

would rally behind his leadership. Outflanked by the simultaneous revolt of the rest of the country, Palafox's gamble proved a failure, but he was by no means an isolated figure, substantial elements of the clergy and nobility being bitterly hostile to regalism, disamortisation and the decline of aristocratic influence. Throughout Spain, this group from the start strove to interpret the rising in terms of a crusade for Church and king, thereby short-circuiting arguments in favour of radical change. Nor did they limit themselves to mere propaganda, indulging in a series of intrigues against the liberals that culminated in the overthrow of the Junta Central in January 1810.

In the event the establishment by the collapsing Junta Central of a regency of its own choice in Cádiz outmanoeuvred the conspirators, but the political programme that they espoused had by no means been dispelled. As exemplar of its many advocates, we have the figure of Juan Pérez Villamil, a senior official of the admiralty. Though as much enamoured of popular heroism as any liberal – following the Dos de Mayo, for example, he had issued from the village of Móstoles a stirring call for a national uprising – for Pérez Villamil the past was still valid, liberty (and, indeed, a constitution) lying in the existence of the fundamental laws inherited from the past. Far from being overthrown by the introduction of dangerous foreign innovations – it was a constant theme of traditionalists that the ideas of the liberals were drawn from the French Revolution – these should rather be reinforced. We thus return to the position adopted by Jovellanos, but, for all that, it would be a mistake to believe that Pérez Villamil was in agreement with him. On the contrary, for Pérez Villamil and his fellows, given the threat that it represented to corporate privilege, the royal reformism that the erstwhile minister represented was just as much a cancer as the ideas of the liberals, the solution being to turn back the clock: in 1810, for example, we find the future traditionalist deputy, Francisco Borrull, not only defending the rights of the nobility but also demanding the restitution of the Valencian *fueros* overthrown by Phillip V in 1707.

With Spain in a state of the most utter confusion, it was not until the convocation of the *cortes* in September 1810 that a measure of order was restored to the country's political affairs through the triumph of the liberals. Often attributed to the fact that circumstances had forced the new assembly to meet in the port city of Cádiz – in January 1810 the French had occupied the whole of Andalucía – this development rested above all on simple muddle.

Few of the priests, lawyers, functionaries, writers, academics and army officers who constituted the majority of the deputies were strongly committed to any one of the three basic political positions outlined above, but all were agreed on the need for reform. At the same time, meanwhile, one cannot but be struck by the extraordinary amount of common ground that existed even between the liberals and the mediaevalists. Thus, all shades of opinion coincided in defending the sovereignty of the people, denouncing 'ministerial despotism', and calling for a return to a mythical mediaeval 'golden age', the consequence being that the revolutionary nature of the liberal position was simply not apparent. With the liberals further assisted by the fact that they alone had a measure of political organisation, their leaders having often known one another for many years, not to mention the favourable circumstances afforded by Cádiz, which possessed a flourishing press and had always been a centre of the Spanish Enlightenment, their triumph was assured.

Thus it was that the *cortes* embarked upon the course of reform encapsulated by the constitution of 1812. Taking the constitution first of all, great stress was placed on the idea that it was a reflection of tradition, but in reality this was a mere fiction: for all the liberals' claims, the constitution's roots lay firmly in the Enlightenment, establishing, as it did, all the basic civil liberties except that of religion, and in general dealing a heavy blow to corporate privilege. Thus, the *cortes* itself, being unicameral, made no recognition of the estates, whilst there was to be equality before the law, freedom of economic opportunity and employment, and equal liability to taxation and military service. Meanwhile, the principle of the separation of powers was declared, the nation proclaimed to be sovereign and the most severe restrictions placed upon the power of the king. Real power therefore belonged to the *cortes* which was to meet each year and to enjoy complete control of taxation as well as a dominant role in legislation. Last but not least no changes in the constitution would be permitted for at least eight years, Ferdinand being expected to swear an oath of loyalty to the entire document as soon as he returned from exile.

