7

The liberal treason. Money and Catholic Morality in the Spanish Carlist War, 1872–1876[1]

Lluís Ferran Toledano Gonzàlez
Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona. Director of the Politics, Institutions and Corruption in the Contemporary Era Research Group.

Given the complexity and diversity entailed in studies of political corruption, they may be able to answer the following question: How was it possible that the ultra montane movements which had God by their side, according to their members, could have emerged defeated from the anti-liberal wars of the 19th century? Another question is whether there was a connection between the defeat, military and political of Carlism, and the value system of this movement and its relationship with the immoral money or not. Certainly, the Spanish liberals have won, on the military and political fields, but it is also true they and Carlists as well

[1] This study spans different projects. The first is "Political corruption in contemporary Spain in a comparative perspective. Databases, maps and historical analysis (1810–2016)", financed by the Ministry of Economy, Industry and Trade (MEIC) of Spain (HAR2017-86545-P). It is also associated with the work performed by the SGR Politics, Institutions and Corruption in the Contemporary Era (PICEC) (2017 SGR 818), financed by AGAUR, Generalitat de Catalunya. Likewise, it is associated with the MEIC project (HAR2016-75954-P) entitled "The monarchies of southern Spain (19th and 20th centuries). Cultures and practices of the royalty". GDRI-842 CNRS "Politique et Corruption. Histoire et sociologie comparées à l'époque contemporaine".

shared similar values conflicts about finances. Especially, because by this time in Spain political change was often perceived in terms of "moral revolution".

The answers we provide here are the outcome of extensive research into Carlism, the longest-lasting anti-revolutionary armed movement in Europe. The Spanish counterrevolution was defeated in different battles in 1840 and 1849. However, once bourgeois society was consolidated, Carlism's political influence once again rose because of a dynastic crisis and the democratic revolution of 1868, and because of the political trauma that the Catholic world suffered with the papacy of Pius IX and the dangers of contamination from the Paris *Commune*.

Carlism managed to turn defence of the legitimacy of its pretender, Carlos VII – the word "Carlist" comes from "Carlos" – into Catholic Europe's chief alternative at the time, a true "Internationale Blanche"[2]. And it was capable of driving a war, the third civil war, between 1872 and 1876 (although Catalonia alone had suffered from five armed conflicts since 1822) against other governments of different political stripes, a war which ended with the defeat of the traditionalist option.

According to the current state of the investigation, what constituted corruption in Spain in the 19th century was the shielding of the executive power, or the State, against the threats of citizen political participation and the local challenges. The independences in the Americas, the depletion of the treasury, the cost of the first Carlist civil war and the spectre of revolution led a generation of doctrinaire liberals and theoreticians of the administration to try once and for all to save Spain from the centrifugal threats coming from the former provinces or kingdoms, or from the new local powers. For this reason, it is quite difficult to speak about a true division of power in Spain because the judicial power was subordinated to the government and its representation, the public State administration. In fact, executive power and its administration were equated with each other thanks as well to the strict control of public employees and the new political clientelism[3]. On the other hand,

---

[2] The so-called *White International* expressed the alliance of the European counterrevolution that was forged in the central decades of the 19th century in order to recover power in the face of the consolidation of the liberal revolution.

[3] An overlook of the history of political corruption in Spain in the collectively-authored text by Borja de Riquer, Gemma Rubí and Lluís Ferran Toledano, "Más allá del escándalo. La historia de la corrupción política en la España contemporánea", in

it should come as no surprise that the army would be seen as a traditionally corruptible body, and that the circumstances of war could increase this negative perception, while also leading to the delegitimisation of the State powers in large regions of Spain, which negatively affected the success of its political nationalisation processes.

The Spanish liberal state, which had an agrarian, not industrialist, culture, dealt with the new political and social conflicts from a conception of public order in which the military authority had to rectify these problems. This explains, among other things, the constant exceptionalism and political instability experienced in some territories, like Catalonia, which amassed most of the military contingents throughout the century to contain workers' uprisings, the democratic and republican attacks, as well as the Carlist ones.

Bearing in mind this background, on these pages I will analyse the meaning of the civil war in Carlist political culture. I will explain how the brutal transformation in the conditions under which politics was conducted, along with the weakness of the institutions and the "Carlist state", led to a singular accommodation of the corruption undertaken in places like the Court, the fiscal violence that was waged by the guerrilla parties and thrived in the rear-guard establishments. Secondly, I shall discuss the practices of Carlist corruption to ascertain whether or not there was a distinct type of irregular conduct, then I will review their evaluations and demands for morality and observe how corruption ultimately eroded their cause and their king.

Counter to years of a liberal political system and "false" parliamentarianism, Carlism acted as a counterrevolutionary umbrella capable of constructing a complex, modern political culture, with newspapers in almost all the provinces, a rich web of circles of sociability and a formidable propaganda machinery which led it to occupy seats in the Congress of Deputies and Senate. The Carlist party became identified as the main Catholic party, a "party of memory" that encompassed decades of critical experience against parliamentarianism and the corrupt machinery of the administration[4]. Therefore, Carlos VII managed to seem like

---

Borja de Riquer, Joan Lluís Pérez, Gemma Rubí, Lluís Ferran Toledano and Oriol Luján (dir.), *La corrupción política en la España contemporánea*, Madrid, Marcial Pons, 2018, p. 47–79.

