who registered Gibraltar as a colony in the U.N. Spain, suspecting that the aim of this move was to grant Gibraltar the right of self-determination, would only consider the return of the sovereignty of the Rock to Spain according to the principle of territorial integrity. In 1969, Britain granted the Rock a "constitution" which promised to respect the "wishes" of the Gibraltarians. This was too much for Spain, who admitted, at most, mention of their "interests". The so called 16<sup>th</sup> siege had begun: no war this time but a full blockade on the communications of Gibraltar with the external world. Curiously enough, in spite of numerous historical and legal arguments used to support the Spanish claim, in 1966, Castiella proposed to the British "the cancellation of article X of the Treaty of Utrecht and the return of Gibraltar to Spain". Thus, he implicitly admitted the validity of Britain's title. No wonder Spain refused to treat the matter in terms of law. In 1941, Castiella, together with Jose María de Areilza, later also a Spanish foreign minister (1975-76), had published a book entitled *Spanish Claims*. The authors proposed to restore the Spanish Empire recovering, with the help of the Axis powers, Gibraltar, Tangiers, Oran, some possessions in the Gulf of Guinea, etc.

Gibraltar was part of a negotiating "package" by which, at the end of the War of Spanish Succession, in the treaty of Utrecht of 1713

the Bourbon dynasty had obtained the Crown of Spain in exchange, among other things, for certain territorial concessions to Britain, including the Rock and the island of Minorca, and certain privileges in trade with America. I've always been intrigued by how soon and with what determination the Bourbon king Philip V and his successors challenged the terms of this deal: they didn't seem to have considered that their permanence on the throne of Spain was part of it, and normally should have been subject to the fulfilment of the whole set of mutual obligations, both dynastic and territorial. The British forces under Admiral George Rooke had occupied the Rock in 1704 and had seized it on behalf of their ally, the Austrian pretender to the Spanish Crown. Rooke had tried without success to conquer Cadiz and Barcelona. Gibraltar was a secondary target. That explains how, after the matter was settled by the Peace of Utrecht in 1713, the British, in a letter of King George I in 1718, offered to give it back to Spain in exchange for several things: cash, a Spanish possession of commercial value (Florida?), etc.

All of Britain's early offers were in vain. Philip V considered that the Peace of Utrecht was unjust, because it had been concocted by his grandfather Louis XIV at the expense of Spain and without consulting him. When he married Isabella of Farnesio in 1714, this impressive lady and her right hand man, Cardinal Alberoni, started to challenge the Treaty of Utrecht systematically. After repeated attempts and sieges, Philip tried to win Gibraltar back officially in 1727, arguing that the provisions of Utrecht had been breached. In a letter to the British King, he declared article X of Utrecht null and void. The British, according to him, had extended the fortifications beyond the legal limits; they had allowed Jews and Moors to reside in Gibraltar; they had encouraged smuggling at the expense of Spanish revenues. So a new unsuccessful siege began in 1727, the thirteenth or fourteenth depending on the different accounts. In the end, the British, at any rate, prevented these manoeuvres and never considered giving Gibraltar back. It became a symbol of the great British Empire and public opinion attached supreme sentimental value to it.

This tense situation lasted until 1779 with changing scenarios depending on the sides Spain and Britain were taking in the numerous wars of the times. That of 1779 was the great siege of Gibraltar. Spain

was then allied with France and both were at war with Great Britain on account of their support of the Thirteen Colonies in North America in their fight for independence. This time, the siege was a major military undertaking: the Spanish Navy had been considerably reinforced and huge means were used, including new types of weapons. However, the siege failed, as all the previous attempts had failed. The treaty, which put an end to the war in 1783, recognized the validity of the cession at Utrecht and Gibraltar started a new life as an important strategic outpost. The British Empire, in fact, hadn't died with the Independence of the U.S. It had simply changed direction, this time towards India and the Middle East. From that point of view, Gibraltar and the control of the Mediterranean became vital for the security of the land route, the old "silk route", and, above all, the sea route once the Suez Canal was opened. By the way, France, the ally of Spain in all these battles, was discreetly absent or very distant in the matter of Gibraltar: she didn't want her neighbour to control both shores of the straits.

Minorca's life in the 18th century was not very stable either. During the war of Spanish Succession, France occupied the small island in the Balearic archipelago in 1707 for the Bourbon pretender to the Spanish Crown. One year later, British Admiral Leake recovered it for the Austrian pretender. The Treaty of Utrecht handed it over finally to Great Britain, together with Gibraltar: the Catholic King (of Spain) yielded "the whole island of Minorca and doth transfer thereunto forever, all right, and the most absolute dominion" to the crown of Great Britain. Anyway, the British remained in Minorca until 1756. At the beginning of the Seven Year War, France conquered the island, only to give it back to the British in 1763. Again in 1782, Minorca was surrendered to Spain and, in the context of the Napoleonic wars, became British again for four years, 1798-1802. The treaty of Amiens put an end to all this song and dance and Minorca became Spanish again for good, at least until now. All of this turmoil was probably not very pleasant for the islanders. They received a strong influence from the British who, after all, occupied the island for the longest, although interrupted, part of the 18th century. You can perceive it clearly even today in the architecture of the port of Mahon and in the Minorcans' English habits and language.

## 55. THE HOLY WEEK MUTINIES IN MADRID, 1766

On Palm Sunday 1766 the people of Madrid, always fond of celebrations, filled the streets with processions and festive gatherings. Unexpectedly, it seems, rumours were spread, leaflets distributed and the feast turned into a mutiny against the government of Leopoldo de Gregorio, Marquis of Squillacce. The masses were easily excited and gathered around the brand new Royal Palace (the old Alcázar had burnt down in 1730) to present their grievances to King Charles III. They wanted Esquilache, as they called the marquis, and other Italian ministers removed from office and replaced by Spaniards; they wanted the Walloon Guards, a foreign police force imported from Belgium, disbanded; they wanted the price of food reduced. Above all, they complained about a recent Royal Decree that obliged them to change the style of their traditional capes and hats in order to modernize them. Imposing the short cape and three-cornered hat was going too far: for the people of Madrid, it was the spark that ignited a conflict that had been gathering momentum for months. They went to the Palace in great numbers and demanded satisfaction for their complaints. A reluctant Charles III was obliged to appear on the balcony of the palace and grant all the popular demands one by one. He was shocked and humiliated and thought it better for his own, and his family's, security to take refuge in his palace in Aranjuez, to the South of Madrid. He stayed there several days, concerned by the quick and broad repercussion of the protests in other provinces.

The Mutiny of Esquilache, as these widespread riots have been traditionally known, had probably more than one cause. Charles III, first son of Philip V and Isabella of Parma, had been well received in Madrid after having successfully fulfilled his tasks as Duke of Parma (1731-1735) and King of Naples (1734-1759). He brought with him his closest Italian advisers and wanted to modernize his new kingdom, starting with the capital. He had found Madrid dirty, dangerous, dark and insalubrious and took many measures to turn the city into a modern and beautiful city. He did this with success, opening new avenues

and parks, changing the habits of hygiene and procurement of goods, putting lights into the streets. He banned beggars, gamblers and prostitutes from open spaces. However, not all these measures were popular: some had to be financed with new taxes and money was scarce after a year of poor harvests and a year in which liberal trade policies had been imposed. Prices had gone up and tempers had quickened dangerously when the people realized that, on top of it all, they had to buy new hats and capes...following the foreign fashion imported by Charles's Neapolitan ministers.

Very soon, theories started to appear to explain the causes of the grave crisis of 1766, in the middle of what was otherwise a stable and rather prosperous period. Who had been behind the riots? Had the mutiny been simply a spontaneous rebellion of subsistence? How could similar uprisings have taken place in so many cities so soon and almost simultaneously? On the first question, fingers were pointed to the usual suspects: first, the Spanish nobles, who were resentful of the Italian control of the Royal Court and who complained of being neglected by the king; second, the clergy, that had also been negatively affected by "regalism": Charles III, otherwise a very pious monarch, was after all a Bourbon and wanted to assert the authority of the Crown over the Church. He had tried to do the same in Naples, where nobles and the clergy possessed up to 50% of all property. And third, although Charles was an enlightened but convinced absolutist he was especially prejudiced against the Society of Jesus. He considered the Jesuits a foreign organization which was out of his control due to their vows of obedience to the pope. They were too rich and paid hardly any taxes. They had been suspected of manoeuvring against Spanish interests in the American colonies. They were accused of supporting "regicide" in their old theories about tyranny. And so on.

The king entrusted Pedro Rodríguez de Campomanes, a very stubborn minister of finance, well known for his enmity towards the Jesuits, with an inquiry into the mutinies. The evidence presented was rather weak: the leaflets distributed in Madrid, the accusers maintained, were too well written to be the work of the populace; many priests had been seen in the streets, etc. It didn't matter. The king was only too glad to receive a full report that clearly placed the blame

with the Jesuits. As Portugal in 1759 and France in 1762 had both done, Charles passed a decree expelling the members of the Society of Jesus from Spain and from her possessions in America. The implementation of this decision was entrusted to the expeditious Count of Aranda: 2641 priests were deported to Italy from the mainland, 2630 from America; their properties in Spain and in the colonies were seized in a first *amortization*. Together with France and Portugal, Charles worked hard in the following years to achieve the total suppression of the Society, which Pope Clemens XIV finally decreed in 1773. In Spain, only 6 out of 56 bishops had opposed the expulsion, which goes to prove that a conflict within the Church co-existed with the political confrontation between the Jesuits and the crown. The King was relieved and satisfied that the papal decision would bring “much tranquility in our kingdoms and security for our persons”, as he wrote to one of his ministers.

I think these words reveal that the king was really frightened by the mob he saw approaching the Royal Palace on that Palm Sunday of 1766, and that he believed, or wanted to believe, in the exclusive responsibility of the Jesuits in the rebellion. The Society did not die, though: Prussia and Russia didn't recognize the papal decree and the Jesuits kept operating until they were “legalized” again in 1814. In Spain they did disappear officially but they made their influence felt through the continuing activity of the Inquisition, an old ally of the Society. Charles III had tried to curb this once powerful instrument of the Church but could not completely avoid its continuing interference. To prove that it still existed, soon after the expulsion of the Jesuits, the Inquisition orchestrated, a notorious process against Pablo de Olavide (1725-1803). Born and educated in Lima, he was an advanced if somewhat anticlerical Catholic, fond of French literature and philosophy. He went to live in Spain and served in different positions under Aranda and Floridablanca; these men were both convinced reformers but they were so powerful that the Inquisition didn't dare attack them. Olavide's responsibilities included the renewal of cultural institutions and the policy of colonization of new land in Andalusia. He was detained by the Inquisition in 1776, being accused of reading impious books (which he had in great numbers), possessing lascivious images, disregarding the obligation of fasting and affirming that the

earth moves. For all these reasons, Olavide was declared a heretic. All his property was confiscated and he was banned from Madrid and Seville. Neither the king nor his former protectors moved a finger in his defense.



## 56. ITALIAN ART INVADES BOURBON SPAIN

One of the treasures I most admired when visiting the Royal Palace in Madrid was a group of instruments made by Italian violin-maker Antonio Stradivari around 1700. Two violins, two violas (one of them lost), a cello: a string quartet exceptionally made to sound as a single instrument, with a unique tone color. They were decorated with designs by the maestro of Cremona and belong to a group of only eleven master-pieces unique in the world (the rest are kept in Washington and Oxford). The Spanish instruments were acquired for the Spanish court by a young King Philip V in 1702 but, for reasons unknown, only arrived in Spain in 1772, having been sent to Prince Charles, at the time heir to the crown. This Charles, who would later reign as Charles IV, was an amateur violinist and soon started to enjoy playing the Stradivari instruments together with hired court musicians. One can suppose that he played like a king, not better. The story goes that once he was (literally) executing a string quartet written by Luigi Boccherini, one of his court musicians. The prince objected with some impertinence to a passage in the music that he found too difficult to perform and the famous composer, who was playing the cello, lost his temper: he responded with artistic pride and was dismissed from his job. He spent some years under the protection of another prince, Louis de Bourbon, at his palace in the village called Boadilla del Monte, near Madrid.

Luigi Boccherini was just one in the long list of Italian composers, musicians and singers who went to live in Spain during the 18th century, along with other artists from France. The Bourbon dynasty installed in Spain after the War of Succession, was determined to unite the country politically and have her take her rightful place in Europe. In particular, they wanted to renew the culture, very much in decadence after the glories of the Baroque era had given way to excesses, vulgar or trivial music and art of dubious taste. A certain degree of cosmopolitanism and a higher sense of order and elegance were introduced in the way Spaniards dressed, danced and were entertained. Soon, Academies, following the example of the French, were estab-

lished to control the language, the sciences and the arts, including architecture. Palaces and gardens were built following, if at a rather modest level, the example of Versailles and Paris. Broad avenues and parks were opened in Madrid. A new Royal Palace was built to replace the old “Alcázar”, the commission was given to the Italian architect Giambattista Sachetti, who built it in the neoclassical style characteristic of those years. It presents the typical contrast between an elegant and imposing exterior and some very rococo decorations inside. Frescoes and paintings were done by the Venetian painters Tiepolo and Mengs, an Italianized Bohemian.

The Italian influence is not difficult to understand. The second wife of King Philip V was Isabel de Farnesio, a very obtrusive queen who intervened in politics and, in addition, wanted to protect her husband from frequent attacks of “melancholy”. The palace of San Ildefonso de La Granja, not far from Segovia, was a refuge for the king and his court. There, Philip was able to give himself over to his real passion, hunting, and he could be entertained with music and plays. A famous Italian castrato, Carlo Broschi, better known by his artistic name “Farinelli”, was brought from London by the queen and given full powers in the musical and theatrical life of the court. He brought Italian opera with him, and this was to dominate the musical taste in Spain for the next half a century. Another influential queen was Barbara de Braganza, a Portuguese princess who, before becoming the wife of the next king (Ferdinand VI, 1746-1759), had studied the harpsichord in Lisbon with another Italian maestro, Domenico Scarlatti. The queen also invited him to Madrid where he lived for 28 years, until his death. He was the son of Alessandro, a very famous Neapolitan composer of no less than 70 Italian operas, who worked at the service of the (then Spanish) viceroy. Domenico (1685-1757), in the neoclassical mood of the time, devoted himself to instrumental music and created a new form of “sonata”, of which he wrote many for the queen, and which inspired Spanish composers like Padre Antonio Soler. These sonatas in one movement often included tunes from Spanish popular music.

When Charles III accepted the throne of Spain (1759), he was king of Naples and a decisive reformer. He was not as musical as his predecessors had been and he thought that there were too many Ital-

ian operas and other popular entertainment going on. He started to close theatres in Madrid and the provinces and, under the influence of the Count of Aranda, President of the Council of Castile and former ambassador in Paris, began to give preference to the French aesthetics of the Enlightenment. The theories of Rousseau and Rameau were introduced and also the new German music of Gluck and Haydn was played and listened to in the palaces of the princes Louis and Charles. So, Haydn's famous "Seven Last Words" were commissioned by the cathedral of Cádiz. The struggle between the Italian and French styles was hard fought and the latter won in the end, when Godoy, the strongman of King Charles IV (Boccherini's rebellious partner), decreed in 1799 the end of Italian opera in Spain. Vicente Martín y Soler (1754-1805) is a good example of this evolution. Born in Valencia, he achieved great success as a composer of Italian operas, both in Spain and in Naples and ended his career at the court of Catherine II in Saint Petersburg. When the aesthetic winds started to change in Spain, he left for Vienna and served under the Emperor Joseph II in the most brilliant capital of European music at the end of the 18th century. He worked with the poet Pietro Metastasio and with Lorenzo da Ponte, the author of the librettos for Mozart's best Italian operas. In 1786, Martín y Soler composed a very successful opera *Una Cosa Rara* (Something Strange), which was played more than seventy times in the Burgtheater. It is said that the second act of *Don Giovanni*, Mozart's masterpiece, contains a melody taken from Martín y Soler's work. His was music of great refinement and grace but, of course, he cannot be compared with the genius from Salzburg. He certainly is not Mozart... but then who is ?

## 57. THE WAR OF JENKINS' EAR OR WAR OF THE "ASIENTO"

Robert Jenkins, captain of the British brig "Rebecca", lost his ear when Julio León Fandiño, the commander of a Spanish coast guard, boarded his ship and accused him of smuggling. After a heated discussion, Fandiño allegedly cut off Jenkins' ear with his sword. Jenkins preserved it in alcohol and produced it in front of the British Parliament in March 1738, after a growing number of battles and incidents at sea had pushed the relations between Spain and Britain to the brink of war. The Rebecca incident had happened in 1731 off the coast of Florida, but it was considered a good argument by those in England who wanted to force Prime Minister Robert Walpole to declare war on Spain, which he did in 1739. Trade with Spanish America had been a constant source of conflict between the two countries, but there were other causes for tension: disputes in North America on the border between Spanish Florida and British Georgia, the continuing challenge by Spain about the cession of Gibraltar and Minorca in the Treaty of Utrecht and, above all, massive smuggling in what Spain saw as a contravention of the trade concessions given to the British in that Treaty. The *asiento de negros* (negro slave contract) and the "permission (or annual) ship" had been an historic first breach of the Spanish monopoly of trade with her colonies in America.

The "asiento" had a long history, nothing of which was to be very proud of. Spain lacked direct sources of slave manpower in Africa since the first explorers and the controllers of the coast had been the Portuguese. The needs of the fast growing economy of the American colonies were covered by contracts with companies that would transport the "merchandise". This contract, conceived as a monopoly, was given first to Portugal between 1580 and 1640, while it was united to the Crown of Spain. After Portugal became independent, the contract was given to the Genoese and, as of 1702, to the French. The British were determined to obtain the *asiento* for themselves and made of it a sine qua non condition to conclude the peace of Utrecht, which ended the War of Succession of Spain. In 1706 they had first obtained the

privilege from their ally in that war, the Austrian candidate, Archduke Charles of Habsburg. They lost it when the succession was won by the French pretender, Philip V, but Britain continued to demand the *asiento* and commercial concessions, together with Gibraltar and Minorca, and obtained all of them. Article XII of the Treaty of Utrecht, signed in July 1713, is sufficiently expressive: “The Catholic King doth give and grant to her Britannic Majesty and to the company of her subjects appointed for that purpose, the subjects of Spain as all others being excluded, the contract for introducing negroes into several parts of the dominions of her Catholic Majesty in America for the space of thirty years successively”. According to the terms of the contract that had been agreed in advance a British company created for this purpose, the South Sea Company, would carry out the transport and delivery of a total of 144,000 slaves, 4,800 for each of the 30 years. Other provisions stipulated the dues the company should pay to the Spanish Crown for each shipment, the ports of entry in America and the means of controlling compliance with the conditions of the contract.

More important for the British than the “*asiento*” was another concession contained in an annex to the contract by which, “to please as much as possible the British Queen”, King Philip V granted a permit “to annually load a vessel of 500 tons with duty free merchandise to trade with the Spanish Indies”. This was little compared to what Britain had obtained from Archduke Charles, which was ten times more, but it committed a significant part of the Spanish American trade to British control. It was the end of the Spanish monopoly and, contrary to the previous contracts, which were signed directly with Portuguese or French companies, this was a commitment between the two crowns in a treaty under international law. Since the Spanish economy couldn’t supply the colonies with all the goods they needed, smuggling became endemic and, once the “permission ship” started to carry legal merchandise, the South Sea Company used its right in almost unlimited traffic. The ships of the *asiento* also participated in this massive trade as they came back from the American ports loaded with gold, silver and tobacco, in quantities beyond Spain’s control. The Treaty and the Contract had included very detailed norms on verification. The British company was obliged to provide regular accounts of the trade and the Spanish authorities had the right of on-site monitoring

at the ports of arrival. All these norms were so massively ignored that the *asiento* had to be interrupted. A Treaty signed in Seville in 1729 restored the contract and allowed the Spanish authorities a “right of visitation” of all the ships involved.

The British parliament rejected this treaty and its Ambassador in Madrid demanded the cancellation of the right of visit. In response, King Philippe V terminated the *asiento* and the annual ship and detained all British ships at ports on the mainland and in the Indies. War became inevitable and Britain declared it formally in October 1739. It was one of many wars fought for the control of the Atlantic during the 18th century and it included some important battles. The British took Portobello in 1739 and tried to occupy Havana and Cartagena de Indias, without success. The siege of Cartagena in 1741 was one of the greatest amphibious battles in military history. The defenses of the Caribbean capital can still be seen standing today: they are mighty walls and it is no wonder that a British fleet of 186 warships and 27,000 men could not conquer it in spite of their overwhelming superiority. The war was not decisive and Spain, with a renovated navy she had built thanks to the reforms of minister Ensenada, continued her predominance in the Atlantic until the end of the century. The hostilities were interrupted in 1742 because both Spain and Britain were involved in the War of Austrian Succession as allies. The Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle ended this and the War of Jenkins’ Ear, and two years later Spain and Britain agreed to cancel the “asiento”. Spain granted it to the *Compañía Gaditana* and the monopoly ended in 1779. The *asiento* as such had never been very profitable and the movement against the slave trade would begin soon, mainly in Britain, of all places.

## 58. BEAUMARCHAIS SPENDS AN EVENTFUL YEAR IN MADRID

Mozart adored Prague. The most beautiful town in Europe in my opinion (after Venice) gave him his best moments of glory. He premiered *Don Giovanni* there in October 1787, thankful as he was for the reception Prague had given to *The Marriage of Figaro* a year before. The Jacobins of the capital of Bohemia relished the opportunity of presenting the aristocracy, be it Spanish or Austrian, in humiliating situations. Apparently, it was the local freemasons who promoted the function for political purposes. It is not difficult to understand that *Le Nozze*, as opera lovers familiarly call it, had not pleased the Vienna aristocrats. Mozart had chosen a dangerous subject for this Italian opera: namely, the relationship of the ordinary man with their superiors the nobles. Set in Seville, it was an adaptation of a play Pierre Agustin de Beaumarchais (1732-1799) had written after a stay in Madrid in 1764-65, where he had ample opportunity to learn about Spanish society and its "mores". The original play, *Le Mariage de Figaro*, had found difficulties to be staged in Paris. King Louis XVI had declared: "Cela est detestable, cela ne sera jamais joué" ("this is awful, this will never be performed"). The comedy had to wait until 1784 to get onto the stage, after it had become widely known in literary circles. In Vienna, a German version was prohibited by the otherwise enlightened Emperor Joseph II for similar reasons: lack of respect towards the nobility and the traditional social order in general. In Act V of Beaumarchais's play, Figaro, Count Almaviva's valet, tells his master in a long monologue things never heard before: "You think that because you are a great lord you are a genius! Nobility, wealth, rank, high position, such things make a man proud. But what did you ever do to earn them? Choose your parents carefully, that's all".

In spite of all the dangers, Mozart, who was not particularly involved in politics at that time, chose this play for his Italian opera. He had to convince the Italian writer Lorenzo da Ponte to write the libretto for him and both had to work hard to make the text palatable for the Emperor and his censors. Figaro's monologue of Act V was de-

leted for the sake of political expediency and other cuts were made to turn the text into a workable opera. An aria by Figaro, very disparaging towards women (*Guardate queste femmine!*: Look at these women), was added to Act III in order to please the misogynist ears of the Emperor. At last, da Ponte could obtain permission to produce the work. Joseph II, on watching the opera, must have repented having given his approval. In effect, a premature atmosphere of disrespect is clearly present in this masterful work. Count Almaviva tells us that he regrets having renounced his customary *ius primae noctis*, the right to the first night, and wants to enjoy it with Susanna, Figaro's bride. The jealous Countess joins them in a conspiracy to prevent it. A shocking spirit of comradeship between Count and valet, Countess and maid goes far towards giving the impression of an incipient egalitarian relationship. Figaro and Susanna form an effective opposition to the sexual urges of the Count, who ends ridiculed and humiliated. So, in spite of the many cuts and manipulations, the social conflict emerges vividly, with the help of music of unsurpassed beauty which gives life to very real characters, with their contradictory emotions, interests, lies and misunderstandings, love and lust.

It is understandable that both Mozart and da Ponte would be willing to seek revenge, as Beaumarchais had done. Gifted with the highest creative powers, they were treated with contempt by the powerful people of their time. But why did they set the work in Spain? Beaumarchais had never travelled to Seville, but I suspect that, wanting to criticize their own societies, both he and Mozart preferred to use the most fashionable setting for exotic adventures as a vehicle for their social or personal grudges. Nevertheless, Spain was a good choice. Count Almaviva's feudal imagination reveals the distance that existed between social classes in 18th century Spain, which was very real. The status of nobility gave right to precedence and also special privileges before Justice (no torture, no prison for debts, special prisons) and Spain had a large share of nobles: 7-8 %, compared to the average of other European countries, only 3%. Participation in commercial business was prohibited for them by law (like in France) and claims of cleanliness of blood were frequently brought before the judges. On the other hand, Figaro's impertinence when he refers to his master as *contino* (little count) and offers to teach him how to dance and caper reflects the



reality of a transition. The idea of honour, a certain militarization of life, receded progressively into the past and the authorities of Spain of the Enlightenment were trying to relax the hierarchical character of society. In its confrontation with the nobles, the Bourbon monarchy wanted to establish a direct relationship between the Crown and its subjects and, for these, a degree of equality before the law. External signs of class, like the use of special vehicles or dress, started to disappear and the sale of titles of nobility dropped in numbers because the kings increased the number they granted for “services to the Crown”, military or otherwise: thus able politicians of modest origins like Campomanes or Floridablanca were rewarded with the title of counts.

And what about Beaumarchais’ presence in Spain? The son of a rich Parisian watchmaker, Pierre- Agustin Caron, as he was really called, was a gifted businessman and socialite when he travelled to Madrid in 1764. He arrived with a mission of seemingly private character: to solve the problems that were delaying the marriage of his sister Lisette, who had resided in the Spanish capital since 1748, with a procrastinating Spaniard, José de Clavijo y Fajardo, an enlightened writer and scientist originally from the Canary Islands. This business obliged him to travel repeatedly from Madrid to the Court at Aranjuez, where he met the French Ambassador to ask for his assistance and, through him, the favour of the king. But Beaumarchais had very good financial and political connections in Paris, and very ambitious plans. He wanted to secure the *asiento* contract for France, the monopoly in the slave trade with America. He tried to obtain a huge contract for the supplying of the Spanish military. He also aspired to the monopoly of commerce with the Louisiana, at the time a Spanish dominion. Last but not least, he wanted to obtain payment for the quality clocks and watches his father had sold to the highly placed clients he had in Madrid.

He failed in all these and other projects and left somehow embittered with his Spanish friends and clients. But he had, otherwise, a very good time in Madrid. He was a friend of Don Ramón de la Cruz (1731-1794), who staged no less than ten of his popular light plays (*sainetes*) during the year Beaumarchais spent in Madrid. Back in Paris, he profited from them and from his own experiences in Spain to create his own theatrical trilogy: *The Barber of Seville*, *The Marriage of Figaro* and *The Guilty Mother*. The Barber was inspired by one of those Span-

ish “sainetes” and was an instant success in Saint Petersburg (1782) and Vienna (1783) when Giovanni Paisiello made a comic opera out of it. Mozart and Da Ponte composed *Le Nozze* presumably to follow up in the wake of this triumph. Gioacchino Rossini’s famous version of *Il Barbiere* had to wait until 1816.

## 59. THE ORIGINS OF LATIN AMERICAN REVOLUTIONS

The bones of Francisco de Miranda are hidden somewhere in the fortress in Cadiz (Spain) where he died in 1816 at the end of the three years he served in prison. The Venezuelans have tried in vain to identify them in order to give due honours to the remains of their hero. I can imagine what Miranda thought in bitterness when, in 1813, while he was in jail, Simon Bolívar was given the title of *Libertador* (liberator). Bolívar, who handed him over to the Spaniards after he, Miranda, was obliged to sign the capitulation of the First Republic of Venezuela, of which he was the President and Generalissimo. What a story! Miranda was born in Caracas in 1750. His father, who later became a rich merchant, had emigrated from the Canary Islands, as so many poor islanders had done for centuries, and was obliged to prove that he was of pure blood in order to defend himself from the suspicion that he was a mestizo of Spaniard and Guanche, as the aborigines of Tenerife were called. From such humble origins, Francisco rose to be a hero of the Independence, the *precursor* of the American Revolutions. His was a fascinating life: to promote his ambitious cause, he travelled to Spain, to the United States, London, Russia and France. He had dealings with Alexander Hamilton, with Empress Catherine of Russia, Napoleon, the Duke of Wellington. Back in America, he failed twice in 1806 to disembark in Venezuela although he had U.S.-financed troops at his disposal. He later went back to Caracas at the request of Bolívar and participated in all the events leading up to the insurrection of Venezuela and the whole continent against Spain.

Miranda rose high but fell victim of the confusing circumstances of these agitated times. He will be remembered above all for having promoted the rebellion with enormous passion and energy and contributed to it with a broad culture, knowledge of foreign languages and a direct perception of the rapid changes that were taking place in the world. He had introduced the ideas of the Enlightenment into America, with his own writings and through the promotion of authors like Voltaire and Rousseau, at that time prohibited by Spain. He

translated a manifesto for liberation written by a certain Juan Pablo Viscardo, a Jesuit who lived in Italy, one of the many of his order that the Spanish monarchy had expelled from Spain and her colonies. He, together with other travellers, had been responsible for spreading the knowledge of the new ideas among a minority of educated creoles.

The revolutions of the British colonies and the French revolution were well known in Spanish America in spite of the efforts of the Inquisition and the colonial authorities to keep them at bay. The seed was sown and the minds prepared, waiting for the right moment, and it came in 1808 when Napoleon invaded Spain. However, the ideas of freedom and popular sovereignty and the example of other revolutions, would not have been enough to trigger off the American rebellion without the intervention of other causes that, for decades, had started to widen the distance between the Spanish monarchy and the creoles, the descendants of the original Spanish settlers. After more than two centuries in which practically “nothing” happened, politically speaking, in Spanish America, the new Bourbon dynasty installed in Madrid in 1700 started to change the rules of the game. Allied with France in continuous wars against Great Britain, a serious programme of reforms was applied to modernize the economy in Spain and to reinforce the mainland and the colonies militarily. How did these reforms affect the American colonies? In many ways, both political and economic. The Bourbons had a “French” idea of how to govern a country, which was very different from the loose union of territories or kingdoms that was characteristic of Spain in Habsburg times and before. They wanted to unify the laws and the institutions. They created new administrative divisions in the American continent, new viceroalties and military governorships; they increased the presence of Spaniards from the peninsula and, worst of all, excluded the creoles from all the newly established political and military positions of authority. The resentment created by this discrimination, which had remained latent until then, became the foundation for a “creole nationalism”, a sense of a widening distance with Spain and of a different cultural identity in which the place of birth and not Spain was felt as the real homeland.

As for the economy, the perception of having interests opposed to those of Spain became clear for the creoles when the authorities in the Metropolis started to impose new taxes in order to finance the defen-

sive effort and the multiplied activities of the government. Not unlike what had happened to Great Britain in the North, the atmosphere became tense and ominous. Most of all, the attempt to control trade and to reinforce the monopoly in favour of the Crown directly threatened the privileges of the local merchants and landowners. They had prospered, mainly thanks to contraband. Tobacco from the state of Barinas (Venezuela) had been massively smuggled for centuries to the Netherlands without major problems. Thus, one can imagine the reaction of the creoles when King Philip V created the State company called the *Vasco-Guipuzcoana* in 1730. Through it, Basque traders were granted the monopoly of commerce with Venezuela and other provinces, plus the competence to commercialize Venezuelan products in Europe in exchange for Spanish products whose prices were highly inflated due to the scarcity of goods. Contraband diminished, although it couldn't be totally suppressed, and the prices of local products plunged drastically. The creole landowners and traders were incensed against Spain and certain limited liberalizing measures taken by the Monarchy around 1785 could not quite pacify the aggrieved locals.

This was the cultural, political and economic breeding ground where one single spark could unleash the great fire. And the spark was not a minor event: the foreign invasion of the "Motherland" by Napoleon's armies and the dismissal of the Spanish Monarchy. With no "sovereign", sovereignty went up in the air and the vacuum had to be filled by the people, that is, by the several nations that had developed in the viceroyalties in which the enormous continent had been divided, which was not so very different from what was happening in mainland Spain where the Juntas, locally improvised powers, took upon their shoulders the responsibility of the struggle for independence against the French.

## 60. LIGHT ENLIGHTENMENT REACHES SPAIN

Around 1798, the great Francisco de Goya painted a portrait of Don Gaspar Melchor de Jovellanos (1744-1811) seated at his ministerial desk, holding a document with one hand and supporting his head with the other. He looks at the artist with an expression which is a mixture of astonishment and boredom. It may be that he had just read the letter dismissing him from the post of Secretary of Justice in José Godoy's government. It may be that Goya wanted to express Jovellanos's deep concern with regard to the problems of Spain. It may be that he was just tired and drowsy after a long day's work. He was a tireless reformer of Spanish traditional institutions and had behind him a long life of service to the Crown as a judge, professor, politician and writer of some poetry and theatre in the dry neoclassical style then fashionable. He is best known for the fine prose of his many proposals for the modernization of Spain. He wrote long and lucid reports on agrarian reform (1795), on public education (1809), on the fine arts (1781), on the ordering of public feasts (1796). In the latter he tried, not very successfully, to regulate bullfighting and suppress some of the gruesome practices we can see in the bullfighting engravings done by Francisco de Goya. But his most advanced project, while he was Minister of Justice, was his attempt to reform and limit the power of the notorious Holy Inquisition. Too much reformation, the not-so-hidden powers of tradition probably thought. Jovellanos was dismissed and banished to a castle in Majorca for six years. No wonder he looks so concerned in Goya's portrait. After the Napoleonic invasion in 1808, he refused to serve in the puppet government of José Bonaparte and finished his life in his native Asturias.

Jovellanos was a political moderate and a pious Catholic. He wanted to import useful ideas from the European Enlightenment without touching the Spanish religion or the crown. He was a forerunner of Spain's "regeneration", a philanthropist who expressed his love for Spain with a mildly pre-romantic touch of sentimentality. In short, he was the prototype for Spain's timid participation in the century of Enlightenment and revolution. Why was Spain so "different" as far

back as the 18th century? The reason seems clear to me. These were the times when science and religion were entering into an unsolvable conflict. In the Middle-Ages such a conflict had not existed, science was preserved in the monasteries and the classics were translated by monks. Even the main actors of the scientific revolution following the Renaissance, Copernicus, Galileo and Newton were good Christians. But, in spite of their good intentions, the logical consequence of their methods, empiricism and rationalism, was inevitable. They soon produced interpretations of life and the cosmos which clashed with Catholic dogma and the words of the Bible. From then on, faith and reason followed different paths.

Spain had for many centuries united her destiny with that of the Christian faith, firstly in the war against Islam and later with that of Catholic orthodoxy against Protestant Reform. Spain had built herself “sacredly”, as the writer José Jiménez Lozano put it. You would be astonished to read what some priests wrote and said about these ideas even during the war of Independence. A certain Fray Manuel Hurtado saw the Spanish people as another Israel, chosen by God as His people. Descendants of Noah had supposedly arrived to the peninsula shortly after the flood and had been rescued from the paganism of Carthaginians, Phoenicians, Greeks and Romans by the birth of Jesus. Given Spain’s identification with Catholicism and the influence of Bourbon absolutism, it is not strange that Europe’s crisis of conscience wouldn’t have a great effect on her. The great majority of the population was not aware of what was happening to the North of the Pyrenees and the few who had access to the works of Voltaire and Rousseau preferred not to contradict the people’s abhorrence of new ideas too openly. Even some of the more civilized scholars treated the scientific advances with irony and despised any attempt to alter the country’s lethargic routines. Any criticism, such as the one contained in the French Encyclopedia or in the writings of Montesquieu, was dismissed as part of the Protestant-plotted “Black Legend”.

Spain, therefore, received a sort of light-weight Enlightenment, in which the true faith was never really challenged. It was focused on the development of the country through the application of new techniques and knowledge derived from contemporary scientific development, almost exclusively in pragmatic areas that didn’t touch on

Catholic dogma. In this vein there were many, very valuable writers. Diego Torres de Villarroel implicitly criticized Spanish old-fashioned customs as he offered a detailed account of all types of people and places in a partly fictitious autobiography (*Vida*, published in 1743) in which he tells of his adventures as a hermit, alchemist, dancing-master, astrologer, soldier and bull-fighter.

But the most famous of the Spanish enlightened writers is Benito Jerónimo Feijóo (1676-1764). If his colleagues were good Christians, this encyclopedic writer was a Benedictine monk protected by King Philip V, and professor of theology at the University of Salamanca. He had no problem with the Inquisition, but, perhaps impressed by the fantasies and superstitions so common in his native Galicia, he wrote abundantly and in a clear and beautiful style to combat the vulgarity of the people's beliefs, including some that were common among the aristocracy. In his two main works, "Erudite letters" and "A Universal Critical Panorama" he included over 250 essays on the most varied matters. He excluded high theology and metaphysics and gave preference to empirical problems, new techniques for agriculture, medicine, law and customs... we could say he wrote a Spanish Encyclopedia for daily life. With this apparently harmless approach, however, he was challenging the fear of novelty that paralyzed his nation's life in the long period of decadence that followed the glories of the Golden Age. He was proud of being Spanish and defended his country against foreign critics, both Protestant and pre-revolutionary. A latent shade of pre-Romanticism can be perceived in Feijóo since in his aesthetic ideas he went a step further than his traditionalist or neo-classical contemporaries. He defended an element of subjectivity in beauty and freedom of form and taste in its expression. He was a precursor of modernity and a decent writer, if not a great genius.



## 61. TRACES OF SPAIN IN VIENNA

The first time I visited Vienna, I was intrigued by the many traces of Spain I found hidden in the city. Many of them are less well-known than the Spanish Riding School, founded in 1560, and bear witness to a later presence that must have been deeper. On a building in the Schwarzschanerstrasse (Street of the Black Spaniards, so called due to the black robe of the Spanish Benedictine monks) a sign on a certain building reminds us that Beethoven died there, in what back in 1827 used to be a Spanish church dedicated to the Madonna of Montserrat, the patroness of Catalonia. Another chapel also remains of what used to be the Spanish hospital, built in 1718. In the Kapuzinergruft (Crypt of the Capuchins), where the Habsburg monarchs are buried, I discovered the tomb of Emperor Charles VI complete with, among others, the symbols of the Crowns of Castile and Aragon. When he inherited the Imperial throne in 1711, he established his Court in Barcelona and fought for the Crown in the War of Spanish Succession. He left for Vienna with a number of loyal Spaniards, mostly aristocrats, and they were followed by several waves of emigrants and exiles, up to 30,000 in all, according to one account. The last group left Spain in 1714, when Barcelona was assaulted by the Bourbon pretender Philip V and the Treaty of Utrecht granted him the Spanish Crown. Emperor Charles only admitted defeat in 1725, in a treaty done in Vienna, by which he renounced his rights on the throne of Spain. He died in 1740, still full of nostalgia for his lost reign and until then he allowed his Spanish “court” in Vienna to form a government in exile and to organize the life of “his” Spaniards: palaces in town for the rich nobles, a hospital and other charities for the less fortunate.

The Spanish war of Succession was a European conflict, but also a Spanish civil war. Like all civil wars, it caused bitter repression and exile. The Spaniards who left for Austria and Italy took with them, and continued to defend for years, “austracism”, the ideology they identified with the Habsburg monarchy and which was not very different from the traditional Spanish constitution created by the Catholic Monarchs, Ferdinand and Isabella, when they united the kingdoms

of Castile and Aragon: a system in which a common crown coexisted with territories that continued to be governed by their ancestral institutions and their particular legal orders. This “pact” between King and Cortes was of vaguely medieval origin and was maintained by the Habsburg monarchs who ruled Spain until 1700.

Philip V of Bourbon and his followers, many of whom accompanied him from France at the beginning of his reign, had different ideas. They wanted to give preference to reason over tradition and to reproduce the experience of a successful State in Spain, thoroughly unified according to the model of Philip’s country of origin as seen in the government of Cardinal Richelieu. In 1707, when the war was still going on, Philip issued a Royal Decree in which he declared that the provinces of the Crown of Aragon had breached the traditional “pact” when they took sides with the Austrian pretender. According to the French doctrine of “regalism” and invoking the right of conquest, Philip intended to recover for the Crown the rights it had lost to the nobles, municipalities, universities, religious orders, etc.. Briefly, he wanted to revise the legacy of the Middle Ages and give Spain a new government and law under his absolute and “rational” rule. This he did, although not very consistently, by the so-called *Nueva Planta* (New Organization). Through a series of Decrees he deprived Valencia of all its privileges, and the kingdom of Aragon and Catalonia of its institutions of government, leaving just their civil and procedural laws in force. In the Basque country and Navarre, which had been loyal to him, Philip respected all their peculiar political and fiscal institutions.

