"Is it useful to deceive the people?" The Debate on Public Information in Spain at the End of the Ancien Régime (1780–1808)*

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> Drilling through mountains, slowing or redirecting rivers, conquering the ocean; all these miracles of human industry are games when compared with the task of making man see and act according to his true self-interest. (Francisco de Cabarrús, *Sobre los obstáculos de opinión y el medio de removerlos*, 1795)[1]

Introduction

During the eighteenth century, an interesting debate emerged in Spain regarding the advantages and disadvantages of informing the people or keeping them ignorant of the affairs of state, as well as the question—if choosing the former option—of whether to tell them the truth or manipulate them with lies. Although we may consider this to be a moral or philanthropic concern within the general context of the Enlightenment, for the absolute monarchs and the writers sympathetic to them the issue was primarily a question of state. What was the most effective means to govern?

Throughout the kingdoms of eighteenth-century Europe, the elite had expanded beyond the titled nobility thanks to the unstoppable ingress of the lower nobility and middle classes into administration, commerce, and the Republic of Letters, as well as influential positions in the military and the church. The government could not afford to maintain the traditional hermeticism of the monarchy while attempting to cultivate the loyalty of this increasingly broad and influential public. In the last third of the century it became clear that the king's veil of secrecy over state affairs was not suitable for ruling the most educated sector of royal subjects, whose collective views constituted the precursor to

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[1] In *Cartas sobre los obstáculos que la naturaleza, la opinión y las leyes oponen a la felicidad pública* [Letters concerning the obstacles to public happiness imposed by nature, opinion, and law] (Madrid, 1990), 73.

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what we might call a "public opinion." By informing and forging bonds with this elite, monarchies not only gained capable allies but also avoided making dangerous enemies. Left to follow its own free will, or treated like the rest of the population, this public might distance itself from the monarchic project and generate its own opinion, something potentially dangerous to the preservation of the status quo.

In 1778, in accordance with the express wishes of Friedrich II and at the request of D'Alembert, the Academy of Berlin convened a literary contest with the question: "Is it useful to deceive the people?"[2] The contest responded to a generalized European debate over how best to practice politics; without a doubt, it helped to expand this debate further still.[3] Deception and concealment in political practice—championed by Machiavelli, among others[4]—had constituted part of the *raison d'état* during the ancien régime. Eighteenth-century paternalism had done nothing if not reinforce the value of the "noble lie,"[5] a tactic that found numerous critics among Enlightenment authors, proponents of educating the public and helping it to come out of nonage. Of the thirty-three submissions to the contest in Berlin, twenty proposed that it was not useful to lie to the public; thirteen proposed that it was. The academy—probably to humor Friedrich II, who had become an advocate of deceit over the years—gave a prize to one defender of each stance.[6]

Many other absolute monarchs besides the king of Prussia were familiar with this new sensibility, which they virtually always considered from the point of

[2] Werner Crauss found the forty-two texts and published a selection of them, along with other documents of interest (such as the correspondence between D'Alembert and Friedrich II, or Condorcet's work on the same theme). See Werner Crauss, ed., *Est-il utile de tromper le peuple? Ist der Volksbetrug von Nutzen?* (Berlin, 1966). There also exists an Italian version: *Bisogna ingannare il popolo?* (Bari, 1968). In Spain, a compilation similar to that of Crauss was published with an introduction by Javier de Lucas: *¿Es conveniente engañar al pueblo? (política y filosofía en la Ilustración: El concurso de 1778 de la Real Academia de Ciencias de Berlín)*, ed. Javier de Lucas (Madrid, 1991). See also Jeremy L. Caradonna, *The Enlightenment in Practice: Academic Prize Contests and Intellectual Culture in France, 1670–1794* (Ithaca, NY, 2012).

[3] Before and after the contest, prestigious authors expressed their opinions on the topic. See Voltaire, *Jusqu'à quel point on doit tromper le peuple* (1756), and Condorcet, *Est-il utile au peuple d'être trompé?* (1790).