[4] Begoña Urigüen, *Orígenes y evolución de la derecha española: el neo-catolicismo*, Madrid, CSIC, 1986; Lluís Ferran Toledano, *Entre el sermó i el trabuc. El carlisme*

the European Catholic pretender who would stand up to the danger of the revolutionary drift, as captured by this text which appeared in the leading Carlist newspaper of Barcelona, a kind of felicitous, euchronic expression of the emancipating potential of Carlist monarchism:

> Supposons que le royaume d'Italie se soit défait et que la confédération italienne soit formée sous la présidence du Souverain Pontife, supposons Carlos VII en Espagne, Enrique V en France, Francisco José, repentant des condescendances libérales, et tous coalisés, non par la haine contre la race ou la nation, mais pour l'intérêt commun de l'auto-préservation[5].

Definitely, it's essential to briefly explain the relationship between Carlist and political Catholicism and money, an issue which is inseparable from the overall attitude of counterrevolutionary culture versus capitalist and industrial society, although we cannot go deeper into this text. Broadly speaking, the Carlism of the second half of the 19th century accepted economic liberalism, with a few nuances, and remained the staunch enemy of political liberalism. Dovetailing with what the historian Mari Cruz Romeo has written, the Carlists' religion was just one of many appropriations of modernity[6]. Many new leaders were lawyers, rural landowners or merchants working within the capitalist economic circuits. They did not solely reflect the dream of a past society. Some of them spurned material interests, luxury, but not the circulation of productive capital and the surge in industrialism, trade and shareholding. The Catholic, moral perspective of wealth was not at odds with modern capitalist society, but they felt it was overwhelmed, close to collapse and in need of a strong monarchy.

One of the keys of the Carlist and ultra montane point of view is the understanding that Religion and Politics were identical, the same. In this view, human society was corrupt by origin and nature. Therefore, the origin of corruption lay in the decline in religious principles. In their

---

català contra la revolució setembrina (1868–1872), Lleida, Pagès Editors, 2001. Likewise, Gemma Rubí and Lluís Ferran Toledano, "El carlismo en la Cataluña contemporánea: tradición histórica y cultura política", *Trienio: Ilustración y Liberalismo*, No. 33, 1999, p. 117–140.

5 Refers to Franz Joseph I of Austria. Letter from Madrid to the newspaper *La Convicción*, No. 113, Barcelona, 10 March 1871.

6 Mari Cruz Romeo, "¿Qué es ser neocatólico? La crítica antiliberal de Aparisi y Guijarro", in *Por Dios, por la Patria y el Rey: las ideas del carlismo*, Pamplona, Gobierno de Navarra, 2011, p. 129–164.

opinion, the abuses of power which led to the instatement of the new liberal order, especially tyranny and the arbitrariness of the ministers, which resulted from the institution of ministerial responsibility, emanated a gigantic corrupting machinery, namely the appointment of all public employees, which only a Catholic restoration could curb. In this project, Religion – as a curb on the loss of pure customs – and the work of the Christian prince – as the protector of good laws and good governance – were the keys to mitigating the abuses of power. This was the speech of authors such as Juan Donoso Cortés, Jaume Balmes or Antoni Aparisi, and other minor authors who took Luigi Taparelli's work as an international reference.

Civil War and State:

Following Eduardo González and Charles Tilly, we define civil war as a context of large-scale internal violence between two or more groups over the power and jurisdiction of a State. This process of civil war was opposed to revolution and counterrevolution and developed in southern Europe, with transnational features in Portugal, Spain, France and Italy[7]. The Carlist civil wars fit within an interpretative model made up of complex, superimposed processes which enabled multiple sovereignties to blossom and produced particular effects in the non-combatant population. They were "dirty wars" waged by regular and irregular forces that engaged in high-intensity violence such as kidnappings, executions, population displacements and cleansing in their zones of geographic influence. At the same time, the conflicts produced group identity and memory. In Spain, they were part of the founding liberal story symbolised by the rupture with the old regime, while for Carlism they expressed the continuity of the struggle against Napoleon, which was interpreted as the founding cleavage between tradition and revolution.

---

[7] There is extensive literature on this, but we shall limit ourselves to that which addresses the 19th century. Charles Tilly, *Coercion, Capital and European States, AD 990–1990. Studies in social discontinuity*, Cambridge, Basil Blackwell, 1990; Jordi Canal, Eduardo González, *Guerras civiles. Una clave para entender la Europa de los siglos XIX–XX*, Madrid, Casa de Velázquez, 2012; and finally, for the perspective provided by the new debates on *caudillismo* and civil wars in America, see Kees Koonings and Dirk Kruijt (eds.), *Societies of Fear: The Legacy of Civil War, Violence and Terror in Latin America*, London and New York, Zed Books, 1999.