In spite of the discriminatory character of these reforms, which appear to have more to do with vengeance than with reason, the change was real and was implemented by a generation of able and educated ministers influenced by the ideas of the Enlightenment. Like the “nationalization” of the French Church carried out by Louis XIV (“gallicanism”), Philip V attacked the privileges and exemptions of the Spanish Church. Here again we can see an element of revenge since most of the Spanish clergy had taken sides with the Austrian camp. Previously on the side of Philip, a weak Pope, Clement XI suffered the decisive pressure of the Austrian Emperor Joseph II. His troops, on their way towards Spain, had invaded the Papal States and conquered Parma and Piacenza, as well as the city of Comacchio in Ferrara. After the war, the

Spanish Bourbons participated in the general European movement to reduce the traditional Church privileges and the power of the Inquisition. They were, in general, faithful, even pious Catholics but, after all, they had to deal with a powerful organization: 2,000 monasteries and 1,000 convents, with around 100,000 members was a force impossible to ignore without risk. So the attack was modest and prudent, so much so that the Church maintained its deep social influence. The fact that people continued to respect Catholicism is evident. I found a very shocking example in one of the few books on the law of nations which were published at the time in Spain: dated 1747 and written by a certain Joseph de Ortega y Cotes I read, on the front page, that it was “a work dedicated, offered and consecrated to Christ crucified”.

The reforms that started in 1700 were profound and long-lasting. But Spain's administration was not completely unified and the political and structural problems that remained unsettled are still alive today because history doesn't forgive and will repeat itself from time to time. But the country enjoyed a long period of growth and a renewal of her imperial energies that derived clearly from the rationalization imported by the Bourbon dynasty. Paradoxically, Castile lost her economic predominance, while the defeated Catalonia and the towns and regions of the periphery received the benefits of uniformity. The internal borders between the old kingdoms were suppressed, the taxes were unified, diminishing exemptions and privileges, the ministerial bureaucracy became more efficient than the blundering management through councils of the previous regime. Intensive cultivation of vineyards in Catalonia and an incipient industrial revolution based on cotton factories brought about the intensification of foreign commerce that culminated later in the 18th century, when trade with America was liberalized, and the monopoly of Andalusia suppressed. A stronger monarchy that received increased revenues and created a limited state capitalism with prosperous Royal factories was the result. A fact which explains how, in spite of all the losses of Utrecht, Spain was able to conserve her overseas dominions almost intact and fight for dominance of the Atlantic until the end of the 18th century.

## 62. MUSIC OF CHANCE: THE WAR OF SPANISH SUCCESSION

“Almost all nations observe almost all principles of international law and almost all their obligations almost all the time”. These words were written in 1967 by an international lawyer, Louis Henkin, and always come to my mind when considering the Spanish War of Succession and the Treaty of Utrecht (1713), which sought to organize peace in Europe when that war ended. The word “almost” means that there are certain vital interests that States will put before their international commitments, no matter how solemn. The Treaty of Utrecht consisted of several treaties among the powers involved in the war. It reorganized the continent territorially in a complex system aimed at preserving the “balance of power”. The idea was that none of those powers should become so powerful that they would threaten the integrity of the others. In the case of Spain, all the territories she possessed in Italy and Flanders were handed over to the Austrian Empire. Here the European powers went too far. Her presence in the Mediterranean had been one of the components of Spain’s international essence for centuries, the external projection of the Kingdom of Aragon and, thus, a really vital interest. This explains why, soon after she signed the Treaty of Utrecht, Spain set about reversing the losses of Italy and of Gibraltar. The new king, confirmed by Utrecht, Philip V of Bourbon, whose reign started in 1701, had rejected the arrangements signed in Rastadt in 1714 as part of the Peace of Utrecht and, in general, resented what his grandfather, the great Louis XIV, had negotiated with the other powers on behalf of Spain.

Philip’s “Mediterranean Irredentism” had another, decisive component: the dynastic interests of his second wife, the overwhelming princess of Parma, Isabella of Farnesio. They had married in 1714 and, behind this marriage, there was Cardinal Giulio Alberoni, the Italian patriot and very influential Ambassador of Parma in Madrid. He advised the King, a rather pusillanimous and weak character (except sexually), about Isabella’s virtues. In return, she gave Alberoni unlimited power, once she became Queen of Spain. She had children

by Philip, who she absolutely wanted to place on Italian thrones, since the children of Philip's first marriage had preferential rights over her own for the Crown of Spain. This was called "the secret of Farnesio" and became the foreign policy of Spain during the long reign of the first Bourbon (until 1746). Alberoni boldly challenged the European powers as he briefly conquered Sardinia and launched other military adventures. The vanquishers in that war, Britain, Austria and the Netherlands united in an Alliance aimed at preserving the order of Utrecht. Alberoni was dismissed in 1719, only to be succeeded by Jan Willem Ripperdá, a still more imprudent politician who tried to circumvent the Treaty through an understanding with Austria. He also failed, after having provoked a war with Britain in 1727. Finally, after too many blunders, the King and Isabella entrusted the affairs of government to an able diplomat, José Patiño y Rosales (1666-1736). He made peace with Britain and promoted a first Family Pact with France (1733) and an understanding with the other powers. Isabella was able to see her two sons placed on Italian thrones: the first, Charles, went to Sicily-Naples in 1731 and would reign in Spain as of 1759 as Charles III. Her other son, Felipe, became Duke of Parma, Piacenza and Guastalla.

Utrecht meant the beginning of France's decadence and the rise of Britain to world dominance. Louis XIV wanted hegemony and that would be achieved through the union of France and Spain (and her American colonies) under a Bourbon king. Britain wanted mainly to maintain the balance in the continent and to prevent the creation of a huge European power. For that purpose he forced the other powers to include a solemn renunciation in the treaty to be signed by Louis and Philip, to unite the Crowns of France and Spain in one monarch. Britain's ambitions were centred on the Atlantic and in Utrecht she obtained concessions which, in effect, broke the monopoly of Spain's commerce with America (obtaining, at the same time, Gibraltar and Minorca). The balance on the continent was achieved by a redistribution of territories and the creation of small buffer-states between the most powerful countries so as to prevent expansive temptations. It was a British peace and France received just a symbolic compensation: the Bourbon king she had supported for the Spanish crown was confirmed in Utrecht, but his influence and territory were drastically

reduced: Spain continued to be an empire only because her possessions in America remained basically intact.

Philip V became King of Spain mostly by coincidence. The last Habsburg king of Spain, Charles II had died in 1700 without descendants. After many doubts about what to do with his “patrimony”, and much pressure from France, he wrote a last will and testament which contradicted all previous ones in which he had inclined in favour of a Bavarian pretender. Fearing a partition of Spain among different pretenders, he opted for the Bourbon candidate, the Duke of Anjou, who arrived in Madrid in 1700 as Philip V of Spain. Austria won the support of Britain and the Netherlands for her own candidate, the Archduke Charles Habsburg, and war broke out in Europe for the spoils of Spain and against the danger of French hegemony. This war for Charles’ dominions was no joke: it caused 1,250,000 dead and on the whole was lost by France. Louis XIV, in search of glory, had offered a typical example of an empire that overextends itself. It is almost pathetic to read in Voltaire’s account of his reign (*Le Siècle de Louis XIV*) the many battles he lost and the desperate efforts for peace attempted by the once proud “Sun King”. Then the music of chance intervened. The Austrian pretender became the Holy Roman Emperor when Joseph II died and went out of the race for the Spanish Crown: the possible union of Spain with Austria was as unacceptable for the power balance as would have been her union with France. Thus a compromise was worked out: the French king was allowed to stay in Spain with reduced powers, dramatically weakened as a European power in a world controlled by a British peace.

And what about the Spaniards? Had they anything to say in this memorable mess? Not at the beginning, because the war was fought elsewhere in Europe. Later, they were involved in a long civil war: Spain divided itself into two camps depending on preference for one or the other of the pretenders. Installed as king in Madrid since 1700, Philip V won the allegiance of the former Crown of Castile. The Austrian Archduke, helped by the British, established himself in the East, in Aragon, Catalonia and Valencia. Paradoxes of history: after having fought against the Habsburg monarchy of Madrid in 1640, the Catalans adhered to the Habsburg of Austria, under the banner of liberty and the preservation of their ancient privileges, therefore against the

absolute monarchy of France. Aragon and Valencia fell in 1707 and the general war ended in 1713. Catalonia resisted until 1714 and the adherents of the Austrian pretender, or “austracists”, took refuge in Vienna or in Austrian Italy.

## 63. THE DECLINE OF HABSBURG SPAIN

It has become usual to speak of the decline of Spain as we speak of the decline and fall of Rome. I think it is fair to do what some other historians have done, focussing instead on the decline of the Habsburg Empire which, by chance, fell on the shoulders of the king of Spain... and the Spaniards. Spain became an empire due to two coincidences. The first was the so-called Habsburg inheritance and the second, the discovery of a rich continent, a New World. Charles V inherited the kingdoms of Spain, Castile and Aragón with their overseas possessions in Italy and America from his mother. From his father, he received Austria and a number of countries in Central and Northern Europe. Managing such an enormous array of lands, geographically distant and culturally alien to each other, would have been a very difficult task indeed, even in times of peace. It was impossible in the long run if, on top of that, you had to fight continuous wars on many different fronts. The size of Spain's dominions, even after the Habsburg Empire was divided by Charles V between his son Philip II and his Austrian cousin Maximilian, could not but give the other European powers the impression that Spain had the total domination of the continent, even of the world as her purpose (at times, the idea of a "Monarchia Universalis" was imprudently evoked). These other powers, mainly France and England, were determined to avoid such a total Habsburg hegemony.

Therefore, wars were fought by the Emperor and his successors at least to conserve the inheritance intact. These were not just classical, dynastic wars. A new kind of confrontation had made its appearance: wars that were not based solely on territorial or dynastic grounds but that included Religion when Christianity became divided. The German Protestant princes and the northern Dutch provinces challenged Catholic Austria and, by extension, Spain. France in turn took advantage of the situation and tried to take over Spanish Italy. The English started to challenge the Spanish trade monopoly in the Atlantic. The Ottomans occupied Hungary and besieged Vienna in the North and tried to control the Mediterranean in the South. The Spanish monarchy committed itself not only to the defense of the inheritance but



also to the defense of Catholic orthodoxy against the reformers and of Christianity against the “infidel”. Too many wars at a time that also witnessed a radical change in the military field. Huge quantities were needed of, mostly mercenary, personnel; also advanced machinery for the transport of heavy arms and the siege of cities and bigger and more expensive warships. How could one monarch manage to pay for all that?

Castile was the main provider of resources for this extraordinary enterprise. When Charles V became Charles I of Spain and the Holy Roman Emperor, the kingdom was overpopulated and prosperous. It had completed the conquest of the rich Moorish kingdom of Granada and was starting to receive bullion in great quantities from the New World. This permitted Charles to finance his armies in Europe and to guarantee the loans he received from German and Genoese bankers. But even if he didn’t entertain expansive intentions, attending to the defense of the whole was too expensive and could not last very long. By the end of Philip II’s reign in 1598, Spanish prestige and power had been maintained, but the treasury of Castile had undergone more than one bankruptcy. Italy and the Dutch Provinces were not providing funds (to the contrary) and, even inside Spain, Catalonia and Portugal were fighting against Castilian dominance and demands for money. Last but not least, the English were making the transport of gold and silver from America difficult.

The decline had started, as happened to Rome and to all empires once they cease to be able to limit their expansion. The first Habsburg king of the XVII century, Philip III, abandoned the task of governing, which he put in the hands of his favorite Duke of Lerma and he concentrated on a religious mission that led to the expulsion of the *moriscos* from Spain. He failed to understand the need to preserve a strong economy to provide for the military effort necessary to conserve the empire. The Count-Duke of Olivares and Philip IV abandoned Lerma’s pessimism (and crude corrupt behavior) and embraced imperialistic dynamics that led to participation in the 30 Years War in support of Austria and, again, to direct confrontation with France. Long before the Peace of Westphalia put an end to most of the European extension of Spain, many battles had been lost and a perception of failure and dejection had started to invade a country that had been accustomed to

glory and success, that even believed that it enjoyed a special state of grace in the eyes of the Lord.

The causes of her decadence had soon been understood in Spain. A sharp fall in the Castilian population started the crisis in 1597-1602, disastrous harvests, devastating plagues in Seville and Catalonia, emigration due to high taxation, the expulsion of the Jews and Moriscos. All these factors contributed to the atmosphere of gloom, to the sensation of a terrible nightmare: *Life Is A Dream*, as a famous drama by Calderón de la Barca was entitled, reflected the national mood. Many writers proposed measures to reverse a situation that threatened to put an end to two centuries of power and glory. Some of their ideas were rather preposterous and, for that reason, the name of this school of economic thought, the *arbitristas* (reformers) was treated by writers of the time, like Cervantes and Quevedo, with sarcasm. Others, like Martín González de Cellorigo or Pedro Fernández de Navarrete, were serious thinkers and advised the government, as early as 1600, to reduce taxes and public expenditure, to encourage immigration and to change the fiscal system in order to distribute taxes more equitably between regions and classes.

Not much was actually done in that direction and decadence and pessimism increased all throughout the 17th century. Later historians and politicians, like Cánovas del Castillo who, in 1854, wrote a book on the decline of Spain, pointed to the deterioration of the Habsburg dynasty during the reign of its three last representatives: kings Philip III, Philip IV and Charles II. The great Philip II had warned that his son would have to be governed and, as with his successors, so he was: dominated by ineffective or megalomaniac favourites, whose degradation extended to the nobles and the popular classes. The Habsburg power in Spain ended thus: in complete disaster. Charles II was called "The Bewitched": unable to have descendants, no matter how hard he tried with his two wives, he believed in a punishment by God on him and his kingdom. Ill-advised by one of the fanatic and mystical nuns who crowded his court, he saw ghosts and apparitions all around him and transmitted an obsessive spirit of fear, madness and hallucination to his entourage, which ended only with his death in 1700.

## 64. MACHIAVELLI IN SPAIN: GRACIAN AND QUEVEDO

Baltasar Gracián (1601-1658) was a Jesuit and a bad tempered person. He was solitary and arrogant, but gifted with a great intelligence and a broad and deep classical culture. He wrote books under a pseudonym because he didn't want them to be scrutinized by his superiors in the Order, whom he despised. But the pseudonym he used was "Lorenzo Gracián", the name of his brother and, naturally, he didn't deceive anyone. He was reprimanded for this trick and for the substance of his books. In 1647 he published his *Art of Wordly Wisdom*, a collection of 300 aphorisms on how to behave in order to succeed in public life, each accompanied with a short comment. The book was an instant success and was widely translated in Europe. Surprisingly, as late as 1861 Arthur Schopenhauer produced a German version of the work, which he presented as his own, mentioning the Spanish author only in the small print. Gracián was a pessimist about life and the world in general. Before Thomas Hobbes, he thought that "man is a wolf to his fellow man". But Gracián was no political theoretician. He concentrated on prescribing the practical way to survive in such a world, how to behave in order to make progress and gain power. His idea of prudence was a deformation of the classical *Prudentia*. For him it meant astuteness, calculation, reserve, simulation. His main rules were: control yourself, know yourself and others, adapt to the circumstances and don't reveal your intentions.

If Gracián's book was meant for general use, others wrote mostly for the benefit of princes, or for highly placed people, following the example of the *Book of the Courtier* written by Baldassare Castiglione, the onetime Apostolic Nuncio or Ambassador of the Holy See to the Spanish court. These books offered advice for prudent behaviour in a turbulent world, such as the world of 17th century Europe was. This world combined continuous wars for territorial dominance among the monarchies with internal tensions among the absolute rulers and the people, brought about by the change of economic structures from feudalism to capitalism. In Spain, one of the many such books intended

to guide a prince was written by Diego de Saavedra Fajardo (1584-1648). He composed it for the benefit of Baltasar Carlos, the son of Philip IV, who died prematurely and left the book without a dedicatee and left the kingdom in the hands of Charles II “The Bewitched”. Saavedra Fajardo was an aristocrat and diplomat with a great deal of experience. He was also a sophisticated writer on history and literature. His *Idea of a Christian Political Prince* presents the future ruler with 100 short essays as a commentary to as many “emblemata”, or allegorical designs representing a moral or political principle. Published in the fateful year 1640, when Catalonia and Portugal were revolting against the Crown, the book is beautifully written as well as very erudite. It reflects the concerns of 17th century writers for the new conditions of life both in Europe and in Spain, which in practice meant a progressive loss of personal security due mostly to a growing mutability of the political establishment. His prescriptions were directed towards conserving the State as it was, advising a precise technique based on historical examples: society obliges one to defend oneself, to accommodate to circumstances; high ideals are secondary.

Saavedra Fajardo’s book was supposed to be a Christian response to Machiavelli’s *The Prince*, which had been published one century earlier. But it is impossible not to see in it a faithful adaptation of its principles of practical, egotistic morals to the circumstances of Catholic Spain. In a way, both Gracián and Saavedra wanted to “baptize” the advice given by Machiavelli to princes, what was later called “machiavellism”. Only that Machiavelli had gone much further than just giving amoral advice. He had attacked the dynastic principle and the sacred nature of politics received from the Middle-Ages, and admitted a plurality of political models which was contrary to the accepted theocratic tradition. As such, it was condemned by the Church: in 1559, *The Prince* was included by Pope Paul IV in the Index of Prohibited Books. It was, as a consequence, received in Counter-Reformation Spain with general hostility. The first attack came from a Portuguese priest, Jerónimo de Ossorio, who as early as 1542 had declared Machiavelli a pagan. In Spain, Anti-machiavellism brought about an ample abundance of attacking arguments. The Italian author was accused of ignorance in his quotations of classical works, of political atheism, of confusion in defining the difference between personal and political morals. In

these attacks, Gracián and Saavedra Fajardo also participated but it is interesting to note that one of Gracián's first works was *The Politician King Ferdinand the Catholic*, in which he praised the artfulness of the Monarch most admired by the Italian master.

In the case of Francisco de Quevedo (1580-1645), there was no compromise or ambiguity. He was a bold polemicist and satirist and his was an all-out attack against Machiavelli. His main book on political philosophy had a significant title: *Politics of the Lord and Government of Christ, and Tyranny of Satan*. Quevedo sought to give no moral counsel to the general public like Gracián had done, or to educate a future prince like Saavedra Fajardo. He directly addressed the reigning king, Philip IV, and sought to reaffirm the traditional idea of the king as Christ's representative, telling the monarch to act according to the behaviour of Jesus in the Gospels. Mentioning Christ in the title, he was rejecting the Jewish brand of monotheism and, at the same time, reaffirming the Trinity of God as the pillar of all policy. The book is long and its erudition doubtful. The Argentinian author, Jorge Luis Borges, an otherwise sincere admirer of Quevedo for the beauty of his language, considers the method he uses arbitrary and his conclusions trivial. Quevedo tried to extract a rule for all possible circumstances in which a ruler would have to make decisions from the sayings of Jesus. The results, are at times, almost comical, as when he deduces from the miracle of the bread and fish, the king's obligation to prevent the poverty of his people. The treatise is addressed to the King but dedicated to his favourite, the Count-Duke of Olivares, who disliked the idea of a king who intervenes in the public affairs. He was in charge of almost everything and wanted to leave King Philip to his leisure. Quevedo was a pugnacious critic, anyway, and expressed himself with surprising liberty. He was repeatedly punished for it and responded in a famous poem, also dedicated to Olivares: "I shall not be silent...even if with your finger you advise me silence or threaten fear".

## 65. PARALLEL LIVES: OLIVARES AND RICHELIEU

In his *Essay on the Customs and the Spirit of Nations* (1756), Voltaire wrote a curious paradox about the Count Duke of Olivares: (*il fut enfin disgracié pour avoir été malheureux*, he ended up in disgrace because he was unlucky. Voltaire was comparing him with Cardinal Richelieu of France, and remarked that they had many things in common: they were both masters of their respective monarchies for two decades; they both strived to enhance the authority of their kings; they had both to fight against the same enemies - the royal entourage at the court, the nobles and the people. They differed, however, according to Voltaire, in character. If the French cardinal was lively, haughty, bloodthirsty and active, Olivares was calm, reserved and negligent. A century earlier, the Spanish writer and diplomat, Diego de Saavedra Fajardo, had made the comparison between the two statesmen in terms of luck and bad luck. Richelieu finished in glory in spite of his many crimes, acts of treason and abuse of power, whereas Olivares seems to have been punished by Divine Providence with defeat and rebellion in spite of his apparently sincere defense of Christianity. No matter how badly they governed, Richelieu was lucky because he advised his king and led his country at the moment of their highest glory and predominance. Olivares was a *Statesman in an Age of Decline*, as J. H. Elliot defines him in his monumental biography of the Count-Duke. The external circumstances of the time that led to the fame and prestige of Richelieu and to the sad end of Olivares are well known. But what were their accomplishments in the internal affairs of their own countries?

In this respect, the general opinion on both of them is negative. Armand Jean du Plessis, Cardinal-Duke of Richelieu, (1585-1682) was elevated to the post of favourite by the Queen Mother of the future Louis XIII, the officious Italian, Marie de Medici. She was the regent of France during the infancy of her son and practically managed to destroy the work of the first Bourbon king, Henry IV. This Henry was the one who declared, "Paris is well worth a Mass" and converted to Catholicism in 1594 in order to gain the throne in a mostly Catholic country. He was right, but a Mass was not sufficient. Henry had

to contend with the important Huguenot minority to whom he had belonged, that considered him a traitor. He had to face the opposition of the Catholic League, which accused him of being a usurper. He made it. To the Protestants he promised tolerance in the Edict of Nantes (1598) and left their 50 fortresses untouched. To the nobles he promised to respect their privileges while he obtained the support of the people for the idea of a strong, centralized monarchy. This delicate balance was shattered in the seven years of the Italian Queen's regency.

The new King Louis XIII found that the Protestants continued to be a state within the state and that the nobles and provincial governors had led the country to the point of disintegration. Richelieu, a competent bishop and brilliant theologian, was entrusted with the difficult task of restoring the unifying work of Henry IV. He did more than this. He created a renovated France with the help of a king who was reportedly violent and resentful against his mother for the consequences of her obtuseness. Together, King and Cardinal defeated the Protestants at the battle of La Rochelle and destroyed all their autonomous fortified cities. They ordered all the nobles who had conspired against Richelieu's policies to be executed. They wrested all authority from the provincial governments and worked toward a really absolute, authoritarian and centralized monarchy. Then they devoted the strength of the new nation to the task of countering the power of the Austrian and Spanish Habsburgs and leading France to undisputed hegemony in Europe. All this was accomplished through ruthless and clever politics, without any major effort at reforming the laws, institutions or economy of the country.

The Count-Duke of Olivares (1587-1645) became the favourite of King Philip IV in 1621 after gaining his favour while he was the Crown Prince. At that time a discredited Count of Lerma, the favourite of the incompetent Philip III, had aroused a debate over the appropriateness of kings confiding in favourites. Olivares himself wanted to be considered a "minister" of the monarchy, the most important minister, and refused the title of favourite, but not the power. He was a rich Andalusian aristocrat originally destined to the priesthood who, because of the death of his eldest brother, had to administer his family estates. He had gone to Madrid without previous administrative experience but gifted with an extraordinary "passion to command". The physician and historian, Gregorio Marañón, published a major biography of Ol-

ivares in 1936, based on the then fashionable study of the physiological and mental traits of outstanding characters in politics and the arts. He saw in the Count-Duke's personality an egregious example of this extreme ambition. Coupled with favourable social conditions, it led him to achieve the favour of an intelligent but passive king and, with it, almost unlimited power. He appealed to the instinct of greatness of the king and to the memory of the imperial glories of Spain. Indeed he wrote a long memorial to Philip in 1624 in which he advised him not to be satisfied with just being king of Castile, Portugal, Aragón, Valencia and Count of Barcelona. He should dedicate all his efforts instead to become "King of Spain". This was to be done by adapting and unifying all these kingdoms to the "style and laws of Castile without allowing any difference"; reaching this goal, he promised, "will make of Your Majesty the most powerful Prince in the world".

It was to this high mission that Olivares devoted all his efforts, an exuberant and all-encompassing activity, which was not accompanied by the prudence, reserve and pragmatism which was characteristic of a Richelieu. The powerful favourite ended in disgrace, as Voltaire wrote, for "lack of luck". He wanted to change the national mores at a time when society was corroded by a mixture of religious fanaticism and moral degradation which included his master the King. He didn't know how to reform the economy, although he was very much of an "arbitrist" of the most arbitrary kind, other than raising taxes in Castile to finance wars with a treasury in a state of declared bankruptcy. He multiplied the bureaucracy in order to govern through numerous *Juntas* or ministries, while leaving the no less numerous Councils with their privileges intact. He devoted enormous means to building a new Royal Palace which would surpass in luxuriousness anything existing (in France). In the end, all these efforts were consumed by the numerous wars in which he forced Spain to embark for the sake of prestige or *reputación*. He probably had the best intentions in his idea of unifying a complex country but, when he met with the resistance of the different kingdoms to provide the funds Castile could no longer offer, he forced his hand and had to face the consequences: defeats abroad, rebellion in Catalonia, independence in Portugal and, at home, his own disgrace.



## 66. DIEGO VELAZQUEZ, A SOLITARY BIRD IN THE COURT OF PHILIP IV

In his *Sayings of Light and Love*, Saint John of the Cross defined the conditions of the solitary bird: he flies the highest; he has no specific colour; he sings softly. These conditions have been rightly applied to the modest genius of Diego Rodríguez de Silva y Velázquez (1599-1660). He was born in Seville one year after the death of Philip II and he died one year after the Peace of the Pyrenees was signed, by which Spain practically transferred the hegemony over Europe to France. Thus he saw his country fall from maximum glory to humiliating decadence. He spent the last forty years of his life in the Court of Philip IV as his protégé and friend. He had been supported and introduced to the king by the Count-Duke of Olivares, who promoted the presence of his fellow Sevilians in the royal entourage. Velázquez led an apparently uneventful life. While still very young, he married the daughter of his teacher Francisco Pacheco, Juana, and they remained happily married till the end. Once in Madrid, he hardly moved from the Court, except for two voyages he made to Italy, in 1630 and 1649. Previously, he had a significant encounter in Madrid with the famous painter and diplomat Peter Paul Rubens. He became the great artist he was, thanks to the pictorial and cultural background of his youth in Seville, the teachings of Rubens and his profound knowledge of Italian painting, where Tintoretto and Titian were his main influences.

Other facts about Velázquez are known but have been minimized in order to enhance his genius as an artist. Once he was admitted to the Court, he climbed steadily in its complex hierarchy: first as a painter for the king and the royal family, then as a bureaucrat with important functions in the household of the palace, as decorator, organizer of protocol events and purchaser of works of art for the monarch. He must have been ambitious and skilful in the art of worldly wisdom. Otherwise it would be difficult to understand his progress in such an atmosphere of intrigue and pettiness. He certainly enjoyed the confidence of the king. Philip IV had a seat reserved in the studio of the painter and visited him almost daily to watch him paint and to enjoy

his conversation. But he must also have suffered the many obstacles set in his way by jealous colleagues and the nobles of the royal bureaucracy. He had applied to become a member of the important Order of St. James and had met with great difficulties to obtain it, in spite of the support of the king. He had to make up excuses: first, he had to pretend that he painted for the amusement of the monarch and not as a professional painter, which would be considered a menial task; second, he was not a military officer, a condition that was required to enter a military order; third, his origins were in Portugal and the Portuguese were looked upon with hostility after they declared independence in 1640. Moreover, the authorities of the Order wanted him to prove that there was no trace of Jewishness in his blood. A negative proof that is by nature impossible, as the Roman lawyers knew so well when they called it the *probatio diabolica*, the devil's proof.

Velázquez's art has given ample room for interpretation, both by critics and by philosophers. He started in Seville under the influence of Caravaggio and his early paintings, like those of Juan de Ribera, were full of contrast of light and darkness. In Madrid, he moderated his style as he worked initially as a portrait artist for the rich and the powerful. Under the influence of Rubens and the Italian masters, he became the real Velázquez. He abandoned the representation of a world of "essence" and fixed his prodigious eyes on the facts themselves. Ortega y Gasset observed that our master didn't paint objects or persons but rather a reality made up of instantaneous appearances, a phantasmagoria. They lost the corporal quality of the classic representation and seem to float in the light. They contrast strongly with the paintings of Zurbarán and Murillo, two contemporaries also from Seville. Zurbarán painted with pious love for the objects, normally simple and insignificant things that he renders with exact reverence. Murillo described a celestial world of ideal beauty where angels and madonnas float in the heavens. What Velázquez offers to us is absolute adherence to the truth of nature, seen at a distance and rendered with subtle touches of light.

In his masterpiece *Las Meninas*, Velázquez painted his self-portrait. He wanted to be present in a scene of royal life: an ample room where he himself appears painting the portrait of the royal couple. If you look closely, you merely see the King and Queen through their

vague image in a mirror. The painter occupies a median plane as he attentively observes his models, and they are “behind the camera”, so to speak. In the foreground, bathed in clear light, a beautiful princess shimmers, attended by the ladies of the court, plus a dwarf and a dog. Velázquez painted this Infanta, Margarita-Teresa, many times. In Vienna’s Kunsthistorisches Museum you can admire what to me is the most beautiful portrait Velázquez ever accomplished. The princess appears in a pink robe, resting a fan in her left hand. Her expression, in this and in other versions painted by Velázquez, is sweet, patient and serious at the same time. She was five years old at the time of *Las Meninas* (1556). She was, obviously, the King and Queen’s pride and joy, and she accompanies them during the official sitting for the painting.

She must also have been a pleasant solace for Don Diego in his mature years. He painted himself with an expression of concentration and gravity. He may have been meditating on his long life, in which he had been able to keep his balance and nobility of character, even a proud distance in the midst of a court where vice and corruption were rampant. In spite of the King’s impassible face that we see in other portraits, he was ardent and sensual, fond of giving lavish banquets and balls in order to offer an image of affluence in a court where sometimes there was not enough food for the royal family, in a country impoverished by depopulation, constant wars and natural catastrophes. To give just one example: in 1624, the King travelled to the possessions of the Duke of Medina-Sidonia in Andalusia accompanied by 16,000 guests and servants; they hunted and feasted there for two weeks. Philip, according to certain accounts, engendered 36 children with his lovers and eleven with his two wives until finally, when he was 52, a son was born who would reign as Charles II. All these excesses began to recede in his later years. In 1643, he met a pious nun, Sor María de Agreda, the abbess of a convent in which obedience and virtue were strictly demanded, no doubt an exception. Impressed by her holiness, the king started to correspond with her weekly, gradually repenting of his numerous sins and madly terrified of death and damnation.

## 67. FRENCH CATALONIA, 1641-1652

On January 16<sup>th</sup>, 1641, Pau Claris i Pasademunt proclaimed the Catalanian Republic under the protection of the King of France. He was a priest and a jurist, born in 1586 of rich parents from Barcelona, and he made a brilliant and quick career as a politician. From his post as canon in the cathedral of Urgel, then the diocese for the whole of Catalonia, he climbed all the steps in the traditional institutions of his region until he was elected deputy to the parliament and, in 1638, president of the *Generalitat*, the highest autonomous office. Three years later, he declared war against the Crown of Spain and promoted the independence of Catalonia. Eight days after Pasademunt's statement of January 16<sup>th</sup>, the French changed their idea: instead of simply "protecting" the Catalans, they proclaimed King Louis XIII Count of Barcelona and annexed Catalonia as a province of France. This situation lasted until 1652. Catalonia was separated from Spain for close on 12 years. In the end, the military circumstances were favourable to Spain and it seems that the Catalans themselves had concluded that the loose Spanish union of kingdoms was more suitable for them than subordination to the French centralized monarchy.

How was it possible for this extraordinary situation to come about within the still powerful empire of Habsburg Spain? It is difficult to imagine, but 1640 was the "annus horribilis" for the Spanish monarchy. We have to recall that the Thirty-Years War was, at the time, ravaging most of Europe in a religious and strategic struggle of alliances. Spain joined the Austrian Empire in its fight against the Protestant princes out of Habsburg family solidarity. France, under the rule of Louis XIII and the powerful cardinal Richelieu, took the opposite side, declared war on Spain in 1635 and two years later her army crossed the frontier at Salses, in Northern Catalonia. The rivalry between the two great neighbouring countries was deeply rooted and constant. Not long before, they had been at war in Italy and, at the same time, Spain was fighting rebels in the Netherlands and other wars in different parts of her overextended empire. Shipments of gold and silver from America were becoming scarce. It was a bleak panorama for what had

been the dominant power in Europe and the world only a century earlier.

In Madrid, Philip IV had acceded to the throne in 1621. His father, the passive Philip III had left the management of affairs to the no less indolent favourite Count of Lerma. The new monarch was all but indolent and put power in the hands of Count Duke of Olivares, whose famous portrait on horseback painted by Velázquez tells better than any description that he had nothing to do with Lerma. He was active and ambitious: “larger than life-size”, as the British historian J.H. Elliot has called him. He wanted to bring the Spanish Empire back to its former greatness and he was a Castilian with a clear ideology of Castilian hegemony. He wanted “one king, one law, one currency” in an empire that had always been loosely united and whose different kingdoms had retained their institutions and laws and led a life autonomously from Madrid. They were governed by viceroys and always complained about the indifference of the absent kings. Portugal and Catalonia were always resentful: Portugal had lost its independence only a century earlier; Catalonia had never been an independent state but was ill at ease belonging to any superior power that would limit her liberties.

Just imagine: in this situation, France attacks in the North. Money is badly needed to continue the war and fresh troops must be sent to Catalonia, the perfect recipe for disaster. Olivares found the Castilian treasury in bankruptcy and tried to squeeze funds from Portugal and from Catalonia herself. Faced by what they saw as excessive demands, the Catalans rebelled. Some incidents that had occurred in previous years led to a full revolution in 1640. Olivares sent his army for the war with France, disregarding all the traditional privileges of the Catalans: they had to pay a war-tax he had invented to raise funds, the so called “Union of Arms”, and had to billet the troops in their homes and on their farms. The peasants found these demands excessive and were supported by the aristocrats. A revolution that combined social unrest and political grievances was more than Olivares could manage. A last-minute attempt to negotiate with the Catalans arrived too late. Olivares had to send more troops, this time to fight the French and, simultaneously, the improvised army of Catalan peasants. The war against France and Catalonia lasted until 1652. At that point,

France was weakened. Moreover, once they had killed the viceroy and expelled his bureaucracy, the most radical among the people started to direct their complaints against the local aristocracy. Barcelona fell back into the hands of the Spanish and a peace was signed with France in 1659 that settled matters more or less well for Spain (although she lost the Catalan provinces to the North of the Pyrenees).

The Spanish monarchy proved to be resilient indeed. I find it curious that after this violent conflict against the House of Habsburg, that the Catalans had identified with Castilian nationalism, they were to take sides with the Austrian candidate to the Spanish throne when the Habsburg dynasty was left without a successor after the death of King Charles II. In spite of all, after their experience with French rule, they preferred the loose and autonomous Austrian system. After the war of succession, that involved the whole of Europe, however, the French candidate, the future Philip V, was placed on the throne of Spain and punished the Catalans as enemies, depriving them of their traditional rights and institutions by the *Nueva Planta* Decrees (a new administrative order) which he approved as soon as he ascended to the throne in 1715.

His attempt failed to unify Spain as thoroughly as France had been unified. After all, Spain was composed of real kingdoms and not solely of restive feudal lords. The task was more difficult, as proven by the failure of Olivares as he tried to imitate Cardinal Richelieu. As for Catalonia, the difficulty stemmed from the richness of her history. It had been protected by the Emperor Charles the Great as the “*Marca Hispanica*”, the frontier territory between the Franks and Islam South of the Pyrenees. As the county of Barcelona gained hegemony over the different counties of the border region, she had been a naval power with influence over the whole Mediterranean. The Catalans had a consulate in Constantinople as early as 1290 and later sent an expedition to assist the Byzantine emperor in times of trouble. On their return, they stayed in Greece and created the duchy of Athens (1326-1388). Catalonia became part of Aragon when this young kingdom saw the heiress to the throne married to the then Count of Barcelona in 1131. That is, long before the Catalans had expanded economically and culturally as a maritime empire. No wonder they did not want to be identified with Aragón... or with Spain.

## 68. PORTUGAL AND SPAIN

In 1888, the Portuguese author José María Eça de Queirós published a long novel, *Os Maias*, in which he described the Portuguese society of the 19th century with accuracy and humour. In chapter VI, several young people of the high society are discussing the problems of the country and rather frivolously putting forward opinions about how to solve them. Then, to my surprise, one of them declares dramatically: the only solution is for Portugal to be invaded by Spain again. The others pay no attention to what seems to be a simple witty remark and the conversation continues endlessly and without consequence.

I sometimes fall into the temptation of imagining “what if” Spain and Portugal had become one nation, as they came close to being on more than one occasion. To begin with, the counties that formed the nucleus of what later became Portugal could have followed the path of all the others which later became united within the Kingdom of Castile. They didn’t because King Alfonse VI gave them in fief to two sons-in-law of his who had come from the Duchy of Burgundy in France, supposedly with imperialistic intentions following the movement of Europeanization of Castile launched by the monks of Cluny. In 1140, a very energetic Alfonse Henriquez proclaimed himself king and founded the Portuguese nation. His people, in the words of Américo Castro, simply didn’t want to be Castilian. For their part, the Castilians didn’t want to be Burgundian. Portugal was recognized as an independent nation by Pope Alexander III and in a relatively short time became a great empire. In the battle of Aljubarrota (1385), the Portuguese defeated an invading army from Castile. This first opportunity of unification failed and Portugal launched its oceanic adventures in Africa, Asia and America.

In the 15th century, a new opportunity presented itself when Queen Isabella of Castile had to choose a husband. Her main options were the king of Portugal and Prince Ferdinand, the future king of Aragon. Of course she didn’t know that a few years later the New World would be discovered and that, had she married the Portuguese, the empires of Portugal and Spain could have formed a formidable

union. Isabella also disregarded the fact that the dynamic societies of Castile and Portugal of the time were a better match, culturally and economically, to form a coherent union. She chose to marry Ferdinand of Aragon, supposedly out of love, which was also a good choice, with the prospect of a powerful Mediterranean extension for Castile. However, Aragón had institutions and traditions so different from those of Castile as to make it almost impossible to unite them completely and permanently.

Philip II lost the next opportunity, this time to unite not only Portugal and Castile, but the two great empires combined. The Portuguese have called the 60-year period between 1580 and 1640 *la longa noite*, the long night. A crisis in Portugal, caused by the death of King Sebastian in an unsuccessful battle in the North of Africa, deprived the country of an heir to the crown in 1578. Among the several candidates, Philip II had title, from the dynastic point of view, and material power enough to cut the legal discussion short if necessary. He did so by sending two armies to Portugal, one commanded by the notorious (for his behaviour in the Netherlands) Duke of Alba and another by the Marquis of Santa Cruz. Philip, as the new king of Portugal, was advised of two things by his minister Cardinal Granvelle: first, to adopt a Castilian, or centralized, solution to the government of his new kingdom; second, to transfer his capital to Lisbon in order to give the new union an Atlantic centre to manage the hugely extended empire. Philip followed neither of these suggestions. He preferred to maintain his capital in Madrid, close to his refuge at El Escorial, and permitted Portugal, according to the Habsburg model, to maintain most of its institutions and customs. Portugal functioned thus as a practically autonomous country, with its own coinage and Portuguese officials in charge of administration.

This arrangement worked for some time, more or less until the death of Philip II: after all his case for the succession of Portugal had had many followers among the local élite, although not much support among the people, which conserved the traditional anti-Castile sentiment, born at Aljubarrota, alive. As time passed, Portugal revealed itself as one more of the incoherent parts of the unmanageable Habsburg inheritance. Like Aragon, she resented being governed by absent monarchs, more so after the next kings ceased to respect the “spirit of To-



mar” (the town where the agreements of 1581 were formalized). Philip III sent a Castilian as his representative to Lisbon who clearly had the mission of tightening the union following the Castilian, centralized way of government. He also appointed Castilians counsellors to the Council of Portugal, breaking the arrangements made by his father with the Portuguese. The decline of Castile also affected the relationship: silver from America became insufficient to finance the many wars in which Spain was involved. The Portuguese and Castilian models of empire began to be seen as being more incompatible than they had seemed in times of prosperity. When Brazil was invaded by the Netherlands, Castile wanted the Brazilians and the Portuguese to agree to take charge of the military effort necessary to recover it.

