

THE CONSOLIDATION OF LIBERALISM IN THE SPAIN OF THE MONARCHICAL RESTORATION AND THE NATIONALIST RESPONSE OF SABINO ARANA

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Abstract: In the general European context of Italian and German unification in July 1876, Spain underwent a process of consolidation of a homogeneous and centralised state. The approval of a new Constitution and the advent of Cánovas del Castillo's monarchical Restoration was the result of a long process, which began in the Cortes constituyentes of 1812. This article focuses on the events that took place in the 19th century, especially since 1868, when Spanish nationalism, of an economic, political and cultural nature, formed the backbone of conservatives, moderates and republicans. But during the 1870 everything began to change in Spain. The periphery responded with centrifugal movements such as the Rexurdimento in Galicia and the Renaixença in Catalonia, which set the tone for the beginning of other identity sensibilities in Vizcaya, the Canary Islands, the Kingdom of Valencia and even Andalusia at the beginning of the 20th century.

The Glorious Revolution of 1868 precipitated the events that led to the arrival of Sabino Arana's nationalist reaction, for two reasons: first, because it meant a great step forward in national unification, which still preserved the old fragmentary structures of the Ancien Régime; and second, because the liberal and progressive revolutionary atmosphere aroused the reaction of the most ultramontane sectors of Spanish society, which were so deeply rooted in the Basque Country in the form of Carlism and fuerismo.

Keywords: Basque nationalism; Spanish nationalism; Sabino Arana; Monarchist Restoration; Cánovas del Castillo

Introduction

The object of study of this article is the reaction of Sabino Arana, the first ideologist of Basque nationalism, to the processes of legal and cultural normalisation of Spanish nationalism in the context of the monarchical Restoration of Antonio Cánovas del Castillo, (1873-1903).

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In terms of methodology, we have proposed a critical history based on the analysis of Kedourie, in the case of European nationalism, the studies of Pérez Garzón for the process of the construction of the liberal state, and of Pablo and Mees, for the Basque problem. On the other hand, we have focused on two fundamental sources: the session diaries and the work of Sabino Arana. The starting point is the controversy surrounding the Basque *fueros*¹, as obstacles in the process of liberal normalisation.

The result is a text divided into two parts: one that deals with the contextual epidermis that "prepares" the clash between Spanish liberalism (centralist nationalism) and Sabino Arana's reaction (Basque nationalism-independence).

Historical contextualisation, processes of liberal homogenisation in Spain (1808-1876)

The approval of a new Constitution in July 1876 marked the beginning of a new era. At last, a liberal regime triumphed and was consolidated in Spain, albeit with a conservative orientation, but also an idea of Spain as a nation and as a State. If we were to express ourselves in Hegelian terms, we could say that the spirit of the Spanish nation has a series of moments that have made it advance. According to S. de Pablo and L. Mees, the starting point was after the War of Succession (1701-1715), with the arrival of the Bourbons and the importation of the French centralist model with the imposition of the *Nueva Planta*² decree on the - defeated - territories that had served the interests of Archduke Charles of Habsburg. It was a question of building the absolutist State. For M. Moreno Alonso, on the other hand, Spanish nationalism emerged in response to the famous polemic aroused by the article by Nicolas Masson de Morvilliers, published in the *Encyclopedia Methodique* in 1782, which questioned Spain's contributions to European culture over the last few centuries; this, together with the passions aroused by the war against Napoleon³, gave rise to the first Spanish nationalism⁴. Cánovas del Castillo points out that the rapid surrender of the San Sebastián City Council to the French, possibly due to the sympathy of many of its members for the Revolution and liberalism, was a determining factor in the subsequent

¹ Sets of laws or privileges granted or sanctioned by the (medieval) monarchy governing a territory, which may be inspired by customary traditions.

² Santiago de Pablo, Ludger Mees, *Historia social del nacionalismo vasco (1876-1937)*. Teoría y práctica, in V. A., *Nationalism in Europe: past and present*, II, (Santiago: Universidad de Santiago de Compostela, 1994), 254.

³ The thesis is broadly in line with Kedourie's view, who sees much of nationalism as a response to Napoleonic Europe. Elie Kedourie, *Nacionalismo*, (Madrid: Centro de Estudios Constitucionales, 1985), 22.