[4] See, for instance, the German humanist Sebastian Frank and his *Paradoxa* (1534), or the Spaniard Diego de Saavedra Fajardo, in his *Idea de un príncipe político y cristiano representado en cien empresas* (1640).

[5] Miguel Catalán, "Introducción," in Marqués de Condorcet, *¿Es conveniente engañar al pueblo?* (Madrid, 2009), 31 pp.

[6] Other works that address this issue include Lester Gilbert Crocker, "The Problem of Truth and Falsehood in the Age of Enlightenment," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 14, no. 4 (1953): 575–603; and Jean-Marie Therrien, "Est-il utile de tromper le peuple? (question de 1780)," *Philosopher* 10 (1990–91): 53–71.

view of optimizing their resources. Absolute monarchies such as the Prussian, the French, and the Spanish, which were not particularly inclined to justify their policies to the people, revised their views on the subject, but they did so without revolutionizing it. Moved by the "science of police,"[7] eighteenth-century monarchs gradually changed their role and ceased to seek the maintenance of society in its current state, instead intervening in it directly and attempting to manage the lives of men and women at the personal and collective levels. For that purpose, commanding was not enough; they also had to convince.

I do not intend to imply that absolutism—or other, previous forms of government—had been mute before the late Enlightenment. The sovereigns of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries usually addressed their subjects in messages conveyed via public proclamations, festivities, fine arts, the theater, and the pulpit (the great mass media of the ancien régime). They thus communicated royal orders, news such as declarations of war or royal weddings, and messages of obedience. José Antonio Maravall brilliantly demonstrated that in this sense the baroque was an inexhaustible source of propaganda for the Habsburgs of seventeenth-century Spain.[8] But at all times—according to rulers and the authors of political treatises—there had existed the underlying notion that the absolute king should not lower himself by giving explanations and that orders and official communications were sufficient. They never lost sight of informational secrecy, since the reasoning that led the monarch to make each decision constituted *arcana imperii*.[9]

But the desacralization of the monarchy,[10] the infiltration of Enlightenment thought into the practice of power, and the eighteenth-century exaltation of the development of the state all presupposed a change in political praxis. Did information have any sort of political utility? Was it better to conceal the facts or to offer a manipulated version of them?

In absolutist France, the economy was an exercise in political information. The notion of the importance of the public for proper government, characteris-

[7] According to Delamare's *Traité de la police* (1705), this enlightened science covered religion, morality, health, provisions, roads, canals, ports and public buildings, public safety, liberal arts, commerce, factories, servants and farm workers, and the poor. The aim of the science of *policía* was "to develop those elements constitutive of individuals' lives in such a way that their development also fosters that of the strength of the State" (Michel Foucault, "*Omnes er Singulatim*: Towards a Criticism of Political Reason," in *Power* [New York, 1994], 322).

[8] José Antonio Maravall, *La cultura del Barroco: Análisis de una estructura histórica* (Barcelona, 1975).

[9] Robert Darnton, "An Early Information Society: News and the Media in Eighteenth Century," *American Historical Review* 105, no. 1 (2000): 1–35.

[10] Jeffrey Merrick, *The Desacralization of the French Monarchy in the Eighteenth Century* (Baton Rouge, LA, 1990); Paul Kléber Monod, *The Power of Kings: Monarchy and Religion in Europe, 1589–1715* (New Haven, CT, 1999).

tic of British parliamentarianism, crossed the English Channel through the work of the Scotsman John Law[11] and later through that of the Anglophile Jacques Necker. The latter, minister of finance under Louis XVI, published the Crown's accounting books in 1781 (*Compte rendu au Roi*) and authored a work addressing the importance of public trust to the health of the economy (*De l'administration des finances de la France*, 1784).[12]

As was the case with other schools of thought, the French reception of these ideas facilitated their arrival in Spain. Without a doubt, the works of Jacques Necker crossed the Pyrenees,[13] but they were not the only ones. Ludovico Muratori, whose *Pubblica felicitá* (Public happiness) was translated into Spanish in 1790, found fault with the idea "that it is better for a Prince to command an ignorant people than a learned one, for the ignorant obey more easily and let themselves be controlled, oblivious to the flaws and vices of government."[14] The debate about informing the people was directly linked to a commonplace of the Enlightenment: universal education.