Philip IV and Olivares did the rest in their typical fashion. They aggravated the resentment of the Portuguese, whose nationalistic fever was growing around a unifying elite led by the Duke of Braganza. Olivares revived the Castilian purpose to unify the kingdoms of Spain under Castilian laws and common institutions. Besides, he demanded money and men for his wars in Europe and against the incipient rebellion of the Catalans. A tax approved without the consent of the Portuguese Parliament caused serious riots in Evora and other cities in 1637. Thus, to what had been a typical nationalist revolt of the elites the ingredient of the popular revolt, probably incited by the nobles, was added. When the Catalans started their rebellion in the spring of 1640, the few Spanish troops stationed in Portugal were sent to Catalonia and the new independence of Portugal was brought about by a simple palace coup.

Coming back to *Os Maias*, when our character mentioned the Spanish invasion as a solution, he was not speaking totally in the void. A strong current of “Iberism”, with the view of peacefully uniting Spain and Portugal had been present for a long time in both countries. It resurfaced in Spain in 1874, when it was too late because the cycle of unifications in Europe had been completed earlier, with the birth of the newly unified Germany and Italy. The great powers didn’t want more movements of that kind and so the distance between Spain and Portugal grew, making even a relationship of mutual respect and tolerance extremely difficult. Not a positive situation for either of the two neighbours. As Juan Valera would write, regarding this question sentiment and instinct had too much predominance over reason.

## 69. MIGUEL DE CERVANTES: A HERO'S LIFE

The life of Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra (1547-1616) can easily be divided into two halves. The first coincided with the high time of Spanish might under Philip II, the second with the beginning of imperial decline during the reign of Philip III and his favourite, the Count of Lerma. His first novel, *La Galatea*, was published in 1585 but most of his work, except some minor incursions into poetry, belongs to the second half of his life. The first part of Don Quixote appeared in 1605, when the writer was 58. The rest was published between 1613 and 1615 during the three years prior to Cervantes' death. Included are the *Exemplary Novels*, the second part of Don Quixote, the *Journey to Parnassus* and his theatrical work *Eight Comedies and Eight Interludes*. A posthumous novel, *The Labors of Persiles and Sigismunda* appeared in 1617. It doesn't seem to be a large output, in spite of containing the "magnum opus" of Spanish and universal literature, Don Quixote's two parts. Moreover, it is intriguing that he wrote most of it in his mature years, as if he had been "born again" as an artist.

The first part of Cervantes' life was truly a hero's life in the traditional sense. He was born in Alcalá de Henares, the university town not far from Madrid, and soon had to move to Valladolid when his father, a modest surgeon, suffered imprisonment for failure to pay a debt. At 22, he was involved in a duel and had to flee to Italy. He became a soldier and was recruited for *La Marquesa*, one of the galleys that were to participate in the famous battle of Lepanto in 1571, as part of the coalition of the Holy See, Spain and Venice against the Ottoman Empire. In spite of being ill with fever, our hero insisted on fighting for "God and King". He did so bravely, was injured in his left hand and was rewarded for his courage by the commander of the fleet, Don Juan de Austria. The battle was won but Cervantes, after continuing his military life for some years, was unlucky enough to be taken prisoner by the Turks. He lived as a captive in Algiers until the Trinitarian Order paid his ransom in 1580 with funds raised privately. During his captivity, according to witnesses, he continued to act as a hero. He organized four attempts to escape with his fellow captives

and took full responsibility for the punishment that they received as a consequence of their failures. A short novel included in the first part of Don Quixote (*The story of the captive*) gives an approximate account of this very real adventure.

Back in Spain, a completely different fate awaited Cervantes, hardly a heroic life at all. Cervantes did what it was customary to do in the case of retired soldiers, and one who had been injured in combat at that. He sought employment in the bureaucracy surrounding the King and his Court. He repeatedly asked for a position in the Indies, without success (in 1582 and 1590). He later offered himself as secretary to his protector as a writer, the Count of Lemos, who had been appointed Viceroy in Naples. He was rejected (in 1610, five years after the first part of Don Quixote had been published!). In the meantime, Cervantes had to accept minor assignments. As an agent for the procurement of the “invincible” armada that was being organized to attack England he had to travel all over Andalusia collecting oil and cereals. This time he participated in the hardly heroic side of war: the defeat of the great Armada in 1588. Later he became a tax collector in Granada and was sent to jail in Seville when the banker who he had entrusted the custody of the money he had collected went into bankruptcy. Our only consolation in this pathetic panorama is that he started writing his well-known masterpiece while in jail and had ample opportunity to learn about the life of Seville’s underworld for use in this and other of his shorter writings.

What a contrast! Being an author in Golden Age Spain was no easy matter, in spite of the patronage offered by the nobles, who were generous and competed with each other to give protection to writers and artists. Not only Cervantes, other famous fellow writers like Garcilaso de la Vega, Quevedo, Mateo Alemán, fought in various wars, served time in prison and suffered from poverty and estrangement. One reason for all this seems clear. In spite of the new vigor of militant Catholicism in the wake of the Council of Trent, they wrote works that were far from conformist and this applies even in the case of the most traditionally-minded like Lope and Calderón, who wrote plays of protest in disguise (*Fuenteovejuna*, *The Mayor of Zalamea*). Cervantes and the author of Guzmán de Alfarache are the most representative creative geniuses of a time in which heroism was being replaced

by “disappointment” following the disaster of the Armada. Some have gone so far as to call the literature after 1600 a real cultural revolution against the traditional values centred on war and religion, which they depict for the first time with irony. The title of a play by Guillén de Castro is very telling: *There be Laws wherever Kings want them*.

In the specific case of Cervantes, I’m tempted to add to other explanations the idea defended by Américo Castro (and, naturally, contradicted by Sánchez-Albornoz), who presents the creator of Don Quixote as a typical victim of the division of the Spaniards in castes derived from their religion, new and old Christians, Muslims or Judaic. This division added complexity to Spanish society, since the castes coexisted with the normal division of social classes according to wealth. Cervantes was a true Christian but his ancestors had supposedly been Jewish and this placed him in the category of “new” or converted Christians. To him, and to everyone who would be classified in this special category, access to the highest positions of power and prestige was prohibited. They were reserved for those who were able to prove “purity of blood”. Persons were valued according to who they “were” rather than for what they “did”. The memory of the war of the Reconquista and the struggle against the Protestant Reform explain the persistence of this system of castes which estranged Spain from the rest of the more uniform societies of Europe and, in certain ways, appears to have survived up to present-day Spain. In his works, Cervantes seldom praises nobility of birth or the superior principles of the imperial structure of power: he contemplates Spain from the social periphery and mocks the codes and the books of chivalry. His main hero, Don Quixote, has the highest and most fantastic aspirations... and he suffers from poor kidneys. As for Sancho Panza, he is the one who boasts purity of blood and “hatred of all the Jews”. He thinks that this condition would be sufficient for him to become a Count. His master, the sad Don Quixote, retorts ironically: you would be worthy enough to me even though you were no “old” Christian.

## 70. DON QUIXOTE AND SANCHO: READING BETWEEN THE LINES

In one of his shortest short-stories, Franz Kafka maintains that actually Sancho Panza was the one who read too many romances on chivalry. So many that in the end his demon, under the name Don Quixote, set out, uninhibited, in search of his many adventures. Sancho followed him “out of a sense of responsibility” and so found entertainment for the rest of his life. Like Kafka, many literary critics and philosophers have given themselves over to interpreting Miguel de Cervantes’ masterpiece, *The Ingenious Gentleman Don Quixote of la Mancha*. Maybe Kafka was even mocking the abundance of theories created to read between the lines of this, otherwise, very readable book. However, I think he was adhering, with his timid irony, to a particular one of those theories: the one that sees in Don Quixote and Sancho a single character split into two halves, the heroic and the prosaic, the educated and the ignorant, the idealist and the materialist. Perhaps Cervantes, in his stunning act of creation, unconsciously poured into his novel his own life full of aspirations and disasters, perhaps even the life of his country falling from the heights of power down to poverty and decadence. Why else would the author state mysteriously in the prologue that he is not the father of the book, but only its “stepfather”?

*Don Quixote* was published in 1605, when its author was 58 years old and had only written a modest pastoral novel ten years earlier. The book is a major work of art from the very first sentence to the last. It flows, alternating humourous and pitiful situations, through many hazardous adventures. The main hero, deranged after having read too many chivalry books, seeks these stories in pursuit of justice, fame and love. Sancho accompanies him and with his comments tries to bring Don Quixote back to reason in order to avoid some of the perils that his master’s fantasies lead them to encounter. At first sight it seems a simple story. It unfolds in many episodes without a real plot and one can read it simply enjoying the crazy and comic situations. Looking at the book more closely, one may begin to perceive its exceptional complexity. Cervantes plays with the reader and with the story, adding new hidden

levels of meaning at every step of its development. At the beginning, the gentleman Alonso Quijano becomes the chevalier Don Quixote, which is the character he imagines himself to be in order to gain glory “and right wrongs”. Then, our hero, who decides to transform the shabby reality that surrounds him, begins to interpret the things he sees or hears as imaginary “realities” that provide him with the opportunity to accomplish his high deeds. Later, the imaginary situations are created by other, supposedly “sane” characters in order to bring Don Quixote back to reason...or simply to ridicule his madness. Don Quixote himself realizes at times that he acts under illusions, convinced that he is bewitched by his many and famous enemies.

In 1615, ten years later and after having written most of the rest of his works at a really much lower level, Cervantes published a second part of Don Quixote. In this new book, which at times seems to be a different work altogether, complexity reaches new heights. To begin with, the characters are aware that the first part had been already published and comment about its success, introducing fact in the fiction. It is more complex, also, because Cervantes finds new tricks to complicate life for his hero. Don Quixote encounters Maese Pedro, who in his puppet theatre is telling an old chivalry story. He intervenes violently in the action to correct what the puppets do and say: this time what he is changing in his imagination are not real facts but directly fiction. Later, he descends into a deep cave and comes back telling a story of pure, unprovoked illusion, perhaps a dream, perhaps a simple invention, with which the aged hero wants to deride Sancho and the others who were always ready to mock him. On the whole, Don Quixote seems tired and indecisive in Part II of the book. He seems to have already had too many adventures. He starts to act in a less idealistic fashion. He has doubts, has fits of melancholy, pays attention to down-to-earth necessities. He debates endlessly with Sancho and accepts his protest about the master’s habit of correcting his language. In the second part it is Sancho who comes to the fore. He is under the spell of Don Quixote’s madness. He talks to his wife in a patronizing manner, the way Don Quixote talks to him. He abandons his lower interests and sees himself as a count, taking for reality the fictitious “insula” or government which is created and granted to him to see how he rules it. He, finally, starts to talk in a collective plural,

unifying himself with Don Quixote as if they formed a single person. Which they probably did, according to Kafka's intuition.

As a book, Don Quixote had an equally eventful life as its main hero. Initially, it was better accepted in France and in England than in Spain, where it was popular but not especially appreciated by Cervantes' fellow writers. They resented the underlying criticism of traditional Spanish values hidden behind the attack against the books of chivalry. Later, they rejected the foreign interpretations of the book when critics made a classic of it for its literary excellence while presenting it as a general condemnation of Spanish society. Only German Romanticism rescued Don Quixote for Spain as an object of national pride, turning him, together with El Cid, into a representation of the *Volksgeist* of Spain, its national character. Belatedly but with enthusiasm, the Spaniards started to believe this notion and accepted Cervantes and his work as a cultural institution. Miguel de Unamuno, to quote just one, encouraged his countrymen to become pilgrims to Don Quixote's grave in order to rescue him. He saw him in 1909 as a savior, the founder of a new religion who would give strength to his dejected country in a new crusade of courage and truth and reject the common sense of all those, priests, barbers and graduates, who wanted to distract the hero from his fantastic and elevated illusions.

At the end of part II, Don Quixote dies after having recovered his "sanity" and repents for whatever harm he may have caused. But Alonso Quijano doesn't renounce his identity as Don Quixote: "I am *no longer* Don Quixote", he says. He simply accepts that his alter ego belongs to the past but not that it only existed in his imagination. Poor Don Quixote! The first time I read the book I felt sorry for him, I thought he was treated too harshly by his creator, who made him crazy and cruelly punished him with ridicule at every failure of his adventures. Heinrich Heine and others wrote that the character was morally superior to Cervantes. On second thoughts, I have imagined that Cervantes was punishing himself in his hero, bitterly protesting for the disastrous results of his own high ambitions, which he presented with irony under the disguise of ridiculous chivalry books.

## 71. SPAIN IN THE THIRTY YEARS WAR, 1618-1648

Hans Jakob von Grimmelhausen was born in 1621. He lived until he was 27, immersed in the general European conflagration known as the Thirty Years war, which only ended in 1648. In his mature years he became a writer and produced a very popular novel inspired by Spanish Picaresque: *Simplicius Simplicissimus*. He also wrote a tale, *The Runaway Courage*, which is rightly famous because it provided inspiration to Bertold Brecht for his 1939 play *Mother Courage and her Children*. Brecht wrote the play as an anti-war manifesto and with the purpose of stopping the Nazis in their inexorable “march of folly” towards confrontation. He set the play in the 30 Years War to paint his appeal for peace in the most tragic tones. The war of 1618-1648 was fought in many places and for many reasons but it was in Germany where it attained unheard-of levels of violence and cruelty, of death and devastation, a grim foretaste of the total wars of the 20th century. Brecht wanted the reader to focus on the moral degradation of the main character of the play, a canteen woman who accompanied the Swedish army with her cart and tried to take advantage of both Catholics and Protestants with her tricks... only to see her three children die by gunfire from one or the other camp.

The Thirty Years War started in 1618, triggered by a rebellion in Bohemia, where the notorious practice of “defenestration” became a common way to finish heated discussions. Largely Protestant under the inspiration of Jan Huss, Prague rebelled against attempts by the Catholic Emperor Ferdinand II to impose the Counter-Reformation order in the country. This initial part of the war ended in 1621 at the battle of the White Mountain, near Prague, with the defeat of the Protestants and their supporters by a coalition of Catholic powers: Austria, Spain, Bavaria and the Pope. Why Spain, one wonders? Of course, Spain was still the hegemonic power in Europe and had to intervene to conserve her position. “To conserve” had been the key of Spanish foreign policy since the Habsburg dynasty received the Spanish Crown: to conserve her complex inheritance of unconnected territories all over Europe and America. This policy became a tradition and was associated with another idea, that of *reputation* or prestige as



opposed to “appeasement” which was the policy of Philip III and his favourite Count of Lerma. When Philip died in 1621, new airs swept the Court of his heir, King Philip IV. His new all-powerful favourite was the Count-Duke of Olivares, who, in turn, relied on the opinions of a character who is less known but was very influential, his nephew, Baltasar de Zúñiga y Velasco.

Zúñiga had come to Madrid after serving as the King’s ambassador in Brussels, Paris and Prague. In the capital of Bohemia, he served long and decisive years, from 1609 until 1617, when the clouds of the future conflagration were gathering. He was a powerful ambassador, as they used to be in those times. He intervened shamelessly in the interior affairs of the Kingdom, favoring the Catholic party and the Counter-Reformation policies that Ferdinand II wanted to impose on the Czech lands. Appointed to the Council of State back in Madrid, he persuaded Olivares to intervene in the Bohemian war. His argument was strong. Dynastic solidarity obliged Habsburg Spain to support the Austrian Emperor against the rebels. Moreover, due to the religious vocation of the Spanish monarchy, it was unthinkable for her to remain aloof in a conflict in which the maintenance of “the Catholic frontier” against the German Protestants was at stake.

But there was more. There was France under Louis XIII and Cardinal Richelieu, and there were the United Provinces of the Netherlands. In 1621, as the battle for Bohemia ended, the hostilities in the “80 Years War”, the war for Dutch independence, resumed after a truce of twelve years. France, the emergent great European power, wanted to create difficulties for Spain and used an enclave in the Swiss Alps, the Valtellina, and the succession of the Duchy of Mantua as timely excuses. La Valtellina valley was a key strategic point for the passage of Spanish troops and war material from Milan and Lombardy to the Spanish possessions in the Netherlands. The French wanted to disrupt this traffic as they had fought Spain for two centuries, anyway, to keep Italy open to them for free passage towards Venice and the East. Spain was initially the winner of these battles in Bohemia and Italy, and in 1634 was able even, at the battle of Nördlingen, to defeat Sweden, which had joined the Protestant camp in the hostilities at the request of France. The French could not tolerate this trend of affairs. They declared war on Spain one year later and organized an imposing

anti-Habsburg coalition, which included Denmark, Sweden and the Protestant League of German Principalities

Too many fronts. The war had become a general European conflict and soon there were initiatives to seek peace and discreet contacts for a comprehensive settlement. Spain was losing ground on the battlefield. She suffered significant defeats, not only in Europe in the war with France, but also in America, where the Dutch occupied most of the Portuguese possessions in Brazil, at that time still under the Spanish Crown. The gold and silver from the American colonies was no longer enough to finance all these conflicts and money was needed in great quantities to maintain so many and distant fronts. Olivares tried to obtain it from Spain itself, only to provoke the rebellions of Catalonia and Portugal in 1640. He was dismissed three years later as favourite and replaced by a more pragmatic minister, Luis de Haro. In the meantime, both Louis XIII and Cardinal Richelieu had passed away. Once the main contenders were out of the way, the conditions for peace became more credible and the powers started sending plenipotentiaries to Münster and Osnabrück, two towns in Westphalia. Spain first sent an able and experienced diplomat and writer, Diego de Saavedra y Fajardo, and later a very trusted politician, Gaspar de Bracamonte, Count of Peñaranda. They did their best, using the diplomatic means typical of those times, which were not always quite clean, and they were able to avoid major disasters. Spain knew that The Netherlands could no longer be kept under her control and recognized their independence, maintaining today's Belgium and some strategic cities within the Spanish empire .

France was not satisfied with this part of the peace achieved in Westphalia and continued to wage war on Spain until 1659. Louis XIV was at the peak of his power and Spain was deeply depressed under the reign of Charles II "The Bewitched". The Spanish succession would, in turn, bring about the beginning of the end of France's hegemony. The famous Peace of Westphalia wasn't the historical watershed it has been supposed to be: it didn't end the confrontations between powers. But it ushered in a new epoch of international law, the beginning of the modern idea of the sovereign state and the "balance of powers". At the very least, it put an end to the violent times when religion was the main factor in the wars among European monarchies.

## 72. MIGUEL DE MOLINOS AND OTHER SAINTS AND HERETICS

Heresy is a relative matter. Whether or not you are declared a heretic is something that depends on historical circumstances. Consider Miguel de Molinos. He was condemned by the Roman Inquisition in 1687 for writing things in a book which didn't differ very much from what Teresa of Avila or John of the Cross had written one century earlier, and the latter were declared saints by the Church. The title of Molinos' little book is sufficiently expressive: *A spiritual guide, that frees the soul and leads her along the interior way in order to achieve perfect contemplation and the rich treasure of inner peace*. Born in 1628 in a village near Saragossa, Molinos had made a good career as a priest, first in Valencia and later in Rome, where he published his "Guide" in 1675. A simple and beautifully written explanation of mysticism, it was an instant success among Molinos' community at the church of San Alfonso and also in wider ecclesiastical circles. Cardinals and Princes, even the Pope admired it...until the Jesuits and Dominicans, in the middle of a bitter controversy on the orthodoxy of mysticism and quietism, denounced Molinos before the Inquisition. He was condemned in 1687 as a heretic and was sent to prison, where he died eleven years later. Menéndez Pelayo, of course, had to include Molinos among his collection of heterodox Spaniards and denounced the "sickly poetry" of the guide, reminiscent of Buddha's nirvana and full of "quietist poison". But he did so somewhat reluctantly: he admired the high quality of the Guide's style: "a model of flowing and pure prose".

More than two centuries later, the Castilian poet, Antonio Machado, rediscovered the Guide, which had been prohibited by the Church, and included Molinos among the four most illustrious *Miguel*es of Spanish literature, together with Miguel de Cervantes, Miguel Servet and Miguel de Unamuno. Aldous Huxley in 1930 included a dialogue full of admiration about Molinos in his novel *After Many a Summer*, and Ramón del Valle Inclán declared him his model in his literary essay *The Wonderful Lamp* of 1916.

In Catholic Spain of the 17th century, however, Molinos was seen as dangerous. He was the one successful and open representative of a kind of religiosity, quietism, which was widespread in clandestine circles and ran against orthodoxy as defined by the Council of Trent, which in turn had been imposed by Philip II by law as the official and exclusive religion of the Spanish Monarchy. The Council had finished in 1563 but in the previous years the Spanish Inquisition had begun to busy itself with certain symptoms of heresy discovered in Valladolid and Seville. The perpetrators were denounced as Protestants, which was the new source of concern for the Inquisition after a century spent in the eradication of faithful Jews and false “conversos” or judaizers. There were in fact communities of illuminists (*alumbrados*) that had been active in Spain for a long time. The origins of this special form of inner religion, as opposed to the conventional devotions of the Church are unclear for historians. The reign of Emperor Charles I had allowed the Spaniards ample contacts with Germany and the Netherlands, where “pietism” was popular. The emperor himself was fond of Erasmus of Rotterdam, whom the Inquisition also later declared a Protestant, just in case. Others critics look for ancient sources of mysticism in Spain herself, in the doctrines of Priscilian and other sects of the Middle Ages. Be that as it may, in the aftermath of the Council of Trent, the Inquisition started to find Lutherans and illuminists everywhere it turned. Famous saints like Ignacio de Loyola, even St John of the Cross were considered suspect, the poet and theologian Fray Luis of León was imprisoned and had to wait six long years for his absolution. As the legend goes, coming back to teach from his Chair in Salamanca he greeted his students with a well-known sentence: “As we were saying yesterday...”

The Golden Age of Spain was truly full of rather extravagant religious and pseudo-religious practices, of communities of monks and *beatas* in which sex had sometimes a conspicuous presence. Molinos himself declared before the Inquisition in Rome that sexual acts are not sinful if “neither reason nor will intervenes”, an idea that was not uncommon amid mystics of former times: the perfect soul, lost in God, cannot commit sin. But, at the same time, many real saints and missionaries appeared. I have already mentioned Ignacio de Loyola on account of his difficulties with the Inquisition. He was the founder of

the Company of Jesus, a powerful weapon of the Counter-reformation Church against Protestantism. His disciple, Francisco de Borja, made the first attempt to spread the Christian religion in Japan and Asia. A serious effort was also made at the time to systematize the study of theology. Cardinal Cisneros, regent of Castile before the arrival of Charles I, created numerous chairs and Melchor Cano, at the University of Salamanca, promoted the so-called "Positive Theology", an organized method for the education of future priests which was used until the 20th century. Many other saints could be mentioned from before 1648 (Juan de Avila, Juan de Dios, Tomás de Villanueva...). Curiously, they are hard to find in later years, the same as happened with great literature and the arts: the truly great of the Golden Age had no following.

Why was there so much religion in Spanish life of the 16th and 17th centuries, you may ask? I think that the strict fusion of Church and State had much to do with the long struggle against and exposure to Islam, where religion and power are one and the same. Certain mimeticism may have led the Spanish kings to use religion as an effective instrument of power. The State acquired thus a religious dimension and obliged the Church, sometimes even against the opposition of the Pope, to adapt its conduct and organization to the policy of the kings. A monarchy that identified with the Catholic dogma could not leave room for non-Catholic minorities or for religious dissidence. What follows logically is the expulsion of the Jews and the *Moriscos* and the repression of any symptom of heresy by the Inquisition.

## 73. THE “MORISCOS” ARE EXPELLED FROM SPAIN

It is a truth universally acknowledged that Philip III was the most incompetent king ever to reign in Spain. Born in 1578, his reign lasted from the death of his father Philip II in 1598 until his own death in 1621. It didn't start very auspiciously because his lack of character was well known. So much so that, according to witnesses, the dying father confided to his closest advisers: “God gave me many kingdoms but denied me a son who could govern them...I fear they (the nobles around him) will govern him instead”. Many adjectives have been used by historians to characterize Philip III: weak and shy, kind and benevolent, apathetic, gifted with an empty mind and no willpower...Above all, he was uncommonly religious, for which he was rightly given the nickname “The Pious”. He probably knew his limitations well. On acceding to the throne he gave up any attempt to follow the example of his overpowering, hyperactive father. He put the whole operation of the monarchy in the hands of his best friend, Francisco Gómez de Salazar, Duke of Lerma, and opened the period characterized by the government through favourites or *validos*. Lerma has also been considered to have been almost as incompetent as his King. Of that I'm not altogether sure. He was determined and skillful enough when it came to enriching himself, his family and his clientele. He chose to pacify the country, exhausted by many wars, making peace with England, France and The Netherlands. Above all, he put into practice with surprising efficacy the expulsion of the *Moriscos*, the Muslims, converts or not, who had stayed in Spain after the conquest of Granada.

That was the most important decision Philip III made in 23 years at the helm of the monarchy. To modern eyes it seems an appalling and cruel measure and it was controversial even for many of Philip's contemporaries. There was general agreement in the objective to consolidate the religious unity of Spain; the disagreement was about the means used to that end, since part of the Church still believed in the possibility of converting the remaining Moors by means of preaching and persuasion. The majority of the nobles and the clergy that had

influence on the king, however, were convinced that the assimilation of the Moriscos was impossible. The powerful party in favour of the expulsion was formed by the prudish and intriguing queen, Margaret of Austria, some counsellors of the king concerned by security, some ideologues of “purity of blood” and the Archbishop of Valencia, the region, together with Aragon, where most of the *Moriscos* were concentrated. Lerma, humiliated by the truce he had been obliged to agree on with the Dutch Provinces in 1609, joined the expulsion party with enthusiasm. He didn't pay attention to the economic consequences, he just implemented the only measure which might attract popular support, amplifying the rumors that accused the Muslims of treason, of being a “fifth column” for the enemies of Spain. Those living in Valencia were suspected of being in contact with the Ottomans and plotting an attack on the Southern coast of the peninsula with them. Those in Aragón were supposed to have dealings with the Protestants of the South of France, equally inimical to the Spanish monarchy.

The decision made in 1609 was prepared swiftly and in secret. It was very carefully put into operation, which shows that the Habsburg bureaucracy was still working well even at the time of “decline”. The *Morisco* population was concentrated in borders and ports and sent to France or the North of Africa in mostly foreign ships chartered for the purpose, for which the expelled persons had to pay for their transportation. Of a total Spanish population of 8 million, 300,000 *Moriscos* left the country between 1610 and 1614. The departure of this 4% of the total deprived Valencia and Aragón, where they had mostly settled, of the main source of labour for agriculture. It ruined the nobles who owned the estates where they were employed, who protested to Lerma and the King, to no avail. For Castile the *Moriscos* were not a special problem and Lerma was not intelligent enough to see that this would be the seed of a renewed discord with Aragon and Valencia, two kingdoms that resented the growing centralism of Madrid as it was.

The expulsion of the *Moriscos* was only the last act of a long drama. The Muslims who stayed in the territories re-conquered by the Christian kingdoms, so called *mudéjares*, had been given a rather tolerant status by the vanquishers. They allowed them to continue living according to their customs in separate districts called *morerías*. The most generous had been the “Capitulación” of the Catholic Monarchs with the last

king of Granada when the Reconquista was completed. But this agreement was never applied. Cardinal Cisneros, Isabella's strong man, went to Granada and forcibly baptized 4,000 Moors by a random sprinkling of holy water. His was an expansive concept of religion: it included not only the faith but any external signs like dress, food, hygiene, language, singing and dancing, which for him revealed heresy or apostasy. His attempt to force a change failed: the Moors who had taken refuge in the Alpujarras, the mountains surrounding Granada, rebelled violently in 1499. Their uprising was violently crushed personally by King Ferdinand the Catholic. In 1508 Charles V decreed the forcible conversion of the Muslims and the suppression of their practices but, in the height of his imperial ambitions, he didn't insist on having his order implemented. Later, the pressure grew and the Council of Trent, which ended in 1563, transmitted a militant Counter-reformation spirit to Spain that proscribed any religious dissidence. This time, King Philip II issued a new Pragmatic and was determined to have it enforced by any means necessary. A new insurrection flared up in the Alpujarras, and this time it became a real war that lasted four years, until 1570. It ended, after much bloodshed, with the dispersion of the Moors of Granada (from then on called contemptuously *moriscos*) in the rest of the monarchy's territory, mostly in Aragon and Valencia.

The controversy went on and in their new locations the Moriscos continued to feel isolated and resentful, never ready to renounce their religion or their customs. The intransigent Catholics felt strong enough to push their intended unity of religion, race and language to the extreme: the expulsion of 1609-1614 was meant to end the Reconquista for good. The story of the banished *Moriscos* is a blemish on Spanish history. Many of them were sincere converted Christians and most considered themselves true Spaniards. They were no danger for anyone and contributed to the economy with their work: as the saying used to go, "whoever has a Moor has gold". In the second part of *Don Quixote*, Sancho Panza meets Ricote, a Morisco who had been the shopkeeper in his village and was obliged to go into exile. Back in his native country as a rich pilgrim after having lived in France and Germany, he expresses forcefully the fate of all "Moriscos": rejected in Spain because they are Muslims, rejected abroad because they are Spanish.



## 74. THE FRIGID BEAUTY OF EL ESCORIAL

What is the meaning of El Escorial, this massive structure of a Monastery? It seems to be up there in the mountains keeping a stern vigilance on Madrid, as if it wanted to guarantee that nothing stirs, that order is kept in Spain and the Empire. It was built in a very short time for its size. Starting in 1562, the man behind its inspiration, the mighty King Philip II, saw its construction almost completed when he died in 1598. This Monastery-Palace-Mausoleum amounts to a portrait of the feared and powerful king, who has been so harshly judged by posterity. Historians have complained about how difficult it is to get any kind of grasp on his personality: he seems almost to be made of granite, like his favourite building, a mixture of ceremony and sheer effort, of aloofness and strict sense of duty. He spoke little or not at all, leaving his interlocutors to ponder whether his silence meant profound meditation or absence of anything at all to say. We do not need to have recourse to foreign critics to obtain such a negative image of Philip. Nationalist Spanish historians provide us with sufficient material and, for once, Sánchez Albornoz and Américo Castro are in agreement. The former reproaches the King for many drawbacks: being, in contrast with the Castilian tradition, phlegmatic, sedentary, diffident, hermetic, cold and revengeful. More importantly, according to him, Philip continued what his father, the Emperor, had started when he changed the course of history, setting imperial objectives for Spain which were alien to her interests. Castro tried to focus on the reasons why the Spaniards didn't love Philip. He was a king who made too many demands and seldom gave anything to his people, who used the riches of Castile to increase his power beyond his father's policy of just conserving his heritage. And he did that at the cost even of waging war on Portugal, a Christian and brotherly kingdom.

The Monastery of El Escorial was built to honour Saint Laurence because the Catholic liturgy celebrates this Saint's Day on 10<sup>th</sup> of August, and it was on such a day in 1557, when Philip was on his way to receive the crown, that Spain won the so-called battle of Saint Quentin against France, ensuring a period of relative peace on the Northern

front. It is said that this huge and coldly beautiful building was the only pleasure the prudent and prudish Philip allowed himself in his whole life (leaving other more down-to-earth distractions aside). It served him to escape from what he felt to be the appalling duties as a ruler of a vast Empire. He enjoyed the impressive collection of books and works of art he had amassed to furnish the Monastery. He was very serious indeed, this King who conceived El Escorial as a refuge for his countryside times of leisure away from Madrid, his chosen capital, which at that time was no more than a dull village. But whether he wanted it to do so or not, El Escorial betrays him, it gives us somehow a look, if not into his intimate character, at least at the two key features of his historic destiny: greatness and religion.

Greatness, first. Philip II only gradually inherited the lands of his legendary father, the Emperor Charles V. In 1554 Naples and Sicily, in 1555 The Netherlands, in 1556 the Crowns of Spain and the Indies. Although he had to administer a vast and unconnected Empire, this didn't amount to the whole expanse of land that his father had owned. Above all, he regretted having lost his father's dignity, since Charles had to relinquish the traditional title of Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, together with the Austrian territories, to the Habsburg branch of the family in Vienna. As John H. Elliot wrote, the Empire ceased to be "universal" and based in Central Europe and became Atlantic with the centre in Spain. But these were turbulent times: there were multiple threats, the Turks in the Mediterranean, the Calvinists in France, the Protestants in the Low Countries. Moreover, inside Spain, there were centrifugal pressures from the kingdom of Aragón and unrest of the *Moriscos* of Granada. Is it not tempting to think that Philip conceived his palace-monastery as a desperate statement of the greatness of his power, which he inevitably had to hold up against the mirror of his imposing father?

And then there is Religion. Charles's Empire had to be divided, partly because the Protestants had won the battle for most of the German lands. The Council of Trent had concluded its work in 1563 and created the platform for the defensive movement of the Counter-Reformation. The war against heresy was to be conducted from Madrid, Vienna and Rome, but Philip II wanted to assert Spain's primacy over his Habsburg cousins and over the Pope. Religion, he seemed to think,

was too important to be left to the Church. At the end of Charles V's reign, the most conservative forces within the Church had already won the upper hand over the renovators and wanted Spain to be governed according to the principle of Catholic exclusiveness and its corollary: "purity of blood". Imposing the most rigid version of the Catholic faith, he used the Inquisition as his main instrument of domination and went as far as having one of the most prestigious theologians accused of heresy. Bartolomé de Carranza, the Archbishop of Toledo, thus spent seventeen years in prison until he was released shortly before his death. King Philip suppressed the few cells of Protestantism that had appeared in Valladolid and Seville and persecuted the followers of Erasmus, who the Inquisition assimilated to the Lutherans. He also forbade the entry of foreign books and foreign teachers and tried to prevent Spanish students from being contaminated in foreign centres of learning, except, under strict supervision, the University of Bologna, then belonging to the Papal States. Again, is it not tempting to think that Philip II wanted to make El Escorial the centre of the Catholic world, challenging Rome and the Pope?

In any case, he personally directed the construction of his Monastery, with the help of architects Juan Bautista de Toledo and Juan de Herrera, in order for it to become the central image of the power of Religion in Counter-Reformation Europe. Dismissing the sensuality of the Plateresque style and any Renaissance sense of freedom, he adopted the classical Greek and Roman lines for the building presenting them in a Catholic version. He then turned it into a huge deposit of religious objects and filled it with 7,500 relics of saints, brought mainly from Rome, and with countless statues and paintings, as well as sacred ornaments and illuminated manuscripts of religious inspiration. Many of these are wonderful masterpieces, like the nineteen paintings by Philip's favorite artist, the Venetian, Titian. Some were kept in the King's chambers for his private devotion and not all of them are of the highest quality. Nevertheless, the King's goal was not to favour artistic achievement: his idea, or rather ideology, was to create a symbol of religious exemplarity and rigor for his people and the world. In this endeavor, at least, Philip II succeeded.

## 75. LEPANTO AND THE SPANISH ARMADA

The two best known moments in the reign of Philip II were both inconclusive: a great victory at the naval battle of Lepanto against the Ottoman fleet (1571), a great disaster in the English Channel in his attempt to invade England (1588). The one led to the other and in the background of both was the rebellion of the Spanish Netherlands which had started in 1566. The turning point in this story, as in many others, was the fall of Constantinople in 1453. The new Ottoman regime that replaced the decadent remains of the Byzantine Empire had proved to be a formidable expansive force and was not ready to stop at Istanbul. It continued its drive toward the West and had soon conquered Greece and all the territories along the Danube, including most of Hungary. In 1529, the Ottomans laid siege to Vienna. On the seas, the Ottomans rapidly built a powerful fleet intended to control the Mediterranean. They seized Rhodes, Malta, Cyprus and strategic enclaves in the North of Africa, threatening the lines of commerce of both Venice and Spain. So much so that, while forming the Holy League with Rome and Venice to counter the Turkish threat, Philip II decided to evacuate the population of the endangered Balearic islands.

For Spain the challenge was twofold. First, in solidarity with the Austrian branch of the Habsburgs; second, for her own security against a possible alliance of the Turks with the *Moriscos* in Valencia and Aragón. The situation in the Dutch provinces was stable after the merciless intervention of the Duke of Alba in 1567, and the rebellion of the *Moriscos* at the Alpujarras (Granada) had been suppressed by Don Juan de Austria in 1570, in time to be given the command of the Spanish fleet that would join the forces of Venice and Rome at the Straits of Messina. Philip II, the most powerful monarch at the time, couldn't resist this opportunity of leading the Christian camp against the infidels in a revival of the glories of the Reconquista. He provided the coalition with the largest fleet which had ever confronted the Turks. They did so at the Gulf of Lepanto, on the Western coast of Greece, and obtained a victory that was total and glorious. The Spaniards, starting with Cervantes who fought in this battle, would

be forever proud of it. As a naval operation it certainly was a total success. Looked at from a distance, though, Lepanto opened both for Spain and for the Turks a new historical period but not a decisive change. The Ottomans rebuilt their fleet in one year and continued to act in the Mediterranean but their main concern was the war with Persia. The triumphant Spaniards had to pay attention to the rebellious Dutch and to the real threat posed by England, the emergent naval power. Both, Turkey and Spain were in a hurry to pay attention to their real priorities: so, with Turkey looking Eastward and Spain looking Westward, the Mediterranean was deserted, strategically speaking, and the Atlantic era was born.

For the next two centuries there was no official peace between Spain and Turkey until the treaty of Constantinople (Istanbul) was signed in 1782. After Lepanto, protracted negotiations took place in the Ottoman capital, in which many colourful characters intervened as real or fictitious agents for King Philip. A merchant from Milan, Giovanni Marignani, conducted the talks for Spain, in the absence of a full Ambassador, something that Philip was not prepared to concede to an infidel enemy. Marignani, with diplomatic skill and often in fear for his life (the Sultan once threatened to impale him), agreed on short truces starting in 1578 and finally in 1587 a longer period was agreed: it was a period of “de facto” peace during which the two countries entertained no diplomatic or commercial relations.

The Netherlands were a problem all by themselves. They were part of the Habsburg inheritance and Philip couldn't afford to relinquish the land where his father the Emperor was born. As the self-appointed champion of Catholicism against heresy, besides, he felt obliged to prevent the expansion of Protestantism, or at least to contain it. After Lepanto, therefore, Spain remained absorbed with the Dutch provinces. Neither the hardline approach of Alba nor later attempts at compromise could stop the drive for independence. The brutal sacking of Antwerp in 1576 by unpaid mercenaries was the turning point and the support by the British for the secession pointed out to Spain where the real danger lay. After Philip completed the annexation of Portugal in 1580 and returned to Madrid two years later, preparations for a decisive action to contain the incipient power of the British were set up. At stake was not only the peace in the Netherlands but also,

and perhaps more importantly, the control of the commercial routes in the Atlantic, where the monopoly that Spain claimed for herself was being challenged by Sir Francis Drake and other privateers on behalf of Queen Elizabeth I.

Preparations for an invasion of England or, at least, the inflicting of decisive blow to its naval strength started in 1583 and many incidents, diplomatic and military, paved the way for the expedition of the "Great Armada". The successful attack on the port of Cadiz by Drake in 1587, served as a provocation and was the last straw for Spain. The following year, a fleet of 127 ships was launched from Lisbon and Flanders. They met with a strong and effective defense by the English and strong winds which caused many of the Spanish ships to sink or run aground on the Belgian beaches. After this defeat, much of the remaining Spanish fleet had to flee and reach the Spanish ports sailing around Scotland and Ireland.

As in the case of Lepanto, the defeat of the Great Armada was important but not quite decisive. For Spain it was a great psychological shock and it is said that it ruined the end of the reign of Philip II, a depressed king who shut himself up in El Escorial. But the fleet was promptly rebuilt in the following years and would still effectively defend the communications with America for centuries. As for the British, they could not achieve total freedom on the high seas but their victory meant the discovery of their potential to continue challenging the Spanish naval dominance. British historian, Garrett Mattingly, in his book on the defeat of the Armada reminds us of Shakespeare's euphoric expression of pride in the aftermath of the British victory: "Come the three corners of the world in arms, and we shall shock them!" For Mattingly, the battle in the Channel was mostly decisive from the point of view of the onlookers: France, Germany, Italy and the Dutch were able to get rid of the image of the Spanish Empire as "invincible", as the Armada was wrongly called by some. For the Protestants, God had been on their side, whereas for the Catholics the defeat, with the fateful storm included, amounted to God's condemnation of this sort of judicial duel. From 1588 on, it was clear that religious unity was not going to be imposed on Europe by force of arms.