⁴ Manuel Moreno Alonso, *El sentimiento nacionalista en la historiografía del siglo XX*, in A.V., *Nación y nacionalidades en Europa*, (París: Fondation Singer-Polignac, 1985), 65.

relationship between the Basque provinces and the rest of Spain. According to Manuel Montero, as a result of these acts of disloyalty to the nation, or at least to the crown, a harsh anti-foral campaign began. The government, presided over by Manuel Godoy, commissioned Juan Antonio Llorente to write a work, which he wrote between 1806 and 1808, whose title is significant: *Noticias históricas de las tres provincias vascongadas : en que se procura investigar el estado civil antiguo de Alava, Guipuzcoa y Vizcaya, y el origen de sus Fueros...* (Historical News of the Three Basque Provinces: in which he tries to investigate the ancient civil status of Alava, Guipuzcoa and Biscay, and the origin of their Fueros...).⁵ Its content is antiforal. It is the eve of the birth of the Spanish nation from a political point of view: the conjuncture of the Napoleonic invasion and the response of the Cadiz Constitution. Most historians agree that the Cadiz Constitution was the event that inaugurated the era of Spanish nationalism. S. Pérez Garzón situates the birth of the liberal state and nation in a specific time and space, when "...the Deputies (of the Cortes of Cadiz) who compose this Congress, and who pre-represent the Spanish nation, declare themselves legitimately constituted in general and extraordinary Cortes, and (proclaim) that national sovereignty resides in them".⁶

But, as Pérez Garzón himself acknowledges, the consolidation of this State took place in a long process punctuated by a series of events that made its arrival possible. After the death of Ferdinand VII in 1833, the First Carlist War, which openly pitted ultramontane Spain against liberal Spain, led to a further step in the legal unification of the State, the Law of 25 October 1838, which called into question the Basque-Navarre foral differences with respect to the rest of Spain. For Sabino Arana, this law "...extends to Bizkaya the constitutional unity of the Spanish Monarchy, tolerating the loss of its nationality; by it the Spanish government re-establishes its political power over Bizkaya, arrogating to itself powers to understand the modification of the Fuero".⁷ Arana understands this law as an annexation and the beginning of the greatest ruin for Euskal Herria.⁸ But what exactly does he mean when he

⁵ Alonso, "El sentimiento", 39.

⁶ Sisinio Pérez Garzón, "La nación, sujeto y objeto del estado liberal español", *Historia Contemporánea*, 17 (1998): 120.

⁷ "Eferérides infaustas" *Bizkaitarra*, (Julio 18, 1894), *Obras completas de Sabino Arana*, (San Sebastián: Senda, 1980) 320.

⁸ "This article -Arana is referring to the first abolition of the fueros-, which seemed to our leading men (so Spanishised were they!) A beautiful and elegant article that spoke to them of the Mother Country, and in which not only did they not see any offence on the part of Spain, but in which it seemed to them that the mother was lovingly extending her arms to them, was for that very reason one of the most decisive causes of our ruin. Indeed, judging Bizkaya as a region and province of Spain. The defenders of our 'fueros' (ancient laws) presented as the strongest lever of their argument that maintaining them did not alter the unity of the Spanish Monarchy. Unfortunate them!" ("Obras completas", 320).

speaks of ruins for the Basque nation? Knowing Sabino Arana's reactionary political thinking, it is easy to deduce that it is Spanishism and, together with it, liberalism. The religious sense of history and politics makes this ruin of the Basques the consequence of a divine punishment for having lacked a national conscience.⁹ In reality, Sabino Arana considers the Cortes of Cadiz to be the first aggression against the natural freedom of the Basques.¹⁰

Simultaneously with these political events, the various ministries of finance carried out a policy of disentailment, which lasted until 1895, which shows that "...the nation was the concept and alibi for transforming the possessions or domains of the dead hands into national assets, and immediately privatising such assets in order to create and develop that class of property owners which Mendizábal and all his liberal contemporaries considered should be the support of the revolution in progress".¹¹