The Spanish case is key for an understanding of European absolutist monarchies' attempts at renewal toward the end of the eighteenth century. If the final two decades of the reign of Charles III (1759–88) had taken the course of a peaceful and moderate reformism inspired by the Enlightenment, the rule of his successor, Charles IV (1788–1808), was marked and thrown off balance by the French Revolution.[15] To avoid following in the footsteps of the executed

[11] Thomas E. Kaiser, "Money, Despotism and Public Opinion in Early Eighteenth-Century France: John Law and the Debate on Royal Credit," *Journal of Modern History* 63 (1991): 4–16.

[12] See Léonard Burnand, *Necker et l'opinion publique* (Paris, 2004); Robert D. Harris, *Necker: Reform Minister of the Old Regime* (Berkeley, 1979); Robert D. Harris, "French Finances and the American War, 1777–1783," *Journal of Modern History* 48 (June 1976): 233–58, and "Necker's *Compte Rendu* of 1781: A Reconsideration," *Journal of Modern History* 42 (June 1970): 162–83; and Esteban López-Escobar, "La opinión pública, 'héroe' de la política: La contribución de J. Necker," *Doxa comunicación: Revista interdisciplinar de estudios de comunicación y ciencias sociales* 7 (2008): 25–41.

[13] On Necker's influence on Spanish economics, see Jesús Astigarraga Goenaga, "Necker en España, 1780–1800," *Revista de economía aplicada* 8, no. 23 (2000): 119–44. On the reception of his ideas on state administration, see David Alonso García and David Villar Barragán, "Necker y España: La transformación administrativa de 1788," *Cuadernos de historia moderna* 18 (1997): 87–118.

[14] Ludovico Antonio Muratori, *La pública felicidad objeto de los buenos príncipes* (Madrid, 1790; Italian 1st ed., 1749), 58.

[15] An astute analysis of the Spanish situation may be found in Richard Herr, *The Eighteenth Century Revolution in Spain* (Princeton, NJ, 1958), which continues to be the English-language point of reference for late eighteenth-century Spanish history. It is a pioneering, meritorious, and still relevant work, but its age clearly indicates a need for renovation of the canon of English-language works on the history of Spain. The works of Emilio La Parra López cited here are recommended for Spanish readers. On the influence of the French Revolution in Spain, see Herr, *The Eighteenth Century Revolution in*

French royal family, the Spanish branch of the Bourbon dynasty intensified a two-pronged process that it had already begun prior to 1789: the consolidation and protection of royal power, on the one hand, and an ornamental adaptation to the liberal Enlightenment creed, on the other. The shift in strategies for communicating with the public speaks to both concerns.

With the objective of analyzing these political and cultural changes, this article is divided into three parts. In the first, I will reflect on the concept of public opinion in Spain during the crisis of the ancien régime. One cannot speak of any authentic public opinion when there is no dialogue with power—that is, with the only party empowered to speak, which therefore has no need to listen. But it does seem fitting to identify that knowledgeable public for which ecclesiastical propaganda and the theocratic system had lost credibility and to which the monarchy now reached out in an attempt to gain its loyalty. This sector of the population would be the foundation of public opinion in the kingless Spain of 1808 and in the liberal Cortes of 1812.