Hostile to the throne though it was, in many respects the constitution followed the goals of enlightened absolutism. Thus, provincial privilege was removed and Spain declared a unitary state, her governance being completely remodelled. The king was to be aided by a council of state, and the network of councils that had stood at the apex of administration and justice was replaced by seven new ministries. As taxation was to be assessed in an equal and

proportionate fashion, it followed that the nobility and the Church, and indeed, such favoured provinces as the Basque territories, would now lose their fiscal exemptions and have to contribute their full share of revenue. And, last but not least, in contrast to the confusion that had characterised the *ancien régime*, Spain would henceforth be administered according to a uniform pattern of civil governors and town councils.

Dramatic though all this was, however, it meant very little with regard to the social and economic position of the population as a whole, one form of privilege simply being replaced by another. Already visible in the constitution, which effectively limited political power to the propertied by denying the vote to such groups as domestic servants, the indigent and the illiterate and setting up a complicated system of indirect elections, this is even more visible in the various pieces of social legislation by which it was accompanied. If we look, for example, at the abolition of the feudal system on 6 August 1811, we find that the peasantry gained few benefits, their erstwhile *señores* being enabled to convert most of the old fees into rent by the fact that they were confirmed in their property rights. Nor did the rural masses do any better from disamortisation. Seizing the property of the municipalities, of those religious communities – and there were many – whose monasteries or convents had been destroyed by the war, and, when they abolished it in February 1813, of the Inquisition, the liberals placed immense amounts of land on the market without taking any practical measures to ensure that even a proportion of it was acquired by the peasantry. As a result, wherever the Patriot cause held sway, existing proprietors consolidated their position and were joined by new men from the towns and cities, the peasantry in the meantime being subjected to rent rises, eviction and exclusion from the vital commons (hence the bitter social disorder in southern and eastern Spain noted in our discussion of the guerrillas).

Inequitable though liberal social and economic policy was, it did have a powerful rationale in that Spain, as we have seen, was bankrupt. Alongside disamortisation, the other central component of liberal financial policy was therefore fiscal rationalisation. Here, too, we see the influence of Bourbon reformism in that the model selected for reform had been proposed as early as the 1750s. In brief, the aim was to simplify the collection of revenue and impose a uniform system of taxation. On 13 September 1813 a new financial structure was therefore duly introduced, which formally abolished all fiscal privileges and exemptions, and suppressed the complex

array of direct and indirect taxes that had hitherto been levied in favour of a single 'direct contribution' assigned to each province on the basis of a quota based upon its population, the payment of the individual citizen being decided according to his income.

Although the liberals continued to enjoy a surprising amount of support on many issues, as time wore on opposition to their rule began to grow. As might have been expected, the catalyst for this development was the question of religion and, in particular, the Inquisition. Identifying the Holy Office as a key obstacle to Spain's liberation, the liberals were determined to secure its disappearance. To the vast majority of political and ecclesiastical opinion outside the *cortes*, not to mention a large number of its own deputies, such a move was quite out of the question, however, and all the more so in view of the increasingly anticlerical flavour of much of the Cádiz press. Having already fought hard to restrict the freedom of the press, its supporters therefore made a determined attempt to have the Inquisition reinstated. In the event the liberals were triumphant, the Holy Office formally being abolished on 22 February 1813, but the debate had served to clarify issues that had hitherto been elided. Though the constitution might proclaim Catholicism to be Spain's faith, freedom of the press and the abolition of the Inquisition together stripped the Church of its defences, the liberals therefore no longer being able to hide behind the fig-leaf of traditionalism. With public opinion greatly inflamed, for the first time there coalesced a definite traditionalist party, known scornfully by the liberals as *los serviles* – the servile ones.

As a result of these developments, the period 1812–14 was marked by a deepening political crisis. Ostensibly, the root of this crisis was ideological in that criticism of the liberals was for the most part couched in terms of a defence of throne and altar (though Spain's continued prostration did produce numerous claims that the *cortes* had also neglected its duties with regard to the conduct of the war). Thus, no opportunity was lost to compare the work of the liberals with that of the French Revolution, the constitution was denounced, the liberals themselves were vilified as heretics, disaffected generals were courted and extolled, repeated efforts were made to persuade the duke of Wellington (since January 1813 commander-in-chief of the Spanish army) to overthrow the liberals, and there was widespread clerical resistance to the *cortes'* religious policy. Faced by these developments the liberals responded with official pressure: in March 1813 the Regency was purged; in June the generals in command of the Spanish forces based in Galicia (a

hotbed of traditionalist feeling) were dismissed from their posts; in July the papal *nuncio* was expelled from Spain; and attempts were made throughout to build up a force of loyal troops in Cádiz, to pack the local administration, and to delay the holding of new elections and the transfer of the *cortes* to Madrid (now finally evacuated by the French).