In other words, the ownership and control of land is one of the great struggles behind the heroic struggle of Spanish liberal nationalism. In this case, the defence of the Spanish nation meant the suffocation of the Old Regime¹², which was imposed by the State itself. In the opening section of the *Diario de Sesiones de las Cortes Constituyentes*, on the disentailment of February 1855, we read "...it is a fundamental revolution in the Spanish Nation; it is the death blow given to the old and deplorable regime; it is, in short, the formula and summary of the political regeneration of our Homeland".¹³

As we have seen, unification continued, and the Glorious Revolution was an event that triggered a vertiginous path to the definitive crisis of 1876. On 19 October 1868, the finance minister of the provisional government, Laureano Figuerola, "...signed a decree establishing the peseta...as a monetary unit and as effective currency in all the Spanish dominions...", which meant the definitive death of the Spanish monetary system of the Ancien Régime¹⁴ and the consolidation of liberalism. The coat of arms that appears on the new coins is

⁹ "...God has allowed this people to remain blind for so long, without knowing each other, without being aware of their nationality... and our country has fallen into the claws of the Spanish lion, which is devouring its entrails! / God knows what is being done / Terrible punishment! Horrible must have been the sin!". ("Revista de la prensa", *Bizkaitarra*, Bilbao, (Marzo 31, 1895), "Obras completas", 556)

¹⁰ "Obras completas", 320-321

¹¹ Pérez Garzón, "La nación", 122.

¹² Pérez Garzón coincides with a very similar hypothesis by José Ramón Recalde: "In Spain, a national mode of organisation is thus being constituted as a result of the generic process of modernisation that involves the liquidation of the medieval world and the creation of the social, economic and political bases for capitalist expansion". Juan Ramón Recalde, *Las construcciones de las naciones*, (Madrid: Siglo XXI, 1982), 374.

¹³ *Journal of Sessions of the Cortes Constituyentes (Spanish Parliament) (Diario de Sesiones de las Cortes Constituyentes)*, Apéndice al número 89 (1855), 2.367. (https://app.congreso.es/est_sesiones/)

¹⁴ José Miguel Santacreu Soler, "La revolución monetaria española del 68", *Anales de Historia Contemporánea*, nr. 10 (1994), 512.

the symbol of the unification of the old medieval kingdoms, but very different from the one that appeared on the coins minted under Charles III. In addition, the legend replaces "las Españas" with Spain, in the singular. These coins were not accepted by the Carlists, who defended the old decentralised model of "las Españas".¹⁵

The Glorious Revolution of 1868 stirred up the most conservative sectors of society, and soon responses began to emerge. The most important response was the Carlist uprising, but it was also felt in the world of culture; Father Coloma, a Jesuit who had experienced the revolutionary fervour from Cadiz, published *Pequeñeces*, one of the basic novels in the trajectory of reactionary literature.

Although, in reality, the September Revolution had little success, because many of its advances were not consolidated, the regimes that followed, both the brief monarchical period and the ephemeral republic of February 1873 until 1876, were steps towards unity. The restoration of the monarchy and the law abolishing the *fueros* succeeded in stabilising the country (perhaps, in part, in retaliation against Carlism¹⁶). And, despite all these crises, Spanish nationalist sentiment grew stronger and stronger, perhaps also favoured by the very climate that prevailed throughout Europe. The work of Cánovas del Castillo was the definitive national unification. For Arana, all these political events were the sophistication of an imperialist policy against the Basque nation: both the new state and immigration were imperialist agents: "...many have contributed to the misfortune of our homeland, all recognising as their origin the excessive ambition of the foreign enemy who at all times and in all places has distinguished himself by his insane fondness for dominating other peoples, provided they were weak enough not to be able to oppose his criminal intentions....".¹⁷

However, not all authors agree that these political events from 1868 to '76 are advances in the unification of Spain. Riquer i Permanyer, on the contrary, maintains that '68 is also the beginning of nationalism in the West Indies, and that this first rebellion in Cuba is capable of questioning, for the first time, that Spanish national unity.¹⁸

¹⁵ Santacreu Soler, "La revolución monetaria", 517-519.