Next, I will identify the ways in which the debate on public information marked the Hispanic monarchy. A series of intellectuals who were linked to administrative, military, or ecclesiastic service between 1780 and 1808 asked themselves similar questions toward the end of the century and arrived at the conclusion that hermeticism and isolationism were not the best way of doing politics. Contrary to what had previously been believed, the king's absolute power could be even greater if, thanks to the dissemination of propaganda by the apparatus of state, he managed to shape public opinion and earn the loyalty of the people. He who obeys out of a sense of conviction does so more efficiently than an automaton; the ignorant had little to contribute to the public good. These are the arguments of the Enlightenment intellectuals whom we will consider here. They include, among others, Manuel Aguirre, Juan Pablo Forner, Valentín de Foronda, Juan Sempere y Guarinos, Francisco Cabarrús, and Juan Meléndez Valdés.

Third and finally, having established the theory, I will consider the practice of royal policy. Through various examples, we will see to what extent this thought had penetrated the policy of the absolute monarchy. I will not argue that Charles IV (1788–1808) broke radically with the practice of silence and secrecy characteristic of the ancien régime, but nonetheless he was more inclined than any previous Spanish monarch to use the means of communication at his disposal to shape public opinion, mainly (aside from the century's cultural inheritance)

Spain, 239–68; Jean-René Aymes, "Las repercusiones político-ideológicas de la Revolución Francesa en España (1789–1795): Esbozo de síntesis," in *Ilustración y Revolución Francesa en España* (Lleida, 2005), 147–72; Jean-René Aymes, ed., *España y la Revolución Francesa* (Barcelona, 1989); Enrique Moral Sandoval, ed., *España y la Revolución Francesa* (Madrid, 1989); and Emilio de Diego et al., eds., *Repercusiones de la Revolución Francesa en España* (Madrid, 1990).

due to the exceptionally difficult political and economic circumstances that he and his vassals had to deal with.[16] Still, internal political affairs remained veiled from the public eye until the end of his reign. It was then, in the acute crisis of 1807 and 1808, that both Charles IV and his successor, Ferdinand VII, gave themselves over to the public, whose support they desperately needed.

Public Opinion in Absolutist Spain?

Unfortunately, outside its borders the history of Spain is relatively unknown, especially in a period such as the eighteenth century, during which the Hispanic monarchy—notwithstanding its immense colonial empire—played a secondary political role. Nonetheless, the peculiarities of the highly mediated Spanish Enlightenment, the attempts of the absolute monarchy to adapt to the times, and, finally, the subsequent—heterodox and discontinuous—liberal movement present idiosyncrasies that provide an interesting counterpoint to the "canonical" French model.[17]

The period to be analyzed here (1780–1808) coincides with the last years of the reign of Charles III (1759–88) and the entire reign of Charles IV (1788–1808). The two kings were adherents of so-called enlightened absolutism (or despotism),[18] the political system that propelled a series of reforms intended to reinforce the state with the goal of increasing the power of the monarchs over their territory and exploiting more fully the military and economic resources that the country had to offer.[19] For eighteenth-century absolutism, the Enlight-

[16] The reign of Charles IV (1788–1808) was marked by tremendous political and economic difficulties. First the French Revolution compelled him to begin a war against the nation that had been Spain's ally for an entire century. After Spain's reconciliation with France in 1795, and especially after the rise of Napoleon, Charles IV found himself trapped between an extremely demanding ally, the French Empire, and a historical enemy (Great Britain) that both coveted his overseas possessions and sought to break his commercial monopoly over them. Internally, the situation was even worse: Charles IV's son, the future Ferdinand VII, conspired against his parents and their unpopular minister, Manuel Godoy, eventually overthrowing them in the 1808 Mutiny of Aranjuez after the French invasion of Spain.

[17] This crucial and exciting period of Spanish history has been broadly disregarded in international studies, in part because the processes of political and cultural evolution in Britain and France have been considered the "orthodox" models, tending to eclipse others. Arguably, however, the predominant image of this century was not the most widespread one. The study of different systems, such as the Spanish one, can vastly enrich our knowledge of the period through an international perspective, offering a "third point" of comparison not only with France and England but also with other states, such as Portugal or Naples.