## 76. ANTONIO PEREZ, PHILIP II AND THE KINGDOM OF ARAGON

In his famous “Confessions”, Jean-Jacques Rousseau explained very lucidly how a simple lie, if patiently repeated, can change the course of a life or destroy a reputation. Lies are a weapon that is frequently used in the world of power and the story of Antonio Pérez del Hierro, for many years the powerful secretary of King Philip II, is an intriguing tale of lies and conspiracies whose precise meaning has not been clearly established to this day. Pérez was born in 1540, the illegitimate son of Gonzalo Pérez, a clergyman and secretary of Charles V’s and, when the emperor died, of his son and successor. He was clever and highly educated. Furthermore, he was as hard-working as the King. He gave his master what he wanted: good advice and lots of papers, well written summaries of long documents which Philip read avidly, filling them with handwritten notes in the margins. The young Antonio was prudent and had something that this slow-moving monarch needed: the capacity of decision. His father died when he was 26. He was officially given the post of Secretary of State for Southern Europe, but his ambition pushed him to meddle in all matters of government. He worked under the protection of the faction headed by Ruy Gómez, Prince of Eboli, and became its leader in 1573 when Gómez died. They defended a policy of conciliation in the Low Countries and federal organization for Spain, which would respect the rights of the ancient kingdoms. Opposed to them were the followers of the Duke of Alba, champions of Castilian nationalism against the kingdoms of the periphery and of repression to quell the revolt of the Dutch which had started in 1566.

Philip II was in favour of conciliation in the North, but not Eboli’s other projects, who urged him to declare war on England. Philip sent his half-brother, Juan de Austria, to pacify the Dutch, which he tried to do. But Don Juan was an ambitious and arrogant prince. He had won the battle of Lepanto and occupied Tunis. He worked on pacification with unequal success but had other aspirations for himself. He was fond of the idea of attacking England and carving out a

kingdom for himself, for which he had the support and encouragement of the Pope. Philip II was jealous of Juan's fame and didn't trust him. Advised by Antonio Pérez, he appointed him a secretary in order to be well informed about the goings-on in the Netherlands. Juan de Escobedo, the man chosen for the post, was a friend of Pérez: ambitious like him but also violent and outspoken. The stage was set for a very intricate story of espionage and counter-espionage which ended in tragedy. When Escobedo went to Madrid to discuss the projects of his master, Pérez convinced the King of Escobedo's responsibility in the ambitions of Don Juan on England. Fearing that his own double game be discovered, he advised the king to eliminate Escobedo, which a gang of armed mercenaries did on March 31, 1578, in a dark backstreet of Madrid.

The case of Antonio Pérez has fascinated many generations for its intrigues, treason and assassinations, and above all for the question as to whether the King had or not authorized the extrajudicial execution of Escobedo. What I found most intriguing when I read the major biography of Antonio Pérez written in 1969 by Gregorio Marañón was how this case-study in tyranny illustrated the problematic structure of the Spanish State at the height of its glory (and afterwards). Neither Charles V nor Philip II succeeded in forming a really united country, busy as they were with the many external challenges presented by the task of conserving the Habsburg heritage. Philip, always hesitant, refused to take prompt action in the case of Escobedo, no doubt because he was involved in the murder, as he eventually admitted. He even offered Pérez a comfortable retirement in an embassy abroad. But he started to lose confidence in him when Escobedo's family demanded justice and certain letters were discovered which revealed that his secretary had been pursuing his own agenda and lying on all sides. In 1579, only a few hours after he had been conferring with the King on State matters, Pérez was arrested, accused of ordering the murder of Escobedo and of revealing state secrets. He was confined to Madrid and judged again in 1585. This time he was sent to jail and in 1590 he confessed, under torture, to his participation in the assassination.

Now comes the most interesting part of this thriller. Antonio fled from his prison and took refuge in Saragossa, out of reach of Philip's otherwise absolute power. He obtained the protection of the *Fueros*,



or “freedoms” of Aragón. Proud of and attached to its historic privileges, the judicial authorities were in no way prepared to comply with Philip’s demand to have him extradited. They had had conflicts of jurisdiction in the past and were now offended by the appointment of Count of Almenara, who was not a native of Aragón, as Viceroy in contravention of the special privileges of the kingdom. The King, in his stubborn pursuit of his former secretary, chose an extreme option: to fabricate an accusation of heresy against Pérez (his father was a Jewish convert) and submit him to the tribunal of the Inquisition, which was independent of Aragón’s authority and subject only to that of the Church. When the Aragón judges complied and sent Pérez to the Alfarería, the prison of the Inquisition, a popular mutiny obliged the reversal of this decision and Pérez went back to the regular prison. By the time the King had sent an army to quell the Saragossa uprising and had the Chief Justice of Aragón executed, Antonio Pérez had fled again, this time to France. There he put himself at the disposal of the French King Henri IV, offered him plenty of secret information about Spain and suggested an invasion in which the *Moriscos* of Aragón and Valencia would participate. Henri reluctantly accepted this proposal but the invasion didn’t get very far. More dangerous for Philip II were the numerous books and leaflets Antonio wrote while in France, presenting the King as an immoral and sinister character, which served as material to the so-called Black Legend against Spain.

Once Pérez lost the trust of the French King, he left for England and offered his services to Queen Elizabeth I, who, with his information, launched an indecisive attack on Cadiz in 1596. Pérez ceased to be of any use for his foreign patrons and died in disgrace and poverty in 1611. Marañón believes that the most important information he gave his foreign friends had not been about the weakness of Spain in any of her possessions in Europe or America. The weakness he pointed out was inside Spain and was due to a lack of coherence between the different kingdoms that neither Charles V nor Philip II knew how to unify as a single nation.

## 77. LOPE DE AGUIRRE WRITES TO KING PHILIP II

In his posthumous work *Giudizio Universale* (“Universal Judgment”, 1957), the Italian writer and historian, Giovanni Papini, included Lope the Aguirre among the historical characters who appear before God to defend their case on Judgment Day. Aguirre is classified in the category of “assassins and thieves” and is accused for his numerous crimes and acts of treason, for his cruelty that went to the extreme of killing his own daughter. Elvira appears as a witness and blames her father for not having given her the choice of experiencing the chances of living, in suffering or in happiness. Aguirre defends himself addressing the unfortunate girl in pathetic tones: killing had been many times a pleasure, but not killing her; he had done it out of love when surrendered by his enemies, to prevent them from taking possession of her after murdering him. Aguirre, however, who has been unanimously condemned by historians and moralists as a crazy assassin and torturer, appears in this imaginary recreation of the Last Judgment as someone capable of reasoning on the only sin for which he is ready to beg forgiveness. Otherwise, his bad reputation is amply justified: he really was a megalomaniac with bitter contempt for religion and obsessed about death: “traitor until death”, he signed some of his letters, probably inventing the cry *patria o muerte* (“homeland or death”) of later revolutionaries. With an inordinate lust for fame and riches, he took part in the civil wars between conquistadores in Peru and then led a legendary and fruitless adventure in search of gold, or El Dorado, up the Amazon River. After having murdered two successive leaders of the expedition and many of his own followers, 70 according to one account, Aguirre was in turn beheaded in 1561 by his soldiers near Barquisimeto in Venezuela.

Shortly before ending his life in such a dishonourable way, Lope de Aguirre had sent a long letter to his King in Spain in which his personality is manifested in details that confirm the usual and almost general condemnation of this extreme character. He was born around 1515 in Oñate, a county in the Basque Country, to a family of *hidalgos* or lesser nobles. The region had been pacified with great pains by

the authority of Isabella, the queen of Castile, after centuries of brutal confrontations among families or clans for influence and wealth. They were violently attached to certain “liberties” and customs that made them somehow autonomous from the Crown, their vassals only if those ancient laws were respected, naturally according to their interpretation. Aguirre wrote to Philip II in a mocking and insulting style which revealed a certain command of an elementary classical culture. The substance responds to the ideology just described for the lords of Oñate. Other conquerors had also complained frequently of being subject to excessive hardship and perils and not sufficiently compensated by the Crown. He, Aguirre, in consequence decided to make use of his “right” to denaturalize from his country and his king because he felt himself to be “worth more” (*más valer*); in consequence, he would only serve a king chosen among the conquerors themselves. He declared himself a traitor and signed his letter as such. The anthropologist, Julio Caro Baroja, has explained that all these ideas have their origin in legal principles from of the Middle-Ages. They were included in *Las Partidas*, a code of laws compiled in the 13th century by King Alfonso X “The Wise”, with which Aguirre was vaguely familiar.

The same claims of liberty against tyranny could be found in other abortive rebellions that erupted at the beginning of colonization in Spanish America. One wonders how it is that they were not more numerous given the extraordinary circumstances. The key to all of them was the strenuous efforts made by the Monarchy to introduce some order in the initially chaotic conquest of such vast and distant lands by adventurers who were not precisely very scrupulous. In 1542, under the influence of Church critics, the Emperor approved new laws to reinforce previous attempts to discipline the conquerors in their treatment of the Indians, who under the system of *encomiendas* had been practically enslaved and treated as non-persons. The *encomenderos* or owners of land and persons distributed under this quasi-feudal regime had never respected the royal limitations. After 1542 some simply rebelled against them. In Peru this conflict had caused a civil war between the original conqueror Francisco Pizarro and his rival Diego de Almagro, for the spoils of the conquest. And Pizarro’s younger brother Gonzalo launched a direct rebellion of *encomenderos* against the new laws. They defeated the Royal army, killed the Viceroy and governed

the country for four years until they, in turn, were defeated by an army loyal to the Spanish Monarch.

Mexico is another example. The New Spain, as it was initially named, was conquered by Hernán Cortes against the express instructions of his superior Diego de Velázquez, the Governor of Cuba. Cortés was his secretary and manoeuvred to be entrusted with the leadership for a limited exploration of the neighboring peninsula of Yucatan. Educated and macchiavellic, but also an experienced soldier, Cortés managed to conquer the whole territory of the Aztecs, obliging their emperor, Moctezuma, to declare himself a vassal of Charles V. The former bureaucrat showed himself to be a strategist and, short of claiming the crown of New Spain, went on to complete his portentous conquest and to organize the rest of the vast territory as an absolute ruler. Again without proper mandate, he reconstructed the capital city of the Aztecs, Tenochtitlan (today Mexico D.F), and planned to travel across the Pacific to conquer Asia. He saw himself as the christianizer of the whole world. He was finally stopped short by the Emperor, who obliged him to return to Spain and compensated him with a rich fief and the first title of nobility in Spanish America: Marquis of the Valley of Oaxaca.

Hernan's son, Martín Cortés Zúñiga, spent his youth in Spain and went back to Mexico in 1562 as the second Marquis, convinced of his rights as *encomendero* for reasons that his father had explained to the Emperor in a well-reasoned letter: Mexico offered no sufficient booty to compensate his fellow conquerors for their actions, so its land and people had to be divided among them as fiefdoms. Martín Cortés was received in Mexico as a king and, ignoring the new laws and the old, asked for an increase in the revenues and privileges of the *encomenderos*. The rejection of these demands by Spain brought about a conspiracy that was prepared to proclaim Martín King of New Spain. But the plans of the conspirators were discovered and aborted. No more major rebellions were reported in later times when the situation in the colonies became stable and a certain organization was finally achieved. Simon Bolívar, gifted with a portentous imagination, would later see these attempts, especially the adventure of Lope de Aguirre, as the precursors of his own cry for independence.

## 78. NEW PEOPLE FROM A NEW WORLD

The Spaniards who discovered the New World also became new people: Simon Bolivar would describe them later as “a small mankind”. No wonder, because what they found on the islands and on the continent was out of all proportion to anything they had seen before. Huge spaces, towering mountains covered with snow, rivers that looked like the seas, impenetrable forests, new trees and flowers, different animals...More importantly, they met different people, adapted since time immemorial to those different geographical conditions. This encounter was enough to change their way of life, their outlook and their habits. The new settlers became a different people. They mixed with the natives and were transformed, the way Spaniards had changed each time Spain had received the impact of new cultures on their own soil: Carthaginians, Romans, Goths, Arabs...

They changed in many ways. A new baroque art, a result of the blend of cultures, was created under the influence of the masons, artisans and artists who built the new churches, now adorned with forms inspired in nature itself, new fruits, plants and beasts. Inside the churches, religion itself received the influx of ancient local cults and superstitions and, very soon, of those coming from Africa. The Castilian language became more colourful and adapted to express the new realities. Under the pressure of the new environment, a new self-conscience seemed to bring about a new kind of human being: European travellers of the 18th century thought that America was living in a different age, that the climate created a civilization never seen before. The Americans also saw themselves as different and often doubted what identity was right for them: at first, they wanted to be seen as Castilian *hidalgos*; later they preferred to be more European, mostly French and British, than the Europeans themselves. Lately, they also claimed their indigenous origins or their Afro-American heritage.

How soon did these new Spaniards come back to their homeland and how were they perceived there? The attitude of Spaniards toward these compatriots was soon reflected in the literary works of

the authors of the Golden Age, who lived and wrote only a few decades after the discovery. They never treated the subject of America extensively, but in their works there are frequent hints about those Spaniards who were returning to their country after the experience of the Indies, the *indianos*. Miguel de Cervantes, who had come back to Spain in 1590 after having lived dangerously in battles and suffered from being placed in captivity, applied for a bureaucratic position in America. His petition was rejected: he got a job, but as purveyor of the Spanish Armada and tax collector, not in America, but in Seville. As the town that monopolized commerce with America, this was the ideal place to come into contact with the Spaniards who had travelled back to the homeland after their colonial experience. These encounters, and perhaps his frustration as a failed candidate to join in the adventure, inspired in him a rather negative view of the Indies: he calls it the “refuge and shelter of Spain’s helpless people”. He didn’t seem to believe in the legends about easily acquired riches: America would be “a common delusion to many, a particular remedy to few”.

The most prolific writer in Spanish literature, Lope de Vega, was more colourful, at times sarcastic, but not more positive than his rival Cervantes in his account of the *indianos*, as he called them for the first time. He sees them as very different from the usual Spaniard. They are rich and ostentatious, but not very generous, their language is farfetched and a little pompous, they usually claim a noble origin to compensate for the suspicion on the dubious motives of their travels and the source of their gold. Marriage and honour are recurrent subjects in Lope’s plays and the way he deals with them in relation with the newcomers from the colonies is revealing. In spite of the changes in economic conditions that the discoveries had brought about for Spain, old prejudices had survived. The value of money as opposed to the value of nobility is a recurrent theme. For (perhaps envidious) Spanish fathers, money gained in distant lands is suspicious and treated with contempt. It certainly is not merit enough to give away their daughters to pretenders from overseas. The American characters, for their part, resent their Spanish critics, arguing the purity of their own feelings, which they set in contrast with the preference of Spaniards for material gain or purity of blood. In one

of Lope's plays an *indiano* proclaims: "In Spain love does not exist. Interest reigns over there. Here, Love".

And what about the Americans who didn't go back to Spain? They created their own literature, which developed slowly during colonial times. In fact, the Spanish Americans didn't need to wait for independence to start creating a rich tradition of writing. The American spirit was born at the moment of discovery due to the strange impressions caused by the really new world they saw around them. This literature grew in originality as there widened the distance with the Spaniards who had stayed on the peninsula. However, one must not forget that, for a long time, the identity between the people of both worlds persisted, since they had a common cultural tradition. The American and the Spanish classics were written at the same time and they were numerous and of high quality: Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz in Mexico, Inca Garcilaso de la Vega in Peru, Andrés Bello in Venezuela are some of the most illustrious that come to mind. The Spanish critic Guillermo de Torre has pointed out that the evolution of the later literary creation happened in a discontinuous way: what was being created in the Americas didn't necessarily coincide with the simultaneous European fashions, it was sometimes anachronistic until in the 18th century the Enlightenment unified tastes and influenced the Americans even before it made its timid entrance in Spain. He gives as an example a novel by the Mexican writer, José Fernández de Lizardi, *Periquillo Sarmiento*, which can be seen as the last picaresque novel: it was published in 1816, long after Spain had ceased to produce this kind of book.

Another matter for debate is how long the literature of Spanish America continued to have the unity it had in the beginning, just after the discovery, grown as it was from the same roots transplanted from Spain. This probably happened long before the independence revolutions, when the administrative separation of the Spanish Viceroyalties started to set apart what later would become independent nations. The authors then started to look for the separate identity of those units. The recourse to the indigenous past and a certain nostalgia for an imaginary arcadia sprang out of the strong influence of French culture, by Montaigne's meditation on the cannibals and Rousseau's idea of the "good savage". The Venezuelan writer, Arturo

Uslar-Pietry, sees the essence of Latin-American literature in “metis-  
sage” and “creolism”, a blend not just of ethnic groups, but mainly  
of cultures and historical moments lived simultaneously, the seed  
of an explosion of good literature and art that had to wait until the  
20th century.



## 79. DON JUAN OR SPIRITUAL DECADENCE

In Renaissance Spain, Seville was the jewel in the crown. Her Golden Age, her lucky moment in history, came a few years after 1492, when the American continent was discovered by Christopher Columbus. Being a convenient and secure fluvial port, surrounded by a rich and fertile plain, she received from the Castilian Crown the privilege of monopolizing trade with America. Seville thus became the “Gateway of the Indies”: in 1503 the *Casa de Contratación* was created in a building near the cathedral and, by Royal Order, all imports and exports were licensed in this trading house, ships and cargoes were organized and controlled, taxes collected, goods of all kinds stored to provision the ships for their long voyages. The periodic convoys of ships to and from the new continent were decided and their armed protection against piracy funded and organized in Seville. All the abundant gold and silver that came from the colonies had to pass through this “gateway”. The fabulous wealth amassed there attracted merchants and bankers from all over Europe, who, with their business, brought excitement and agitation, exchange of news about the fleets and the American ports, contraband and other forms of crime and corruption.

After almost a century and a half of high life, however, Seville had lost more than a half of her population. It had been one of the most crowded towns in Europe, with 150,000 souls, and would not recover such numbers until a new rise to prominence two centuries later. The fall, after such an exceptional climax was, naturally, sharp and long. A crisis in commerce with America and competition from other European powers brought about the bankruptcies of 1567. Then, the great plague of 1649 and an earthquake in 1751 marked the end of the Golden Age. The great river Guadalquivir ceased to be navigable and served no longer as the Port of Spain for traffic with America. The nearby town of Cadiz was given the new right of monopolizing this still rich trade. An era of decay, poverty and disorder began: the world of *Don Giovanni*.

Certainly, Seville was not alone. The crisis engulfed the whole of Spain. The decade of 1640 marked the beginning of the fall. The end

of the richness and high population caused a profound psychological and economic depression and, inevitably, a cultural period of silence and vulgarity. Education was exclusively in the hands of the Church, its universities ignored the scientific progress achieved in Europe and, fearful of being accused of heresy, concentrated on the teaching of Scholasticism and law. The fear of death in the presence of so many disasters became an obsession for the popular classes. It was transmitted to King Philip III, "The Pious," who waged a pathetic war for the recovery of morality. He ordered punishment for sinning in public and the restoration of discipline in convents and churches. He imposed restrictions on the production of theatrical works. As a reaction, the people, many of them poor and ignorant immigrants in Madrid and other big cities, tried to compensate so much Baroque gloom with a life full of celebrations. They took advantage of the Church festivities and seized the streets in processions, high masses and other gatherings organized at the least excuse. They added their own secular entertainment, bullfighting, dances and games of all kinds to the religious initiatives.

This profound crisis naturally also caused a degradation of values since, from the Royal Court down, the whole of Spanish society forgot its former dreams of greatness and glory. Above all, honour, the leading idea of the Spanish classical world, became suddenly obsolete. Is it any wonder that *Don Juan* came to life in this atmosphere, and precisely in Seville, which had been the shining star in the times of optimism and opulence? It is true that the character of Don Juan had precedents in classical literature. Also, that other writers of the Golden Age like Lope de Vega had attempted to give life to this paradigm of extreme depravity and dishonesty. But the appearance of *Don Juan* as a main theatrical figure in world literature was brought about by the priest and dramatist, Tirso de Molina. He visited Seville in 1616 and set the action of *Don Juan* in the town he saw immersed in the demoralization that was affecting the whole country.

The stereotype of *Don Juan* is not necessarily typical of Spain, as is usually believed, nor even of Seville. Some Italian specialists claim him as originating in their country and Joseph Losey in his film of 1979 set the drama convincingly in a place near Venice. But there are evident reasons why Spain offered the ideal setting and historical

background for this drama. Don Juan is the most famous of anti-heroes. He seduces countless women during his travels (exactly 1,003 only in Spain, according to the account his servant Leporello gives in Mozart's opera!) by means of deceit and/or violence. In this way, he mocks the idea of honour which had been paramount in Spain up to his time. Even more significantly, he rejects monogamy and the whole set of values of the Catholic religion which the Council of Trent had just reinforced after centuries of laxity and corruption. Don Juan even challenged the belief in an afterlife when he invited the statue of the *Comendador*, the father of one of his women-victims, whom he had murdered, to dinner.

This antireligious feature made the myth of Don Juan necessarily Spanish, because the intensity of the Church's dominance over Spain, whose King Philip II had appointed himself to be the paladin of the Counter-Reformation, gave the rebellion of our hero a special dramatic intensity precisely there, in Spain. Also, some have seen a certain sentiment of nostalgia for the polygamy that the Arabs had brought and had practiced during the centuries of their presence in Al-Andalus reflected in an Andalusian *Don Juan*. *Don Juan* would thus represent the dream of a "man-sultan" surrounded by his harem. Many, like the Spanish doctor and historian, Gregorio Marañón, have proposed various interpretations of the psychology of the character, pointing to a certain sexual immaturity which prevents love and replaces it by momentary pleasure. From the total depravity of Tirso de Molina's *Burlador de Sevilla* or of Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, *Don Juan* evolved in the 19th century towards a romantic version in the well-known play *Don Juan Tenorio*, written by Jose de Zorrilla in 1844. In *Tenorio*, Don Juan goes on cheating and killing but in the end falls in love, something that had never happened in the previous versions, and he is redeemed by the love of Doña Inés, a nun he has seduced forcing his entry into the convent. This *Tenorio* represents a different moment in the life of Spain, no longer the tragedy of the Baroque era but the sentimentality of Romanticism. We are now in Romantic Seville, where Carmen was born.

## 80. MADRID, THE MODEST CAPITAL OF SPAIN

Madrid is a strange town. Writer Ramón Gómez de la Serna said, in one of his *Greguerías* or surrealistic aphorisms, that she is “the most difficult capital to understand in the whole world, where living is more appreciated than gaining”. She gives the stranger the peculiar impression that she apologizes for being the capital of an important country which even used to be a great empire. She wants to seduce and make life easy for all, pretending that all her inhabitants are indeed strangers, that nobody was actually born in Madrid.

Madrid wasn't always meant to be the capital of Spain. During the Middle-Ages she was at the border between the Muslim-occupied part of the peninsula and the Castilian kingdom in the long struggle of the Reconquista. When she finally became Castilian, around the year 1000, the town consisted of little more than the Alcázar, the castle built by the Arabs, and a small settlement in the middle of a forest. The kings of Castile treated her as they treated any other town, visiting occasionally for hunting or pausing on the way Southward to pursue their wars. She received a *fuero* or local legal order for the first time in 1202 and on some occasions meeting of the *Cortes* were held there. A strange incident may give you an idea of how small and second-rate Madrid was compared to Toledo, Burgos or Segovia. In the year 1383, King John I of Castile donated the town, together with an annual amount of money, to a certain Leo V, king of Armenia, who had been thrown out of his kingdom by the emperor of Babylon. This peculiar character spent two years in Madrid enjoying the Castilian King's hospitality, then left for Paris among the protests of the people and the municipal authorities. King John I promised them not to repeat his initiative.

Why then did poor Madrid became the capital of Spain? It is not easy to explain. The city grew modestly and was visited more and more often by the monarchs, but they preferred to establish their court in the more important cities of Castile, especially Toledo, which had been the capital of the Visigoths and became the imperial capital under Charles V. The most intriguing thing is that Madrid started to

function as Spain's capital in 1561 notwithstanding the fact that no formal decision was made to that effect by the incumbent king, Philip II, who was otherwise the most formal and bureaucratic of all Spanish monarchs and wrote obsessively all his decrees by his own hand. Federico Carlos Sainz de Robles, the main historian of Madrid, has written extensively on the different theories that have been given for King Philip's surprising decision. These theories are based on various imaginary reasons: the geographical advantages of Madrid's location, at the centre or heart of the body of the realm; the abundance of water and a healthy climate; an ambitious scheme for connecting the capital with Lisbon joining the rivers Manzanares, Jarama and Tagus with channels...All of them seem to me far-fetched save the one explanation Sainz the Robles accepts as the most likely. According to him Philip, who had started the construction of El Escorial in 1563, secretly cherished the idea of making it his permanent residence, from which he could easily control his huge empire in solitary detachment. What better place to have all the instruments of power than Madrid, only 43 Km. away? The growing archives, the Councils, the bureaucracy had been concentrated there. Many nobles had joined the new court and so Madrid became, inevitably, the first stable capital of the empire.

The troubles of Madrid's agitated rise to power, however, were not over. The population doubled or trebled, new palaces were built for the members of the nobility, new convents and churches for Catholic worship. However, after forty years functioning de facto as Spain's capital, the new King, Philip III, decided in 1601 that he preferred Valladolid for his court and, this time through a formal decree, decided to transfer himself and his government to their new seat. Why? This time, the opinions are less divided. The Duke of Lerma, whose interests and lands were concentrated in the area of Valladolid, was in charge. The King was indecisive but certain advantages or bribes offered by the council of the city did the rest. Madrid was shocked, impoverished and depressed. After five years of protests, complaints and public processions praying to the saints for the return of prosperous times, the capital was re-established in Madrid, this time for good. Malevolent critics have pointed out that the notorious Duke of Lerma had taken advantage of the depressed prices of property in the town to invest heavily, selling after 1606 for a huge profit.

It is not surprising that with this highly unstable past, Madrid grew differently from the other great capitals of Europe, big or small, which had developed harmonically from a centre, a cathedral and/or a large square. Madrid was not a “round” city but three different *Madriles*, as the expression goes. She grew from East to West: first, the castle of the Arabs (today’s Royal Palace) and the oldest settlement; then the Plaza Mayor and its surrounding palaces and markets in the Madrid of the Habsburg kings; finally, the “new” Madrid of parks and broad avenues built by the Bourbons in the 18th century around el Prado. This heterogeneous and mixed provincial city was the capital of the once mightiest empire in Europe and America. It is no wonder that the writers who, as seems to be inevitable regarding all great capitals, want to seek the “soul” of Madrid find themselves at a loss. They have to turn to the heroic uprising of the people of Madrid against the French invasion in 1808 or else joke affectionately about the blend of classes and castes, the urge of the people for an easy life full of religious feasts and popular entertainment. At their best, since the Golden Age of Spanish literature, they have found ample motive for literary humour when mocking the modest river which runs near the capital, the Manzanares (where apples grow). Francisco de Quevedo called it an “apprentice river”. Lope de Vega, speaking of the exaggeratedly big bridge of Segovia, advised the authorities either to buy a real river or sell the bridge. The well-known foreign travellers of the Romantic age like Alexander Dumas or Théophile Gautier were also happy to joke about the poor Manzanares. Even the ambassador of the German emperor Rudolph II, Count of Rehebiner, wanted to contribute to Manzanares witticism: he is reported to have said that Madrid’s River was “navigable on horseback”.

## 81. THE GREEK MASTER OF TOLEDO

In the years 1202 to 1204 one of the most shameful events in history took place. A group of French Knights formed an alliance with the Venetian Republic to launch the fourth crusade. They obtained the benediction of Pope Innocent III and assembled a fleet which sailed from Venice with the obvious end of recovering Jerusalem for Christianity. But on the way there they changed their idea and route and decided to conquer Constantinople (today's Istanbul) instead, the rich capital of the Orthodox Church and of the Byzantine Empire. They laid siege to the town, ransacked and occupied it and founded the notorious Latin Empire, which lasted until 1261. One of the leaders of this strange adventure, the Italian Count Boniface of Montferrat took the island of Crete for himself and subsequently sold it to the Venetians, who held it until the Ottomans conquered it in 1645. Crete had been Roman and then Byzantine before all this happened, except for a short period: in 826, an army of dissident Spanish Muslims coming from Córdoba captured it and founded the Emirate of Crete, which lasted twenty years.

That Doménikos Theotokópulos (1541-1614) was born in Crete, a place with such turbulent history could not be without influence on his life and in his work. He was called *Il Greco* by the Venetians because he belonged to the Greek population of the island, established there since the Byzantine period. But he was officially a citizen of the Serenissima Repubblica and as such went to live in Venice when he was 26 years old. He had been trained as a painter in the Byzantine tradition and spent the next ten years in Italy, where he practiced under Titian and Tintoretto, no less. He also lived in Rome, where he met the great Michelangelo and some Spanish nobles. One of them, Don Luis de Castilla, gave the young painter letters of recommendation for his father, an important magnate in Toledo. The reasons why Doménikos decided to travel to Spain are not well known. Perhaps he was attracted by a country which had been at the height of its power under Emperor Charles I and had a history as turbulent as his native Crete, including the intriguing Muslim episode.

El Greco arrived in Madrid in 1577 and offered his services to the powerful King Philip II, who was busy, among many other things,

building the monastery of El Escorial and filling it with works of art. Our painter didn't succeed. He offered the Monarch, as a presentation card, a huge painting representing *The Martyrdom of Saint Maurice*, an early work which already contained many of the typical features of his style. The very sober and pious king didn't like it and I don't blame him. It is a minor production compared with the painter's marvellous later works. Besides, there were strong ideological reasons for rejecting the daring picture. Philip wanted El Escorial to be the showcase of Counter-Reformation, projecting an image of seriousness and orthodoxy, which was not exactly what *The Martyrdom* suggested. Fray José de Sigüenza, adviser to the king and historian of El Escorial, wrote about El Greco: "not many people like him". Philip wanted many pictures representing saints, but not paintings that inhibit the viewer's wish to pray!

So our Greek went to Toledo, where he soon received two important orders, one by the Cathedral, the other by his protector, Don Diego de Castilla. The resulting works were already true masterpieces: *The Disrobing of Christ* and the paintings for the altarpiece of the convent of Saint Dominic. From then on, El Greco received many orders from the religious associations of the city, the nobles and the Church: Toledo had been the imperial capital under Charles I and since ancient times had conserved the condition of Catholic capital (its archbishop is still today Cardinal Primate of Spain). In El Greco's time there were, in a town of sixty thousand souls, 20 parish churches and over 40 convents. Our master found ample clientele and organized an atelier where not only the paintings but the whole setting of the altarpieces, with statues of angels and all the rest, were produced. He was expensive, proud and stubborn. He had many quarrels with his patrons but always refused to lower his prices or change his style. He built a mansion for himself overlooking the river Tajo and lived in luxury. Aloof from his fellow painters, he frequented intellectual friends and never really felt assimilated into the town where he lived until his death in 1614. He never learned to speak Spanish properly and always signed his paintings in Greek characters, as if wanting to underline that he continued to feel like a foreigner.

Was he a mystic? With the personality just mentioned, it would hardly seem to be the case. For a long time he was considered extravagant and a little crazy, an Italian painter, as he was mentioned in the



catalogues of the Prado Museum until 1910. Then at the end of the 19th century a French specialist, Paul Lefort, launched an attractive theory: according to him, el Greco's style was inspired by the Castilian saints Teresa de Avila and John of the Cross and other mystics of the Golden Age. This idea soon appealed to the Spanish writers of the 1898 Generation, who in the dejected national atmosphere of the turn of the century were looking for brilliant moments in the history of Spanish art in order to give new life to the glory of the past, if not to discover the "essence" of Spain. El Greco was declared Spanish and Castilian, and specifically identified with the magic of multicultural Toledo. The poets of Modernism found in him a model in the rejection by art of the crudeness and soullessness of reality. As a contemporary and friend of el Greco's, the poet Luis de Góngora had very soon understood: in his images art wins over being.

El Greco's style was indeed strange, sometimes disturbing. But he was not the first painter to treat nature with contempt, deforming it in order to express religious feelings or mysteries through images. Tintoretto, the maestro he most admired in Venice, had already rejected the academic order, the adherence of art to reality and spatial harmony. El Greco elongated his images, giving them expressions often filled with anguish, in an upward tension reminiscent of the Gothic cathedrals, involving them in unreal light and ambiguous colors. He hardly painted landscapes as a background for his religious narratives. In his last pictures, the forms dissolved in a magmatic assemblage of secondary figures which filled the space as if the painter suffered from agoraphobia. Aldous Huxley, ever attentive to any trace of mystical or para-sensitive phenomena, wrote interestingly about El Greco's work. He admitted the common idea of his being a deeply religious person, longing for union with God. But he remarked that the means he employed to this end were not conducive to the peace of mind necessary for the supreme religious experience, which the more classical art of the Renaissance represented through static figures and landscapes. Too much tension, too much unsatisfied longing and even certain revelations of dark subconscious troubles are present in some of his works, as when in "The Dream of Philip II" a whale swallows a multitude of figures, probably on their way to hell.

## 82. HONOUR IN THE SPANISH THEATRE OF THE GOLDEN AGE

“Mine honour is my life; both grow in one. Take honour from me and my life is done.” These words belong to Shakespeare’s Richard III and could have been uttered by any European of the Middle-Ages. The concept of honour represented the highest value of traditional culture. We can find it in Plato, who presented it as the main feature of the caste of warriors. In Seneca, who taught us that things that the law permits may be prohibited by honour. The Germanic peoples viewed honour as the main force to keep the society united: in shame, life would be unbearable. Christianity considered honour a personal quality that you acquire when you take arms and put them at the service of religion and justice. The French had a code of honour that minutely defined the conduct of the chevalier in combat and in the practice of courteous love.

The Spanish theatre of the Golden Age kept honour as one of its main subjects when in Europe the idea had long begun to recede, discredited by the artificiality and uselessness of chivalry and feudal combats and by the abuses incurred by the nobles against a code that was exclusively applicable to their caste. Félix Lope de Vega (1562-1635) was not only prolific, having written more than 1,200 plays, but an innovator: he abandoned the adherence of the humanists to classical theatre and sought his inspiration mostly in Spanish history and tales taken from the popular tradition of the Middle-Ages. In his versified essay of 1609 *The new art of writing comedies*, he proposed going beyond the classical rules of the theatre and create a new, more popular, dynamic and extroverted sort of comedy, full of action and suspense. In them, honour replaces the tragic fate of the classics as a moving force: honour attracts all kinds of people and excites them by the emotions that derive from its different aspects: whether it belongs to the nobility only or whether it can be extended to the popular classes; whether it includes race and orthodox religion as its sources. Above all, the public relished in the dramas related with lost sexual honour, frequently avenged by death.

*Fuenteovejuna*, presented in 1612, is one of the best of Lope's dramas. A noble *comendador* (commander of royal troops) abuses his power when stationed in the village of that name and is killed. The whole population refuses to reveal the identity of the assassin: "Fuenteovejuna did it!", they cry. The King extends his pardon to all for their loyalty and the silence they maintained in spite of the fact that some of them were subjected to torture in order to break it. The obsession with honour had begun to be replaced in Europe by other values, which were more rationalistic and less attached to religion and war. In post Renaissance Spain, however, it persisted. It found it interesting that, in this respect, there was practically no break between the Middle Ages and Modern times. What were the reasons for this? Some that seem reasonable and interesting have been pointed out. In the first place, the presence of war was longer and harder in Spain than in other European countries: the Reconquista was considered by Castilians and other Spaniards as a crusade which demanded an extreme personal involvement that was alien to the ritual world of chivalry. Secondly, the religious factor was paramount in the fight against Islam, and so continued to be when Spain, carried by inertia, assumed the defense of the Counter-Reformation Catholicism against the Protestant Reform. Third and most important, purity of race continued to be a mark of nobility into the 16th and 17th centuries, and beyond. These were all matters of great interest for the popular audiences and Lope and others exploited them with enormous success. Honour in *Fuenteovejuna* was no longer the privilege of the high nobility. The King himself recognized that it also existed in the vengeance of the villagers against the dishonourable conduct of the Comendador.

Leaving aside the love of the public for easy entertainment, the theatre was used as a vehicle of social cohesion, to inspire traditional values in the lower classes, especially loyalty to the king and the nobility, as their main aspiration. This was nowhere made clearer than in the theatre of the other great playwright of the Golden Age, Calderón de la Barca (1600-1681). Not as prolific or popular as Lope, Calderón became the favourite author at the court of King Philip IV. He had one thing in common with Lope, though: they were both ordained priests when they were around 50, after enjoying very eventful lives, which included, in Lope's case, many disastrous love affairs, and, in

that of Calderón, active military duty in the Catalan war of 1640. He was fully immersed in the culture of the Baroque and produced complex dramas, using advanced technology of scene-setting inspired by Italian models. Calderón's works abandoned the realistic plots of Lope's "New Comedy". His plays are filled with ideology, myths and religion. His masterpiece was, curiously enough, a "remake" of an early play of Lope's, *The Mayor of Zalamea*, in which the theme of honour again takes centre stage. On the eve of the invasion of Portugal in 1580, Philip II's troops are stationed in a little village close to the border. An officer of aristocratic caste seduces and rapes the daughter of Pedro Crespo, a rich farmer, and is protected by his superior, also a nobleman. Later, Crespo has become mayor of the village and tries to persuade the officer to marry his daughter, even offering his fortune in exchange. The officer refuses and Crespo orders his execution. The King rewards his adherence to honor and makes him the perpetual mayor of Zalamea.

Calderón is perhaps better known by his philosophical drama *Life is a dream* or by his spectacular Sacramental Plays. In no other work did his art achieve, though, the force and the beauty that is admired in *Zalamea*. The characters are presented with extraordinary vividness and the theatrical plot is built up with technical perfection. The play is interesting too because, although presenting the public with the omnipresence of honour, there is also a change in the prevailing conception which limited this value to the highly placed in the ranks of society. Pedro Crespo has made a fortune as a farmer and is as proud of it as were the possessors of honour in older times proud of their deeds of arms. He therefore considers himself a noble and despises the empty honour of chevaliers. True honour is not based on inherited riches or nobility of blood: those have honour who respect the rights of others and justice: "To the king, Don Pedro famously exclaims, life and property must be given over, but honor is the patrimony of the soul, and the soul belongs only to God".

### 83. NUÑEZ DE BALBOA AND MAGELLAN DISCOVER THE PACIFIC OCEAN

Stefan Zweig declared, in the prologue to his biography of Ferdinand Magellan, that the motive he had for writing it was “shame”. He had just got to know the life and extraordinary adventures of the discoverers of Latin America in detail and was ashamed to be leading the life of comfort and security which had become so normal for people of his time. So he decided to pay homage to those adventurers and delivered two of his most attractive works; to honour Magellan he wrote his beautiful biography; to Núñez de Balboa he dedicated the first historical sketch of his book *Decisive moments in History*, published in 1927.

On September 25, 1513, an extraordinary event happened in the land that is today on the border between Panama and Colombia: the Pacific Ocean was seen for the first time by a European. His name was Vasco Núñez de Balboa, born in Jerez de los Caballeros in the southern region of Spain called Extremadura, bordering with Andalusia. Who was this man and how did he come to this portentous discovery? Vasco belonged to the second wave of Spanish adventurers who travelled to the New World after Christopher Columbus had returned from his first voyage. Columbus had brought back news, somewhat exaggerated, about the marvels and riches he and his companions had found in the lands they had discovered when they came across what they thought to be India and it turned out to be America. If Columbus had difficulty in 1492 recruiting sailors for his trip into the unknown, this time the eager searchers for gold, silver and spices were certainly numerous and daring. Vasco Núñez de Balboa, born between 1473 and 1475, was one of them. He arrived in the Spanish colony called Hispaniola (present-day Dominican Republic) and, after trying different trades and enterprises, left the island for the mainland, or *Tierra Firme*. There he founded with other Spaniards the city of Santa María de la Antigua del Darién, one of the first settlements on the Continent. He ignored the authority of the official commander of the expedition and led the struggle for control of the new colony with

the help both of some fellow Spaniards and with the native *Caciques* (tribe chieftains) they found there. With other rulers of the region he engaged in relations by which he came to know about the abundance of gold and other riches in that territory. He also received news of the existence, beyond the mountains, of a great, boundless “South Sea”.

On the 1<sup>st</sup> September, 1513, Vasco started his exploration across the land. It lasted 25 days, days of penury and hardship through high mountains, abrupt valleys and deep rivers. When he reached the highest peak, the vast expanse of sea that we now call the Pacific Ocean appeared before his eyes in all its majesty. He descended to the shore and, according to the theatrical “mise-en-scène” of the discoveries of that time, walked knee-deep into the water and, raising his sword and banner, claimed possession of the ocean and all the lands surrounding it for the King of Castile. He went back to Darien expecting to be received as a hero, only to find that news of his discovery had reached Spain too late. Because of his initial treason against his superiors, he was tried on the spot and beheaded. After Núñez’s epic discovery, other Spanish explorers continued the drive towards the South, conquering the shore on the “other” side of the American continent, including present day Peru, Ecuador and Chile.