The persistent Carlist insurrectionist culture was one of the hallmarks of its ideological identity. Its political culture was full of commemorations, sites of memory and veterans' memories, which forged a clashing community of supporters and adversaries. While the realists were labelled servile, thieves or arsonists, the liberals were labelled black, mongrels or sepoys. The Carlist was upright and pure – consequently, honest in politics – the opposite of the liberal, who was labelled a mongrel. According to this discourse, the liberal Catholics accepted principles that "corrupted" Christian virtues, and this had negative repercussions on the political life and wars. For this reason, liberal soldiers and corps of liberal and republican volunteers were considered to be filled with undisciplined troublemakers.

The Carlist tradition of war was made up of repertoires and archetypes of violence, among which the guerrilla party and the Royal Army were the most representative[8]. The party underscored identification with the natural community, led by a chief with local roots, and with different generations from the same family. This discourse mythicised the leader, the chief, as a good father who took care of his volunteers. These images experienced their own particular civil war in the sphere of publicity, counter to the liberal representations of the Carlist bandits, with their arbitrary and destructive activity which corrupted all military values. We could assume that part of the society that lived in contact with both sides suffered from two forms of corruption at the same time, because both legitimised their own actions without recognising the other side's authority.

Carlism fostered an image of "healthy people", compared to a dirty and potentially corrupt as the liberal and republican one. A Carlist people "naturally peaceful and obedient", consecrated to martyrdom, who used a redemptive violence against the State. This surgery to excise the other had to continue until their extermination. However, in that process, Carlist warfare shaped a kind of political identity – a kind of violence – which endangered bourgeois respectability. This is what happened in the manifesto written in 1848 by the landowners in the Catalan town of La Garriga, in which they blamed the Carlists for attacking property and resembling communists. This is somewhat similar to the accusation by

---

[8] On this issue, see Lluís Ferran Toledano, "El caudillaje carlista y la política de partidas", *Ayer*, 38, 2000, p. 91–113.

the republican press that the Carlists were teaching the mountain-dwelling masses to use oil like the *communards* of Paris, a kind of culture of violence which could affect the social peace in the future when the veteran combatants moved from the countryside to the city in search of work. This entire context of the uses of power and violence is extremely important in being able to delimit, within the conditions imposed by war, the boundaries between the legal and the abusive, between obedience to positive law or its violation by corrupt practices.

On the other hand, it is useful to question the existence at that time of an international body of literature concerned with the legal and humanitarian protection of war victims, and how limits could be set on abuses and deviant behaviours. One of the main works was by Nicasio Landa, *El Derecho de la guerra conforme a la moral*. Landa was a liberal Catholic physician from Navarra, the inspector general of the Red Cross nicknamed the Spanish Harry Dunant. He had direct experience in the Carlist war and wrote his memoirs.

According to Landa, the Civil War in Spain had taken on a federal form because each state enjoyed some degree of autonomy and had the right to enjoy, to some extent, "considerations and attributes when war is declared"[9]. He compared this situation with the Swiss Federation, the American Civil War and the Germanic Confederation. It was a war between the central power and different states. Yet it was not a war between comparable states, in which international public law clearly prevailed and the belligerence of both parties was recognised. In the Carlist War, as in others, the acceptance of belligerence was a relevant factor in pinpointing the boundaries of abuse because it meant recognition of the rival as a state and its legitimacy to apply norms.

Nicasio Landa was a follower of Johann Caspar Bluntschli, a Swiss jurist and politician and the author of benchmark works on public law, the theory of state and the right of peoples, who was also influential in the laws on war at the Hague Conventions in 1899 and 1907. It is no coincidence that he was Swiss and had solid knowledge of federal structures. According to Bluntschli, when a political party organised into a State, the laws of humanity gave it the status of belligerent force and it

[9] We have used the third edition, from 1877, expanded with his reflections after the Carlist War. Nicasio Landa, *El derecho de la guerra conforme a la moral*, Pamplona, Imprenta Joaquín Lorda, 1877. The first edition was from 1867. The quote appears on page 36.

could not be condemned as a gang of criminals. This happened if the party was capable of creating powers analogous to those of a State, if it equipped itself with a military organisation with sufficient guarantees of order, and if its conduct demonstrated the will to become a government. Then, this party earned the natural right to be treated with the principles of the army of an existing state. If it were not recognised, the war would be savage on both sides. In order to recognise a belligerent force in a civil war and ensure that it is not merely a mutiny or sedition, the following conditions must exist: it must maintain the three branches of the military over time, at least one year; it should win victories and gain ground in urban centres; and finally it should sign conventions with other powers. To Landa, this was the model to follow in the Carlist Civil War, even though it was not wholly fulfilled: the Carlists did not have a navy, the urban centres they controlled were medium-sized, and it was lacking official recognition from other countries, even though it enjoyed the solidarity of the Catholic and legitimist "internacional blanca".