¹⁶ Juan Pablo Fusi, "El problema vasco: De los fueros al Estatuto de Guernica", *Revista de derecho político*, nº 5 (1979-1980), 92-93.

¹⁷ Causas del mal", *El correo vasco*, (Julio 27, 1899), "Obras Completas", 1729- 1730.

¹⁸ "...the great impact that '68 and Cuban '98 had on Spanish nationalism: that was the first questioning, and the first defeat, of 'Spanish national unity'; the Cuban rebellion signified the emergence of an alternative nationalism to Spanish nationalism and even took up arms to emancipate itself." ("...el gran impacte que contra el nacionalisme espanyol tingueren el 68 i el 98 cubà: allò era el primer qüestionament, i la primera derrota, de la 'unitat nacional espanyola'; la rebel·lió cubana significava l'emergència d'un nacionalisme alternatiu a l'espanyol i prenia fins i tot les armes per emancipar-se.") (Borja de Riquer i Permanyer, "Aproximació al nacionalisme espanyol contemporani", A.V.,

In our opinion, the emergence of other nationalisms, such as that of Cuba and the Philippines, or even the first feelings of independence in Catalonia, the Basque Country and Navarre, reaffirmed the patriotic feeling of Spanish nationalism, which for the first time found its enemies in its own geography. Jover Zamora¹⁹ draws attention to a fragment of a speech by Castelar, delivered at a session of the Cortes a few months after the proclamation of the First Republic, which deals quite well with the Spanish reaction to the first glimpses of regionalism or pre-nationalism in the periphery.

"... I will always oppose with all my might the smallest, the slightest dismemberment of this soil, which we have received in its integrity from past generations, which we must bequeath in its integrity to future generations, and which we must organise in its integrity within a true federation. The cantonal movement is a senseless threat to the integrity of the Fatherland, the future of freedom".²⁰

The revolution of 1868 profoundly affected the Basque provinces, so much so that their economic history can be divided into a before and an after that date. Above all because the law of 29 December, which disentailed the subsoil, meant three major changes for the Basque Country: the possibility of private initiative in exploitation meant the creation of a strong capitalist bourgeoisie; the export of iron at high levels meant that a considerable injection of money reached the Basque Country, which was reinvested in mining and industrial infrastructures; the fluid trade with other European countries such as Great Britain, Belgium or Germany facilitated the arrival of new ideas such as socialism, liberalism or nationalism, which would soon be adapted to the problems of the Basque world.²¹

All this radically transformed society and largely explained its industrial and economic development in the following decades, to the point of turning the Basque Country into one of the most powerful locomotives of the Spanish Industrial Revolution.²²

But the 1876 Constitution also meant the triumph of centralism, whose old model was France. That same year, however, federalist nationalism took on an important dimension with the publication of Pi y Margall's *Las nacionalidades* (The Nationalities of Pi y Margall). Thus, there was a clear

IIIes Jornades de Debat: Orins i formació dels nacionalismes a Espanya, (Reus: Centre de Lectura de Reus, 1994, 256.)

¹⁹ José María Jover Zamora, *Realidad y mito de la I República*, (Madrid: Austral, 1968).

²⁰ *Diario de Sesiones*, nr. 53, (30 de Julio, 1873), 1056. (file:///C:/Users/Usuario/Downloads/C-0053-01021.pdf)

²¹ Mariano Monge Juárez, "Orígenes de la industrialización en Vizcaya. Aproximación al marcojurídico liberal, 1868-1900", *Puriq: Revista de Investigación Científica*, nr. 4 (2021), 869-879.

²² Jordi Nadal, *El fracaso de la Revolución industrial en España, 1914-1913*, (Barcelona: Ariel, 1987).

division into two different ways of understanding the Spanish nation²³: centralist and federal, although Cánovas del Castillo's unitary centralism would eventually prevail. A month after the constitutional text was proclaimed, the first architect of the restoration gave a speech in the Cortes which, in very few words, summarised the liberal concept of the nation, but without forgetting the spiritual undertones of patriotic unity: "Everything that means inequality between a Spaniard and a Spaniard, is determined to succumb by the work of time and Providence, by the law of formation of nationalities, but the principle of association that unites the individuals of the Nations among themselves and that prevents that in these associations there are individuals of unequal status and that follow unequal fortunes".²⁴