The vast ocean that Balboa saw for the first time was named the Pacific years later, when Ferdinand Magellan (1480-1521) undertook the first navigation across the Ocean in search of the Islands of Spices. He was a Portuguese sailor, born in a region of his country with a beautiful name, *Tras os Montes* (beyond the mountains). He had been on numerous journeys with the Portuguese navy, including one to India. His king John II rejected the project he presented to find the passage to the Moluccas through straits he had imagined connected the Western and Eastern shores of the American continent. In 1518, he proposed the voyage to Charles I, the King of Spain (before he became Emperor Charles V). In spite of Portuguese protests, Magellan sailed from Seville with four ships and a very conflictive crew formed by Spanish and Portuguese sailors. After the obligatory passage through the Canary Islands, they reached the coast of Brazil and continued to sail to the South. The straits which Magellan expected to find was much farther away than he had calculated: he failed to find the passage after many attempts, finding what turned out to be broad rivers

or deep bays but no straits. He faced serious rebellions by the sailors, mostly the Spanish who didn't believe in Magellan's calculations.

But he was right after all and his decimated fleet found the passage to the Ocean on the other side of America, full of physical obstacles, strong winds and powerful currents. They had to travel for months because the Ocean was much wider than the European geographers had thought and, for a long time, without any winds at all, the reason why they called that sea the Pacific. Finally, in 1521, they found what they were looking for: the Spice Islands, the Marianas first and then another archipelago which would be later called the Philippines, in honour of the then prince of Asturias, the future Philip II. The natives were initially friendly and Magellan was able to form an alliance with their chief, who converted to Christianity and accepted the Spanish King's sovereignty and protection. But life was not easy at all on the islands. Our heroes were threatened by a variety of enemies, Portuguese, Muslims and above all the natives of other nearby islands. Magellan was very courageous and a man of honour. So much so that he felt obliged to assist his ally in a war with a rival tribe. These natives were very violent people and their attack was fatal for Magellan: trying to cover the retreat of his fellow sailors in disarray, he fell on the beach wounded by poisonous arrows. The return voyage of what remained of Magellan's fleet to Spain was led by Juan Sebastian Elcano, who took the route toward the west around the South of Africa and so completed the first circumnavigation of the whole globe.

The Philippines were colonized by Spain as a unified archipelago, after several voyages of exploration. The model followed in the American colonies was reproduced in the islands, although the resistance the new conquerors encountered was much fiercer and the emigration from the metropolis far less numerous. The system of *encomiendas* was applied in the beginning and, in the 18th century, the Bourbon monarchy tried to apply the same measures of control they had extended to America. The result was similar in the long run: a nationalistic rebellion that ended in independence with the help of the United States. This happened in 1898, when Spain was also losing Cuba and Puerto Rico. The Philippines became independent only in 1946.

## 84. PIRATES AND PRIVATEERS IN SPANISH HISTORY

A pirate is, generally speaking, a robber on the high seas. But not all robbers on the high seas are pirates. If your king or queen has given you a commission, a “letter of marque”, to rob on the high seas you become a privateer and a respectable citizen who served his country in the privatized war for control of the oceans. Pirates, as Fernand Braudel wrote, are an every-day occurrence in history. They have existed on all the seas and at all times, depending on how strong the states were to repress their crimes. Spain had suffered attacks from pirates since the time of the Romans. The Balearic Islands had to be protected from pirates as early as 123 B.C.: the Republic sent a punishing expedition under the command of a general Metellus, who for his success was given the nickname *Balearicus*. Indeed, the Romans took the threat of pirates to their prosperous maritime trade very seriously. A very young Julius Caesar was kidnapped by pirates near the island of Rhodes in the year 67 B.C. When his ransom was paid, he organized a fleet, captured his captors and had most of them crucified. Later on, Caius Pompeius received the order and the means to achieve a comprehensive solution to the growing problem of piracy from the Senate. The historian Plutarch in his *Life of Pompey* explained how pirates were disrupting commerce and even dared to attack cities on the coast. Pompey divided the Mediterranean into regions and systematically suppressed piracy for a long time in just three months of ruthless repression or deals with pirates.

But history repeats itself and Spain was again deeply involved in piracy or privateering in the 15th and 16th centuries, when the Ottoman Empire was trying to dominate the Mediterranean and threatened not only the Balearic Islands but also Spain’s Eastern coast. The Christian powers of Europe were frightened: they had thought the time of the Crusades was over. But they had to deal with a seemingly unstoppable Muslim drive after the Ottomans captured Constantinople in 1453 and expanded towards central Europe and the Mediterranean. They took the islands of Crete and Cyprus and threatened Malta, which was



successfully defended by the Knights of the Order of Saint John. Then they proceeded to wage their maritime war by proxy: they gave commission to their allies on the North coast of Africa, in Tunis, Tripoli and above all Algiers. The most famous of these privateers were the Barbarossa, a clan of sailors who had already practiced piracy on the Southern coast of Anatolia. They became the scourge of the seas when the Ottoman emperor Selim I entrusted them with the harassment of Christian merchant ships, any enclave on the coast of Africa belonging or being loyal to the Spanish King and even ports along the coast of Spain itself. Suleiman the Magnificent continued the offensive in 1533 through an alliance with the King of France, at war with Spain, who let them occupy the port of Toulon for the purpose.

When Spain and the Ottomans signed their peace in 1580, the Barbarossa and their successors continued enriching themselves as real pirates, without any State commission and Spain had to organize her defense against their attacks. She had recourse, as the Ottomans had before, to regular armies but also to privateers, and the fight against piracy continued to be part of the war against the infidel.

Pirates were a special kind of robber: they needed to be especially bold and daring, even cruel. But they had to be clever too. They had to be able to command a ship and know the dangers of the different seas, the convenient anchorage havens. For obvious reasons, they seldom revealed their whereabouts or their daring crimes. Spain offers one of the few exceptions to this rule of secrecy, a privateer who, once retired, took in 1633 the time to write his memoirs. Captain Alonso de Contreras was a remarkable soldier and sailor at the time of the European Thirty Years' War. He narrated his adventurous life in a clean and direct style. When he was only 14 years old, he killed a fellow student after a minor quarrel. He enrolled in the royal armies and received his Letter of Marque from the Spanish Viceroy in Naples. He started to murder and sack any Muslim ship or port in the Middle Seas under his favorite motto: "We'll dine with Christ or in Constantinople". Contreras never received important commands no matter how hard he tried but in the end he was distinguished with the order of Saint John of Malta for his services.

When the centre of trade moved from the Mediterranean to the Atlantic and the confrontation began between Spain and England we

find more of the same, clandestine wars and ennobled privateers. I am thinking, of course, of Sir Francis Drake (1543-1596), a notorious pirate for the Spaniards, a hero for the British. He was a faithful captain of Queen Elizabeth I in her challenge to the Spanish Empire. His aim was to disrupt the trade monopoly Spain held with the colonies in America granted by Pope Alexander VI. In theory, only Spain could trade with her colonies and these could trade only with Spain, not with one another or with third powers. This monopoly given to "papist" Spain was, of course, recognized neither by Protestant England nor by the Netherlands nor Huguenot France. They all embarked on a systematic attack through privateering of the huge Spanish convoys organized from Seville destined to the fairs in the Caribbean. Portobello, Panama and Cartagena de Indias were repeatedly attacked, as were the cities of Vigo and Cadiz in mainland Spain. Immersed in a critical economic situation, the country did not have the capacity to provide her American colonists with all the goods they needed. The creoles were therefore interested in trading freely with other powers and became their accomplices. They also secretly rejected the monopoly of Spain.

However, as these other powers established colonies in the Antilles, they also wanted to enjoy a monopolistic position in their trade with them and began to suffer the disruption of their commerce by pirates. After the peace of Utrecht ended the War of Spanish Succession, many mercenary soldiers lost their jobs and sought a source of income in piracy. They were "a queer lot", as historian of piracy Philip Gosse calls them: desperate offshoots of dynastic or religious wars, many of them dregs of society from various countries. Some French adventurers, expelled by the Spaniards from Hispaniola (today's Dominican Republic) found a new base on the tiny island of Tortuga, off the coast of Cuba. With the reinforcement of English and Dutch outcasts they created the pirate republic called "Brotherhood of the Coast" and terrorized the merchants on the Caribbean Sea and the British colonies in North America. Protected at first by the British governor of Jamaica, they wrought havoc of Panama and Veracruz under the leadership of such ferocious criminals as Henry Morgan. The pirate, now called "buccaneer", became again "hostis humani generis", the enemy of mankind and Spain at last was not alone in her struggle for peace on the waves.

## 85. PAUPERS AND ROGUES (“PICAROS”)

They are not the same thing. In 16th century Spain, there were many real paupers and also many false paupers, scoundrels who pretended to be poor in order to commit all kinds of crimes and misdemeanors in disguise. In 1598, after several years of economic crisis caused by disastrous harvests, natural disasters and the plague, King Philip II received a long report written by Cristóbal Pérez de Herrera, a medical doctor and military officer. Its title was sufficiently expressive: *A Discourse on the Protection of Legitimate Paupers*. Several measures were proposed: the creation of special homes for the poor, imposing the obligation to work on able paupers, banning female prostitution and so on. This report had an antecedent in a decree Emperor Charles V had issued in 1540 that was never fully implemented. Several doctrinal works had also addressed the problem, starting with the book *De Subventionem Pauperum* (On Helping the Poor) published by Juan Luis Vives in 1526. The general idea behind these proposals was to change the medieval concept of pauperism, which saw in it a mere question of charity under the control of the Church, giving the government a role in its solution. There was also an underlying aim apart from limiting pauperism and crime: to take advantage of the paupers capable of working and employing them to revitalize the Spanish economy at a moment when an incipient capitalism was replacing the feudal system. Pérez de Herrera's report had no practical effect because Philip II died in 1598, the year in which it was published. New attempts had to wait until the enlightened ministers of 18th century Spain proposed their new reforms. Meanwhile, the Church and other religious institutions continued to be entrusted with the problem.

In the same year, 1598, a masterpiece of the so-called “picaresque” literature appeared in Madrid. Its author, Mateo Alemán (1547-1614), was a friend of Pérez de Herrera and included an episode in his novel *Guzmán de Alfarache* that shows their common approach to the subject of “illegitimate pauperism”: the rogue (*pícaro*). Guzmán, after a series of adventures in Spain and in Italy, appears in Milan disguised as a beggar and he commits various acts of fraud. This work is one of

the high literary accomplishments of the Golden Age. It follows the pattern of most “picaresque” novels: they were autobiographical (because who else would write about the lives of such rascals?) and they followed the lives of the main character through many episodes, travels and misfortunes without any real plot. The *pícaro*, moreover, rejected the prevailing idea of “honour” by declaring his origins at the outset: parents who were not only humble but also of dubious reputation. In this sort of literature, “Guzmán” is special because it includes not only adventurous episodes but also lofty moral commentaries, supposedly written by the repented criminal, who had finished his adventures in the galleys. The substance of the book is deeply pessimistic: the life of the *pícaro* is presented as a struggle in a world of vice and meanness. Mateo Alemán, probably a converted Jew, even hints at an idea that comes directly from the Bible: God made a mistake creating man and, in view of the result, repented... when it was too late (Genesis VI.5-7).

*Guzmán de Alfarache* was very successful and was soon translated into many European languages in countries where similar social problems existed. It initiated a fashion that produced many “picaresque” novels during the next half century. The most illustrious precedent of this kind of literature had been, of course, *Lazarillo de Tormes*, a novel published by an anonymous author in 1554. The main characteristics of the genre were already there: a spontaneous style and a tone of realism intended to mark the distance between the new novel and the pompous books of chivalry; a hostile society made of impenetrable castes; hunger as the driving force behind an eventful life; deceit as the weapon for achieving a certain material position in exchange for lost honour; denouncing of superficial religiosity and the corruption of the clergy. Above all, humour in the very comical situations in which *Lazarillo* and the other *pícaros* found themselves, in which the reader is sometimes moved to compassion even towards the worst characters imaginable.

The same contrast with the gloomy world of *Guzmán de Alfarache* can be found in the incursions Cervantes made into the “picaresque”, a world of which he had direct knowledge, acquired during the years he spent in jail in Seville. In the short novel *Rinconete y Cortadillo*, moreover, an interesting description of the world of the *pícaros* of that town is presented in detail. They work in a tightly organized way, like

real mafias. The chief of each group is the absolute ruler and judge: he administers justice according to the strict rules of the trade, including the decision about who can enter the “order”; he negotiates the distribution of areas of influence in the town with the leaders of the other bands; he dictates the use to be given to the revenues from the band’s crimes: he controls the expenses of the organization, charities and bribes to policemen, judges and informers.

In sharp contrast, one of the most famous novels of the “picaresque” genre is set in the gloomy atmosphere of *Guzmán de Alfarache: The life of Paul the Swindler* by the great Francisco de Quevedo. He wrote the book at an early stage of his career, in 1604, shortly after the success of Mateo Alemán. Quevedo was a satirist and wrote bitterly about the underworld of the *pícaros*, without explicit moral comments or any tenderness towards the characters. He followed the pattern of other picaresque novels: the memories of a criminal of low origins, hunger, adventure, exposure to the corruption of nobles and clergymen. El Buscón ends in flight to America after the inevitable episode in Seville, where so many *pícaros* profited from the riches of the town at her most prosperous times. Quevedo was one of the best stylists of the Golden Age, an aristocrat with a broad classical culture, connections with the powerful and political responsibilities. His voice was crudely critical, at times irreverent or even obscene, and he suffered exile and prison for his outspoken satires. In *The Swindler* we can find traces of Quevedo’s basic social and political conservatism, even echoes of the spirit of the Middle-Ages. He presented his character in the worst light, not just because he is a treacherous and vulgar hypocrite. The main objection is that he perpetrates all his crimes to obtain money to allow him a change in his social position. He aspires to scale to the rank of the nobles instead of resigning himself to accepting the place that corresponded to his humble origins. Quevedo was obviously not prepared to accept the social mobility that the new times had made inevitable for Spain and for Europe.

## 86. EMPEROR CHARLES AND HIS HABSBURG INHERITANCE

Charles I of Spain left Bruges on July 4, 1517, with a fleet of 40 ships and a retinue of 160 persons, to take over his kingdoms in Castile and Aragón. They intended to land in Laredo, in the vicinity of Santander, and start their ride South towards Valladolid. Instead, the winds took them far to the West, to a humble village called Tazones in Asturias. The fishermen living there claim that the royal expedition set foot in their little port. In fact, thanks to Laurent Vital, a Flemish page travelling with Charles, we know that they had to sail back and enter the nearby broad estuary of Villaviciosa on September 4 and start from there. This meant a long ride bordering the sea with the high mountains at their back until they found a pass toward the South, an entrance to Castile. Vital left us a vivid account, only recently discovered, of the journey through small primitive villages and the bewilderment of the peasants at the luxurious and cumbersome baggage of the royal retinue.

Charles was 17 years old at the time, a shy and not very talkative young man, well educated in the Court of Margaret of Austria in Flanders, small and with a queer face which showed, for the first time in Spain, the protruding lower jaw that would be so characteristic and visible in his portraits and those of his Habsburg successors. This young monarch reached the coast of Spain with a heavy burden on his shoulders, the so-called Habsburg inheritance. From his maternal grandparents, Isabella and Ferdinand, Charles would receive Castile and her possessions in Africa and America, Aragón, Catalonia, Sardinia, Naples and Sicily. From his paternal grandparents, Maximilian of Austria and Mary of Burgundy, the Austrian lands, the Duchy of Burgundy and the Netherlands. Many coincidences had contributed to the assemblage of such an unprecedented collection of distant, diverse and mostly uncommunicated countries in a single ruler, many timely deaths and unforeseen territorial changes. But also, as Fernand Braudel has shown us, a clear imperialistic design of the House of Burgundy and its old-time allies in the kingdom of Castile, executed through a minutely plotted policy of intermarriages. Be that as it may,

an ensemble almost impossible to govern as a normal political unit. More than a century later, the Count-Duke of Olivares would write a report to the future King Philip IV warning him that the mighty Habsburg inheritance had been “a poisoned chalice”.

To manage this awesome task, Charles had only one clear idea, based on the feudal and dynastic traditions of his family. The territories were his by inheritance and his was the obligation of keeping them together, to defend the patrimony at all costs. Peace in Europe would contribute to this difficult purpose and his French and Flemish advisors, educated in and used to the commercial civilization of the Netherlands, suggested the new king take over the external relations of the whole Empire, while respecting the freedom of the different territories and allowing them to continue governing themselves according to their own laws and traditions. They also advised the Crown to maintain a peaceful relation with France. But this was not so easy: the mighty Kingdom to the North felt understandably threatened, encircled as it was by so many countries united under one single Crown. And there were other threats: England, the Princes and Republics of Germany seconded by the cities of Italy attached to their liberties, the Papal States also as neighbours of the Kingdom of Naples. But the main challenge was the fearful Ottoman Empire pushing in an unstoppable expansive wave towards the Mediterranean and Central Europe.

For this task a conservative, purely dynastic and static policy was not sufficient. A unifying idea was needed and this was provided to Charles by his Grand Chancellor, Mercurino Gattinara, a cardinal of Italian origin who had been trained in Burgundy at the service of the Habsburg family. He had taken his post over when the Lord of Chièvres, who had arrived in Spain together with Charles, died in 1521. Gattinara became the main inspiration for the imperial idea that he instilled little by little in Charles' mind: a powerful Christian empire was necessary to counter the threatening Muslim empire of the Turks. Gattinara was a real man of the Renaissance, an erudite in history and Roman law and a follower of Dante's proposal of a *Monarchia Universalis*, a secular power unifying Christianity on equal terms with the papacy. As an Italian, he believed in the historical permanence of the Roman Empire, according to the so-called *Translatio Imperii*, an idea originated as far back as the biblical book of Daniel, which proph-

esied “an empire that shall never be destroyed”. Spain was destined to be the legitimate successor of the great world empires, including the Roman and the Frankish empire of Charles the Great. This would be the Christian response to the Muslim challenge, no less than to the threat of the Protestant reformation coming from Germany and also to the holy mission of spreading the true faith in the newly discovered territories of the Indies.

This magnificent construction required the king to be crowned with the dignity of the Holy Roman Empire, and Charles obtained this in 1519 against the fierce opposition of the King of France and the Pope, who didn't want an Emperor endowed with such overwhelming power next door to their States. The Castilians and the Aragonese, on the contrary, were not very happy with these grand designs. They were alien to their medieval traditions and, as they correctly foresaw and feared, would cost them a lot of money and ruin Spain in the long run. Charles himself was, as it seems, reluctant to embark on a real imperial enterprise, as advised by Gattinara and the Erasmian intellectuals in his Court. He fought for the title of Emperor but, as for higher ambitions, he was more realistic. He was obliged to act for most of his life on the spur of the moment, attending to momentary threats and circumstances beyond his control: the necessary protection of Italy against the interests of France, the defiance of Martin Luther and the German Protestant Princes, the pirate attacks from the coast of Africa supported by the Ottomans, the rebellion of the nobles in Castile and Valencia... What did he think about the universal monarchy? It is hard to know with any precision. Reviewing his life one gets the impression that he didn't have much time to think. He was a warrior-king in the medieval mood of the Reconquista; in fact, historian Sánchez-Albornoz, always looking for Hispanic essence anywhere, sees in him a typical Spaniard as corresponded to the Castilian and Aragonese side of his ancestry. More impulsive than reflective, proud and passionate, he preferred action over discourse. He may have accepted Gattinara's ideas out of political expediency. He fought the Pope fiercely in defense of his imperial interests. But when he went to Bologna in 1530 to be crowned by the Pontiff as head of the Holy Roman Empire, he knelt and promised Clemens VII that he would limit his ambition to the preservation of what he had received in inheritance.



## 87. TERESA AND JOHN, MYSTIC SAINTS OF CASTILE

Teresa of Avila (1515-1582) and John of the Cross (1542-1591) came into the world not far from each other in two villages of the province of Avila, North of Madrid. They met in 1567, after Teresa had started the arduous process of reforming the order of the Carmelites, to which both belonged. Teresa, born in Avila to a noble family, had spent 20 years in a convent. She was disappointed with the kind of good life the nuns enjoyed since the Rule of the order had been progressively relaxed by the Church. It had little or nothing to do with the original foundation of Mount Carmel in the 12th century: a community of hermits in Palestine inspired by the prophet Elijah and dedicated to contemplation in poverty and work. Teresa, without abandoning the Catholic orthodoxy, wanted to go back to the original spirit and set up a reformation of the order, which she transformed into the Discalced Carmelites. She succeeded, defying the fierce opposition of the traditionally-minded monks and nuns, acting with extraordinary energy to the point of exhaustion and illness. She didn't see herself as a writer, but she was. By order of her superiors, she wrote several books with a didactic purpose: about the reforms she introduced in the Carmel (*The Foundations*), about the mystic way of union with God (*Dwellings of the Spirit*), and about her life (*Vida*). Her autobiography is a very special book, written with simplicity, vividness and, at times, humour, following the inspiration of the famous confessions of St. Augustine of Hippo. Teresa also wrote some verses in a popular vein, but her real gift was for prose. Spanish linguist and historian Menéndez Pidal said that Teresa "spoke in writing". With grammar which was not particularly rich and little literary artifice, she achieved a work of enchanting realism and innocence.

John (later called "of the Cross") was 25 when he joined Teresa in her campaign for reform. He was small in size, dark of skin and frail of health, a pious and apparently simple young man who would sit quietly observing the flowers and the stars, thinking of nothing. He devoted his life to the creation of convents for male Carmelites but in his

heart he was a poet. Some say, and I agree, that he was the finest poet ever in the Spanish language. He studied in Salamanca and had a good literary and theological training. He knew the Bible well and also the theology of St Thomas Aquinas, the writings of European and Spanish mystics and Plato's doctrines. The result was a highly elaborated doctrine of Mysticism: marvellous verses reminiscent of Solomon's *Song of Songs* (*The Spiritual Canticle*) and long poems describing the mystic way (*Ascent of Mount Carmel*, *Dark Night of the Soul*). He presented all of them with long comments in prose to explain in detail the allegorical meaning of his apparently amorous poetry. John's central idea refers to The Night: to become one with God, the soul has to go through a period of self-denial amounting to total abandonment of knowledge or feeling. Darkness suppresses the borders between things and ideas and thus permits direct access to the Divinity. Through this "cloud of unknowing", as another mystic put it, the soul is purified and, God willing, delivered up to the light of the divine union.

Paul Valéry, commenting on the *Cántico*, warned us that this is not reading for everyone, that it speaks only, or at least best, to those who have embarked on the religious way themselves and have a vital empathy with what the mystic has to say. In fact, mystic literature is neither theological nor pastoral writing, it is a language within the language. St. Therese herself warned against any misunderstanding: John's is a specific "mystic style". It has to be understood as the metaphorical way to translate the words of the Spirit and to ignite the love of God in the soul.

This language is universal and as old as the Bible. Mystic literature abounded in Europe in the Middle-Ages: Bernard of Clairvaux, Meister Eckhardt, Tauler, Ruysbroeck, Julian of Norwich...all wrote during the XII and XIII centuries, as did the Muslim and Jewish mystics. If you look at these names, you will see that there are no Spaniards and you may ask why. Well, in fact, there was at least one important mystic in medieval Spain: Ramon Llull (1232-1315). He was a priest, missionary and prolific writer in many fields, best-known by a short work for contemplatives. The *Llibre d'Amic e Amat* (Book of the Lover and the Beloved) is beautiful and interesting in itself, but it is more interesting for what it tells us about the source of inspiration for this and other mystic writings: Llull admitted his debt to the literature of the Sufis,

the Islamic branch of mysticism. He recognized this as something quite normal, which is not so surprising because there had always been a reciprocal influence between Eastern and Western mysticism. The Spanish specialist in Arabic literature, Miguel Asín Palacios, through the life and teachings of the Sufi poet Ibn-Arabi (1165-1240) proved that Islam was somehow “christianized” by its original mystics under the influence of Christian Cenobitic monasticism in the Middle East. The Sufis somehow “enriched” the Koran with Christian doctrines and the sayings of Jesus. They allegedly even attributed to the Prophet words that he had never uttered, in order to adapt his doctrine to ascetic and mystic religious practices. Thus the Sufis were able to elaborate a coherent doctrine which, in turn, influenced the later mystical theology of Catholicism, including the *Summa Theologica* of Thomas Aquinas.

And what happened in Castile? The only real mystic we have been able to quote in medieval Spain was Lull, who was born in Majorca and wrote in Catalan. Castile was busy with the war against the Muslims and could not afford to distract her centuries-long struggle with anything that might recall the Sufi or other branches of the enemy religion. Lyricism and subjective literature was banned by the Church and Monarchy in favour of the religion of the warrior, a militant faith and a strict morality: the virtues of *El Cid*. Once the Reconquest ended, things started to change. During the reign of the Emperor Charles I, the country was opened up to foreign influences, including the teachings of Erasmus and Dutch pietism. Mysticism flourished again, culminating in the works of Teresa and John. This change was not entirely peaceful. The Spanish reform movement reeked too strongly of the “other” Reform and the Inquisition did not leave the mystic writers alone so easily. Although they were later consecrated as saints by the Popes, both Therese and John were repeatedly investigated. John was even imprisoned for his suspicious writings about “love” and for his supposedly Jewish origins. At the time, race and orthodoxy were frequently mixed up. They were never really condemned or tortured but the power given to the Inquisition by the monarchy created in Spain a poisoned atmosphere of mistrust and suspicion “propitious for the informer and the spy”, as John H. Elliot aptly put it.

## 88. CHARLES V AND HIS BANKERS

A curious visitor to the city of Augsburg (Bavaria, Germany) can enjoy an unusual tourist attraction. It is called the Fuggerei, a town within the town built around 1515 by the wealthiest banker in town, Jakob Fugger. Its aim was to accommodate poor families in 106 comfortable and secure apartments, two in each of many neatly lined townhouses, with a square, fountains, gardens and all the utilities that were available at the time. At the entrance an inscription reads: *For the good of their city and in heartfelt gratitude for the worldly goods received by (the Fuggers) from God.* Jakob Fugger, nicknamed “The Rich”, had reasons enough for his unusual initiative. He was indeed provocatively wealthy and perhaps wanted to reconcile his conscience by performing this remarkable charity. Perhaps he also wanted to apologize, as a Catholic, for the very unorthodox methods by which he took his family and his town to the pinnacle of opulence at a time when the Church had not yet relaxed its strict rules against usury and other business devices of large-scale capitalism. Jakob learnt them in Venice, where he was sent as an apprentice. He also absorbed the culture of Renaissance Italy and became a patron of the arts, a sort of German Medici. Albrecht Dürer painted two portraits of him.

The Fuggers had done business with many countries and in many branches of the economy, not only in banking. They took advantage of their fidelity to the House of Habsburg, whose emperor Maximilian was fond of Augsburg and a close friend of Jakob's. Having failed to win the election as Holy Roman Emperor in 1518, Maximilian asked his favourite bankers to support his grandson Charles the following year. Charles had become by inheritance King of Spain and Naples, as well as ruler of the Netherlands and Burgundy. He was too powerful to accommodate the German Princes who wanted a less threatening emperor. He also had to compete with Francis I, the French candidate. Finally the electors unanimously chose the candidate who provided the highest bribes: Charles, whom the Fuggers financed with 850,000 florins, with an additional contribution of 143,000 florins from an-

other family of famous bankers of Augsburg, the Welsers, and a further contribution from Italian bankers.

In the future, Charles would need a great deal of financial support from those families for his ambitious foreign policy, his many wars for the control of Italy and against the Ottomans and the Protestants. When he arrived in Spain in 1517, he found that Castile could not provide sufficient funds for his imperial enterprises. Neither was Aragón able nor did it wish to contribute, not to speak of the more distant components of his Empire in Italy and the Netherlands. Many new taxes had been invented since the time of the Catholic Kings, some revenue was obtained from the riches of the Catholic Church and fresh rights were imposed on the incipient trade with the Indies. But substantial quantities of gold or silver wouldn't start arriving from the American colonies until around 1550: obviously, the imbalance between revenue and expenditure could be bridged only by loans from the bankers of Augsburg and Genoa. Augsburg had become the capital of modern capitalism, after being an important centre of commerce during the Middle-Ages. The Roman Emperor Augustus Caesar had founded the city and given it his name. He had done more than that. He had connected it with Venice through the Via Claudia Augusta, a road that channelled trade between Italy and the South of Germany.

Of course, the bankers not only expected repayment of their loans with high interest. Since this hardly ever materialized, they demanded tangible guarantees from their powerful customers, which in turn gave them the opportunity to improve their international business and income. From Spain, the Genoese obtained the monopoly of the trade of playing cards and the exploitation of salt mines. The Fuggers were given control of the mercury mines of Almadén in Castile and the silver at Guadalcanal, in Andalusia, plus the management of the property of the military orders. But it was the Welsers who obtained what I found the most startling of these collaterals. This family, also from Augsburg, obtained the first monopoly for the production of sugar on the island of La Palma, in the Canaries. Then, from their base in the Hispaniola (today's Dominican Republic) they controlled the traffic in pearls from the island of Cubagua. They finally sought an agreement or "capitulación" with the Spanish monarchy for the administration of "the island of Venezuela", accepting in exchange the obligation to build forts and Spanish *pueblos* on the mainland, importing pines

from Tenerife (Canary Islands) and “very black blacks” from Africa. They sent an expedition of 300 men to Santa Marta and Maracaibo and one of their agents, Ambrosio Alfinger, was appointed governor. He established the first capital of Venezuela in Coro, a city they built beautifully following the colonial model of the Spanish New World. Thus Venezuela was “out-sourced”, as we would say today.

Charles’ basic idea, according to which his kingdoms had to pay for his imperial project, was not well received in Castile, which was the most substantial of these kingdoms but it was not rich enough to finance an assemblage of territories so incoherent and widely extended. The new king didn’t succeed in gaining the adhesion of his new subjects. On his arrival he was found to be clumsy and not very good-looking, he didn’t speak a word of Spanish and he came accompanied by a team of “rapacious Flemings”, as John S. Elliott called them. They distributed among themselves the highest dignities in the Court, including the Archbishopric of Toledo, which went to Guillaume de Croy, the sixteen-year old nephew of the Grand Chamberlain Chièvres. As soon as the new king won the election as Holy Roman Emperor, he prepared to leave for England and Germany, appointing his tutor Adrian of Utrecht as Regent of Castile. An absentee king was the last offense the Castilians were prepared to suffer. They didn’t believe that Charles would ever come back and started a strange rebellion known as the war of the *Comuneros*. It broke out as a quarrel between opposing factions of noble families. After Toledo, several cities like Segovia, Salamanca and Valladolid joined the revolt, mainly out of fear of losing of their local privileges. In the end, the peasants took advantage of the confusion to protest against the aristocracy, transforming the initial conflict of the elite into a social revolution. This strange war lasted almost a whole year, from May 1520, as Charles left Spain to take possession of his new dominions abroad, until April 1521, when the uprising was defeated by troops loyal to the Emperor in the battle of Villalar, near Valladolid. I find it paradoxical that the official name of this village ended by being *Villalar de los Comuneros*. Also that in later years Madrid would honor the main military leaders of the rebellion against the monarchy by giving them the name of three of her best streets: Juan de Padilla, Juan Bravo and Francisco Maldonado. They had been executed on the day after their defeat at Villalar.

## 89. PROTECTING THE INDIANS OF AMERICA

“Are these not men? By which law and authority do you wage war against them and hold them in servitude?” During his sermon at the Christmas mass in 1511, Antonio de Montesinos, a Dominican friar, pronounced these passionate words in favour of the Indians in front of a congregation which included Diego de Colón, the son of Christopher Columbus and his successor as admiral and governor of the American territories discovered by Spain up to that moment. In the years since the discovery of the first islands, colonization had been organized without any specific regulations other than the ones developed for the occupation of Muslim-dominated lands during the Reconquista. The Spanish Monarchs had acted under the mandate of the bulls or papal decrees given by Pope Alexander in 1493 and therefore couldn't avoid the Church taking the right to accompany the colonists and to scrutinize their actions closely according to the doctrines of Catholicism. The missionaries especially rejected the feudal system of *encomiendas* or distribution of land and work force among the occupiers. Their criticism soon travelled to the court of King Ferdinand, who in 1512, issued laws aimed at limiting any excesses, to prevent the treatment of the Indians as slaves and to provide them with religious instruction.

These pious regulations were strongly resisted by the colonists. But the words pronounced by Fry Montesinos, and presumably other Dominicans, were not exactly “the voice of one who cries out in the desert”. Bartolomé de las Casas (1484-1566) assumed the leadership in the struggle against the abuses of the conquerors and devoted his whole life and extraordinary will-power to defending the Indians and attacking the Spaniards. He must have known the abuses he combated well since he himself had started his life in the colonies in 1502 as an *encomendero*, owner of men and land. His basic idea was surprisingly old-fashioned, as it was based on the authority of the Pope: according to his interpretation of the bulls, Spain had the right only to propagate the Christian faith among the Indians. Anything else would be considered crimes and abuses. He incessantly wrote cumbersome “relations”

to the authorities in Spain, abandoned his encomienda and himself became a Dominican friar in 1522. In the meantime, he had travelled to Seville with his fellow friar, Montesinos, and had presented his ideas with passion, first to King Ferdinand and later to the Emperor. He became, understandably, the worst enemy of the encomenderos and, due to his rather megalomaniac character, developed what many have considered a black-and-white presentation of the Spaniards as absolute evil-doers and the Indians as perfect human beings, the first version of the doctrine of “the good savage”. He loved the Indians so much that he suggested they be replaced for work in the plantations by slave work force imported from Africa.

Obviously, these ideas and the vehemence with which Las Casas presented them couldn't but have a strong influence in a country where the Church was practically identified with the State. Charles V is said to have been so affected by the atrocities perpetrated in Peru by Francisco Pizarro in 1534 that he considered the abandonment of the possession of the Indies altogether. The “new laws” approved in 1542 were demanded personally from the Emperor by Las Casas in one of his journeys to Spain. Of course, there were also powerful forces defending the interests and the actions of the colonists. The most influential was Ginés de Sepúlveda (1490-1573), a priest and philosopher who obtained his doctorate at the University of Bologna and held important positions in the highest levels of the Court, including that of chaplain to the Emperor. He had translated the works of Aristotle, including his “Politics”, into Spanish and found justification for the Spanish behavior in the conquest in this work: savage peoples are by nature inferior and should be pacified forcefully and destined to perpetual servitude. Preaching should come after the subjugation of the natives, violently if necessary. A solemn confrontation of these ideas with those of Las Casas took place in a debate held in Valladolid in 1550 where the two clerics exposed their arguments endlessly and inconclusively.

Four years before this famous debate, another Dominican friar, Francisco de Vitoria (1480-1546), had died after a life dedicated to the teaching of theology at the University of Salamanca. Max Weber would say that he was a true scientist in comparison with the politician that Las Casas was. Vitoria was influenced by the latter's criticism of



the Spaniards and wrote very sternly against the events of Peru. In a moderate but no less determined tone, he constructed a legal doctrine for the protection of the Indians in several solemn lectures he imparted in Salamanca between the years 1534 and 1539. The true story of Vitoria's participation in the polemic about the Indians has been known only in recent years thanks to the discovery of some documents that had remained hidden, for reasons that are not difficult to understand. Like Las Casas, Vitoria was, although in a more discreet way, influential with the Emperor Charles, who often sought his advice. His *Relectiones de Indiis*, as his lectures are known, follow a very coherent logic. They start by examining the titles on which Spain based her claim to sovereignty over the discovered territories and their inhabitants. He recognized no title of ownership to the Emperor as such and, as for the Pope, only as far as the evangelization of the heathens was concerned. Neither of them can deprive the Indians of their property or convert them forcibly, except in certain cases in which according to the traditional laws of war there existed "just cause": for example if they attacked them or prevented them from preaching.

The Emperor found that Vitoria's reasoning went too far and sent a letter to his superior, the Prior of the convent of Saint Stephen in Salamanca, warning him and his friars, without expressly mentioning Vitoria, to stop the defense of ideas that put into question "the right that We have to the Indies...damaging to our Royal Crown on these Kingdoms". The publication of any sermons or lectures containing these ideas was to be avoided and any that may be in circulation retired. This letter was signed on November 11, 1539 and its effect was immediate. First, Vitoria eliminated from his lecture "De Tolerantia" of 1538 the pages that have been recently recovered, where the most critical conclusions were written. Second and more important, in his most famous lecture, "Relectio de Indis", imparted in December, 1539, he took pains to find a reasonable title for Spanish sovereignty over the Indies; this was a natural right of communication or international sociability which permitted a power to engage in commercial intercourse with others and gave it the right to acquire ownership and authority forcibly over any people who denied it that right. He was inventing the concept of "international community" and giving later jurists like Hugo Grotius and Alberico Gentili arguments for defend-

ing the freedom of the seas...against the monopoly over Spain on traffic in the Atlantic Ocean. No wonder that these authors, not to speak of the Spanish nationalistic jurists and historians, honoured Vitoria as the “father of modern International Law”.

## 90. POETRY IN RENAISSANCE SPAIN

1526 was a relevant year for the history of Spanish literature. In Granada, during the celebrations marking the election of King Charles V as Holy Roman Emperor, Juan Boscán, a Catalan poet, met the ambassador of the Venetian Republic, Andrea Navagiero, also a poet and a connoisseur of Greco-Latin classical literature. The diplomat advised his friend to use the new style that had conquered Renaissance Italy in the Castilian language: new themes, new moods and new techniques in the composition of verses. Boscan accepted the idea and, together with his friend Garcilaso de la Vega, started to compose verses under the influence of Petrarch and other Italian poets. They abandoned the poetry that had been written in the palaces of Spain during the 15th century, based on popular romances. It had lost its freshness and had become formal and excessively courtly. The new metres they introduced were longer and more elegant, the new subjects transformed classical poetry into the mood of the Renaissance, which affirmed the centrality of man and his emotions in the world.

In the same year, 1526, Garcilaso de la Vega (1503-1536) fell in love with a Portuguese lady-in-waiting at the Court, Isabel de Freyre who didn't return his passion. She married some years later and died soon after, giving her admirer a great deal of ideal subjects for his poetry: the pain of love and life lost. Garcilaso was born to a noble family and very early entered the service of the Emperor. He participated in many battles alongside his master, including the war against the *Comuneros*, battles in Rhodes, Navarre, Tunis and finally France, where he was mortally wounded. He must have had quite a stubborn character, because on a certain opportunity he dared to attend a wedding which Charles had disapproved and so disobeyed his King. As a result, he was confined first on an island in the Danube, where he could give vent to his bitter suffering in wonderful poems and later at the Court in Naples, where he was in close contact with the poets of the Italian Renaissance. He was a courageous soldier, a refined courtier and a well versed intellectual at a time of revival of classical literature. After his exile in Naples, he moderated the vehement style in which he

had depicted the inner battle between reason, passion and despair. He began to analyze his emotional states with deep melancholy, sincerity and elegance. His poetry reached a high degree of musicality in the description of nature, which was the main background of his pastoral works. He also took his technique of composition much farther than his classical models, Virgil and Horace, when he created a new metre, the “lyre”, that would be used later by Saint John of the Cross and Fray Luis de León.

Garcilaso was a real “man of the Renaissance”, especially of the Spanish version of that movement. His was already a modern mind, in which the individual occupied centre-stage and knowledge replaced the dictates of dogma. He departed from tradition in many ways: he never used religion as a central subject of his poems, he wrote with contempt on the chivalric ideals and warmongering spirit of his fellow aristocrats. At the same time, he was not as dependent on the classical models as were his Italian contemporaries. The Spanish renaissance didn't abandon the strong culture of the Middle-Ages and achieved a certain “nationalization” of the new styles. The Spaniards went from mere imitation to “emulation” of the classical culture. In the polemical comparison of the modern writers with the old, the former were often preferred. In Garcilaso the idea of progress, so typical of the Renaissance, appeared for the first time. Renaissance thinkers abandoned the preeminence of faith and favoured reason, advance in the sciences and the geographical discovery of new worlds. A new sense of history as a dynamic development of society replaced old ideas of cyclical movement or the belief in the impending end of times, which writers like Saint Augustine of Hippo saw as the logical consequence of the decline and fall of the Roman Empire.