However, laws and conventions did not treat irregular forces well. Within this context, Nicasio Landa stressed respect for the 1864 First Geneva Convention on international humanitarian law, as well as the draft international agreement on the laws and customs of war from Brussels dated the 24th of August 1874. Special attention to fulfilment of humanitarian rules required a long list of cautionary acts: considering the population living under the control of the adversary outside the struggle; respecting the freedom of religious worship; not forcing anyone to engage in military service; taking no hostages; respecting private property and not plundering; respecting the properties of the magistrates and public employees; and not using poison or infecting the waters. The majority of these cases were ignored on all fronts during the Carlist War, perhaps more in Catalonia because of the irregular, civilian nature of its conflict. As we shall see, people stole, kidnapped, tried to bribe, expelled sectors of the population, destroyed official documents and set properties on fire[10].

Landa followed other authors like Carlos-Henri Vergé, who considered stratagems based on "corruption and the incitement of treason" unauthorized in the laws of war, although the latter two, he lamented,

[10] An overview in Lluís Ferran Toledano, *La muntanya insurgent. La tercera guerra carlina a Catalunya, 1872–1875*, Girona, Quaderns del Cercle d'Estudis Històrics i Socials, 2004.

"have some defenders"[11]. The liberal revolution in Spain certainly found the military "pronouncement" to be one of its most powerful devices of change and political participation. Sometimes, the conflicts in barracks and arenas came with attempts to buy off and bribe because they did not always reflect the heroic, mythicised image which the liberal martyrologies concocted. If pronouncements were successful, promotions happened that were not based on the merit of seniority, and corporate malaise was guaranteed. Likewise, with Carlos' consent, some Carlist leaders used the conspiracy method and bought off barracks, despite the fact that that they claimed in the press that the excessive politicisation of the army ran counter to its honour, and that some of liberals victories had come from this practice. This was one of the reasons the Carlists disdained "liberal gold" as the root of their defeats.

In his reflections on the nature of war, Nicasio Landa recognised that the army occupying an enemy territory had the right to receive provisions from its inhabitants free of charge, a practice which "however, lends itself to terrible abuses (…)". One of the contributions of Landa's humanitarian work was his attempt to get the Geneva Convention applied in civil wars. There was no legal obligation, but there was a moral one, he said, because foreign armies cannot be asked to do what domestic armies would not do to their own citizens. At the request of the Red Cross, he at least managed to get the constituent courts of 1869 to grant to the members of the Sociedad de Socorro a los Heridos the presumption of complicity, so that they could move around and be respected on the battlefields. This compassionate treatment was extended to the policy of pardons, to mutual respect in hospitals and convoys of injured casualties, and to the exchange of prisoners. Nonetheless, the reality was often much more prosaic.

Even though it could not be applied in practice during the Carlist War, the 1874 Brussels Declaration could provide historians with a solid foundation on the legal system and the *corpora delicti* in the landscape of war. The Declaration recognised that cunning was acceptable, but not perfidy, that is, going back on one's word, accepting the "dishonourable" bribery of enemy officials to deliver an arena, revealing secrets or stirring troops to rebellion. Ruses were licit, but inciting treason among the

---

[11] Nicasio Landa, *El derecho de la guerra conforme a la moral…*, *op. cit.*, p. 163 y 164 (The quote of Vergé).

enemy was "against the laws of honour" and decorum. The first chapter in the aforementioned text discussed "the military authority in the territory of the enemy State". Its fourth article stated that functionaries and public employees had to enjoy the protection of the occupier and not be dismissed, as long as they did not maliciously fail to carry out their obligations[12].

The practices of Carlist and liberal corruption in times of upheaval.

The anti-corruption discourse was a powerful element eroding liberal institutions, parliaments and parties. And in Spain, just as in other countries, it cut across ideologies. In the revolutions of 1854 and 1868, there were appeals to the "honour" of the Crown and, by extension, the political regime. It should come as no surprise that the Carlists pledged to put an end to political immoralities as a promise of redemption. In the call to arms in the province of Cuenca in March 1873, the commander Isidoro del Castillo proclaimed: "let us run and eject from this noble fatherland all the despots who have only brought us misery, corruption and tears."[13] Also during those years, the Carlists sought to offer an immaculate image of the administration of the institutions whose aim was to finance the war, such as the four provincial councils of Vizcaya, Guipúzcoa, Álava and Navarra. Years later, no doubt stemming from the idealisation of a past which had actually been turbulent, the writer and military officer Antonio Brea stressed that the purpose of the provincial councils was to not deplete the people with overly high taxes, to do so following criteria of equality, and especially to administer what they had collected as purely and discreetly as possible[14].

However, the suspicion and accusations of corruption stained Carlist politics and exacted a high political cost. In order to properly locate

---

12 *Projet d'une Déclaration internationale concernant les lois et coutumes de la guerre.* Brussels, 27 August 1874.

13 Juan Botella, *La guerra civil en España de 1872 a 1876, seguida de la insurrección de la Isla de Cuba*, volume I, Barcelona, Imprenta de Juan Oliveres, 1873, p. 158. The proclamation is from 1873.