Unification and reaction, the Constitution of 1876

In short, with the restoration of the monarchy, the idea of a united Spain would finally triumph²⁵, as well as the legal and economic homogenisation, which meant the abolition of the Basque-Navarre charters after the Law of 21 July 1876. The Basques lost their last privileges; they had to pay taxes, the rates of which would be renewed periodically with the economic agreements, and they were obliged to attend military service like any other province in Spain:

"Article 1 - The duties that the political Constitution has always imposed on all Spaniards to go to the service of arms when the law calls them, and to contribute in proportion to their assets to the expenses of the State, will be extended, as constitutional rights are extended, to the inhabitants of the provinces of Vizcaya, Guipúzcoa and Álava, in the same way as to the other provinces of the nation.

Art. 2 - By virtue of the provisions of the previous article, the aforementioned provinces shall be obliged from the publication of this law to present, in cases of ordinary and extraordinary army replacements, the quota of men corresponding to them in accordance with the law.

Art. 3^o- The provinces of Vizcaya, Guipúzcoa and Álava shall also be obliged, from the publication of this law, to pay, in the proportion

²³J. M. Jover has designed this hypothesis which classifies Spanish nationalism in the 19th century into two groups. (José María Jover Zamora, *La civilización española a mediados del siglo XIX*, (Madrid: Austral, Madrid, 1992, in Ángel Bahamonde, Jesús A. Martínez, *Historia de España: siglo XIX*, (Cátedra: Madrid, 1994), 497.

²⁴*Diario de sesiones*, nr. 197, (julio, 12, 1879), and Antonio Cánovas del Castillo, *Discurso sobre la nación*, Ateneo de Madrid, Noviembre 6, 1882, (Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 1997), p. 31.

²⁵Alfonso XII would become the monarch of unity, as the king himself stated in a speech to the troops at Somorrostro on 13 March 1876: "Founded by your heroism the constitutional unity of Spain, even the remotest generations will carry the future and the blessings of your victories". (Beltza, *El nacionalismo vasco (de 1876 a 1936)*, (Hendaya: Mugalde, 1974), 25.

corresponding to them and for public expenditure, the ordinary and extraordinary contributions, revenues and taxes which are raised in the general budgets of the State.

Art. 4^o- The government is empowered to proceed to agree, with a hearing of the provinces of Alava, Guipúzcoa and Vizcaya if they deem it appropriate, all the reforms that may be required in their former foral regime, taking into account the law of 19th September 1837 and that of 16th August 1841, and the decree of 29th of the same year.

Art. 5^o- The Government shall also be used, and the Cortes shall be informed in due course:

First. To leave to the discretion of the Provincial Councils the means of presenting their respective quotas of men in cases of ordinary and extraordinary quintas.

Second. To make such modifications of form as local circumstances may require and experience may advise, in order to reconcile compliance with Article 3 of this Art. To include among the cases of exemption from military service those who can prove that they or their parents have upheld with arms in hand, during the last civil war, the rights of the legitimate King and of the Nation, without these exemptions diminishing the quota of each province.

Fourth. To grant exemptions from payment of the new taxes for such terms as it may deem equitable, provided that none of them exceeds ten years, to the Basque populations who have made themselves worthy of such benefit by their sacrifices of all kinds in favour of the legitimate cause during the last civil war, as well as to individuals who have had to abandon their homes for the same cause or who have been persecuted for it.

Art. 6 - The Government is invested by this law with all the extraordinary and discretionary powers required for its exact and complete execution...".²⁶

But who were affected by these changes in the Basque provinces? The social classes that based their economic and political power on the foral structures. So, would they be the ones to rise up against the new political system? Moreover, the law not only put an end to Basque foral privileges, but was also made with an obvious repressive spirit of the victorious Spain, the liberal Spain, against the defeated Spain, the Carlist Spain, which had defended the illegitimate king. The law even targeted the biographical dimension of Arana himself, because it mentioned the families that had had to leave their homes persecuted by Carlism, but forgot those of the other side, among which was precisely that of the Arana Goiri family²⁷.