The cosmopolitan, fully European spirit of the reign of Emperor Charles in Spain didn't last long. Defeat in the struggle against the Protestant Reform in much of Europe gave way to the closing of the modern mind. Spain was culturally isolated and became, in the reign of Philip II, the fortress of the Counter-Reformation. Catholicism was given the role it had enjoyed in the Middle Ages, religious books were favoured and published in abundance, foreign travel of students was restricted and so was the influx of foreign publications and scholars in Spain. Only the extraordinary force of Spanish tradition can explain

that amid such constraints and obstacles a work of the quality of that of Fray Luis de León (1527-1591) could be created. Born near the city of Cuenca, he was trained in classical studies and the Hebrew language at the University of Salamanca, where he soon became a professor. He spent 5 years in prison because the Inquisition didn't approve of his translation of the Song of Songs, done directly from the original instead of from the Vulgate, the official translation of the Bible into Latin. This may give us an idea of the suffocating atmosphere which strict adherence to the rules of the Council of Trent had led to. Fray Luis was finally released and went back to his chair joking bitterly: "as we were saying yesterday..."

Fray Louis' work was not very extensive but his quality remained long unsurpassed. Instead of adhering to the Latin he knew so well, he defended the use of the Castilian language as a vehicle for the highest and most complex theological and linguistic thinking. He proved this in his book on *The Names of Christ* and other erudite works. He didn't write much poetry and he even dismissed his poems as secondary entertainment: perhaps out of modesty, perhaps lest the Inquisition might pay too much attention to them. They are simply perfect in their form and language as well as in their inspiration. He relishes on the subject of peace of mind and serenity, because he had, it seems, a strong and even choleric character. The retired life in contemplation of nature, the serene night in which to watch the order of the stars, all his themes speak of nostalgia of a perfect world. His ode to Francisco de Salinas, a blind musician and theoretician at his university, praises music listened to in silence, "drowned in a sea of harmony" as a way towards virtue and contact with God.

## 91. CHARLES IN ITALY AND ERASMUS IN SPAIN

It is hard for a modern mind to read something as astonishing as the address pronounced by Charles the Emperor in 1536 in Rome. He was speaking before Pope Paul III, the College of Cardinals and other high authorities. He expressed himself in Spanish and soon came to the point: the King of France is guilty of being in alliance with the infidels (Turks) and with the heretics (Protestants) against his Christian Empire; he, Charles, doesn't want to wage war against Christians and neither is it his aim to dominate the world, as his thoughts and deeds have proved. Since, as it appears, the King of France acts out of hatred against him, he challenges him to solve the conflict through a personal duel "with weapons or without, with a sword or a dagger, on land or sea, on a bridge or an island, in private or before our armies: wherever and however it might be that he may want and may be just".

The origins of this rancorous feud between the Kings of Spain and France date back at least to 1494, when the French King Charles VIII invaded Italy, then under the influence of the Pope and Spain. From Naples he intended to go on towards the East, with the traditional French ambition of conquering Jerusalem and Ottoman Constantinople. Charles VIII and his successor Louis VII were accused of seeking world domination and the imperial crown. After severe defeats and forced redeployments, the new King Francis I brought France back to Italy. He seized the Duchy of Milan in 1515 with the support of Pope Leo X. This French preponderance in Italy was no light matter. In the meantime, Charles of Spain had received his famous Habsburg Inheritance and Milan was the strategic key to communication by land between the Spanish armies in Italy and The Netherlands. Spain couldn't afford to lose it and so began a series of wars that devastated Italy and only ended with the decisive victory of the Spanish at the battle of Pavia, in 1525.

Quite extraordinary things then started to happen. King Francis I was taken prisoner to Madrid, where he spent a year in captivity until a fragile peace was signed, which the French Monarch breached forthwith as soon as he was allowed to return to Paris. He formed a

new alliance with the Pope, the League of Cognac, now reinforced by England, Florence, Milan and Venice. The support of the Pope was the straw that broke the camel's back. In 1527, Charles sent an army of 15,000 mercenaries, mostly German, to Rome. The Pope was confined to the Castel Sant'Angelo and the Duke (condestable) of Bourbon, who led the Emperor's troops, was killed during the attack. The troops had not received payment for a long time and the consequences were disastrous. Without control, they ransacked the city, its palaces and churches. Chaos was rampant, the Sistine chapel was used as a stall for the horses, approximately 4,000 persons were killed and many more wounded. Miraculously, the Vatican Library was saved. It is said that the Emperor was unaware of this notorious "Sack of Rome" and it seems likely that he didn't order it. But it certainly ended the confrontation and established a bad reputation for Spain and a certain balance in Italy between Empire and Papacy. Charles had to turn to other fronts, this time with lukewarm Papal support, against the Ottomans and the Protestants.

"Rome got no more than it deserved". This harsh account of so much violence came, surprisingly, from Alfonso de Valdés, a humanist and brother of the Emperor's secretary. For him, the sack of Rome came as God's punishment for the sins of the Pope and his depraved court. Other no less benevolent assessments could be quoted. Luis Vives, another humanist, wrote to his friend Erasmus of Rotterdam that what had happened to Rome was "a beautiful opportunity granted by Christ to our times for salvation". The Spanish ambassador, in a dispatch from Rome wrote to the Emperor: "all damage that your majesty can inflict on the Pope will be fair and justified".

Most of these words of support for the Emperor came from writers and politicians that we identify with the teachings of Erasmus and it is somehow strange that they, of all people, should write in praise of war and imperial ambitions. Erasmus (1466-1536) was already famous and had become something like a moral point of reference in Europe. Cardinal Cisneros invited him to travel to Spain, as had done the leaders and monarchs of other European centres of power. Charles V and his Flemish entourage were also acquainted with his teachings and asked him to accompany them on their first trip to Spain in 1517. Although the master refused this honour, his works became widely

known in the country in the following years. He opposed the idea of a universal monarchy and rejected war as a means of solving conflicts, but his advocacy of peace in Europe was attractive to the Emperor in his aim to conserve his inheritance and defend the unity and orthodoxy of the Church. Erasmus' acid criticism of ecclesiastical corruption was also well received in intellectual circles close to the Emperor. Also, in the breeding ground of Spanish mysticism, his advocacy of a less ceremonial and more private exercise of piety could not but attract the interest of the most well educated. That is why the "praise of the folly" of the sack of Rome strikes one as contradictory coming from some of Erasmus' followers. I was surprised to read the words of Vives just quoted coming from someone held as a theoretician of pacifism. Historian Américo Castro, reviewing the monumental *Erasmus and Spain* written by in 1937 by the French hispanist Marcel Bataillon, maintains that in Spain "to be" Erasmian was more relevant than the actual doctrines proposed by Erasmus.

In fact, his *Philosophia Christi* was rather alien to the traditions of Spanish religiosity and his bitter attacks against the regular orders were too dangerous, coming from a foreigner above all, and were sure to provoke a strong reaction from the Franciscans and Dominicans who controlled the Inquisition, then in search of new victims after having completed the job against Jews and Moriscos. In spite of the protection of the Bishop of Seville, Alonso Manrique de Lara, a former inquisitor, Erasmus became the new target for the extreme traditionalists. He, who in spite of his criticism for the excesses of the Church, had remained a faithful Catholic and, notwithstanding the proximity of some of his theses with those of Luther, had rejected the latter's extremism, was easy prey. The Church wanted to close Spain to any influence coming from the Lutherans whom the Emperor Charles was fighting in Germany. Erasmus was a nuisance and soon began to be identified with illuminists and heretics. His influence remained firm among the educated minority, his traces visible in the works of Cervantes and others. But life went back to normal and the Counter-Reformation did the rest, keeping Spain aloof from European influence during the reign of Charles' successors.



## 92. TOMAS LUIS DE VICTORIA AND THE MUSIC OF THE RENAISSANCE

In history, changes happen when they happen, not when we start to have documentary evidence of them. This universal truth was applied by Spanish musicologist and composer, Adolfo Salazar, to the slow emergence of polyphony, that is, the art of singing or playing with several voices which sound simultaneously and harmonically. Polyphony was the characteristic music that flourished in the Renaissance when the Catholic Church reluctantly accepted for its liturgy a way of making music it had rejected for a long time. The tradition of singing in one voice, as in Gregorian chant, was considered more appropriate for religious devotion than the profane music practiced by the people and the courts. In 1325, Pope John XXII even issued a Papal decree prohibiting the chant in intervals of third and sixth, which were commonly used in madrigals and dances. Of course, he was not obeyed. The polyphonic way of singing began adding a second voice to a basic line and evolved, as if adding storeys to a building, with a third voice, a fourth and so on. Polyphony spread from the North of Europe towards the South, like the Gothic style in architecture. In the Franco-Flemish school it reached the the highest levels of sophistication and complexity. When it arrived in Italy and Spain, the Church couldn't resist the wave and decided to appropriate it and turn it into its own way of expression.

The Council of Trent, which lasted from 1545 until 1563, opened with a discussion on the matter. The traditionalists tried to stick to the art of the past, Gregorian and in Latin, but the single-line singing was no longer adapted to the new function of the chant that the Church needed: the expression of human feelings and the propaganda of a militant faith against the Protestant reform. Polyphony was finally approved under the pressure of Spanish cardinals with the support of Philip II and the model adopted was the limpid and serene music of Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina (1525-1594). His Mass in honor of Pope Marcellus II, the Pontiff who opened the Council at Trent, was far from the excesses of the Flemish masters Josquin des Prés and

Orlando di Lasso. It was an accomplished synthesis between the old monody and the new harmonies. It became, together with Gregorian chant, the music for high mass and other solemn liturgical celebrations.

Palestrina was the musical director of the Collegium Romanum until 1573, when he was replaced by a young Spanish musician, Tomás Luis de Victoria. Born in Avila around 1548 and trained as a choirboy in the town's Cathedral, he had arrived in Rome when he was 19 years old, thanks to a grant he received from King Philip II. He held several posts in the numerous Church institutions of the Catholic capital: among others, the Collegium Germanicum, and the Church of Santa María da Monserrato. He sang and composed abundantly and had his first collection of masses published in Venice in 1572 under the protection of the Archbishop of Augsburg in Bavaria. In 1575 he was ordained priest and was appointed chaplain of the church of San Girolamo, where Saint Philip Neri was leading a movement for the "re-evangelization" of the morally deteriorated city of Rome and of Catholicism in general. Victoria remained in Rome until 1586, when Philip II appointed him chaplain of a convent in Madrid, where the King's sister, María, the Dowager Empress, had retired after the death of her husband, Maximilian II of Habsburg. Victoria remained in this influential convent of Clarissan nuns, *The Royal Barefoot Nuns*, as an organist until the end of his days in 1611.

By all accounts, the music of Tomás Luis de Victoria was the highest achievement of Spanish, if not of European, Renaissance music. As a young student and priest he composed closely following the style of Palestrina, the recognized master of his time in the Papal Court. He probably also wanted to adapt to the limits set to polyphony by the Council of Trent. But his Roman works already announced how he would surpass his brilliant model. There was an urgency, a intensity of religious emotion that would flourish openly in his mature years back in Madrid, setting him apart not only from Palestrina but also from Cristóbal de Morales, another Spanish musician who had been in Rome before Victoria, as well as from the Flemish school. If the luminous Palestrina evokes ample, clear and spacious churches, Victoria frequently suggests a rather sombre atmosphere, although he wrote in an uplifting mood as well: such as, for example, his *Missa Pro Victoria* celebrating

the Spanish success against the French in the battle of Saint Quentin. However, Thomas never wrote profane music and devoted his art exclusively to the religious services of the Church. His absolute masterpiece, together with the music he wrote to accompany the rites of the Holy Week, was his *Officium Defunctorum* or Requiem Mass. He composed it for the funeral of his protectress, the Empress María, when she died in 1603. This mass reveals Victoria's total mastery in the polyphonic technique, which he composed, not for the sake of virtuosity or brilliance, but with absolute fidelity to the religious function of the music, masterly adapting it to the spirit of the text. He rendered it with passionate and tragic expression reminiscent of the religious statues of his contemporary Alonso Berruguete, a student with Michelangelo.

Not much is known about the character of Victoria. Naturally, some writers, led by Henry Collet in his book of 1913 *Spanish Musical Mysticism*, have fallen into the temptation of assimilating the composer to the Castilian mystics of his time like Saint Teresa of Avila, the town where Victoria was born. There is no evidence, however, of any contact between the two or of any strictly mystical experiences of the master. His music reveals, of course, deep religious emotions, but there are in his life also traces of a very pragmatic behavior and ambition. He always remained close to the House of Habsburg. Philip II, to begin with, who paid his stay in Rome, was a good connoisseur and had arrived in Spain accompanied by a competent chapel of Flemish musicians. Victoria dedicated to this king one of the collections of his masses and motets, and did the same in 1600 to Philip III shortly after his accession to the Spanish throne. He had received several "benefices" in Spanish cathedrals when he was still in Rome and it is easy to imagine that he had made a small fortune and had much influence by the time he was given the charge of chaplain of the Dowager Empress. Rather than speculate on his mysticism, I would rather simply listen to his wonderful music. After all, the mystics wanted silence and solitude. Victoria was mainly a very busy composer and priest, passionate about his music and his religion, not just *le singe de Palestrina* (the ape of Palestrina) as jealous French contemporaries mocked him. He was, very justly, recovered by musicologist Felipe Pedrell at the end of the 19th century as one of the highest glories of Spanish culture.

### 93. ON FEUDALISM IN AMERICA

What was happening in Spanish America when nothing happened? From the discovery in 1492 until about 1750, very little indeed in terms of political and social change: it was one of those periods that, according to the French historian, Fernand Braudel, belong to “immobile” history. 1492 was a crucial date, no doubt, but what we can see happening afterwards was simply the transplanting of the Castilians to a new continent. Not in order to do or to learn new things, but to continue their centuries-long way of living in a new territory, a greater Castile. When the war of Reconquest ended, the expansive historical effort of eight centuries could not be so easily stopped. The Castilian nomad warriors could not help continuing their traditional way of life. Continuity is for me the key word. By 1492, control of the Canary Islands offered the necessary launching pad for long-range navigation. America was discovered by chance, but in little more than fifty years the whole continent was explored and secured for the Castilian Crown. The spirit of conquest was the same: as in the “Reconquest”, the new settlers wanted to occupy the new lands for Christianity and to use their riches to finance their holy mission which continued to be the always delayed Crusade to Jerusalem. The Indians were all right to win for the true faith, since the Moors of previous centuries were no longer there to be converted.

The Castilians didn’t colonize America in the usual sense of the word. A Colonial Pact came much later, in the middle of the 18th century. Rather, they created new “republics”, new territories belonging to the Crown and subject to the old Castilian customs. As they had done with the lands taken from the Moors in the Reconquest, the Monarch granted these lands to the chiefs who had accomplished or financed the war effort. In the newly discovered Castile, the conquerors received land and Indians to work them and the landowners became a new class of feudal lord, the *encomenderos* or owners of an *encomienda*, not very different from those who remained in Spain. They created similar tensions to those caused on the mainland by their aim to gain autonomy from the Crown, in contrast with the firm will of the Mon-

archs to reinforce their authority and create a real absolute nation-state in the modern sense. In America, the landowners had viceroalties and captain-generalcies above them that represented the Crown and tried to impose royal authority. Underneath were the Indians and the mestizos of various kinds. At the bottom of this system of castes were the African slaves that were imported once the extension of agriculture in such huge territories made them necessary.

The task completed by the Spaniards in the first fifty years of colonization was almost incredible. The Church accompanied the conquerors as an integral part of the project of the Castilian Crown. Many priests and theologians discussed the nature of the Indians and tried to exert influence on the landowners so that they should treat them as human beings. They exerted their influence on the Monarchs asking them to legislate in this spirit. The numerous *Indian Laws*, together with norms dictated on the spot by the Spanish authorities to adapt Castilian Law to local conditions, plus certain “creole” customs that started to develop soon, formed a body of Spanish-Indian law that remained in force at least until the end of the Spanish presence on the continent.

After the first colossal effort, a long period followed in which truly “nothing happened”. The social structure was maintained for almost two centuries with little or no change. The hostility between “real” Spaniards and American-born creoles grew, the lines of separation between the economic and racial castes widened, the weight of the Church and religious orders became heavier. The economy suffered the normal cyclical crises, one especially deep in the middle of the 17th century which coincided with the beginning of Spain’s decadence and no doubt contributed to it. But, in general, one can speak of a period of political stagnation, or, as historian John A. Crow has written, of “drowsy monotony”: two societies existed side by side and had more or less peaceful relations in each of the different territories. These were isolated and kept apart by the geographical distances and enormous natural obstacles which separated them. The Castilian laws that were supposed to regulate life in the colonies were implemented only up to a point. One of the most surprising principles of the traditional legal order was: “there will be obedience but not compliance”. There was in Castile a *fuero* or implicit constitution that made the King subject to

certain ancient laws. Were he to order something that the people considered contrary to that constitution (*contra-fuero*), a petition to rectify would be transmitted to the King and the law would not be implemented until the King had decided on it. This trick was not easy to use in Castile, in the vicinity of the King, much more so in the times when the Monarch was set upon consolidating his absolute power. But the New World was distant and different. The creoles did not protest the laws that went against their interests: they simply ignored them. Life went on in spite of the repeated efforts of the viceroys to enforce the will of a distant Royal Court. The reaction of the King to disobedience was never very firm and this “benign neglect” permitted the American affairs to develop independently from the motherland, giving birth to a new political and social culture.

The distance widened slowly, but it would be fateful at the end of this period of uneventful consolidation of the empire. Take contraband for example, a key to understanding the way of life of the colonies and their eventual rebellion against the Spanish Crown. Spain had created a system of exclusive colonial rights, aimed at the complete control of the wealth coming from and going to the New World. But no less systematic was the response of the foreign traders: namely, fraud on a grand scale through the forging of documents on the way to and from the Indies; or else outright contraband, whose value at the beginning of the 17th century was roughly equivalent to the total amount of the monopolistic revenues of the Crown. As a consequence, the Dutch first, later the French and the British, started trading directly with the Spanish colonies. The Spanish Navy was powerless to control the enormous contour of the continent and the local authorities participated and profited from the illicit business treating it with open tolerance. By 1686, it is calculated that the combination of contraband and corruption controlled two thirds of the colonial commerce. The creoles became rich in this system and one can easily understand that both the landowners and the traders would not be very happy when the Bourbon monarchs of the 18th century tried to put an end to all these practices, through Royal Companies which operated on both shores of the Atlantic. Creole “nationalism” was born and, of course, would never disappear.

## 94. MONARCHIA HISPANICA: ISABELLA MAKES HER CHOICE

Isabella of Castile was difficult as a sister. Her brother King Henry VI had carefully plotted for her a marriage of convenience with the King of Portugal. Not that this monarch were very convenient from a personal point of view: he was an aged man and probably not very attractive. The 17-year old Isabella wanted to have the last word and took Henry and the Portuguese faction of the court by surprise when, in 1469, she secretly married a young man with the reputation of a conqueror of lands and women: Ferdinand, Crown-Prince of Aragón and King of Sicily. According to historical gossip, she fell in love and made her decision the moment she saw him. She was making a momentous political choice. A Portuguese marriage, if and when she became queen, would have united Castile and Portugal, creating a huge Atlantic empire and probably a modern monarchy with centralized power with its capital in Lisbon, the gateway to the ocean. But all this happened around 1468, when America had not yet been discovered, so that Isabella couldn't have possibly imagined this grand project. As for King Henry VI, given the early ambitions and strong character of Isabella, a possible contender for the succession in the throne, he probably just wanted to get rid of her. But Isabella chose a completely different marriage and strategic prospect: the union of the crowns of Castile and Aragón. A risky decision, because she was to make her kingdom, historically oriented to military and religious expansion, an ally with Aragón, a century-long Mediterranean power centred on commercial rather than territorial growth.

Isabella was also difficult and stubborn as a wife. In the marriage contract that the future Catholic Kings signed when they married in 1469, she made it clear that her husband would have strictly limited functions at her side and that she would be the Queen Proprietress of Castile (*reina propietaria*). In this way she expressed her concern lest Ferdinand might be tempted to become a pretender to the Castilian throne according to the laws of Aragón, which gave preference in the succession to the male line (Ferdinand's dynasty was the same as Isabella's, the Trastamaras). Be

it out of love or out of political expediency, anyway, the couple achieved a remarkable political result once they received their respective thrones, Isabella in 1474 and Ferdinand in 1481. They didn't create a single modern state like the ones that were emerging in France or England since the Renaissance because the structures of Castile and Aragón differed profoundly and neither the Queen nor the King wanted to or were able to change them. In spite of these differences and of a rather stormy conjugal relationship, Isabella and Ferdinand were able to accomplish a formidable historical project. Ferdinand was given important functions in Castile as military and diplomatic leader and made a decisive contribution to the final victory of the Reconquista at Granada and in support for Columbus' travels of discovery. Together, they succeeded in restoring law and order in their kingdoms after decades of chaos and civil war and achieved religious unity, suppressing any faith other than the Catholic by force. They did many things but let their respective kingdoms go their own way. The long-term consequences of their model of state building are still present today.

Isabella's main task was to concentrate authority in Castile. This she did with her characteristic determination and following a method reminiscent of Augustus Caesar and the Roman Empire: she conserved the traditional institutions of the era that was ending and progressively emptied them of real powers, transferring them to the Crown. In order to diminish the power of the nobility she acted as the monarchs of other European countries were doing, she went over their heads to ally the Crown with the municipalities and with the people. To achieve this she unified the *Hermandades*, a police force that had been developing on a local basis throughout Castile, and excluded the nobles from its command. With the powerful religious-military Orders she did the same: she let them be while, at the same time, she obtained a Papal Bull which transferred their revenues to the Crown. To obtain efficient administrative institutions, she excluded the magnates from the Royal Council, giving the power to a new class of *letrados*, lawyers and bureaucrats. Finally, to control the municipalities, she created the *corregidores*, officials chosen by the Monarch from outside the town involved in order to "assist", that is, in effect to control, the local authorities.

In his kingdom of Aragón, Ferdinand did the same thing, that is, he reinforced the existing medieval institutions, only that the result



went in the opposite direction. Be it out of conviction or because he had insufficient power against the nobles and the cities, in 1481, Ferdinand agreed with the Cortes of Catalonia, where serious troubles had been happening, to reaffirm the centuries-old constitution of the Kingdom of Aragón, which restricted the powers of the Monarch. The system of so-called “pactism” included the possibility for the Catalan authorities to repeal royal decisions that infringed the country’s recognized privileges or liberties. In this way, Ferdinand was able to concentrate on the foreign policy and military action of the combined kingdoms of Castile and Aragón. Thus, together with Isabella, he contributed the most important successes of Spain as a modern power: on the basis of their two separate and secondary kingdoms they created a world empire. Ferdinand, according to his contemporary observers, Niccolo Machiavelli or the Florentine Ambassador Francesco Guicciardini among them, had a project for the union of the crowns as a subject of foreign relations which anticipated the idea of sovereignty. Using a reorganized national army and permanent diplomatic missions and a certain prophetic, even messianic spirit of mission, the Catholic King was able to reject the French invasion of Italy, establish a Spanish presence in the North of Africa and conquer the kingdom of Navarre for Castile. Looking at his portrait, the mighty King Philip II would say of him: “To this one we owe everything we have”.

The great Ferdinand, however, had a sad end. His troubles began as soon as Isabella died. Her exclusivist vision of the Castilian identity was reflected in the will she made in 1504, a few months before she passed away. Ferdinand was deprived of the title of King of Castile, which went directly to Johanna, his and Isabella’s daughter. He was Regent of the Kingdom but, rejected by the Castilian nobles, had to leave for Aragón. In revenge, it seems, he married a French princess, Germaine of Foix and entered an alliance with her brother King Louis XII, an enemy of the Spanish claims in Italy. In 1506, the new King of Castile and León, the Austrian Archduke Philip I “The Handsome”, died in suspicious circumstances. His wife Johanna “The Mad” was declared unable to govern, also by means of doubtful devices. Ferdinand recovered the regency of Castile and died in 1516. Only a year later his grandson Charles arrived in Spain to become king and later emperor.

## 95. LA CELESTINA, CASTILIAN SOCIETY IN CONFLICT

At the end of a long monologue, an old man called Pleberio closes *La Celestina* with these words: “in this my last and uncomfortable old age...why hast thou left me in sorrow, why hast thou left me comfortless and all alone in this vale of tears?” He is addressing his daughter, Melibea, who has taken her life in desperation after finding her lover Calisto dead. Calisto, a noble Castilian had a hard time in winning the love of the virtuous Melibea, the daughter of a converted Jew. He needed the complicity of his own and Melibea’s servants and the decisive intervention of Celestina, the main character of the story, a cunning procuress and suspected witch, capable of involving even the honest Parmeno in the intrigue, a servant of Calisto’s whom she corrupts with cajolements and the help of Areusa, one of her prostitutes.

*La Celestina*, or *The Tragicomedy of Calisto and Melibea*, was first published in 1499 and seems to have appeared out of nowhere as a great work of art. Some Spanish poets had abandoned the epic stories of the medieval “romances” and timidly started to find a new voice to express their personal feelings and frustrations. Otherwise, the reading of the happy few who could read was limited to chivalry books and mediocre sentimental novels inspired by the Italian and French fashions of the time. *La Celestina* towers like a lonely tree over everything that had been written before and much of what was written afterwards. This long work, the first real novel written in the Spanish language, tells in the form of a dialogue, a story of love and death, not a very original plot but developed with astounding reality and profound psychological genius. The author, Fernando de Rojas, confesses modestly that he limited himself to completing a couple of acts he had found, written by someone else. The language is a fully mature Castilian: the characters, depending on their social condition, speak after the high Italianized culture of the upper classes or in the low style of the people, except when the servants address their masters trying to imitate the way they speak. They are defined by what they say, without descriptions or moral comment, through simply expressed but deep

glimpses into their souls. Celestina in particular lives in all her meanness and cunning for evil like a real person, and is fully convincing in her vividness and truth.

This fascinating novel-play was written at a time of deep crisis for the Castilian society. With the Reconquista about to end and a deep economic depression which had engulfed the whole of Europe since the end of the 14th century, the social tensions between classes and between castes had come to the surface. The confrontation between the nobles and the monarchs brought about no less than four civil wars that also involved the protest of the peasants against their feudal lords. From the last of those conflicts there emerged the reign of the Catholic Kings. They imposed a certain order and a period of peace after completing the Reconquista with their victory over the Moorish kingdom of Granada. But they had to reach a compromise with the aristocrats who had made the war effort possible, and they were able to maintain most of their privileges. They were envious of the *letrados*, lawyers and bureaucrats mainly of Jewish origin who were entrusted by the King and Queen with the task of re-ordering their realms. The nobles were in turn hated by them, whose aim was mainly to gain access to the class of *hidalgo*. The result was social unrest and pessimism, a growing distance between the upper classes and an incipient proletariat. *La Celestina* narrates the conflicting love between the noble Calisto and the rich “new Christian” Melibea: the social mores didn’t approve of the marriage of those whose different caste set apart. All of this is masterfully described against a background of a low world of unfaithful servants, rascals and prostitutes. An erratic Castile, bitter and lacking in moral sense, bewildered because no longer engulfed in heroic wars, disappointed by the loss of chivalrous honor.

Fernando de Rojas (1476-1541) was the son of converted Jews from the village of Montalbán who had sufficient means as to be able to send their son to Salamanca to study law and later make a comfortable living in Talavera as a judge. In Salamanca he lived with many other students of Jewish origin at a time when the theology of Saint Thomas Aquinas was being revived following the conservative trend of the Church and the Monarchy. It is not difficult to find the traces of the Jewish origins of the author in his masterpiece. *La Celestina* deals, of course, with the tragic consequences of uncontrolled passion, but

it doesn't go further in presenting moral considerations. In contrast with the abundant religious books published at the time, it contains no reference to any religion, either Jewish or Christian. The words of Melibea's father reproduced at the beginning are full of bitterness and desolation, even when he complains about old age as an "uncomfortable" state. All the characters end tragically regardless of their behaviour in life: there are no traces of a sense of sin and repentance to be found anywhere. In the tradition of Dom Sem Tob and other medieval Jewish poets, what we witness in *La Celestina* is mostly uncertainty about existence, anguish caused by the conflict between life and our surroundings, the feeling of a soul that is out of place in society.

The sad fate of the converted Jews or "conversos" expelled from Spain belongs to a time which is not very distant from the years in which *Celestina* came to literary life. After centuries of a more or less peaceful coexistence with both Christians and Muslims, the crisis of the 14th century altered the conditions of life for many Jews. Widespread persecutions erupted throughout Spain after anti-Jewish riots took place in Seville in 1391. Many fled to the North of Africa and an estimated 100,000 converted in order to escape direct persecution by the Inquisition. They continued to hold important positions in society, as lawyers, priests, intellectuals, even as members of the very same Inquisition that was created to persecute them. But these converted Jews were not comfortable among the "old-Christians", especially of the lower classes. They blamed them for their poverty, envying their social success and accused them of any misfortune they suffered, as had happened when all over Europe the great plague of 1348 was blamed on the Jews. They were accused of the most incredible crimes and suspected of not having truly accepted the Christian faith and of continuing to perform their rites and customs in secret. A byproduct of this atmosphere filled with tension and hatred was a kind of skeptic and faithless *converso*, installed in society but aloof from it. They were numerous in intellectual circles and even more radically kept apart from the society of old Christians. Fernando de Rojas, the genius who gave Spain her first novel, an achievement only surpassed by Cervantes and his *Quixote*, belonged to this group of people.

## 96. EARLY QUARRELS OVER GIBRALTAR

This time I'm not referring to the well-known conflict between Spain and Britain brought about when, after the Spanish war of Succession, the Peace of Utrecht granted Gibraltar to the British Crown. Long before that, this impressive mountain which projects itself proudly out into the sea had been repeatedly a "rock of contention". It offers an interesting example of the tension between the Spanish Monarchy and the nobility at the end of the Reconquista. Let us start with the quarrels of the Crown of Castile with the clan of the Medina Sidonia. These were powerful and ambitious men indeed, they belonged to the class of nobles that had been and were, at the same time, strong military leaders and great landowners, arrogant and somewhat resistant to discipline, to put it mildly. They did not accept royal decisions easily. They had been in negotiations with Christopher Columbus when he was looking for funds to finance his American enterprise. Here, Isabella had to intervene to avoid this project, the jewel in the Crown after the conquest of Granada, being controlled by private hands. She decreed that it was to be reserved for the Monarchy. The Medina Sidonia had later to give up their almost absolute power over Seville, which the Queen took under her control in order to put an end to the quarrel between the Medina Sidonia and another powerful family, Los Arcos.

The relations of the Medina Sidonia family with the Crown would continue to be problematic for a long time. In 1640, the Spanish Crown was in deep trouble. Count-Duke of Olivares, the strong man of the moment with King Philip IV, had to fight on many fronts: wars in Europe were being lost to France and the Netherlands, Portugal was declaring independence, rebellion in Catalonia was being encouraged by the French... Olivares belonged to a lesser branch of the Guzman dynasty, of which the Medina Sidonia were the principal family. But the Medina Sidonia had not forgotten old grievances and thought they could profit from the general turmoil. Prompted by the Duke of Ayamonte, still another Guzmán with suspicious connections in a Portugal on the way to independence, the ninth Duke is said to have conceived the idea of proclaiming himself "King of Andalusia and

the Indies". This wild project was aborted by Olivares, who secretly summoned Medina Sidonia to Madrid, trying to avoid scandal. The would-be rebel confessed to the King and was pardoned, and so the incident was discretely closed. But Ayamonte was sent to jail.

But let us come back to Gibraltar. After following the normal vicissitudes of life of primitive Roman and Visigoth Spain, Gibraltar had been the first point in the peninsula on which the Arabs landed in 711. It was given its name after Tarik ibn Ziyad, the chief who commanded the assault: Mount of Terik, in arabic Djebel-Tariq, Gibr-al-Tar. In Muslim hands for seven centuries and disputed by the different Arab or Bereber factions who contended for power in Al-Andalus, it was only seized by the Castilian King Ferdinand IV for a brief period (between 1309 and 1333) during the war of Reconquista. A century later, when the final battle for the Kingdom of Granada had begun, Gibraltar became an important strategic point on the coast because controlling the Rock allowed communication to be cut between the Arabs to the North and South of the straits, thus preventing the Moors from sending reinforcements by sea for the fighters for Granada. If, in 1435, a first attempt by Enrique de Guzmán, Count of Niebla, failed, his grandson Alfonso finally seized the Rock in 1462 on behalf of the King of Castille, Henry IV, who rewarded him with the title of Duke of Medina Sidonia.

Did he really take it for the Crown or for himself and his family? In theory, he took it for the Crown, of course, but he did so in the very special way in which the Reconquista had mostly been conducted: as a private enterprise inspired and directed by the Monarchs but financed with money provided by the nobles, who led their own armies in the struggle... in exchange for royal privilege and jurisdictional power over the conquered territory. The Guzmán family had started their participation in the Reconquista early: they already possessed a broad stretch of land from Cadiz to Tarifa, the furthest point South in the peninsula, close to Gibraltar. They were, moreover, in fierce competition for the control of Andalusia with another powerful noble family, that of the Count of Arcos, who had also participated with the Guzmáns in the conquest of Gibraltar. This fight between conquerors amounted to an open war and was naturally in detriment to the political project of the Catholic Queen to achieve the unity of Castile under

her absolute power. She wasn't the first monarch to have to mediate between these powerful noble houses with a mixture of diplomacy, threats and favours in order to avoid armed confrontation between them. King Henry IV had decided on Gibraltar in favour of the Guzman family, and when he died Queen Isabella, his successor to the Crown of Castile, confirmed all their privileges...for the time being. Thus she imposed the relative peace in the region that was necessary to pursue the military effort against the Kingdom of Granada.

But Gibraltar was too important to be left in private hands. Being the point where the Arab invasion had begun, it became a symbol of the Christians' victory over Islam. It also became a point of reference in the quarrel between the Monarchy and the Nobles in order to assert the monopoly of power by the Crown. Finally, it was an essential base for passage to Africa if the Reconquista and the fight against Islam, as the Queen intended, were to have continuity in that continent. Too much for the forceful and determined Isabella: she tried to negotiate with Medina Sidonia the return of Gibraltar to the Crown, offering the less important city of Utrera in exchange. The duke refused and the Queen promptly acted: in 1501 she issued a Royal Order that took the rock from the hands of the Duke and made it a property of the Castilian Crown, a city of *realengo*. In her testament, written in 1504 a few months before she died, Isabella ordered her heirs and successors "...ever to hold as inalienable of the Crown and Royal Patrimony, the City of Gibraltar and all that belongs to it: never to give it away, or alienate it or suffer it to be given away or alienated..." Gibraltar must be Spanish forever and the desire expressed in the royal testament was apparently going to remain engraved in the subconscious mind of Spain for a long time, actually even up to the present day, at least.

When Isabella died, the obstinate Medina Sidonia sought to take advantage of the confusing conflict for her succession that ensued, and tried to recover "his" Gibraltar by force. He failed but remained resentful and was never quite deterred from pursuing his struggle for power.

## 97. COLUMBUS AND THE NEW WORLD

It could have been Lisbon, or Cadiz, the most important ports of this extreme end of Western Europe. But it was Huelva. When Christopher Columbus arrived at the nearby port of Palos de la Frontera in 1485, the need, the technical conditions and the right persons for a heroic enterprise of discovery were gathered. Soon the people facing the Atlantic could free themselves from an atavistic apprehension, that of discovering what was in, and beyond, the enormous expanse of dark water to the West, of which nothing, or very little, was known. The Belgian-French writer, Maruerite Yourcenar, wrote an early essay in which she compared the feeling of the inhabitants of Iberia towards the Atlantic with the threat the Greeks felt before the menacing mass of Asia, which would send periodical invasions. The myth of Jason and the Argonauts, who dared to sail up the dangerous Bosphorous into the unknown Black Sea in search of the Golden Fleece reappeared in Renaissance Spain when the proposals of Columbus were considered. He also wanted to defy the unknown waves in search of gold.

The need to find an alternative route to the gold and the spices of the Indies had arisen when the Ottoman Turks, after having progressively conquered what little remained of the Byzantine Empire, seized Constantinople by force in 1453. Their presence erected a hostile wall that meant that the Europeans were no longer free to use their ancestral trade land and sea routes to India and the Orient. Spain was occupied at the time with grave internal troubles and the final effort of the Reconquista against the Muslim Kingdom of Granada. Thus, the task of circumventing the Ottoman obstacle was left to the Portuguese who had already launched several journeys of discovery. They had developed the caravel, a light ship which could replace the heavier galley and undertake long distance travel and they were trying to reach the Indies following a route around the South of Africa. Bartolomé Diaz only completed this in 1488, but by 1476, the Portuguese Kings had already the African coast down to Guinea under their control, so that gold, spices and slaves had begun to arrive in Europe from the territory that we call Ghana today.



1476 is precisely the year when Columbus, a young Genovese sailor of obscure origins, appeared in Lisbon to present a new offer: to reach the Orient and conquer its riches travelling Westward into the Atlantic Ocean. After all, Aristotele had already mentioned the possibility of doing just that “in a few days”. Besides, in the fifteenth century, astrologers and geographers had long abandoned the old idea of a flat Earth. So, the real question was: how far were the Indies and would the travel be at all possible for the fragile caravels. Columbus gave confusing answers when asked for the solution to these problems. Anyway, the Portuguese had already failed in such an attempt. They had launched a fleet of explorers sailing Westward from the Azores Islands, but they had never come back. So, Portugal remained focused on their project of completing the voyage around Africa and rejected the Genovese’s offer.

Disappointed, he arrived at the port of Palos having decided to try anew: he would try to convince Isabella, the Queen of Castile, and her husband Fernando of Aragon, to support the expedition of his dreams. Indeed, he came to them with an appealing messianic vision: he would sail Westward in order to reach the island of Cipango (today’s Japan) that Marco Polo had mentioned in his *Travels*. He told them more: that the gold he would supposedly find there would allow the Catholic Kings to mount a new Crusade and recover Jerusalem for Christianity. Isabella was tempted with the idea. After all, Castile and Aragon were culminating their own Crusade against Islam in Spain and had entered into competition with Portugal for the discoveries along the coast of Africa. So she and Fernando decided they would submit the project to technical and political consideration. But Spain was busy with the final battle for Granada, and Columbus continued to offer little evidence as to the real distance of Cipango from the Spanish shore. The matter dragged on for years and Columbus returned disheartened to Palos de la Frontera, where he resumed his friendship with the monks of the Monastery of La Rabida, near Huelva. These monks were amateur astrologers and, like many sailors of the port of Palos, were anxious to continue the journeys of discovery that had begun with success in the Atlantic.

Finally, at the beginning of 1492, Columbus, with the help and complicity of his friends at the Monastery, was allowed to reveal his

plans to the Court. They were based on the theories of the Italian geographer Toscanelli, who established a certain (excessive, as it turned out) width for the Asiatic continent, which meant, therefore, a relatively short distance from Spain to Cipango travelling around the globe. Besides, Columbus intended to avoid the mistake the Portuguese had made directly sailing Westward from the Azores. Instead, he intended to sail Southward to the Canary Islands and from there Westward, taking advantage of southern winds, milder than those that had probably wrecked the unfortunate Portuguese off the Azores. After all, he argued, the Canaries were supposed to be on the same parallel as Cipango! With the end of the Reconquista in sight, the Queen accepted the idea and provided some limited means to carry it out. She decided that Palos was to be the port where the expedition was to be launched. Why Palos? Because Isabella had there, at the disposal of Columbus, two caravels that had been confiscated to the local authorities. Why Palos, again? Because in that port Columbus could count on the assistance of the influential Pinzon family, explorers and shipowners with sufficient authority to convince the local sailors, who were fearful of the long and uncertain trip into the unknown. Why Palos indeed and not Cadiz, which was a much more important Atlantic port? Because Cadiz had been selected as the departure point for the expulsion of the Jews from Spain, which was to take place precisely on the 2nd of August, 1492, the day in which Columbus was to start the voyage to his portentous destiny.

Luckily, Toscanelli's calculation had been erroneous: Asia was not so wide after all but the voyage was undertaken because everyone, including Columbus, supposed it to be a much shorter journey than it really was. Luckily too, there were other islands and an unexpected continent, a New World on the way between Huelva and Cipango.

## 98. THE POPE DIVIDES THE ATLANTIC BETWEEN SPAIN AND PORTUGAL

In an old legal document called *The Donation of Constantine*, the Roman Emperor of that name narrates how he converted to the Christian faith and was miraculously cured of leprosy. For both, he tells us, he had to thank the intervention of Bishop Silvester, who was then the head of the Christians in Rome. He goes on in the substantive part of the document to confer upon Silvester primacy as pontiff over the other four patriarchates of Christianity, with imperial dignity and property. He grants the Pope “the city of Rome, all of Italy and the Western provinces of the Empire” to remain forever under the possession of the Holy See. Finally, the Emperor confirms his own decision to move to Byzantium so that the presence of a secular ruler in Rome should not diminish the authority of the Church. This startling donation had been widely known since the 8th century and was published in several official collections of papal decrees. It helped the Papacy to assert its own authority as ruler of part of Italy over which he claimed jurisdiction, the Papal States, and to give him authority for the coronation of Charles the Great (Carlo Magno) as Emperor in the year 800. It was proof that there had effectively existed a *translatio imperii* or transfer of power from the Roman emperor to the Catholic Pontiff.