14 Antonio Brea, *Campaña del Norte, de 1873 a 1876*, Barcelona, Biblioteca Popular Carlista, 1897, p. 490–491. The writer was promoted to the rank of general during the war.

these experiences of corruption, it is essential to ascertain the structure of the State that the Carlists built, no matter how fragile it was. The unique Carlist State had land, people and political organisation under its control, along with the fiscal power and capacity to make them obey. This held true on the Basque-Navarra front, although in Catalonia there were institutions which instated a precarious state organisation. In line with their system of thought, the Carlists were interested in protecting subjects based more on authority than on the exercise of rights, which they viewed as illusory. It is essential to understand the counterrevolutionaries' separation between the State on the one hand and the hierarchies of social influence on the other; that is, between the "administration" and "politics". They thought that politics should not be conducted according to a new chain of powers held up by the State but instead according to a society which was already naturally hierarchized. This should influence what was morally acceptable – family solidarities and nepotism – as opposed to the censure of embezzlement, fraud or the abuse of some military authorities, who received criminal sentences in the Carlist provincial codes and the norms that governed the internal order of the liberal armies.

It is essential to recall that in the Basque-Navarran north and in much of the rest of Spain, a literature emerged that was favourable to the provincial institutions and their inhabitants, who were "unpolluted" by liberalism. The Basque provinces had their own administration, the "foral" councils, which lasted until 1876, while the one in Navarra had been eliminated in 1841. The idealising Carlist story upheld the managerial efficacy of the provincial councils in contrast to State over-employment and corruption, as "sanctuaries" where the corrupting gangrene had not entered and moral territories like the small Pyrenean country of Andorra, which so admired its co-prince, the bishop of La Seu d'Urgell, Josep Caixal, who would become the vicar general of the Carlist armies.

In the insurgent country, two local institutions – the Provincial Councils and the General Boards – coexisted alongside Carlist institutions, with which they built their peculiar State. There were frequent conflicts between the Carlist monarch and his own circle of notables around good governance and administration. The king's appointment of general deputies was frowned upon by the provincial political operatives because it was considered illegal. We know that the General Boards forwarded complaints to the King and that he did not always want to hear them. The Boards kept watch over the influence of morals and customs,

and they reminded the town halls that public morality had been lax in those years. For this reason, it should come as no surprise that in an address to its inhabitants, the General Provincial Council of Vizcaya listed among its objectives "the purity of the different branches of the administration and the administration of justice in relations between peoples and among private individuals"[15].

The case of the Carlist leader Miguel Dorronsoro illustrates the kind of traditional controls that existed to limit abuses and embezzlement. Dorronsoro was unable to submit the receipts of expenditures from the first years of the uprising. His honour was not questioned, but the General Boards of Villafranca did not approve the lack of accountability[16]. On the contrary, Dorronsoro himself complained about the creation of superfluous bodies in the rear-guard and of the profligacy of the officers while the volunteers lacked resources to weather the harsh winter. He asked for cutbacks in the king's military escorts, the employees of the quartermaster corps and the personal assistants, quite similar claims to the criticisms on the exaggerated and unsustainable number of functionaries in the liberal administration levelled in times of peace and from different political vantage points. As even the Carlist leaders recognised, the criticism of abuses had adverse political consequences which led public enthusiasm towards Carlos to wane, which in turn led to a call for "Reducing the large Court that follows the King to few and reduced personnel. In this way, we will prevent the peoples, despite their love and enthusiasm for the person of the King, from receiving him coolly because of the inconvenience and onerous expenses brought about by the people in his retinue."[17]

Indeed, the embezzlement of public funds was common among the different armies, in both war and peace. We should recall that the liberal military penologists admitted that their army was extraordinarily behind in its persecution of this kind of crime. It was essential to correct the

---

[15] Address of the General Provincial Council of Vizcaya, Villaro, 17 August 1873. Published in *El Cuartel Real*, 3, Pela de la plata, 4 September 1873.

[16] Once again, Julio Montero, *El Estado carlista…op. cit.*, p. 421–422.

[17] Letter from Miguel Dorronsoro to a member of the provincial council of Guipúzcoa, Sotero de Irazusta, 4 December 1874, in Vicente Garmendia, "Miguel Dorronsoro y Ceberio. Un estadista guipuzcoano hace un siglo", *Estudios Vascos, Sancho el Sabio: Revista de cultura e investigación vasca*, 4, 1994, p. 51–104. Tellingly, just a few months later, the provincial councils of Vizcaya, Álava, Guipúzcoa and Navarra drafted a report addressed to the Carlist pretender containing similar terms.

"immense development" of embezzlement, which had reached "alarming proportions in the military classes" in recent years. This was one of the reasons behind the army criminal code of 1884, twenty years after the war, which reached epic proportions in the overseas possessions, the Philippines and Cuba[18].