²⁶Fragment reproduced by Sabino Arana in *Efemérides infaustas*, in *Bizkaitarra*, Bilbao, Julio 21, 1894. ("Obras Completas", 321.)

²⁷ Mariano Monge Juárez, Sabino Arana. *Historia imposible*, (Valencia: Edicions La Xara, 2004), 14-28.

Undoubtedly, the partial nature of the law, in addition to the ostentatious discourse of the new regime, was a direct attack on the most reactionary sectors of Basque-Navarre society. Cánovas became the great enemy of Basque nationalism and, specifically, one of Sabino Arana's most reviled figures, not only because of his centralising work, which put an end to the Fueros, but also for having designed an essentially corrupt liberal and cacique regime²⁸. Cánovas was the executioner who tightened the noose on Basque freedom, despite being aware of the Basque people's right to form a nation separate from Spain.²⁹ But in reality, the aversion to Cánovas goes against the entire political class and against Spanish politics, which engineered laws and decrees against the Basques³⁰: "What Cánovas did, Sagasta would have done the same if he had been in power at the time; what Cánovas and Sagasta would have done, Ruiz Zorrilla would have done in the same circumstances; and what Alfonso XII signed, Carlos VII would have signed if he had won. [...] It was not Antonio Cánovas del Castillo who dictated the Law of '76. He did no more than draft it and propose it to the Cortes. Who dictated it to him was... THE SPANISH PEOPLE".³¹

It was not only political voices that clamoured for unity; a good part of the Generation of '98³² and regenerationism³³ raised a casteist front of Spanish nationalism, whose master of ceremonies was Miguel de Unamuno, who saw Castile as the spirit of this definitive cohesion.³⁴ This also explains the almost constant polemic between Unamuno and Arana.

²⁸Political corruption system, based on influence peddling, embezzlement of electoral processes and clientelism.

²⁹ "It is certain that Cánovas and the party will bear indelibly on their foreheads the infamous stigma of having willingly lent themselves to carry out that iniquitous will of their nation and to act as executioners of this noble, lost and wretched people of ours...". "La prensa local", *Bizkaitarra*, (24 de Febrero, 1895), "Obras Completas", 503.

³⁰"Obras Completas", 315, 1078.

³¹*El partido carlista y los fueros vasco-navarros (polémica)*, (28 de Marzo 28, 1897), "Obras Completas", 1243-44.

³² A group of intellectuals (Unamuno, Azorín, Baroja, Machado...) who, in addition to sharing literary or artistic themes and aesthetics, maintained a critical spirit in matters of politics and economics in Spain after the loss of the colonies in 1898.

³³ A group, sometimes coinciding with the Generation of '98, of politicians, journalists and intellectuals (Ganivet, Costa...) who consider necessary a series of profound changes in the economic and political structure: above all active against the caciquismo and the obsolescence of society in general in Spain.

³⁴"...Castile has made the Spanish nation, it has been becoming more and more Spanish, melting the richness of its inner content, absorbing the Castilian spirit into another, more complex one: the Spanish spirit. There is no other deep meaning to the regional pruritisms that are becoming more lively every day, pruritisms that Castile itself feels, they are symptoms of the process of the Spanishisation of Spain, they are prodromes of the profound work of unification. And all unification proceeds at the pace of internal differentiation and at the pace of the submission of the whole to a unity greater than itself." Miguel de Unamuno, *En torno al casticismo*, (Madrid: Austral, 1991), 66.