That the Donation of Constantine was a forgery was not proved until 1440 by Lorenzo Valla, an Italian humanist, who served as secretary to king Alfonso of Aragón, Naples and Sicily. Coincidentally, this king was at that time in conflict with the Pope over the control of certain Italian territories. The falsity of the document, drawn up probably in the 6th century, didn't prevent the popes from using it for centuries as the foundation of their power to grant newly discovered territories to kings or nobles as feudal vassals of the Holy See. They used the “donation” as a title on numerous occasions, for example when asked to solve the controversy between Spain and Portugal on the exploration of the islands off the coast of Africa and the lands of that continent. They continued to do it, surprisingly enough, even long after Valla and others had confirmed that the Donation was untrue. It was relevant

for the history of Spain, and, in fact, I see it as one of the most intriguing stories in that history.

When Christopher Columbus discovered the New World, he was convinced that he had arrived in the Indies, that is, in Asia. Coming back from his first journey, he landed in Lisbon and informed the Portuguese King, who immediately claimed the discovered territories for himself, thinking that they belonged to his part in the distribution of Africa and the Atlantic waters established by the Popes. What did they do in 1493, fifty years after Lorenzo Valla's own discovery? After long and inconclusive negotiations, they went to the Pope to obtain a decision on the sovereignty of the new discoveries. The incumbent Pope happened to be Alexander VI, the notorious Rodrigo Borja, known as Papa Borgia in the Italianized version of his name. He had been born in Valencia and had connections with the Kingdom of Aragón, which supported his elevation to the Holy See and granted him other favours. He had, therefore, a favourable disposition towards the King of Aragón, Ferdinand. And thus were the bulls "Inter Coetera" of 1493 born, documents that are almost as startling as the Donation of Constantine itself. This time, though, they were very real and had portentous historical consequences.

One speaks of bulls in the plural because there were several versions of the same document. In the first of them, the Pope granted to King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella, and their successors in the kingdoms of Castile and León "all the firm lands and islands found or to be found, discovered or to be discovered toward the West and South". The bull was directed unilaterally to the Spanish Monarchs, giving them a real monopoly: it forbade "all manner of persons, of what... condition whatsoever they may be, although of imperial or regal dignity, under the pain of the sentence of excommunication...to travel for merchandise or for any other cause to the said lands or islands".

Ferdinand's influence with the Pope was so strong that, not quite satisfied with the text of the first bull, he obtained a new version a few months later. In it, the term "investiture" was deleted in order to make clear that the Papal decision was meant to be a grant or donation and not just a feudal concession under the sovereignty of the Holy See. Besides, in order to settle the conflict with Portugal once and for all, Ferdinand managed to obtain from the Pope the inclusion in the

text of a reference to an imaginary line, following a certain meridian from North to South, that divided the Ocean and the islands or lands therein found between the two Kingdoms, granting Spain all discoveries West of the line and Portugal the same on the Eastern side of the divide. The matter was not completely solved until the two countries, by a treaty signed at Tordesillas in 1494, defined the definitive partition, moving the line to the West. This was how Portugal obtained the right of dominion over Brazil, a part of which lay to the East of the famous line. Many suppose that the Portuguese knew, in advance, what they would obtain with this change. Who knows?

Another interesting point in this confusing story is this: why was the grant given to Ferdinand and Isabella and “their successors in Castile and León” and not to the future heirs of Ferdinand, as King of Aragón, as well? Historian, Juan Manzano, has dealt at length with the fascinating legal intricacies of this case. The intervention of the King in the negotiations with Columbus and with the Pope proves clearly that there was no mistake and that it was his intention to introduce this limitation. The new lands and islands were acquired by the Royal couple as personal owners and, according to Castilian law, shared in two equal parts. The Queen made this point quite clear in her testament written of 1504. She even added that, after her death, Ferdinand would receive one half of the revenues from the Indies until his own death, when the whole property would pass to the Crown of Castile and León. Ferdinand was not happy with this “small” detail: he maintained that he was entitled to half of the property until his death and not just to the revenue. But it is clear that he renounced any future right of inheritance for Aragón. The reason for such apparent generosity has been the subject of much speculation. The Jesuit, Juan de Mariana (1536-1624), author of the first general history of Spain, proposed an appealing interpretation. For him, Ferdinand didn’t want the Indies to be governed following the example of his kingdom of Aragón, where the nobles demanded broad privileges invoking a legendary constitution that permitted the King to govern only by agreement with them. He preferred the New World to be organized following the model of the strong and more manageable monarchy that was Castile, his wife’s land.

## 99. THE LAW OF NATIONS GOES WEST

Spain was, by chance, decisive for something really momentous that happened when Columbus came back from the islands he had discovered sailing Westward from the Canary Islands. The earth was round, for sure, before 1492 and some knew it. But when they realized that what was later called America was on the way to India, many things changed. The image people had about their universe suffered a revolution. History moved from the Mediterranean to the Atlantic. The seas invaded life: the sciences, philosophy, politics and law. Carl Schmitt, the theorizer of Hitler's ideas about space, retired in his last years to write some very lucid contributions to the history of international law. He reminded us that for the ancient peoples the seas were a dangerous, indistinct space to be avoided, an idea that explains the historic significance of an obscure hint in the Apocalypse: that in the future, as soon as the New Jerusalem emerges purified from sin, the sea will no longer exist. The old empires used only coastal waters and even the first crusaders of the Middle-Ages preferred the hazardous land route of the Balkans in their voyage towards Jerusalem. Columbus' discovery brought about a complete rupture of the collective conception of space. It obliged politics and law to take the seas into account. If until then law referred mostly to the appropriation of land, the idea of appropriating the seas appeared soon and the first discovering nations, Spain and Portugal, hurried to take advantage of it.

They did this according to the medieval order of things, recognizing the Pope's sovereign authority to distribute the oceans between them so that there might be no conflict about any new lands that might be discovered. Both the Pope with his bulls of 1493 and the two countries in later bilateral agreements solved the question through a brand new concept: that of a "line" dividing the ocean. Discoveries to the East of a certain meridian would belong to Portugal, those to the West of the line, to Spain. The Atlantic Ocean was not really "appropriated" in this way but transit by Spain and Portugal to the other's sector would need the approval of the other side. And the same was intended for third powers wanting to move their fleets in any of the

two sectors in the open seas. These third countries, incipient maritime powers like England, France or the Netherlands, didn't like the idea at all. It might have been neat and peaceful for the relationship between the two Iberian nations but for them it was *res inter alios acta*, a matter between other parties that didn't oblige them since they didn't recognize the Pope's authority in territorial, let alone maritime, matters. Queen Elizabeth I of England couldn't have stated this more clearly: "The use of the sea and the air is common to all". England would only respect other States' sovereignty over territories already occupied by them, not merely discovered.

Spain tried to stick to the Papal concession, to monopolize navigation in the oceans, and Portugal did the same in the Eastern hemisphere, in conflict with the Dutch East India Company. But it was too late: a world of strong sovereign states had been born with the Renaissance and these didn't recognize any superior authority, be it imperial or ecclesiastical. The pressure on Spain was so intense that she finally had to accept a pragmatic solution based, not on the lines of the Papal bulls, but on a new arrangement: the so-called "amity lines". In the peace treaty of Cateau-Cambrésis, signed in 1559 between Spain and France, the negotiators reached the following verbal understanding: "to the west of the prime meridian (the meridian of the island of Hierro in the Canaries) and South of the Tropic of Cancer, Might should make Right and violence done by either party to the other should not be regarded as in contravention of treaties". The British were delighted with this solution and Sir Francis Drake would famously formulate the principle in simpler terms: "no peace beyond the line". The European law of nations would continue to rule the international relations in Europe and the balance of power would be preserved. Beyond, anarchy or at least "anomy" would be the rule. A sad state of affairs indeed about which the French philosopher Blaise Pascal bitterly complained: "a meridian would separate truth from untruth, justice from injustice".

Another almost simultaneous discussion further developed the thinking on the Law of Nations. Britain defended the freedom of the seas against the monopolistic claim of Spain and Portugal on the whole of the oceans. Holland would do the same against Portugal in the Indian Ocean with the help of the great jurist Hugo Grotius. However, when a new dynasty came to power in England in 1604, James I Stuart

abruptly changed course: against his Dutch neighbours he defended the exclusive ownership of the waters around the British Islands for fishing and passage. A battle of books developed, in which John Selden defended the position of the British in his book *Mare Clausum* against Hugo Grotius' *Mare Liberum*. A compromise was reached in the end, which has lasted until today: navigation is free on the high seas, closed on the waters near the coast which were later called "territorial sea".

How did the famous Spanish jurists of the 16th century intervene in all these, hardly abstract, controversies? They intervened only indirectly but very decisively. The Dominican Friar Francisco de Vitoria was a learned theologian at the University of Salamanca, not a lawyer. He wrote on the rights of the American Indians and on the titles for the Spanish conquest of their lands. Unknowingly, he gave the great Grotius the main argument for defending his thesis on the freedom of the seas: the universal and natural right of all nations to communicate with others and trade with them. The Dutch master was gracious enough to recognize Vitoria's contribution, which, in fact, ran against the interests of Spain at that time. But that was enough to give the Spanish theologian a place of honour in the history of international law. Lawyers and historians in his country went further than that: they proclaimed Vitoria as the father of that discipline, as others had proclaimed Grotius. Neither of them deserved that title, really, because norms of conduct between nations are as old as humanity, if not older. There is another lawyer theologian who in my opinion deserves more appropriately the title of father of the "modern" law of nations: Francisco Suárez. This Jesuit, born in 1548, two years after Vitoria died, was a prolific writer and produced his work in a world made up of modern Nation-States. He admitted that some norms of the *Ius Gentium* or Law of Nations did not belong to Natural Law but were created directly and independently by the will of states, without any moral or religious limits. Spanish lawyers of nationalistic leaning always wanted to blur the differences between Suárez and Vitoria in order to defend the unity of the "Spanish School" of International law. But the truth is that Suárez did definitely abandon the medieval world of a *respublica christiana* and opened the way to a first secular attempt at regulating peace among nations.



## 100. SEPHARAD, SEPHARAD!

An anonymous book describing a voyage to Turkey appeared in Spain in the year 1557. It features a character, Pedro de Urdamala, usual in picaresque novels, who describes the country in dialogues with a wide array of people. One of the persons mentioned is Doña Beatriz Mendes, originally named Gloria Nasi, a rich and influential Jewish lady of Portuguese origin, the widow of a banker from Aragón. She had arrived in Constantinople (today's Istanbul) a few years earlier after following the route that had been common to many of the Spanish Jews who had been expelled from Spain in 1492 (and from Portugal in 1497). She had taken over the banking business of her former husband and lived in Antwerp, Ferrara and Venice. Suleiman the Magnificent offered her the opportunity of living in his capital city and continue her banking and other activities there. She accepted under one condition: that she and her people would not be obliged to dress as the Jewish were compelled to dress, but would be allowed keep their Venetian attire. She then arrived, according to the tale, with forty horses and four big cars full of her attendants. The Great Turk received Doña Beatriz, as he and his predecessor Beyazit II had done with many of the Jews who had been expelled from Spain: promoting their immigration and taking advantage of their wealth and knowledge. They were so surprised at the fact that such a useful group of people had been rejected by the Spanish Monarchy that the Sultan is reported to have said of King Ferdinand: "Do you call this a shrewd king, who impoverishes his kingdoms and enriches mine?"

An estimated 50,000 Jews left at the end of the four-month period prescribed in the royal order of March 30, 1492, by which the Catholic Kings decided to expel all of them from Castile and Aragón. They took different routes: some travelled by land to Portugal and France, most of them by sea from Cadiz toward the North of Africa or Italy. They didn't find it easy to settle. Some, for example, were in turn expelled from the Kingdom of Fez and had to return to Spain. They asked to be baptized and then stayed there as converted Jews. Others founded communities in France, Portugal and Italy but met

with growing difficulties in those and other Catholic countries, where they were persecuted or discriminated against, and they were forced to live in isolation. The Ottoman Empire, including the territories it had occupied in the East of Europe, received this population with open arms because they were hard-working and experienced in many trades necessary for its expanding organization. In Thessaloniki and Istanbul the Jews encountered the traditional tolerance the Muslims used to observe toward other religions. They were not always well treated and usually had to pay high taxes to the Turks, but at least they were permitted to settle permanently. They remained faithful to their religion, united in organized communities, and conserved the culture they had learned in Sepharad, as they referred to Spain.

The expulsion of the Jews from Spain was not a decision made by surprise nor was it anything exceptional in Europe at the end of the Middle-Ages. England had expelled her Jews in 1290, France in 1360, and everywhere the Catholic Church had promoted measures of discrimination or banishment. In fact, the expulsion from Spain happened later than was the case for the other European countries because the Spanish Jews had enjoyed many centuries of peaceful co-existence with Muslims and Christians. However, in Spain there was also a long tradition of enmity which dated back at least to the time when the Visigoth Kingdom decided to embrace the Christian religion. This happened in 589 a. D.: King Recaredo converted and left the government practically in the hands of the Church, which ruled through Ecclesiastical Councils and promoted many repressive laws against the Jewish community. The plague of 1348 and the anti-Jewish riots of 1391 prepared the way for the expulsion of 1492. Many Jews had preferred to convert to Catholicism and maintained a conflicting relationship with those who remained loyal to their faith. At the end of the Reconquista the popular anti-Jewish sentiment worsened. The Catholic Kings were receptive to the pressure from the "old" Christians and the most traditionalist faction of the Church. In the fateful year 1492, at the climax of their reign, they expelled the Jews.

What were their real motives for this decision? Many explanations have been given. The question is not quite clear because many Jews had served the King and Queen well and had contributed actively in the reconstruction of their kingdoms as the end of the wars of Re-

conquista was approaching. Some have maintained that the expulsion was due to the resentment that the nobles or the urban middle classes felt towards those Jews, who practiced banking and charged usurious interests to finance their military or luxurious activities. Some have at times even suspected the Monarchs of profiting from their decree of expulsion, by which they confiscated the properties of the Jews who had to abandon the country and couldn't sell these properties before the date fixed for their exodus.

The French historian, Joseph Pérez, discards these economic or social interpretations and proposes that we stick to the letter of the decree of expulsion. For him the key is clear: religious unity. The Jews, as the texts states, are expelled in order to prevent them from communicating with converts. Any such communication would supposedly help the "new" Christians to secretly continue practicing their old faith, to become what was called "judaizers" or crypto-Jews. This is probably true but I wonder if this might be considered really a religious reason rather than a political one, although in disguise. With the extreme measure of expulsion, Spain was advancing towards the modern state begun during the Renaissance. And it is obvious that creating an absolute monarchy was easier for the Monarchs if they achieved the total identification of the State with religion, using it as a weapon for social cohesion and national identity. Such an exclusive religion demanded the physical elimination of any dissident minority. The expulsion, therefore, had the same sense as a similar measure taken by XIV would have in 1685, when he threw the Protestants out of France.

A gloomy story anyway, which didn't solve any problems for Spain. To the contrary, the separation of the population in the two castes of new and old Christians remained, if it didn't became worse, sowing the seeds for the future clash between "two Spains". It is interesting to observe how the Jews had to move historically West and East. They had arrived in Spain originally from Palestine when they were expelled by the Romans. Once they had destroyed the temple of Jerusalem and the Jewish Kingdom, the Empire decided to send them as far away as was then possible: to Hispania, where they thought the *finis terrae*, the end of the world, was. They spent many centuries there remembering their homeland and longing to return to Palestine. When they were obliged

to take the opposite route and return to the Levant, they had become Spaniards in the meantime and were nostalgic of their Sepharad. If you meet some of the remaining Sephardi Jews of Istanbul today, those who have not settled in the State of Israel or elsewhere, you'll find that they have conserved their ancient language, "ladino", which sounds like the Castilian they spoke when they left Spain in 1492.

## 101. FERDINAND AND HIS AMBASSADORS

Rodrigo González de Puebla was the Spanish Ambassador in London for almost twenty years, from 1487 to 1508. “He was so filthy that Henry VII expressed the hope that his successor might be a man more fitted for human society”. Diplomat and historian, Harold Nicolson, who wrote these derogatory words, was never very benevolent towards Spain. This description, however, was to illustrate the fact that the first permanent ambassadors did not come from the high nobility nor were they highly educated persons. Ferdinand the Catholic chose them from among the new elite of *letrados*, soldiers and churchmen that formed the basis of his administration, while the nobles were relegated to more ceremonial functions. Ferdinand developed a very active foreign policy in the style which was characteristic of the Italian City-States of the Renaissance. This policy was carried out in accordance with Queen Isabella of Castile, with the financial support of the Castilian treasury and with diplomatic agents mostly of Castilian origin. Spain was one of the first countries to conduct diplomacy following the “modern” method, one of whose main features was to use permanent missions instead of just sending envoys to foreign monarchs to solve a particular problem. The Catalan Bishop, Gonzalo Fernández de Heredia, was the first Spanish ambassador in Rome, nominated in 1478 after having acted as ecclesiastical representative for the King of Aragón before the Papal Court. Later, Ferdinand created permanent missions in London, Vienna, Brussels, Venice and other capitals.

Why he did it in these countries and not others is not difficult to explain. They formed a line that encircled France, and France was Ferdinand’s adversary, first as King of Aragón and later as King of Spain. France had aroused trouble for the Kingdom of Aragón around Sardinia and the Roussillon, had tried to destabilize Navarre and had meddled in Castile’s civil wars. She had made attempts on Italy, her secular ambition as launching pad for the Crusades and the Orient. When Charles VIII invaded Naples, Ferdinand sent his missions to the countries he wanted to bring together in a Holy League against the French under the leadership of the Pope: the Austrian Emperor,

Venice, England and some of the states in the North of Italy. He was very successful and acted with skill and determination not only in Italy, but also when he tried to contain the Ottomans in their Mediterranean expansion, or when he invaded the Kingdom of Navarre, not to speak of the active diplomacy he developed with Pope Clemens VII to legitimize Castile's conquests in the New World.

Niccolo Machiavelli, in his famous book *The Prince*, wrote about Ferdinand with admiration, "a king of a small state who has become the first sovereign in the Christian world". He was not so kind when, without mentioning Ferdinand by name, he criticized "those princes that proclaim the values of peace and loyalty... but would not be so powerful had they respected them". Ferdinand was in fact acting in his foreign policy according to a new, modern concept of sovereignty which corresponded to the emerging absolute monarchies of the Renaissance. It was modern in the sense that they no longer recognized superior powers, whether ecclesiastical or imperial. They acted in pursuit of their own interests, regardless of the means necessary to do so. They created strong armies and bureaucracies, including efficient permanent embassies. They added a strong religious factor to their foreign action, which, in the case of Ferdinand and Isabella, took a certain messianic turn, based on the prestige they acquired as they definitively expelled Islam from Europe with their victory against the Kingdom of Granada. In fact, the swiftness with which the Catholic Monarchs broke the generous *Capitulaciones* they had agreed on with the last Moor king, by which they promised to respect the religion and customs of his subjects, illustrates the extreme distance between words and deeds, of promise and reality, which characterized the foreign relations of modern Europe.

Machiavelli was an incisive observer and historian and his little book described the practices of his time, those which Ferdinand made classic. Apart from the use of religion as a means to achieve their ends, the modern princes were supposed to inspire fear and act ceaselessly, taking always the initiative by surprise according to the principles of *virtú*, or courage, and necessity. There were, of course, reminiscences of medieval principles of solidarity in the Christian monarchs and their fight against Islam as well as a theoretical aspiration to peace and harmony. Embassies were only sent to Chris-

tian monarchies and the balance of power was maintained above all through alliances based on dynastic marriages. The Catholic Kings engaged in this practice frequently and with good results. They initially guaranteed peace with Portugal, tried an English marriage with Katharine of Aragón and established several links with the House of Habsburg. They married their son John, Prince of Asturias, to the Habsburg Princess Margaret and their daughter Johanna to Margaret's brother, the Archduke Philip of Austria. The music of chance acted here as in many other instances in history: Prince John died in 1494 and so the Spanish throne went to the Austrian dynasty when, at the death of Queen Isabella, Joanna inherited the throne. But she was declared "mad" and her husband became the first King Philip of Spain, known as Philip the Handsome. His reign was very short: it lasted for only two years, until 1506.

Ferdinand's foreign policy was very successful. His character and Isabella's support certainly had a great deal to do with his contribution to the creation of the future Spanish Empire. It wouldn't be just, however, to ignore the support they received from the incipient foreign service that Ferdinand deployed in Europe. The first ambassadors were perhaps not the most refined people, as happened in general to European diplomacy during the birth of permanent diplomacy. The order of precedence established unilaterally by Pope Julius II, which gave the highest position to France over Spain, caused more than one murderous incident between the French and Spanish ambassadors and their retinues. However, these diplomats were a great help and extremely loyal to the policies of their King and Queen. They were the pioneers of what we know as modern diplomacy. They formed a first group of professionals who moved from one post to the next and remained in their post for long periods of time. Little by little, these tasks were assigned to nobles who were able to act as high representatives rather than as spies as the diplomats initially were.

Ferdinand is said to have been very demanding with his ambassadors and, at times, authoritarian or arbitrary. He gave them very scarce means to entertain the powerful or to bribe their informants. He demanded much in terms of written reports without providing sufficient couriers to transmit them efficiently. He didn't forgive mistakes and didn't always trust his envoys: sometimes he sent more than

one to the same capital so that they could keep him informed about each other. The ambassadors frequently had to guess instructions that never arrived or came to them in an incomplete or misleading state. Diplomats I've met, in Spain and elsewhere have told me that practices such as these didn't die with Ferdinand the Catholic.



## 102. BETWEEN EUROPE AND AMERICA: THE CANARY ISLANDS

When, at the beginning of the 15th century, the Canary Islands entered the history of the world for the first time, they were already faintly remembered by the Europeans. The classics saw them as the last trace of Atlantida, the submerged continent of ancient legend. Some Roman and Phoenician sailors appear to have seen the high volcano Teide in Tenerife from a distance. Only in the year 999 A. D. an Arab captain, a certain Ben-Farroukh, sent dependable news on the first of a series of explorations by Portuguese, Genovese and Arab sailors. None of them stayed on the islands, but the information they brought to Europe started to awaken curiosity and interest. As early as 1344, a French adventurer, Louis de la Cerda, Count of Clermont, appealed to the Pope in order to obtain a feudal investiture over the islands. Clemens VI agreed and by the bull *Tuae Devotionis Sinceritas* he created the "Kingdom of the Canaries". Count de la Cerda was named "Prince of Fortuna" under the Holy See's sovereignty, with the mission of extending Christianity among the pagan natives in exchange for a perpetual canon to the Pope. Louis never put his ambition into practice due to lack of sufficient means. But his initiative and the bull he obtained caused both the Kings of Portugal and Castile to make a formal protest to the Pope. And the matter was forgotten for a long time.

The real story began in 1453, when the Ottomans conquered Constantinople and reawakened the fear of the Islamic advance in Europe. In the following years, the Popes bestowed on the King of Portugal the exclusive right of crusade (and of commerce) along the coast of Africa in order to reach India and threaten the Turks from the rearward. The Pope tried to solve a long controversy, abstruse in legal terms, between Portugal and Castile on the rights for expansion in Africa. Portugal had finished the Reconquista early and was active in the exploration and occupation of islands in the Atlantic and strategic points along the coast of the continent. The Castilians could hardly afford to be distracted from their prolonged struggle against the Muslims but didn't want to be left out of this first "scramble for Africa".

The controversy centred on the Canary Islands, strategically placed as a point of passage toward the new colonies to the South. The arguments used were based on the recently rediscovered principles of Roman law about the ownership of islands. The Portuguese claimed previous voyages of discovery and the proximity of the islands to their Cape of St. Vincent: they did so because, according to the Roman law solution, an island *in flumine nata*, born in the middle of a river, goes lawfully to the nearest landowner on the mainland. The Castilians defended their right as closer landowner using the same argument: they were closer than the Portuguese because Castile claimed to be the successor state of the Visigoth Kingdom which extended to Mauritania-Thingitania. The Canaries, therefore, belonged to the diocese of Seville. Many other reasons were pleaded by both sides, too outlandish for modern ears to be mentioned here.

After arguing the case at length, the Pope's final decision in 1456 was favourable to Portugal as to the rights on Africa but compensated Castile with sovereignty over the Canary Islands. Both sides confirmed the deal in 1479 in the Treaty of Alcaçovas and the matter was put to rest. The Castilians had begun the occupation of the islands closest to the coast of Africa, Lanzarote and Fuerteventura slowly and with scarce means. In 1402, these islands were given as a fief to a Norman noble, Jean de Bethencourt. Later, some Sevillian nobles and Genoese merchants began to show an interest in the new territories and obtained the fertile island of La Gomera, where the Portuguese still tried to intervene during the wars with Castile (1475-1479) inciting and assisting the rebellious natives. The three major islands, La Palma, Tenerife, and Gran Canaria, were more populated and therefore harder to conquer. The Catholic Kings wanted to control them directly and did so once they had won the war over Granada in 1492. They sent an *Adelantado* or military chief and governor, Alfonso Fernández de Lugo, who after years of battling against the natives or seeking their submission through pacts achieved complete control of the last of the islands, Tenerife, in 1496.

One wonders why so much effort was spent on seven rather poor and distant islands before Columbus had accomplished his discoveries. Did the Castilians know that the passage towards the Western Atlantic was only possible taking advantage of winds and currents that

led directly from the Canaries to the Caribbean Sea? Or did they just have a phenomenal stroke of luck? Impossible to know, of course. It is certain that the possession of the Canaries opened the way to the voyages of discovery of the New World. Columbus spent 36 days in La Gomera before he launched his famous first voyage and all those which followed started from the Canaries. The Castilians then understood the strategic importance of the islands and extended the institutions of the mainland to them, turning them into a province of the Kingdom. The towns received *fueros* like those of Toledo or Seville and the land was distributed in similar ways as it had been done during the advance of the Reconquista...and would be done in the New World.

Historians have tended to emphasize the continuity of the process: Reconquista in the peninsula, later in the Canary Islands and finally in America. In fact, the Canaries, as historian Ladero Quesada put it, were the *finis terrae* of medieval Castile rather than the first outpost of America. The population was scarce and primitive: in a very short time it was assimilated by the new settlers from Castile and Andalusia and also from Portugal and Genoa, with the addition of some Moriscos and Jews, who found in the islands a less repressive segregation than in the mainland. The islands offered only modest economic possibilities: there was no gold or silver, only fertile land for agriculture, for sugar and good wine. Little more: the archipelago was mainly a point of passage and its inhabitants were frequently tempted to try their luck in the Americas when times were difficult.

In one aspect, however, it is clear that the Canaries gave a foretaste of what would be the way of life in the new colonies of America. I refer to the new conception of the town. La Laguna, in Tenerife, was conceived as a new kind of town, geometrically designed and without fortifications, open to the surrounding lands: a town for the times of peace that had arrived with the end of the war of the Reconquista. The Catholic Kings entrusted her construction to the *Adelantado* applying the idea of a town ordered to provide a peaceful control of the whole territory: it was conceived following utopian plans like that invented by Plato, no less, in his book on *The Laws* for an imaginary city that he called Magnesia, located in the centre of Crete, as La Laguna is in the centre of Tenerife. You can still see the straight parallel streets today that link the points of a circle delimited

by religious buildings, and broad squares for the palaces where the improvised nobles rested and administered their lands: a Castilian city and a blueprint for La Antigua, the first capital of Guatemala, among others.

## 103. A TALE OF TWO CATHEDRALS

In most towns and villages in Spain you will find a church and a bell tower that were most probably built on the space previously occupied by a mosque, which, in turn, had been built on an old Visigoth church, which, in its turn, had replaced a Roman temple. There'll be little or no trace of the temple that the Muslims had built during their long stay in the country, a stay which started in 711 (an exception is the church at Olías del Rey, in Toledo). They were destroyed as the war of Reconquest, started in Northern Asturias, progressed toward the South only to finish with the assault on Granada in 1492. In Seville and Córdoba, however, the Castilian conquerors found two monuments that were so impressive that they had no choice but to transform them instead of totally suppressing them.

Seville is, and deserves to be, one of the most famous cities in Spain. The town and her surrounding region have always been of importance, throughout the different periods of Spanish history. After probably being the location of the legendary Kingdom of Tartessos, she was then colonized by the Greeks, the Phoenicians and the Carthaginians and became a prominent city for the Romans, who called her Italica. Two of their important Emperors, were born in Seville: Hadrian and Trajan, who gave his name to the most characteristic of Seville quarters: *Triana (Trajana)*. For some time the capital of the Visigoth Kingdom and always its main religious and cultural centre, she also shone during the Arab occupation and after the Reconquest by the King of Castile, Ferdinand III.

Seville possessed one of the greatest mosques in the whole Islamic world. In the 12th century, the city belonged to a "Taifa" Kingdom, whose capital was in Marrakesh (Morocco), which was independent from the Caliphate of Córdoba. Its leader, Sheik Yaqub Jusuf, preferred to settle with his court in Seville and he wanted to create a great capital. For that purpose, he ordered the building of a huge mosque and a high minaret. The minaret followed the pattern of those which complemented the mosques of Rabat and Marrakech and was crowned by tree big globes covered with gold, which were visible

from a distance of 40 kilometres. When King Ferdinand III of Castile conquered the town in 1248, the Christians continued to use the mosque for their religious rites, making only slight adjustments to the construction. But, in 1356, an earthquake caused important damage to the building and, in 1401, the Church authorities decided to destroy it and build a real cathedral with the same proportions that had defined the mosque. Some opposed the idea: they considered it sheer folly and un-Christian vanity. But it seems that the people of Seville like to show off the best and most beautiful, so the project went ahead and was completed in 1519. It became the largest Gothic cathedral in Christendom and the first to surpass in size the huge temple of the Byzantines, the cathedral and later mosque of St. Sofia in Constantinople. From the original mosque in Seville, the builders respected two important elements: one was the North wall and the large and beautiful Court of The Orange Trees used for ablutions and prayer, with Muslim arches and ornamentation. They also kept the impressive minaret almost intact and it became a bell tower after the original golden globes had fallen, victims of the earthquake. The top of the tower was rebuilt and adapted in Renaissance style. It became famous with the name *La Giralda*, which is thought to refer to the weather vane that now crowns the tower. Some Arabs have told me that in fact the name is a Spanish version of the expression *Her Allah*, which in Arabic means “the bounty of God”. You can climb its many steps today and contemplate the whole of Seville, the majestic Guadalquivir and the surrounding landscape.

Córdoba could be no different. She had been also a capital in Roman Hispania, the head of the Province called Bética. Later, under the Muslim rule, she was the capital of the Islamic emirate, and then the Caliphate of Al-Andalus, the brilliant centre of a flourishing culture and education, the most populated city in the World in the 10th century. When it was “re-conquered” by the Christians in 1236, they were confronted with a mosque that defied all imagination. The Arabs had originally found and used a primitive 6th century Christian church dedicated to St. Vincent for their cult. In 786, first the Emir and, in later years, the self-proclaimed Caliphs of Western Islam, starting in 848 with Abd-el Rahman III, enlarged the building several times, adding new and ever richer aisles following the original orientation of

the church to the South and, when the proximity of the river Guadalquivir no longer allowed it, to the East. The result was an enormous and beautiful construction, built with materials taken from ancient Roman monuments and mostly respecting the architectural traditions of Visigoth Spain, with countless arches that, according to a famous visitor, bring to the memory the beautiful palm forests of Syria. As in Seville, the Christians that reconquered the town used the mosque for their rites at first, adding chapels and altars of their own religion. Emperor Charles V and many others wanted to conserve the unique mosque unchanged, but in 1523 the opinion of the Bishop and other Church officials prevailed: they must have a real cathedral. However, the mosque was so huge that it was not possible to simply replace it on the same foundations, as had been done in Seville. They opted for an unprecedented aggression and ordered architect, Hernan Ruiz, to build a Christian temple... in the middle of the existing mosque! This they achieved no doubt with remarkable ability and imagination, in the Renaissance style with some Gothic archaisms and later with some Baroque embellishments. The result was a strange fusion. For some a symbol of the sheer might of the conquerors imposing their own architecture on the Muslim temple. For others, an example of the peaceful coexistence of different civilizations and religions.

There exist many exponents of this phenomenon : the reconstruction or re-styling of monuments to show the ideological preponderance of a new power. You can find it in Istanbul, where, in order to convert the cathedral of Hagia Sofia into a mosque, four tall minarets were added and the Byzantine mosaics were covered with plaster. Something similar happened to other temples across the Ottoman Empire. But it is not necessary to go so far. The European religious wars caused by the Lutheran Reformation provided some notable examples of this type of metamorphosis, architectural weapons in a kind of *Kulturkampf*. Augsburg cathedral in Bavaria has no frontal entrance and contains two choirs, one Romanesque and the other Gothic, which seem to belong to two moments in the transition from reformation to counter-reformation. The same could be said of the flood of Baroque aesthetics in churches and statues across most of central Europe, up to where the Counter-Reformation was able to extend its influence, up to Austria, Bavaria and Bohemia.

## 104. AL ANDALUS: ISLAM IN SPAIN

When Muhammad II al-Ahmar, also called Boabdil, handed over the keys of Granada to the Catholic Kings, he ended one of the most intriguing periods in history, not only in Spanish history. This happened on January 2nd, 1492. He was the last King of Granada and Granada was the last territory in Spain under Muslim domination, a Kingdom founded by Muhammad I, of the Nasrid family, in 1231. Granada was the last of the small kingdoms that had proliferated in Al Andalus when the unified Muslim states that had been established in 711 collapsed, either due to the war waged on them by the Christian kingdoms or by internal clan-struggles. The Reconquista had reached a decisive point when the Castilian King Ferdinand III seized Seville in 1248. He decided to let the Kingdom of Granada survive: it was a territory surrounded by high mountains, costly to attack, and initially agreed to recognize itself as a vassal of Castile. Then it became consolidated as a real state in which the Islamic cultural splendour reached its culmination with the construction of the fabulous Alhambra palace. It entertained diplomatic relations with other States, especially with the Kingdom of Aragon and the rulers of North-Africa and it had intensive trade with the Italian cities of the early Renaissance. It ended amid internal dissensions and when a new threat from North Africa, the empire of the Banu Marins appeared on the scene, Isabella and Ferdinand decided to complete the war of the Reconquista, which had been interrupted for almost two centuries.

The question as to how the Muslim or Arab domination of Spain came about is subject to much speculation and passionate debate among historians. After all, it lasted for seven centuries in which many changes and revolutions happened. From an emirate under the authority of the Damascus Caliphate to an independent emirate, to a separate caliphate which divided the Muslim world, to two successive states dominated by the African tribes of the Almoravids (1086) and the Almohads (1146). And, in between these very different regimes, long periods of fragmentation into small kingdoms or “taifas”, always in more or less intensive war with the emerging



Christian kingdoms that had been forming from a first nucleus of resistance in Asturias.

But had there really been an Arab invasion at the beginning of all this? In 1969, Ignacio Olagüe, a Spaniard of Basque origin living in France, published a book whose title denied this directly: *Les arabes n'ont jamais envahi l'Espagne* (The Arabs have never invaded Spain). He was audaciously challenging the traditional and for centuries generally accepted historical vision of what had happened: a massive invasion and quick conquest of the Spanish Visigoth kingdom. A catastrophe, a punishment from God for the divisions in the realm, a combination of treason by some Visigoth nobles and by the resentful Jews that had ruined Spain for many centuries. With very little contemporary sources, the first Christian chroniclers invented this myth and the warriors from Castile took it as their ideology to inspire the long struggle to “reconquer” the territory lost to the invaders, to reestablish the Visigoth Kingdom that had survived in the North.

Olagüe went to the opposite extreme with an interesting theory. An Arab invasion of a country of several millions that had resisted the Roman Empire for centuries was impossible to accomplish with the few troops that crossed the straits of Gibraltar in 711 and, following the Roman roads, occupied most of the peninsula in ten years and were supposedly stopped only when they reached Poitiers in France in 732. There must be another explanation and Olagüe offered it in great detail. For him, in reality, there was no invasion as such, but cultural penetration first and general conversion to Islam later. This was possible because the majority of the population in Spain professed a monotheistic religion, Arianism, as opposed to the Trinitarian, in fact polytheistic, faith of the orthodox Christians and of Rome. The conversion of King Recaredo to Catholicism in 586 was for Olagüe a superficial event, it had not deeply changed the situation. The previous influence of Arab culture and language in the South and East of Spain had done the rest. To reinforce his argument, Olagüe added a geographic-economic reason which to me sounds somehow contradictory with his main theory, based on the impossibility of a massive invasion: he maintained that the progressive expansion of the desert in Africa and the Middle-East had sent waves of migrant people towards the West and eventually to Spain. The Mosque of Cordoba was, for our author, the proof of his thesis: this

marvellous temple has nothing to do with Arab art. It pre-existed the presence of Islam in Spain and was originally built according to Roman and Visigothic styles. In fact, neither was it Catholic, because it had no central nave to follow mass, nor Muslim, because it lacked the typical open space for common prayer. It was an Arian temple designed for individual meditation: the Arabs conserved its style as they amplified it in the following centuries.

This thesis was received in Spain with incredibly fierce criticism in academic circles and with interested curiosity by Andalusian nationalists. To historians, Olagüe, who, by the way, was no academic, but just an amateur anthropologist, had not come close to proving his ideas in a scholarly fashion. There are testimonies that would suffice to maintain the traditional vision of the conquest: coins that were minted with Arabic signs, ancient toponyms of clear Arab origin, and so on. The main accusation against Olagüe, however, is based in his supposedly ideological bias: he would be one of those many Spaniards who wanted to find the historical “essence” of their country and free it from the pessimism and frustration derived from imperial decadence. Spain couldn’t have suffered an easy “semitic” invasion. It was indeed ready for an “Islamic Revolution” and absorbed the influx of the new religion turning it into a genuine “Spanish culture, neither fully European nor purely Muslim”.

All these objections sound sufficiently solid and convincing. But they have been formulated with so much passion that the temptation to go back to Olagüe and look for some logic in his theory is difficult to resist. To simply negate that there was any “conquest” at all is going too far. But that it was a minimalistic invasion must be somehow true. How can one explain, otherwise, the surprising rapidity of the religious Muslim expansion to practically the whole territory of Spain? How to explain the scarce resistance of the population in the face of a new regime that liberated them from the excesses of the Visigoths? It seems clear that a population that would have seen its way of life really threatened wouldn’t have passively accepted domination by such a small invading force. If invasion there was, it is also true that there were elements in popular belief and culture that made the continuity possible, that the new situation wasn’t perceived as the catastrophe into which it was later construed.

True, the Muslim period of Spanish history had contradictory results for the future. It engulfed the country in centuries of confrontation of the worst nature: that based on Religion. But it brought with it some of the most brilliant periods of intellectual and artistic creation that, in the long run, made the emergence of European Renaissance possible. After all, the caliphate of Córdoba at the time of sultan Al-Hakam II (915-976) was the most powerful and richest state in Europe.

## 105. ALPHONSE X: ROMAN LAW AND ROYAL POWER

In 1254, King Alphonse X of Castile issued a Decree that created the University of Salamanca, ordering the local authority to provide a fixed salary to, first among others, a master in the Law. Salamanca was the first Royal University in Spain and joined those of Oxford, Paris and Bologna as pioneers in a movement that amounted to a first Renaissance, a cultural revolution in Europe. The Law these Universities were to teach was Roman Law. This was nothing new in Spain, of course, since she had been a province of the Roman Empire for centuries. But, as in the rest of Western Europe since the fall of the Empire in 476, the magnificent edifice of Roman jurisprudence had fallen into decay and oblivion. The Visigoths, according to the principle of personality of Law, applied their own Germanic laws to their people in Spain and allowed the Romanized population to continue to be ruled by theirs. But compared with classical Roman Law, these laws were only a shadow of the former legal order, the most sophisticated legacy of the Romans. The *Corpus Juris Civilis* that Emperor Justinian had given to the Eastern Empire in the years 528 to 533 remained in force there (and in certain Byzantine enclaves in Italy and Spain). The rest of Europe implemented the so called “vulgar law”, simplified collections of rules adapted to the most pressing needs of social intercourse in a mostly agrarian society when there was no central power other than the Church.