The analysis of corruption in a movement like Carlism is a much more complex issue than what stemmed from the tension between reaction and revolution, from the criticism of irregularities as bone of contention against the adversary. One example is the practice, frequent in the Carlist political family, of gossiping about certain spaces of party power. In the Carlist press, it was not completely unheard of to represent the pretender's Court as a corrupt space of upstart Carlists, of conspiracies and machinations that had little to do with the exemplariness of the volunteers who had given everything for the cause. The king was the one who granted ranks and promotions, who recognised the prestige of the leaders and could grant noble titles. The King and his wife were exempt from these images created by propaganda. They were austere, good parents, exemplary Catholics who lived in contrast to the dethroned liberal royal family: the Carlist family fulfilled the canons of bourgeois virility and femininity and distinguished both public and private spaces, unlike the scandalous family of Isabel II. These representations provided the Carlists with sound symbolic political capital that was capable of reinforcing their political culture, but through the course of the war and post-war period, the figure of the monarch broke down precisely because it did not match the canon of the Catholic king[19].

The court was made up of the royal family, the House, and its entourage (secretaries, gentlemen-in-waiting, confessor, tutors and

---

[18] Pedro Buesa, *Comentarios al Código Penal del Ejército de 17 de noviembre de 1884*, Madrid, Imprenta de El Dia, 1884. The sections on Embezzlement and Fraud are on p. 359–424. An exemple of corruption and embezzlement in the liberal military bodies during the Carlist War: *Memoria que dedica a S.A. el Supremo Consejo de Guerra y Marina al Intendente de Ejército D. Juan Butler y Arias, impugnando los carlos que se le han dirigido en el proceso sobre desfalco en la habilitación de las disueltas rondas volantes de la província de Lérida*, Barcelona, Imprenta Barcelonesa, 1879.

[19] I have examined these issues in the article entitled "El crucifijo y el baile. El trasvase de sacralidad entre el trono y la comunidad política en la familia real carlista, 1868–1876", in the dossier "Reyes sagrados. Los usos de la religión en las monarquías europeas del siglo XIX", *Pasado y Memoria. Revista de Historia Contemporánea*, 14, 2015, p. 79–108.

ladies-in-waiting), along with a close circle of power made up of the Councils, which were the occasional governments revolving around the Treasury and War. It was a circle of trust which reached 30 to 40 members during wartime. It was not a dense court society economically supported by the State but was instead defined by its status and experience of exile. Around this core was another one made up of the boards of emigres scattered about the legitimist sanctuaries on the frontier, in Bayonne, Pau, Perpignan or Ceret, in Paris or in Vevey (Switzerland). Up to a certain point, this court was socially open because it had to welcome new promotions and party followers. The Carlist court was the space that best represented internal tensions, personal enmities, political aspirations, intrigues and manoeuvres, as well as the abuses of power.

Carlos preferred the old name, "Secretaries of the Office", cabinet figures who depended on the monarch, more than the liberal and relatively autonomous figure of ministers. Secretaries served an advisory purpose; they were the king's right-hand men and were more a part of the administrative machinery than politics. Still, these figures were in no way exempt from criticisms because of their irregular status. An important secretary like Emilio Arjona was accused by courtly society and the Carlist press of being like a "mini-Godoy". The accusation was well-grounded. From the late 18th century until Napoleon entered Spain, Manuel Godoy had been Carlos IV's strongman and was rewarded with the title "Generalísimo". He was so powerful that he was on the verge of being assassinated via the ploys of the "Fernandino party", which united the increasing opposition to ministerial despotism and the abuse of power and corruption against him[20]. The fear of ministerial despotism and a strong executive somehow characterised the first political generation of the 19th century in Spain. So, sixty years later, Emilio Arjona became the target of many people's hatred as the new Godoy, and this eroded the prestige of the Carlist king. Greater proximity to or distance from the Court – itself a hotbed of intrigues and corruption in the Carlist political culture – was crucial in obtaining satisfaction, as opposed to the abuses in the distribution of military jobs and political graces.

What was the threshold of tolerance of corruption on the Carlist side? The start of the war transformed the conditions under which politics was conducted. The most important goal was to secure victories and lands

[20] Emilio La Parra, *Manuel Godoy: La aventura del poder*, Barcelona, Tusquets, 2002.

and to weaken the enemy. Rumours of growth in certain leaders' private fortunes, public scandals at dances and gambling were pushed to the background if the battles were won. However, a series of defeats brought the offenses committed to the fore and justified the fact that the failure was due to a lack of the basic moral conditions of a good Catholic.

Communal soul-searching resorted to Carlist public opinion and facilitated the development of a powerful "rumourology" which acted as a corrosive element during the war and post-war years. The most important leader in the first and second Carlist Wars, the veteran Ramón Cabrera, was suspected of having taken a 1.5 million *duros* to a bank in Paris, as if it were the "golden fleece", plus another 40 million which he deposited in Genoa. The liberal monetary "betrayal" was part of the subtle moral evaluations which defined the ideological boundaries and practices of Carlism.

In this regard, the relationship between money, honour and corruption upheld by the military theoretician J.I. Chacón, an official liberal expert army chief-of-staff, was very symptomatic when he used the expression "the gold war" for one of the sections in his book on mountain warfare. He believed that using a policy of attraction via bribery with the guerrilla chiefs was much more beneficial since it could help thwart the prestige of and demoralise the rival, while lives and money would be saved. Bribery was not dishonourable. This position differed from the discourse of Catholic honour and was the opposite of the 1874 Brussels Declaration[21].