[18] Both oxymorons ("enlightened absolutism" and "enlightened despotism") are used to describe this period.

[19] A brilliant overview of this period is to be found in the already classic work of Antonio Domínguez Ortiz, *Sociedad y estado en el siglo XVIII español* (Barcelona, 1976).

enment was not only a source of prestige but also an instrument for recruiting members of the intellectual elite and employing them in the service of the state. Their tasks were to realize reforms and to produce moralizing literature that would defend the sovereignty of the monarch or censure his critics, as well as treatises or translations of works of experimental science that could lead to the material betterment of the kingdom.[20]

Thanks to patronage and iron-fisted censorship, monarchical control of the press and artistic expression was nearly complete.[21] The only way to work for the "common good" was to participate in state administration and/or official institutions such as the Academies (of History, of the Language, of Medicine, etc.) or the Economic Societies of Friends of the Country (Sociedades económicas de amigos del país). The elites who took part in these activities not only collaborated in the exaltation of a paternal and patriotic king but also began to form a common identity as servants of the nation. They were the "citizens without sovereignty" who would end up displacing the monarch from power during the Liberal Revolutions.[22]

Common clichés aside, Spain did not live in cultural isolation from the rest of Europe. The internal expansion, consolidation, and growing clout of the Spanish middle classes in general,[23] and the political and intellectual class in particular, were compounded by French influence both before and after 1789.[24] The French Revolution—for which the American Revolution, in turn, had been a

[20] Joaquín Álvarez Barrientos, ed., *Se hicieron literatos para ser políticos: Cultura y política en la España de Carlos IV y Fernando VII* (Cádiz, 2004).

[21] Esteban Conde Naranjo, *El argos de la monarquía: La policía del libro en la España ilustrada (1750–1834)* (Madrid, 2006).

[22] David A. Bell, *Lawyers and Citizens: The Making of a Political Elite in Old Regime France* (Princeton, NJ, 1994); Daniel Gordon, *Citizens without Sovereignty: Equality and Sociability in French Thought, 1670–1789* (Princeton, NJ, 1994).

[23] Spain lacked an important commercial bourgeoisie; these middle classes were made up of members of the administration and the army, the *hidalgos* (nobles without specific titles) and lesser nobility, urban oligarchies, and businesspeople.

[24] Through the so-called Family Pacts, the Bourbons on both sides of the Pyrenees had formed a powerful geopolitical bloc that was capable of defeating England in the context of the American War of Independence. After 1789, the Hispanic monarchy had to revise its internal policy, radicalizing censorship, revitalizing the role of the Inquisition, and shutting down all unofficial newspapers to avoid "contagion." It also had to reconsider its international alliances. Although Charles IV never even came close to renouncing his absolutism, the French Revolution "modernized" the Hispanic monarchy in a sense. When, in 1795 (Peace of Basel) and 1796 (Treaty of San Ildefonso), Spain again allied itself with France, dynastic and political loyalty were relegated to a secondary plane, as priority was given to economic and geo-strategic interests. Internally, the permeability of the government and the political class to French culture continued to be indisputable. The government of Napoleon Bonaparte was especially influential; the official Spanish propaganda machine let itself be seduced by the political modus operandi of an emperor that governed France according to the tenets of absolutism, but with the mask of freedom, equality, and fraternity.

clear antecedent—put all European monarchies, but especially the Spanish one, in check. On the one hand, it completely upset Spain's strategic play of alliances[25] (converting the constant ally of an entire century into both a terrible enemy and a dangerous friend);[26] on the other, it introduced the venom of distrust into the authorities and the virus of curiosity and novelty into the people. The question is: did there exist, under Spanish absolutism, a public opinion that the authorities should fear? Or was there only a public—an elite that had not achieved the Kantian age of majority—to be manipulated? Can we speak of the existence of public opinion during the absolute government of Charles III and Charles IV?[27] Or is it necessary to wait for the Napoleonic invasion (1808) and the liberal Constitution of Cádiz (1812)?[28]

Half a century after Jürgen Habermas weighed in on the concept of public opinion, his work continues to be an obligatory point of reference both for those subscribing to his ideas and for those wishing to nuance them.[29] The related bibliography has grown to the point of unwieldiness, which is understandable when one takes into account the unquestionable appeal of the topic for political scientists, sociologists, and historians.