In the 11th century something started to happen in Northern Italy. New forms of economic activity developed in the towns, increased commercial exchange and artisanal production that demanded more precise legal rules. Pavia and other cities had not completely lost the manuscripts of the Justinian codes and discovered the Digest, a huge collection of legal opinions of the classical Roman jurists. A new legal culture began to develop and with it new interest in studying the law that attracted students from all over Europe to the newly created Universities, above all to Bologna, the pioneer of Roman Law studies. The Digest dealt mostly with private law. But, promulgated by an Emperor who considered himself the vicar of God and attributed to Him the

authorship of his laws (*Deo Auctore* is the title of the promulgating decree), it could not but have repercussions in the controversy between Pope and Emperor that was taking place in Europe at the time. “What pleases the prince has the force of law”, was the new spirit: the Emperor creates the law and is above it. Nothing could be more useful for the recently created “Holy Roman Empire”. Since the dynasty of the Hohenstaufen, the German Emperors began considering themselves as successors of the Roman Emperors. As a consequence, Roman Law, as the law of the *Imperium Romanum*, became the Law of the Western Empire. It was an ideal weapon for the Emperor in his fight with the Pope and also with the feudal Lords.

Spain was no exception in this movement. As the Reconquista progressed, the rulers of the different Spanish Kingdoms wanted to assert their authority and tried to unify a rather chaotic legal panorama, made up of privileges and customs of towns, nobles and bishops. Following the example of his father Ferdinand III, Alphonse X (1252-1284) wanted to take advantage of the prestige of the recently rediscovered Roman Law. With the *Fuero Real* he tried to impose common regulations to the towns. Then, in 1265, he promulgated the code known as *Siete Partidas*, a long mixture of traditional customs of Castile and Leon, Roman and Canon Law, rules derived from the Bible and from patristic writers covering public and private law, procedure, marriage, property, succession, criminal law... But Alfonso went too far: all these laws were “given” by the King according to the imperial idea of an absolute power that came from God. He did not consult the nobles, the Church and the municipalities when passing them, as other monarchs were doing in Europe, including James I, the king of neighboring Aragón. The resistance to the premature absolutist ambitions of Alphonse was radical: his ideas were considered too expensive, too foreign and his reign ended in his violent dethronement and civil war.

Alphonse X deserved the title of Wise for his great literary achievements, in poetry as well as in history, and for his contribution to the creation of a coherent legal system. As a politician, however, he was not sufficiently prudent. Not finding the title of Emperor of Spain that his predecessor Alphonse VIII (1126-1157) had assumed satisfactory enough for him, his ambition was to be crowned Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, a new entity which Charles the Great had started in

the year 800, when the Pope crowned him as the new Roman Emperor. Alphonse was the son of Ferdinand III of Castile and Beatriz of Swabia, in southern Germany. Ferdinand had greatly expanded the Christian-recovered lands toward the South as far as Seville in 1248. When he died, Pope Clemens X rewarded him with the canonic title of "saint" because he had been prepared to cross the Straits of Gibraltar and continue the particular Spanish Crusade in Morocco. He wrote a testament encouraging Alphonse to continue his conquests, become an emperor and consolidate for Castile the predominance it had achieved among the other Kingdoms of the Peninsula. This was an unbearable pressure for young Alphonse. He wanted to emulate his father but the circumstances were not favourable and he found that it was not so easy to obtain the vassalage from the other kings that his father had successfully demanded. Portugal had been independent since 1138 and now resisted the hegemonic intentions of the Castilian King over the Algarve region. In Aragon, he had to contend with a mighty king, James I, who had also expansive designs. Since it was so very difficult to become *Imperator Totius Hispaniae*, Alphonse thought he could win the game by becoming *Imperator Germaniae*. After all, he was the son of a German princess and considered himself as such entitled to the Duchy of Swabia.

Alphonse clearly miscalculated his chances. Although the Holy Roman Empire had been vacant since 1250, none of the necessary requirements were realistically in the hands of the Castilian King. First and foremost to that end was the support of the Pope. Innocent IV encouraged Alphonse to continue his father's project of a Crusade in Morocco that would guarantee a land route towards Jerusalem. For the European title, however, there were other important contenders and Spain had never been in the circle of states with allegiance to the Holy Roman Empire. And there were other difficulties. Once the succession was interrupted, the new Emperor had to be elected by the German princes and to win their support a lot of money was needed. Unfortunately for Alphonse, his ambitions were received by the nobles of Castile, already suffering a deep economic crisis, with open hostility. The Cortes would not allow any more spending for the imperial enterprise, and so it failed. Spain still had to wait another two centuries to aspire once again and win the title of Emperor for her King. In 1519, Charles V would be more fortunate.

## 106. THE BOOK OF GOOD LOVE

Good love is the opposite of mad love, which is a sin. According to Juan Ruiz, Archpriest of Hita (c. 1283-c. 1350), however, sin is human and, therefore, inevitable. In the event that anyone were to find themselves unable to avoid falling into temptation, in his *Book of Good Love* he offers the prospective sinners abundant material on how to satisfy their needs, on the ways he manages his conquests and anecdotes of explicit sexual practice, as well as ways to avoid trouble in varied amatory circumstances. He also offers pious “exempla” or parables from which moral exhortation is derived, lyric poems on the seven joys of the Virgin Mary and an ample account of his own life and adventures striding around the villages and mountains North of Madrid. Little is known about the real life of the Archpriest except for what he wrote and that, because of the way he lived, he was sent to jail by the influential Cardinal Gil de Albornoz. The archbishop of Toledo was trying to elevate the moral behaviour of his priests and organized a council in Valladolid which specifically forbade them to entertain mistresses, which was then a common practice. The priests were so indignant that the Bishop should inform the Pope about these facts that they tabled a protest before the King of Castile.

Whoever reads the book of good love will soon understand that its author was a real genius. We know little about him, or perhaps we know everything there is to know, because his book is presented as a biographical account of Juan Ruiz, the writer, but it is a fictitious biography. We don't know how much is true because the driving force of the long poem is irony and humor. Ruiz laughs at himself and at the reader in a virtuoso display of different styles and metres, various kinds of tales and fables interspersed between the autobiographical passages, the lyric prayers to the Virgin and severe admonitions about morals, which in the context of such high eroticism are hardly convincing. Juan Ruiz, however, shows a broad culture, knowledge of the European classics of which Ovid's *Ars Amandi* is quoted and used as inspiration. It is not difficult also to discern a clear influence of the Arabic literature that had been written in Muslim occupied Spain with great

brilliance. The Archpriest obviously belonged to a culture which was both Western and Oriental and his massive and heterogeneous book of more than 1,700 stanzas meant an epochal change in literature in the Castilian language, which, up to then, had been limited to simple and conventional religious poetry and some epic works.

Juan Ruiz lived at a time of high tension in Spanish life. Castile had made decisive progress in the Reconquista: after his victory at Las Navas de Tolosa in 1212, Ferdinand III had conquered Córdoba in 1236 and Seville in 1248. Only the kingdom of Granada was left in the hands of the Muslims. Together with the conquest of territory, the expansion of the Castilian language, originally just the dialect of a small corner at the North of the peninsula, was being imposed on most of the monarchy. But the social consequences of so much success in war were ambivalent. First, the huge territories gained by Castile from the Moors in the South had to be re-populated. That in turn caused imbalances for the economy, aggravated by the repeated episodes of the plague during the 14th century and the aggressions against the Jews that culminated in the pogroms of 1391. For the lower classes famine followed the abandoning of agriculture to the advantage of livestock breeding favoured by the landowning nobles. At the same time, the nobles found themselves, at the end of the Reconquista, deprived of war-booty and rewards by the King in the form of grants of new land. Castile being up to that time a country in continuous movement, the aristocrats weren't real feudal lords with fixed and organized dominions as they were in the rest of Europe. Their power was based, rather, on the insecurity of the monarchy... and money borrowed from the Jews. Is it any wonder that they fought among themselves and with the Kings to enhance their political power? Their struggles led Castile to a long period of civil war, aggravated by the dynastic disruption occurring after the demise of Alphonse X and a change of dynasty not long later, when the Trastámara family came to power.

These were the circumstances in which Juan Ruiz wrote, opening the way to a period of cultural glory for Spain. It would not be the last time that political and social decadence would be accompanied by an explosion of literary and artistic creativity. Alphonse X "the Wise" had given a strong push to the expansion of the Castilian language, publishing his poetical, historical and juridical works in the vernacular, at



a time when the educated in Europe continued to write in Latin. His grandson Alphonse XI recovered the towns along the Straits of Gibraltar that were helping the Moors give aid to Granada or which might even permit an attempt at a new invasion. He consolidated central power with a general compilation of laws and created the Universities of Palencia and Salamanca in order to foment education following the example of the Church. Other circumstances of a more practical nature also helped. Paper was invented and so literature could reach a wider circle of readers. Also the convex lens was discovered, allowing not only the readers but also the essential copyists to prolong their reading life.

The author of the Book of Good Love expressed the joy of living and a broad tolerance of sin in a comic and provoking style, giving the impression of someone who refuses to let himself be carried away by the tensions of society and of religion. But in this dawn of Spanish literature, others preferred to create in a more serious fashion. The historical works of Chancellor Lopez de Ayala are worth mentioning and, above all, a remarkable writer at the service of didactic prose disguised as fiction: Don Juan Manuel, Prince of Villena (1282-1348). He was Alphonse X's nephew and was destined to high destinies as a soldier and politician. At the age of twelve he fought in Murcia against the Moors from Granada. He had a strong personality and was violently opposed to King Alphonse XI until the Pope had to intervene to impose peace. He then participated in the successful battle of El Salado (1340), which gave Castile freedom of movement on the coast near Gibraltar. But in the end, Don Juan Manuel chose to devote his life to literature and wrote many books, among which the best known is *El Conde Lucanor*. In it a young man, in a fictitious dialogue with the teacher, Patronio, is offered advice on all kinds of matters required to confront life in troubled times such as the ones the characters were living through: a book on prudence that prefigures Machiavelli and the later Spanish authors who wrote for the education of princes.

## 107. THE CRUSADE OF THE CHRISTIAN KINGDOMS

*El Cid Campeador* is one of the few characters of the Spanish Middle Ages whose life we know in detail. He inspired a long and beautiful epic poem that tells of his adventures. We know of him besides through other sources, both Christian and Arabic. He was interesting in many ways: as a warrior and leader of a private army, and as a proud and independent-minded noble. He has inspired numerous plays and tales in classical and modern literature, even in the cinema. For me, he is interesting mainly because his life explains better than any theory can the origin and the nature of the war we call the *Reconquista*. Rodrigo Díaz de Vivar (c.1048-1099) served in the Court of the Kings of Castile, Sancho II and Alphonse VI as an adviser and as military chief in many battles. At a certain point in time, he fell into disgrace and was sent into exile. What do you suppose he did? He went to the independent *taifa* kingdom of Saragossa and offered the service of his forces to the local Muslim ruler. Later, he became reconciled with Alphonse VI and yet again expelled for treason. What did he do? He waged war on the Kings of Aragon and Navarre and finally conquered Valencia from the Moors and created for himself an independent feudal dominion which he ruled until his death.

The *Reconquista*, as shown by this story, was at the outset, just a war of territorial and political conquest and not a religious confrontation. The Christians who had taken refuge in the North of Spain created a Kingdom in Asturias that progressively started to claim for itself, as successor of the Visigoth Kingdom, the lands that had been occupied by the Muslim invaders since the year 711. They asserted, of course, that they were blessed with a divine mandate to re-establish the Spanish Catholic Church, but their action was directed first to repopulate the valley of the river Duero and then to challenge the power of the occupiers to the South. This they did until matters became more complicated. Around the year 1000, the powerful vizier in the caliphate of Cordoba, Al-Mansur, launched an unstoppable offensive against the Christian possessions: he seized Zamora, Leon and Barcelona.

From Santiago he took the bells from the cathedral and carried them to Cordoba to adorn the mosque. Then, in 1080, a new wave of invaders from Morocco, the Almoravids, conquered the former territories of Al Andalus after the collapse of the Caliphate. They were Islamic fundamentalists and threatened with their intransigence, the relatively peaceful coexistence of the Muslims with the Christians and the Jews many of whom fled to take refuge in the Christian Kingdoms of the North. Another invasion, starting in 1146, this time by the tribe of the Almohads, no less extremist, had similar consequences.

At that time, the Holy See in Rome was trying to take the political lead in Europe and launching the Crusades against the infidels in the Middle-East. Reconquest in Spain and the Crusade logically had similar aims, the struggle against Islam, and the Popes saw an opportunity in this coincidence to extend their influence to Spain. Pope Urban II sent some Catalan counts, who wanted to participate in the Crusades of the Levant, back to their country. He wanted them to regain the city and Church of Tarragona: "It is no virtue to rescue Christians from the Saracens in one place, only to expose them to their oppression in another". So, gradually, the struggle of the Christian Kingdoms was supported by Papal "Bulls of Crusade" by which eternal pardon for the sins of the fighters and money for the treasury of the warrior kingdoms were simultaneously gained. Of these bulls many were issued, normally at the request of the Kings: the most important was the one granted by Pope Innocent III in 1209, shortly after a second invasion of the Almohads. It provided some European help and urged the Christian Kings to unite against the common enemy. They did so and won the decisive battle of Las Navas de Tolosa (near Jaén) in 1212, which opened the way to the recovery of Andalusia and the Eastern coast during the 13th century.

The Church launched the Crusades, among other things, in order to impose the Gregorian reform on the whole of Europe, intended both to purify a corrupt Church and to assert the political authority of the Pope. In Spain, where the different kingdoms were fighting as much against the Moors as among themselves, the attempt by the Popes to take the lead in the hostilities against the Muslims was received in different ways. In Catalonia and Portugal, in order to assert their independence, the rulers welcomed the Papal Bulls and accepted

church patronage on the territories they would conquer, which legally became subject to the ultimate suzerainty of the Holy See. Castile-Leon was different: King Alphonse IV had hegemonic aims on Spain and didn't want to give up the leadership of the war effort in favour of the Holy See. He wanted to maintain a link with the religious mythology of the *Reconquista* and preserve the economic advantages of the Bulls of Crusade. He thus permitted the main elements of the Gregorian reform to invade Spain with the help of the movement of the monks of Cluny, the most important being the forcible introduction of the Roman liturgy and the suppression of the national or *mozárabe* rites established since the times of the Visigoths. Alphonse resisted the papal attempts and kept the political expansion over the peninsula as his main objective, proclaiming himself "Emperor" of Spain, just in case. He also maintained his intention of "hispanizing" the crusade by other means: he created national Military Orders, separate from those created by the Church for the crusade to Jerusalem, and put them under royal control, giving them religious-military tasks at the frontiers with the Moors. He also encouraged the cult of Saint James as the warrior-saint of the Castilians, a national cult which expressed an implicit superiority over that of Saint Peter in Rome.

The struggle against the Moors finished with the conquest of Granada, for which renewed Bulls of Crusade were issued by Popes Calixto III and Sixto IV. As I suppose has been shown by all the above, the Reconquista was a complex affair. Paradoxically, it started in the Northern territories whose populations of Asturians, Cantabrians and Basques had for centuries resisted Romanization and Christianization. From the initial Kingdom of Asturias, which attracted Visigothic nobles and the people of Al-Andalus who didn't convert to Islam, it expanded following separate ways and amid clan- and dynastic civil wars. Castile, a dissident county of the Kingdom of Leon ended up taking the initiative of the Reconquista, which was also accomplished separately by the Kingdoms of Aragón and Portugal, at different times and circumstances. The struggle was slow but never ceased moving, creating a class of nobles who were not interested in consolidating great feuds but rather in continuing the push for new land to conquer. From a national point of view, as French historian Pierre Vilar has shown, the Reconquista didn't do much to unify the country, quite to

the contrary. Both the taifas of the Arabs and the different kingdoms, municipalities and counties of the Christians became forever very much attached to their titles and proud of their victories in war. The only unifying factor was, in the end, religion and a common enemy.

## 108. COMPOSTELA, PORTICO TO ETERNITY

According to tradition, St James the Great was one Jesus's disciples who, after the miraculous illumination of the Pentecost, travelled to the known world to preach the Gospel. He went to Spain and stayed in Galicia for some time. The Virgin Mary appeared to him in Saragossa and encouraged him to continue his mission, which had turned out to be rather hard in the primitive mountains of the North. He did so before returning to Palestine, where he was martyred: King Herod had him beheaded. His disciples returned his body to Galicia by ship and buried him in a remote place. Covered by the forest, the Saint was forgotten for many centuries until Pelagius, a solitary hermit, who was roaming about the site, saw supernatural signs of a miracle, lights of stars and songs of angels, that led him to discover the tomb. Theodemar, Bishop of Iria Flavia, a nearby port (today called Padrón) went to the place to test the truth of the announcement and then, convinced of the miracle, visited the ruler of Asturias, an incipient nucleus of resistance to the Muslims. In the year, 834, King Alphonse II travelled to Compostela (*Campus Stellae*, or field of stars), as they named the location of the tomb, and proclaimed the discovery to the world. Leo III, Pope from 795 to 816, published an apostolic letter confirming that the *translatio* of St. James' body had in fact taken place. At about the same time, the Emperor Charles the Great had a dream in which St. James encouraged him to visit the church that had been built to enclose his tomb, thus inaugurating a pilgrimage that would follow the direction of the Milky Way to the West until the *Finis Terrae*, the end of the earth.

If you think that this story is mere legend you are probably right and almost everybody would agree. But that is immaterial because this legend was not a legend at the time it was invented. It was a belief, a miracle that nobody seems to have doubted as they did in rationalistic France, when they dismissed a similar attempt made in 1010 by the Abbot Alcuin, who proclaimed in front of a gathering of several monarchs that he had unearthed the head of John the Baptist. The Spaniards had no doubts and their credulity had nothing to do with

the fact that the sources had been systematically manipulated. *Se non è vero è ben trovato*, as the Italians say: it may not be true but it's a good story. St. James and his unlikely adventure was all that a people needed who were confined to the mountains and determined to embark on the daunting task of restoring the Visigothic Kingdom and recovering the territory occupied by the Muslims. The historical galvanizing force of the idea of possessing the body of a major apostle, obscurely believed to be the brother of Jesus and equal to him in divinity, was enormous. Compared to this, all the theories constructed to explain the legend seem rather irrelevant, some of them almost comical. St. James, who according to the Scripture was a pious and peaceful preacher, was transformed into a warrior-saint who inspired the fighters of the *Reconquista*. Américo Castro saw in this a modern version of the Dioscuri brothers Castor and Pollux, sons of Zeus, who also descended from heaven to wage wars. St. James would be the projection of the Muslim *yihad* in the Christian camp, a sort of anti-Mahomet. The acerbic rejection of these ideas by Claudio Sánchez-Albornoz, as usual for lack of rigorous documentary evidence, didn't prevent others from falling into the interpretative temptation. Thus, Fernando Sánchez Dragó, like Castro no historian, went far in showing traces of ancestral Celtic practices and even of an intrinsic need of the human being to travel in an eternal pilgrimage to the West, where the sun disappears below the horizon.

St. James inspired the re-conquest and the Compostelan diocese competed in importance with Toledo, the Visigothic capital of Spanish Catholicism and even with Rome, because some bishops maintained that their patron was superior in holiness to St. Peter, and declared themselves pontiffs of the whole Church. But the pilgrimage to the tomb of St. James was, in another way, no less important historically. The driving force for a renewed effort of the Church for spiritual and political power in Europe was the foundation of the monastery of Cluny in 910. The Order, supported by Rome and the Duchy of Burgundy, saw, in the prestige quickly acquired by the St. James cult, an opportunity to expand the Gregorian reform in Spain and help in containing the expansion of Islam. Many monasteries were founded on the way from Navarre to Compostela. They served as hostels and grew in wealth as alms from the pilgrims and donations from the no-

bles filled their pockets . This was thus indeed a “French Way”, not only in a physical sense. It brought with it merchants, builders who changed the architectural style and, above all, it introduced the new Roman liturgy, even the writing that replaced the old Visigothic way. Spain, as it advanced South against the Moors, was connected to the rest of Europe through France: symbolically, the king who imposed all these changes on the Spanish Church, Alphonse VI of León and Castile (1047-1109) married five times, always with French Princesses.

Nothing, however, can obscure the splendour of the Portico of Glory, created for the cathedral of St. James by a modest sculptor, whose first name is all we know of him: Master Mathew. It took him and his team 20 years (1168-1188) to complete this astoundingly beautiful representation of the Apocalypse. Until 1520 the pilgrims coming from the East would be surprised by this forest of figures, which included not only the main characters of the Last Judgment but also accompanying musicians and historical figures. As you walk into the Cathedral they seem to move, involving you with their mystery in a unique spiritual experience. The Portico was kept, fortunately, inside the building after the old structure was replaced by the present Cathedral in the 18th century, a massive example of baroque pride. It seemed to have been built to disguise the crisis of the cult of St. James that started when the *Reconquista* was completed. A certain rejection by the Castilian nobles of the arrogance of the Galician bishops and probably envy for the riches they acquired came to a climax when King Alphonse VII sacked the treasury of the cathedral. In 1601, the Jesuit historian, Juan de Mariana, challenged the likelihood of the tradition about the preaching and the remains of the saint in Spain. Teresa of Avila was proposed as a replacement patron of Spain but it all was to no avail. St. James had been revived in the 16th century as Spain became again involved in religious wars: against the Turks, against the Protestants and against the pagan Indians of America: Santiago de Cuba, Santiago de León de Caracas, Santiago de Chile and Santiago de los Caballeros de La Antigua (Guatemala) come to my mind as examples of the renewed recourse by Spaniards to the Compostelan myth in their new conquests.



## 109. THE KINGDOM OF ARAGON IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

The *Sicilian Vespers* is the name usually given to a tragic incident that took place in Palermo (Sicily) on March 30, 1282 as the people gathered in the cathedral for evening prayers. A French officer was killed by a man whose wife he had molested and so a rebellion was unleashed that resulted in 2,000 French being killed in the following days all over Sicily. Charles of Anjou, the King who had taken over the island thanks to Pope Martin IV, also a Frenchman, had committed two errors, as historian Steven Runciman accurately summed up. First, he was too ambitious and had seized the island to expel the last monarch of the Hohenstaufen dynasty, Manfred, the son of The Holy Roman Emperor, Frederick II. His aim was to lead one more crusade, this time against the Greek Emperor of Byzantium in order to restore the notorious "Latin Empire". Second error: in order to finance this enterprise he taxed the Sicilian nobles heavily or confiscated their estates and treated his subjects with brutality and contempt.

Peter III of Aragón had married Constance, Manfred's daughter, and took advantage of the Palermo uprising to claim the Hohenstaufen heredity for himself. He was prompted by the military might that Aragón had developed during the Reconquista and the Mediterranean ambition of the Catalan merchants who had long been active in trade with the East. Sicily was the beginning of the strategic route that Aragon opened for expansion to the whole Mediterranean. It would include, together with the Balearic Islands, Sardinia, Tunis and, farther East, Constantinople, where a Catalan Company had offered its services to the Byzantine Emperor and founded the Duchy of Athens. It is suspected that the Sicilian revolution was the result of a conspiracy between the King of Aragon and the Byzantine ruler.

For Aragón to be able to embark in her secular Mediterranean adventure, many factors had to concur. The kingdom was born in a region in the Northeast of the Spanish peninsula which had been deeply Romanized and where the Muslim occupation had also been intense, as the way for the invaders to move towards France and the

rest of Europe. Aragon developed slowly and participated in the Reconquista with less ambition than Castile. Not until the 12th century could it gain control of the rich valley of the river Ebro and in 1150 it was united with Catalonia through the marriage of the Catalan Count Ramón Berenguer IV with Petronilla, the Crown-Princess of Aragon. The kingdom extended over time to Valencia and the Balearic archipelago, Sardinia and Sicily. The kingdom of Murcia, formerly a powerful “taifa” under the Arabs, was the key for the expansion of the Aragonese in the Mediterranean. As early as 1151, the Kings of Castile and Aragon had agreed by treaty on the respective zones where they would conduct the Reconquista. Happily for Aragon, Murcia was assigned to Castile and was under its control as Ferdinand III was completing the conquest of Andalusia in Seville (1248). I say happily because this meant that Aragón had completed her part in the struggle against the Muslim occupiers so that the whole frontier between Christian and Moorish Spain was then for Castile to defend. Aragon could use all her might and wealth in support of her trade expansion toward the East.

Of course, it was the Catalans who took the lead in the commercial activities for which they had long experience. Catalonia had been created as a series of counties called *Marca Hispanica*, a buffer territory at the Eastern end of the Pyrenees formed to stop the invasion of France by the Muslims. Emperor Charles the Great had failed in his attempt to conquer Saragossa, as the famous *Chanson de Roland* poetically narrated. But the French influence in the Catalan countries was long and rich in consequences. Culturally they received the impact of the chivalrous court of Provence and her troubadours. Economically Catalonia profited from the gold that fled to Barcelona from the French nobles persecuted by the crusade launched by Pope Innocent III in 1209 against the heretic Cathars in the South of France. Vicens Vives, the Catalan historian, considers this the main push received by a merchant class that was ready for expansion and would reach as far as the end of the Mediterranean in competition with Venice and Genoa. The Consulate of the Sea, an old institution confirmed by King James I of Aragón for Barcelona in 1258, was an autonomous judicial body which was competent to settle any legal trade controversy without interference from the royal authorities. Its precedents slowly formed the

*Ius Mercatorium*, a body of maritime customs whose application extended the whole of the Middle-Seas. Similar Consulates were established later in Valencia, Messina and Genoa and the Barcelona rules of commercial and maritime law were published in written form in 1494.

The Sicilian Vespers had very relevant historical consequences. The clash between the Holy See and the Hohenstaufen emperor Frederick II for political supremacy in Europe meant the beginning of the end of the Papal aspirations. The defeat of the French solution in the person of Charles of Anjou and the beginning of Aragon dominance in Sicily showed the limits of Papal power when not backed by strong material force. In France and elsewhere, including Spain, the Popes had supported the formation of kingdoms capable of concentrating power against the feudal nobles but that, at the same time, would be subservient vassals to Rome. They were unknowingly sowing the seeds of nationalism and resistance to the Papal claims of supremacy. The frustrated Pope Martin IV, who had supported Charles of Anjou, decreed a crusade against the King of Aragon, but this was a symbolic move that could not stop the evolution of Europe towards the formation of strong Nation-States.

Another consequence of the imperial initiative of the Kingdom of Aragon had to do with the configuration of power internally. The inspirers of the participation of King Peter III in Sicily were mostly the Sicilian nobles of the Hohenstaufen faction, who had fled the island when the forces of king Manfred were defeated by Charles of Anjou and their king had been murdered. They had taken refuge in Barcelona and Manfred's daughter, Constance, was the queen of Aragon. They had a hard time convincing the local nobles, who were conservative and sedentary, accustomed, if at all, to waging land wars against the Moors and not to maritime adventures. The King finally obtained their support but not without paying a decisive price: he had to confirm, by a *General Privilege of Aragon*, the established non-written constitution under which the King accepted significant limitations on his power. He would govern together with his council, he would respect the legislative initiative of the Cortes and would act indeed more or less as a king in parliamentary monarchies of later times. In this way, Aragon and Castile would take different paths, both internationally and internally: the former, Mediterranean and "pactist"; absolutist and

land-oriented, later Atlantic, the latter. Two ways which would remain parallel even long after the two kingdoms had been united under a single crown.

## 110. THE VISIGOTHIC KINGS

Spaniards of a previous generation have told me how they were taught about the Visigothic period in Spain. It was hard but simple: you just had to memorize the names of the 38 kings who reigned between the years 507 and 711 A.D. As a matter of fact this was one of the most complex and decisive periods of a sufficiently complex history. The Visigoths were a people with origin in the North, like all Barbarians are supposed to be. They migrated to the plains around the Black Sea and were then pushed further South by the Huns. They defeated the Romans in 378 in the battle of Adrianópolis (today's Edirne in Turkey) and settled more or less peacefully in the Eastern Roman Empire. Then they emigrated again towards the West, sacked Rome in 410, created a kingdom in Ravenna and later in Aquitaine and entered the Spanish peninsula in 494, where they gradually created a third kingdom with its capital in Toledo. It was a long exposure to the Romans, with whom they entered into agreements to cooperate in their defense against other invading peoples: for example, they were of great help in the defeat of Attila by Rome in 451.

Around the year 340 the Visigoths had converted to the Christian religion in its Arian version, one of the primitive sects into which the former was divided until the council at Nicaea defined the Trinitarian Christian orthodoxy for the first time. The Arians were strictly monotheistic and therefore denied the divinity of Christ, whom they only considered a prophet or emissary of God. This was a convenient ideology for a conquering people that needed to concentrate absolute leadership in the warrior-chief. It was also in agreement with the political structure of the Eastern Roman Empire founded by the Emperor Constantine, as defined by Eusebius of Cesárea, the bishop who had achieved the conversion of the Emperor to the Christian faith. According to him, the Emperor is the head of the house of God; he commands and, at the same time, protects the Church, appoints bishops and assembles its councils. This doctrine became later the so-called *caesaropapism* when the Emperor Theodosius proclaimed Christianity the official religion of the Empire.

With this ideological baggage the Visigoths arrived in Spain and tried to impose their ideas in a territory that had been deeply Romanized and, besides, had remained occupied for more than a century by a variety of Barbarian tribes. They worked very hard to this end and had to wage simultaneous wars against the Byzantine province in the South and against the rebellious populations of the North, Basques and Cantabrians, who had also resisted the Roman conquest. They also had to defend their incipient kingdom against incursions from the Catholic Franks from further North and resistance from the previous establishment of the Roman-Spanish population. In 569, King Leovigild was able to complete this unifying task, which had started sixty years earlier amid multiple divisions and struggles. Leovigild launched a final offensive against the Catholics in 578 in order to unify the country around Arianism, but his success was not complete. His son Hermenegild, married to a Frankish (and therefore Catholic) princess, converted to the faith of Rome and launched a rebellion in Seville which ended with his death in martyrdom, as the Church soon proclaimed. Another son and successor of Leovigild, King Recared I also converted and called a council of all the bishops of Spain and France in Toledo. In it, the Visigothic kingdom rejected Arianism and accepted the orthodox Trinitarian doctrine of the Catholic Church.

Of course the previous and long Roman presence in Spain was decisive for this seemingly abrupt change. The council of Toledo was inspired by a powerful and influential bishop, Leandro, brother and predecessor of the more famous Isidore at the diocese of Seville. Isidore was also a prestigious theologian and more: an author of an enormous amount of works that summed up all the classical culture, which was thus conserved and propagated in Europe at a time of unrest and cultural decadence. His main work, *The Ethymologies*, contains definitions of all kinds of matters, including law and history, of rare precision and lucidity. But the historical importance of Isidore lies elsewhere: in the profound change he promoted in the relationship between power and religion. When the Roman Empire fell in the West, the Church had been the only effective power that survived the Germanic invasions. It had taken over the administration and the teaching previously held by the Roman authorities. It had logically defined a prominent position for the Church which was completely different from the one it had

in the East under the strong imperial monarchy. Pope Gelasius (492-496) defined very precisely this political theology in which the Church encompasses the kingdom and not vice-versa. This idea of primacy of the spiritual over the temporal was given a well-known translation by Isidore: *rex eris si recte facias; si non facias, non eris* (freely interpreted: you'll be king only if you act rightly -meaning: according to the doctrines of the Church as defined by us, the bishops- otherwise you won't be). The King was thus legitimized by ecclesiastical anointing after being elected by nobles and bishops, and he might be deposed by a council. This conception of theocracy, as opposed to caesaropapism, excluded, obviously, any religious dissidence and was especially strict in the persecution of the Jews: the XII Council of Toledo in 681 gave the king a precise mandate: "to extirpate the plague of Judaism that is always being reborn".

As we see, the aspiration to religious unity is old in Spain and determined much of her history. The Visigoths didn't have an easy task. They found ample zones where Christianization had not yet arrived and which continued living according to paganism. Arianism was not completely eradicated when King Recared converted officially: its adherence to monotheism remained latent and probably made easier the conversion of much of Spain to monotheistic Islam. Last but not least, Spain had witnessed the proliferation of sects and heresies of various kinds, of which Priscilianism was the most extended and persistent. Priscilian was a rich noble Galician of Roman origin, a dynamic and persuasive preacher of doctrines with origins in the Orient: Gnosticism and dualism, the idea that salvation comes not from faith but from the knowledge of profound truths and that each person had to arrive at this knowledge freely and in the silence of prayer. Priscilian had many adherents and many envious opponents. He was tried by ecclesiastical and by imperial judges and finally beheaded in Treveris in the year 385 together with some of his disciples. Of course, his doctrines didn't offer a case strong enough to condemn him at a time in which the frontiers of orthodoxy were somehow blurred. So he was accused of "witchcraft, obscene doctrines...and praying naked"(!). Priscilianism was to last for a long time in Galicia and other parts of Spain.

## 111. CANTABRIA DELAYS THE PAX ROMANA IN HISPANIA

“Poor Hispania! This land had to suffer a harsh punishment: to be the stage of the quarrels of Roman generals!” So wrote the Roman historian Lucius Annaeus Florus at the end of the first century. The *Pax Romana* had long been established in Spain, but he was reflecting on the long sufferings the inhabitants of the territory had to endure, having been used as the stage for so many wars that were alien to them: first the war of Rome with Carthage, then the civil wars that marked the end of the old Republic: Pompey against the rebel Sertorius, Julius Caesar against Pompey in the battle that gave him the control of the Republic until his assassination in 44 B. C. All these battles were, of course, alien to the inhabitants of Hispania. They had also been at war with Rome for two centuries, starting in the year 218 B.C. until the Empire succeeded in totally subjugating them. With the Lusitanian Viriatus the Romans had had to contend with a new way of informal warfare, the “guerrillas”. In Numancia they found an unprecedented and fierce resistance: after a siege that lasted many years, the inhabitants set fire to the town: they preferred death to submission.

Everything seemed to be settled by the time Octavius Claudius was given in 27 B. C. the honorific title of Augustus by the Roman Senate. Like his adoptive father Julius Caesar, he was a ruthless military chief, a very young veteran of many wars. In the battle of Actium in 31 B. C., he had achieved complete military control of the Empire that had been previously divided between him in the West and Marc Antony in the East. He was charismatic and strong, admired for his victories and loved by the people as the ruler who could bring peace at last, after a century of civil wars, chaos and violence. He was also an extraordinarily cunning politician. He had learned the lesson of his mentor. Caesar wanted to change the republican constitution of Rome and bring about a monarchy with himself as king. He confronted the defenders of the old republic and paid with his life in the Ides of March. Like Caesar, Augustus wanted to consolidate the absolute power he had secured by control of the armies, but took a sinuous and gradual



route for this end. He accepted ceremonial honours and some minor powers for himself, but left the institutions of the Republic intact... only in appearance. He wanted “just” to be the Princeps, that is, the first citizen of Rome. He achieved this difficult balance brilliantly and, in this way, founded the real Roman Empire that, after him, could not but openly become an absolute monarchy.

However, he could not enjoy his success immediately. Only one year after the inauguration of the new regime, he had to pay attention to some trouble that perturbed the Pax Augusta. And they were happening in a remote corner of the Empire, in the North of Hispania, where two centuries of fighting had not been able to achieve Romanization, that was by then otherwise complete in the peninsula. A rebellion of two tribes, the Cantabrians and the Astures, prompted Augustus to demand full powers from the Senate to finish this last obstinate resistance once and for all. Although this personal involvement was not strictly necessary, Octavius wanted to have a last triumph on the battlefield against an external “enemy” to consolidate his absolute dominance, to renew his *virtus imperatoria*. To this end, he established his residence in Tarraco (present-day Tarragona) and from there he ruled the whole empire and conducted the battles for the total submission of Spain. As in the two previous centuries, this was no easy task. The rebellious tribes were not dominated until 19 B. C. and Augustus had to send his general Agrippa to achieve at all costs the annihilation of their resistance.

From then on Hispania recovered slowly from the ravages of so many wars and entered what some consider a Golden Era. The cultural Romanization was almost complete, the Latin language replaced the old Iberian dialects, the clever propaganda and the generous construction of public works made Spain one of the richest provinces of Rome, free from the unrest that occasionally upset other parts of the Empire. On the contrary, it provided two of the most famous emperors, Trajan and Hadrian, and illustrious writers like Seneca, Quintilian and Marcial.

When the centuries of the decline and fall of the Empire in the West started, however, this would not mean the end of Rome’s presence in Spain. Well after the Barbarian invasions and the inauguration of a Visigothic Kingdom, a province of the Byzantine kingdom would

strangely prolong the relationship. General Liberius was 85 years old when he was sent to Spain in 552 to reestablish the authority of the Roman Empire, challenged by the Visigoths. This great effort for the restoration of the integrity of the Empire had begun soon after its authority in the West had collapsed in 476. When the great Emperor Justinian I (527-565) came to power in Constantinople he managed to settle some threats from the East and some internal problems. A strong financial situation made it possible for him to undertake his great effort for the restoration of the Empire.

Justinian's general Belisarius seized the North of Africa from the Vandals first, one of the tribes that had invaded Spain (and given its name to the Southern region: Al-Andalus). He established his headquarters in Ceuta and then started a long war to recover Italy. But something happened in Spain before the Italian campaign was completed, that gave the Emperor an excuse to extend his efforts to restore the former Roman power. The same as they had done in Italy, the Visigoths started to challenge Rome's sovereignty. They had been allies of the Romans since 418 and by now controlled most of Spain, coexisting with a very Romanized population in the South. In 552, King Agila was facing an open rebellion by a member of his family and pretender to the throne, Athanagild. In a moment of weakness in his struggle he asked the assistance of the Roman Emperor. Justinian jumped at the occasion and, although he was able to divert only limited forces from his Italian campaign, they were soon in control of the Balearic Islands and a large part of Betica, the Southern province in Roman Hispania. When King Agila was murdered and succeeded by Athanagild, he rejected Justinian's help and asked General Liberius to withdraw his troops. But it was not so easy to convince the Emperor. Many battles were fought in cities like Málaga and Cartagena until the Visigoths managed to achieve total control of the Peninsula. The Byzantines stayed until the year 621 A. D.

## EPILOGUE:TARTESSOS AND WHAT HAPPENED BEFORE

What was there before? As is the case everywhere, in the beginning was the Geography. The historical fate of Spain was determined by the caprices of the physical world, perhaps more so. The Iberian Peninsula is a massive square, cut from Europe by the mighty range of the Pyrenees and united to Africa by the narrow straits of Gibraltar. It is watered by mighty rivers and crossed by isolating mountain ranges, which have always hampered communication between the plateau in the centre and the coastal regions, and also between the different tribes that populated them. Surrounded by the sea, Spain's rich coasts were open to invaders from the East of the Mediterranean. Many centuries later her position looking across the Atlantic at the edge of Europe would compel her to become the leader of the new drive of humans towards the West, in search of a New World. She seemed to be perpetuating an ancestral human instinct to migrate in the direction of the sun which flees to die beyond the horizon.

What happened before the Romans is only vaguely known, we have reached a nebulous time in which certain facts are surrounded by legend or simply myth. The Greco-Roman geographer Strabon wrote of the existence of a King "at the end of the Sea" who reigned according to versified laws which were 6,000 years old. This ruler may be the legendary King Habidis of the Tartessian civilization and the laws were brought to Spain probably by immigrant peoples of the Orient. It is certain, in any case, that a real kingdom existed in the South of Spain in the triangle formed by the present day cities of Huelva, Seville and Cadiz. The archaeologists, starting with the German, Adolf Shulten, in 1922, studied the traces of the advanced culture that was already mentioned by Greek Historians as early as the 6th century B.C. Ephorus wrote about "...a very prosperous market...with much tin carried by river, as well as gold and copper..." No wonder: it is a paradisiac region between the mountains and the sea, very fertile thanks to the river that crosses it, with a natural and secure port open to both seas, Mediterranean and Atlantic.

The Tartessian people created the first political organization that existed in Spain. They developed a rich culture and enormous wealth and discovered methods of navigation that allowed them to sail, about the year 2000 B. C., around the coasts of Africa and Europe up to the British Isles. News about Tartessos and its riches reached the advanced peoples of the East early. It is almost certainly the port of Tarshish mentioned in the Bible, to which Solomon tells us that he sent ships in search of metals (Kings I, 10). The Phoenicians started trading with them as early as 1200 B. C. and finished by absorbing them, to whom they transmitted their advanced Oriental culture. They promoted the consolidation of a true Kingdom, which they wanted to be strong and unified so as to make it able to ensure to the East the regular supply of the goods they needed from the rich Western region. When the Phoenician capital Tyrus was conquered by Babilon in the 6th century B. C., Tartessus lost its main client and civilizer. Thus weakened, it disappeared as a separate Kingdom and survived only as a fable. Herodotus mentions the last King of Tartessus, a certain Arghante-sius, who reigned until 550 B. C. and disappeared with his Kingdom. Then came new invasions: first by the Greeks, who settled on the Eastern coast, and later by the Carthaginians, Romans, Visigoths, Arabs...



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