One obvious example of this kind of conflict is represented by the Carlist general Francesc Savalls in the Catalan theatre of operations. In the territories where Carlism had less formalised political institutions – the Provincial Council of the Catalan war operated late, in early 1875, dovetailing with the start of its military decline – corruption was tolerated as a lesser evil precisely because the leader was the hub of the distribution of favours. His military and political control depended largely on the circulation of resources and the success of the factional war, the guerrilla war. In these spaces, the leaders' abuses and corruption were occasionally condemned via letter by the Carlist political staff – lawyers, Churchmen – writing to Carlos' political and military secretaries. The

[21] J.I. C, *Guerras irregulares*, 2 volumes, Madrid, Imp. del Depósito de la Guerra, 1883, (volume I, p. 59–62).

corruptions of the guerrilla war largely undermined the kind of legitimacy that the leader earned in the exercise of his power.

Bosses like Francesc Savalls, in his intense clash with Carlos' brother, Alfonso de Borbón, showed how the factional war conditioned the exercise of authority due to the extraordinary fragmentation of decision-making. Savalls and other leaders saw the king's brother as a capricious leader who did not grasp the insurrectional culture, and who punished anyone who did not want to fight outside their small region and even those who spoke crudely. These conflicts were swathed in the rumours of the possible sexual scandals of Alfonso's wife, the Infanta Maria das Neves, and malicious acts involving the theft or improper destination of the boxes of money from the enemy columns that had been captured in battle. The accusations of the party leadership, divulged in late 1875 among now-weakened Carlist forces, claimed that Francesc Savalls had fled to Nice with the money, where he lived in a gilded exile, as opposed to the difficulties and penuries of thousands of refugees in France. This kind of information on embezzlement and bribery contributed to Savalls' political decline, even though he was probably the most important grassroots leader in Catalan Carlism. Once again, the fear of treason and the temptation of liberal money fed the Carlist political culture to justify its incapacities[22]. Carlism developed a story that justified its defeats and the collective demoralisation, which consisted in blaming "liberal money" and the corruption of the loss of values of a movement that had started out immaculate. We should not forget that in addition to its pecuniary value, money also had an important symbolic weight inasmuch as it was used as a means of distinction between the traditional and arriviste social groups, the liberal "nouveau riche".

The concept of betrayal is used as the title of this article. It was part of the Carlist political vocabulary and was passed down from father to son. In this way, it was possible to justify how corruption and bribery had put an end to the conflict in the first civil war with the 1839 Convention of Vergara, an agreement which broad swaths of Carlists viewed as a betrayal. In their documents, the Carlists often used the expression "the field of honour", referring to the scenarios where wars were waged ultimately as a question of honour, that is, the resolution of a political issue

[22] A list of these conflicts can be found in the classic by Maria das Neves de Braganza, *Mis memorias sobre nuestra campaña en Cataluña en 1872 y 1873 y en el Centro en 1874*, 2 vols., Madrid, Espasa Calpe, 1934–1938.

which affected the public honour. Given this backdrop, an army like the Carlists could only be "sold" because of the traitors to the loyalty of the cause; not so much because of inept leaders as because of the intrigues and ambitions aroused by the lucre of liberal money. According to the Carlist culture, the liberals had no "cause"; they only had interests. The historian Antonio Pirala himself, the liberal author who established the interpretative canon of the Carlist wars along with the prolific novelist Benito Pérez Galdós, explained that in the second Carlist War which ended in 1849, "an army of 50,000 men and the use of corruption [were needed] to beat an army of 5,000". Antonio Pirala and public opinion had documentary knowledge of some of these deeds. The captain general Fernando Fernández de Córdova encouraged several Carlist generals like Josep Estartús and Rafael Tristany to turn themselves in in exchange for money and the recognition of jobs: "more than beating the Montemolinists by weapons, he planned to do so by corruption." The government's gold, corruption, "was as large as it was irremediable"[23].

Another analysis pertains to the "grassroots" base of the Carlist movement, the so-called volunteers. The Carlist discourse on the "volunteers" who were fighting for a "cause", good Catholics, generous and lacking selfish interests, was created in contrast to the image of the venal, mercenary soldier who knew no ideals. However, the reality was quite different. The Carlist army in the north was almost always organised with a draft system, with its start in a minority group of volunteers. This situation was the opposite of Catalonia and the eastern portion of the Peninsula, where the volunteer model predominated, although they also resorted to conscription in the advanced phases of the campaign. The fact is that the name of volunteers came from the corps of Realist Volunteers created by King Ferdinand VII in the early 19th century. The liberal hostility towards this corps explains why it became the identity of the absolutist militia in Spain.

---

[23] The attempt at betrayal in Leonardo de Santiago, *Memoria de los sucesos verificados durante las negociaciones entabladas con D. Francisco Tristany, titulado coronel carlista y proposiciones hechas por él mismo, para la presentación de sus tres hermanos y fuerza a sus órdenes…* Barcelona, Imprenta del Fomento, 1849. Regarding the use of corruption, see the prospectus of the book by Antonio Pirala, *Historia Contemporánea. Anales desde 1843 hasta la conclusión de la última guerra civil*, Madrid, Imprenta Tello, 1878. The rest can be found in Eugenio García, *Historias*, volume II, Madrid, Est. Tip. A. Bacaycoa, 1878, p. 537–540.