At the heart of the liberals' resistance, of course, was their claim to speak on behalf of the Spanish people. Yet on the whole the people remained profoundly hostile: although the liberals did receive some popular support in such cities as Cádiz and Madrid, the resistance of traditionalist bishops, clerics and nobles was heartily seconded from below. Large-scale disorders, as we have seen, took place among the peasantry; in Vizcaya the local commander's fear of popular resistance was such that he for some time refrained from proclaiming the constitution; and in Palma de Mallorca in April 1813 crowds assembled chanting, 'Long live the Faith! Death to the heretic traitors!' By the following year, moreover, the liberals were even more isolated, in the first few months of 1814 serious disturbances taking place in Vitoria, Zaragoza, Valencia, Toledo and Seville. Yet this does not imply that popular resistance was necessarily motivated by ideology. Thus, in the early stages of the war, even when specifically called out to fight for Church and king rather than the 'liberty' of liberal propaganda, the population had often remained quiescent until the French actually arrived amongst them. Nor is this surprising, fighting for the Old Order implying fighting for the hated *señorios*. For the roots of popular opposition to the constitution we must therefore look to other factors, and above all to the threat that liberal policy posed to popular economic interests: having offered the people nothing – indeed, less than nothing – the constitution of 1812 could expect nothing in return.

On their own, however, neither the people nor even the *serviles* were likely to be able to overthrow the constitution. What really mattered was military force, this being something the liberals simply did not have. As we have already noted, most shades of opinion in Patriot Spain were strongly antimilitaristic, the political and social pre-eminence enjoyed by the army in Bourbon Spain having been the subject of much resentment. For the liberals, however, such antipathy was particularly virulent, their language having been characterised by the utmost venom: for example, *El Patriota* blamed the succession of military disasters that had afflicted Spain on the 'shameful madness' of giving the command to an 'infinite succession of generals, each of them more idiotic and culpable than the last'

when what should have been done was to employ nobody but 'leaders formed . . . in the revolution'.⁶ Coupled with scorn for the regular army was respect for the people, this being much reinforced by the defeat of Napoleon in Russia, which was attributed to the fact that 'Russia's war has become as national as that of Spain'.⁷ As Flórez Estrada wrote, 'The people . . . destroyed the barbarous legions of our enemies . . . and upset the plans . . . of the Tyrant. It is the people, the people, and only the people who are the principle authors of these prodigies.'⁸

With the liberals content to rely upon popular heroism, their policy towards the army concentrated upon such issues as the formation of a national guard and of a 'military constitution' that would conciliate the army's ordinances with the social and political norms of the new Spain. In adopting this line, however, it can only be said that they were flying in the face of reality, for the period between the beginning of 1810 and the beginning of 1812 was in fact marked by a series of disasters that involved the loss of most of what little of the country remained unoccupied. Though the guerrillas, aided by 'flying columns' of regular troops, fought on, by the time that the constitution was passed all that was left was Galicia, the area around Alicante, the besieged city of Cádiz and certain enclaves in the interior of Catalonia. Barely capable of defending such territory as remained in their hands, the armies, meanwhile, were desperately short of men, munitions, clothing, transport and supplies, and unable to make good their wants – though Spain was still in receipt of copious aid from Britain, there could be no substitute for the reconquest of the land lost to the French. Guerrillas or no guerrillas, then, Spain was losing the war, the situation only being reversed when the impending war against Russia ended the endless stream of reinforcements that the French needed as the price of victory. Suddenly over-extended, they were no longer able to keep the Anglo-Portuguese army of the duke of Wellington penned up in Portugal, the result being that in the course of 1812 they lost the crucial border fortresses of Ciudad Rodrigo and Badajoz and were forced to evacuate all of southern Spain. Yet even this did not solve the problem. On the contrary, swarming with

⁶ *El Patriota*, No. 1, 4–5, Hemeroteca Municipal de Madrid (hereafter HMM.) AH1–5, No. 158.

⁷ *La Abeja Española*, 23 November 1812, 188, HMM. AH6–5, No. 1250.