As is well known, Habermas linked the rise of a public sphere (with a public opinion to counteract the official one) to the bourgeois maturity that necessarily preceded the Liberal Revolutions.[30] In its mature form, public opinion is a forum

[25] Emilio La Parra López, *La alianza de Godoy con los revolucionarios* (Madrid, 1992); and Antonio Calvo Maturana, "Génesis del II Imperio Británico y ocaso del universalismo español: La doble vertiente del conflicto de Nootka (1790)," *Hispania* 68, no. 228 (2008): 151–92, 159.

[26] The War of the Convention (1793–95) was followed by a period of Spanish-French alliance (1796–1808), which was broken with the Napoleonic invasion of the Iberian Peninsula.

[27] See an extended version of this epigraph in Antonio Calvo Maturana, "Rumor y opinión pública en la España de Carlos IV: La transición entre dos modelos políticos, sociales y culturales," in *Presencia y visibilidad de las mujeres: Recuperando historia*, ed. Rosa María Capel Martínez (Madrid, 2013), 105–56.

[28] Richard Hocquellet, "La aparición de la opinión pública en España: Una práctica fundamental para la construcción del primer liberalismo (1808–1810)," *Historia contemporánea* 27 (2003): 615–29, issue devoted to "Conceptos políticos: Opinión pública intelectual"; Eugenia Molina, "Opinión pública y revolución: El imaginario de una nueva autoridad (1810–1820)," *Revista de historia del derecho* 31 (2003): 271–324; Claude Morange, "Opinión pública: Cara y cruz del concepto en el primer liberalismo español," in *Sociabilidad y liberalismo en la España del siglo XIX: Homenaje al profesor Alberto Gil Novales*, ed. J. F. Fuentes and Lluis Roura i Aulinas (Lleida, 2001), 117–46; and Dardo Pérez Guilhou, *La opinión pública española y las Cortes de Cádiz frente a la emancipación hispanoamericana, 1808–1814* (Buenos Aires, 1981).

[29] We refer to the famous work by Jürgen Habermas published in 1964 and translated into English as *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*.

[30] In 1990, in the preface to a new edition of his seminal book, Habermas acknowledged some flaws in his original theory. He recognized "certain empirical deficiencies" critiqued by historians, such as the Adamism latent in the link between the rise of ca-

for debate and competent judgment: an informed public (thanks to free means of communication and to the state itself) weighs and reaches a consensus on its diverse points of view in order to make its opinion known to the parliament, the final forum that will translate its binding decisions to the political power, which thus becomes a mere executor of public will. But in recent years historians have made an effort to prove the existence of public opinion not only prior to the eighteenth century but also in the Middle Ages,[31] and even in antiquity.[32] Spain has been no exception, and we can find titles that trace its path centuries before there even existed the binomial of "public opinion,"[33] a term that we can measure with an eyedropper in European literature of the modern age until well into the eighteenth century.[34]

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nonical public opinion and the bourgeois revolutions, or the scarce attention paid to other spheres, such as "plebeian publicity." The German philosopher accepted a revision of his theory, but "less in its fundamental characteristics than in its degree of complexity" (Jürgen Habermas, "Prefacio a la nueva edición alemana de 1990," in his *Historia y crítica de la opinión pública: La transformación estructural de la vida pública* [Barcelona, 1981], 1–39).