However, at the end of the last Carlist war, the volunteers no longer said their rosaries and went about as cheerful and neat as the early laudatory discourses claimed. They were poorly fed and dressed in tatters. These volunteers with "high morality" had waged more than 238 kidnappings in the Catalan theatre of war which affected more than 1,400 people, including 67 mayors. A veritable kidnapping corporation. They burned hundreds of civil registries to protest against civil marriages, they cut down liberty trees, they destroyed conscription papers, and they plundered liberal and republican properties and centres of sociability.

In reality, the Carlist was not a paragon of probity as its propaganda stated. The Navarran notary Leandro Nagore left proof in his memoirs that at the end of the war there were many ambitions and rivalries among the Carlist leaders, coupled with "little purity in the civil employees and a vast dearth of resources and well-organised heads and government leaders"[24]. Carlist bishop Josep Caixal had a similar impression. In a pastoral, he condemned the monstrous contradiction of imitating the behaviour of the enemy, the republican hordes, with curses, blasphemies and obscene dances. The Carlists were forgetting to imitate the Maccabees, the warriors of God. One Carlist officer, Francisco Segarra, wrote from Barcelona in November 1874 that the Carlists were as evil as the liberals: "the way they let corruption spread, the way they exploit the peoples (…)". The quartermaster corps were disorganised, expenses were squandered, the Court was a hotbed of amusements, banquets, orgies and gold braid. According to these testimonials, the main reason for the loss of momentum behind the Carlist cause was no longer just liberal money but more importantly the failure to live up to religious behaviour. This discourse fit in perfectly with the eschatological vision of the fall and crisis of man, awaiting a new Catholic armada ready to deal with the crises caused by liberalism. In this logic, political corruption was not only the expression of human imperfection but also the product of man's lack of correspondence with

[24] From Leandro Nagore, *Apuntes para la historia, 1872–1876. Memorias de un pamplonés en la segunda guerra carlista*, Pamplona, Institución Príncipe de Viana, 1964, p. 207. The corruption and irregularies were condemned in a series of leaflets compiled in the book entitled *Los crímenes del carlismo*, Administración: Madrid, ca 1900, attributed to the anticlerical writer José Nakens.

God, as he forgot his social and religious duties, the outcome of his disobedience.

One of the last scandals, this one post-war, illustrates this kind of moral evaluation. The conflict involved the pretender in exile, Carlos, and his former secretary, general Carlos González Boet. Several months after the war had ended, the king had received a highly prized jewel from his relative, the Duke of Módena; it had not only a high monetary value but more importantly a high allegorical value, the Golden Fleece. However, it was stolen in an inn in Milan, and the suspicion immediately focused on his assistant, Boet. Three years later, in 1880, the trial was held in that Italian city, and according to the indictment, two opposing cases were being considered: first, whether the jewels were stolen by Boet and sold by his wife and mother-in-law; and second, whether Carlos himself sold the jewels to get out of his economic penury.

During the trial, Boet condemned the irregularities in the Italian magistracy. In his statement, he explained that the testimonies which were used at the trial gave him no guarantees, and that the only thing he did was participate in a simulated theft in cahoots with Carlos, who was a spendthrift. The scandal was aired far and wide by the liberal and republican press in Spain, testing the pretender's public image and the Carlist moral discourse[25]. During those post-war years, the satirical anti-Carlist press strove to show amusing images of Carlos surrounded by naked nuns, as if they were his own Oriental seraglio, or amused with the news of his lover, the Hungarian opera singer Paula de Samoggy. It was public common knowledge that Carlos was separated de facto from his pious wife, Margarita de Borbón-Parma, who had exemplified the selfless, devoted wife by caring for the injured. He was a manly king with military command powers capable of constructing an alternative to a Catholic monarchy for Spain and Europe who could not resist the temptations of the authoritarian exercise of power and the roles of his masculinity. The monarchy began to lose control over its own image

[25] Previously, Boet had been involved in a trial in Cuba, where he was sentenced to six years in prison, among other charges, because of abuse of authority and taking money. See Justo Zaragoza, *Conclusión fiscal.* Havana 1871. By the federal republican journalist who interviewed Boet, Luis Carreras, *El rey de los carlistas: revelaciones del General Boet sobre la guerra civil y la emigración: cartas publicadas en el diario El Diluvio de Barcelona*, Barcelona, Gaspar y Homdedeu, 1880. *Causa célebre. El robo del Toisón de Oro. Don Carlos y Boet.* Imprenta de El Liberal: Madrid, 1880.

because of the scandals, rumours and abuses of power. Its royalist tendency with the Churchmen close to the *communion* also took away supporters. A providential man sent by God, a model of virtues, who ended up being corrupted[26].

[26] *Traditionalist communion* was identified with the concept of community that Carlist culture used in contrast to that of liberal society.