⁸ *El Tribuno del Pueblo Español*, 22 December 1812, 206–07, HMM. AH1–4, No. 120.

deserters, guerrillas, bandits and bands of mutinous peasants, the Patriot zone was in a state of utter confusion. With the civil authorities completely helpless, conscription and taxation languished. For the army, this meant continued relegation to the sidelines, Spanish troops playing only a limited role in the decisive campaigns that finally drove the French from most of Spain in 1813.

Essentially, then, for the last three years of the war the army had to take second place to the Anglo-Portuguese, its sense of humiliation being increased when the liberals, impelled by the need to gain British support against a particularly dangerous intrigue on the part of the *serviles*, appointed the duke of Wellington commander-in-chief. Meanwhile, it had also to endure the most extreme privations, whilst also seeing most of the privileges that it had hitherto enjoyed being ruthlessly swept away. In this climate liberal rhetoric was at best irrelevant and at worst downright insulting, matters not being helped by the arrogant behaviour of certain of the constitutional authorities. Though a constituency that might easily have been won over to the liberal cause, large numbers of officers having no interest in seeing the return of the conditions that had marked the Bourbon army, the officer corps was therefore propelled in the direction of *servilismo*. Yet this did not make the army absolutist per se. During the period 1810–14 examples may certainly be found of senior officers opposing the liberals on grounds that were clearly ideological, but over and over again what came to the fore were concerns that were explicitly professional, whether it was Wellington's appointment to the command-in-chief (which prompted an attempted military coup in Granada in October 1812), the abolition of military privileges, the subordination of the captains-general to the civil authorities, or the neglect of the army's physical needs. Ideology, then, was unimportant, but, for all that, the army was in fact becoming intensely politicised. As a succession of military pamphleteers began to argue, the military estate was vital to the nation's independence and general well-being, it therefore following that its needs should be satisfied and its members treated with respect, or, to put it another way, that the interests of the army were synonymous with those of the nation. As the guardians of the national interest, it further followed that the army had the right, and, indeed, the duty, to intervene against any government that failed to meet these criteria, Spain therefore being launched on the slippery slope that led via a succession of military coups to the civil war of 1936.

More immediately, of course, the Spanish revolution was

doomed. With the army disaffected, the liberals could neither impose their will on Spain nor stave off a vengeful monarch. And that Ferdinand was vengeful there was no doubt, his having been horrified by such news as he had heard from Spain. Released by Napoleon in a desperate effort to cut his losses in March 1814, he returned to Spain to find that the liberals were completely isolated and that for the most part military opinion was decidedly opposed to them. Disobeying the orders of the *cortes* that he proceed directly to Madrid, he therefore turned aside to Valencia and began to lay plans for the restoration of absolutism. In the last resort, however, this was the work not of the king himself, but of the willingness of the garrison of Valencia to 'pronounce' in favour of absolutism and march on Madrid. With mobs now rioting on all sides and the *serviles* calling for the overthrow of the constitution, everything turned on the response of the rest of the army. As to this there was no doubt: although a few commanders were loyal to the liberals, they knew that they could not trust their subordinates and therefore attempted little in the way of resistance. In short, the revolution was dead.

Though absolutism had been reinstated, nothing had been resolved. In essence, Ferdinand had been restored through the forces of traditionalism and corporate privilege. Thus, on the one hand the chief statement of *servil* intentions – the so-called *Manifesto of the Persians* – was a clarion call in defence of the Church and the nobility that demanded respect for traditional institutions, an end to 'ministerial despotism', and the convocation of the *cortes* by estates, whilst on the other the army had made it quite clear that in future its support for any régime would be conditional upon its treatment. Whatever the ideas of the Bourbons, in short, the days of absolutism were numbered.

~~SWEDEN: THE DOWNFALL OF THE VASAS~~

~~As in Spain, in Sweden war brought political upheaval. Until 1805, Sweden had played little part in the French wars. Gustav III (1771–92) had been a bitter opponent of the Revolution from the very beginning – on hearing of the convocation of the Estates General in 1789, he had exclaimed, 'The King of France has lost his throne, if not his life!'⁹ – and over the following three years he made~~

⁹ Cit. R. N. Bain, *Gustavus III and his Contemporaries, 1746–1792* (London, 1894), p. 104.