The victory of the centralist state and its consequences would come at a price; it would become the trigger for Basque nationalism led by the young Sabino Arana. The loss of the *fueros* from 1838 until the final loss in 1876 meant the end of a thousand years of legal differences (privileges). But the origin and subsequent success of the nationalist reaction was not only the product of the personal resentment of the Basque liberator, still moved by the death of a defeated father. The cause behind and driving Arana's nationalism was the reaction against the liberal state, the dream of reviving that regime of privileges for a class that was dying out: the counter-revolutionary thinking of Carlism, which had fought so hard in the Basque territories against liberalism for two generations, was adapted to the new context, so nationalism meant the modernisation of those ideas, which, without changing one iota, were enriched by the defence of the Basque nation and gave something new to the traditional. Moreover, the feeling of unity, characteristic throughout Europe after the events in Italy and Germany, will not only affect Spanish nationalism. Logically, the transition from Bizkaitarrism to nationalism will also have, as a point of flexion, the idea of unity of all Basques. "The Basque People need union, union and union.... Its happiness lies in the union of its children...".³⁵ Spain continued its process of unity in the 1890s, especially in the critical moments of '98, the year in which the great explosion of Spanish nationalism took place, after the humiliation it suffered in Cuba before a young, unknown, underestimated power and former colony of the natural enemy, England. Thus, the loss of that Spain of plus ultra was a moving event, overflowing with patriotism; it was a traumatic moment that lit the fuse of a movement of national reaffirmation that would later be partly the basis of Francoism, that is, what López Morillas has called the crisis of the Spanish conscience.³⁶

In the last decade of the 19th century, Biscay had already become an economic power. From 1892 onwards, Bizkaya was on the verge of independence³⁷, and Basque nationalism began to penetrate Bilbao society. The opusculé is a reflection on the loss of identity suffered by the Basque people, which the liberator denounces one by one: the lack of a policy to defend Basque interests; the teaching of catechism in Castilian to children who do not understand a word of the language; foreign invasion; and finally, and most importantly, the lack of works that really study the history of Basque liberties.³⁸ In other words, Arana responds to the whole process of centralist national

³⁵ "Regeneración", *El correo vasco*, (Junio 11, 1899), "Obras Completas", 1674.

³⁶ "... there is a crisis of Spanish consciousness in many ways more profound than the one already somewhat routinely attributed to the generation of '98...". Juan López Morillas, *Hacia el 98: literatura, sociedad, ideología*, (Barcelona: Ariel, 1972) 7, in Manuel Tuñón de Lara, *España: la quiebra del 98*, (Madrid: Sarpe, 1986) 16.

³⁷ Although the work had already seen the light of day in the form of four articles published in the "La Abeja de Bilbao in 1890", "Obras Completas", 108.

³⁸ "Obras Completas", 109.

construction, which leaves no political space for the other peoples of Spain, specifically, for example, to the compulsory teaching in Castilian from the promulgation of the Law of Public Instruction or Claudio Moyano, in September 1857.

However, it is not only these relationships that can be established, two very important events took place between **1890 and 1892**: from 12 to 23 May 1890, more than 20,000 Biscayans took part in the first major strike in the history of the Basque Country, which highlights the importance that socialism and the workers' movement already had in Bilbao. On the other hand, on 5 January 1892, José Martí achieved an initial consensus among the different separatist forces to organise the political struggle for Cuban independence. Anti-socialism, closely linked to industrialisation and the Cuban model of struggle against Spanish domination, are basic to the explanation of the Basque nationalist reaction.

From these dates onwards, the nationalist movement was to have a constant progression that closely followed the events in Cuba. As mentioned above, Arana identified Euskadi with Cuba. For this reason, 1898 was a turning point in the life of nationalism, Arana and his recently created party, the Basque Nationalist Party, suffered increasingly effective persecution, the newspapers he edited were closed down, the jeltokide meeting places were closed, and Arana was imprisoned again and again from August 1896 until almost the day he died.

Final reflections

We can therefore establish a parallelism between the political events that characterise the national unity of Spain, with the deployment of pre-nationalism and Basque nationalism. In this way, we are in a position to demonstrate that there is a cause-effect relationship between the process of unification under a liberal Spanish state (Constitution of 1876), and the appearance of a force opposed to that liberalism and to that unity, which took the form of the nationalist reaction of Sabino Arana, driven by the interests of the social classes aggrieved by the new regime. In this process we observe the following sets of facts: firstly, the Bourbon centralising impulse that attempted to import the French model and carry out a relatively enlightened policy provoked the first reaction, the Jesuit Father Manuel de Larramendi, who wrote a series of works defending traditional law, history, language, purity and the Basque legal privileges against this first centralising attempt.³⁹ The Jesuit's work on the Gipuzkoan fueros will be withdrawn from circulation, and according to

³⁹From 1728 to 1766, this ultraconservative Jesuit published several works in defence of Basque culture: *De la antigüedad y Universalidad del Bascuence en España*; *El imposible vencido*; *Arte de la lengua vascongada*; *Diccionario trilingüe del Castellano, Bascuence y Latín*; *Discurso histórico sobre la antigua famosa cantabria*; *Corografía de Guipuzcoa*; *Conferencias curiosas sobre los fueros de Guipúzcoa*.

Tellechea⁴⁰ will remain forgotten until he himself discovers and publishes them in 1983.⁴¹ However, we believe that Larramendi's nationalist ideas had to be transmitted in some way among the Basque Jesuits at least; secondly, the Spanishist upsurge caused by the War of Independence and the Constitution of Cadiz coincided with a period of study and apology of Basque peculiarities by Henao, Erro, Astarloa, etc., who were also a source of Arana's ideas; thirdly, the First Carlist War and the first aggression against the Fueros in 1838 provoked the reaction of the legendary Agustín de Chaho, the first to propose the freedom of the Basques and to write a history with nationalist pretensions. Spanishist historiography, which began with the work of Modesto Lafuente, *Historia de España* (1850-1859), aimed to create a national historical consciousness in its readers, whose emotive elements were the old tradition of Iberian Numantine resistance, the Manichean interpretation of the Reconquest and the apology of the Catholic Monarchs. We can hardly say that Lafuente's work received an equivalent response from Basque traditionalism, but it does demonstrate the existence of a Spanishist historiography that Sabino Arana's historical work will attempt to confront; Fourth, the Glorious Revolution produced the Carlist reaction, and in turn Spanishist legendary literature received the response of a whole generation of poets and novelists whose function was to make an apology for Basque traditions and legends, such as Antonio Trueba, *Libro de los cantares*, Vicente de Arana, *Don Lope de Murélagá: leyenda vascongada de la Edad Media* (1868) or *Los últimos iberos* (1882), Juan Benancio Araquistain, *La muerte del gran poeta y último bardo vascongado D. José María de Iparraguirre* (1881), Francisco Navarro Villoslada, *Amaya o los vascos en el siglo VIII*, (1879), Nicasio Landa, *Visión en la niebla. Guerreros euskaldunes*, (1878), Becerro de Bengoa, *Romancero alavés*, (1885), José M^a Arrieta-Mascarúa: *El árbol de Guernica*, (1882), etc. From the middle of the century Spanish nationalism also strengthened its own myths, such as those of Don Rodrigo, Agustina de Aragón, Mariana Pineda, El Cid, Viriato and the Catholic Monarchs, which were reflected in the official paintings of painters such as Eduardo Cano de la Peña (*Colón en la Rábida*), José Casado de Alisal (*The Surrender of Bailén*), Vicente Palmaroli (*The Third of May 1808*) and Dióscoro Pueblo (*The Daughters of the Cid*), heirs to the patriotic spirit of the work of Goya and Madrazo. And fifthly, the definitive unification of Spain after the restoration of the monarchy, the loss of the Fueros in 1876, and the strengthening of Spanish nationalism, harmed the material interests of a series of social classes whose first response was the fuerist regionalism of the

⁴⁰Telephone interview between the author and Ignacio Tellechea Idígoras, 4 April 1999.

⁴¹Manuel de Larramendi, Manuel, (S. J.), *Sobre los fueros de Guipúzcoa: conferencias curiosas, políticas, legales y morales sobre los fueros de la M. N. y M. L. provincia de Guipúzcoa*, (San Sebastián: Argitaipen eta Publikapenen Gipuzkoar Erakundea, 1983)

Euskalerriacos of Fidel de Sagarmínaga and Juan Iturralde y Suit, but, above all, the traditionalist reaction that shaped the first nationalism.

In short, in the face of the centripetal processes imposed by Spanish state nationalism, more intense after the Constitution of 1876 and the homogenising regime of Cánovas del Castillo, Sabino Arana's work consisted of a resignification of Basque culture (legal tradition, history, language and religious purity) in terms of a differential, identity-based and pro-independence argument. Therefore, in the last decades of the 19th century, in the context of the peripheral Industrial Revolution, the clash of nationalism took place.