[31] For example, J. R. Maddicott, scholar of the institutions of medieval England, makes reference in various studies to the presence of public opinion during that period (John Robert Maddicott, "The County Community and the Making of Public Opinion in Fourteenth-Century England," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 5, no. 28 [1978]: 27–43, and *The Origins of the English Parliament, 924–1327* [Oxford, 2008]). From a perspective closer to that of cultural history, Bernard Guenée has studied the image of public opinion toward the end of the Middle Ages (Bernard Guenée, *Ĺopinion publique à la fin du Moyen Age: D'après la "Chronique de Charles VI" du religieux de Saint Denis* [Paris, 2002]). Finally, the American Charles W. Connell has announced the upcoming publication of a book entitled *Vox Populi, Vox Dei: Public Opinion in the High Middle Ages*.

[32] Various highly influential works relating the religious wars of the Empire to wars of public opinion were published in the 1970s. See Marta Sordi, "Opinione pubblica e persecuzioni anticristiane nell'Impero romano," *CISA* 5 (1978): 158–70, and *Aspetti dell'opiniones pubblica nel mondo antico*, ed. Marta Sordi (Milan, 1978); Timothy E. Gregory, *Vox Populi: Popular Opinion and Violence in the Religious Controversies of the Fifth Century A.D.* (Columbus, OH, 1979); José Ramón Aja Sánchez, "'Vox populi et princeps': El impacto de la opinión pública sobre el comportamiento político de los emperadores romanos," *Latomus* 55, no. 2 (1996): 295–328.

[33] For a political and cultural perspective on medieval Spain, see Ana Isabel Carrasco Manchado, "El rumor político: Apuntes sobre la opinión pública en la Castilla del siglo XV," *Cuadernos de historia de España* 80 (2006): 65–90, and "'Vana' o 'divina' vox populi: La recreación de la opinión pública en Fernando del Pulgar," in *Gobernar en tiempos de crisis: Las quiebras dinásticas en el ámbito hispánico (1250–1808)*, ed. José Manuel Nieto Soria and María Victoria López-Cordón (Madrid, 2008), 287–305. For an attempt to offer a vertical historical perspective on the concept—from the Middle Ages until the contemporary age—see José Manuel Nieto Soria, Luis Miguel Enciso Recio, Jean-François Botrel, Alejandro Pizarro Quinteroso, and Amalia Sánchez Sampedro, eds., *Propaganda y opinión pública en la historia* (Valladolid, 2007).

[34] Cándido Monzón Arribas, *La opinión pública: Teorías, conceptos y métodos* (Madrid, 1987).

Without a doubt, propaganda from the nexus of power, elite opposition to the same, and rumors produced by or for the people can be traced throughout ancient Greece and Rome, medieval Europe, and the early modern age. The heart of the question is whether or not the sum of these elements may rightly be called "public opinion." It is logical to think that in all forms of government (even in the most despotic regimes, in spite of what Montesquieu writes in his *De l'esprit des lois*), there existed an elite whose opinion carried weight in politics, and even that popular sectors were taken into account (at least during episodic riots and rebellions brought on by food shortages). In any case, we know that the formula extolled by Hesiod—*Vox populi, vox Dei*—continued to be used by authors in the service of sovereigns, writing to legitimize their decisions. We can thus find cultural antecedents of public opinion in Greco-Roman authors, in Renaissance anthropocentrism, in the dissemination of the printing press, in the Protestant Reformation, and in the Enlightenment; but that does not necessarily mean that public opinion, as a politically influential factor, existed in those societies.

On the other hand, perhaps it makes little sense to confine an analytical instrument as pedagogical and useful as that of public opinion to the bourgeois public sphere. Spanish modernists ourselves have long been anticipating its presence, associating it with cultural productions such as theater or official propaganda[35] and institutions in decline such as the Cortes,[36] in spite of the restricted access to information and the lack of freedom of expression that characterized the ancien régime. Public opinion, communication, and information have always existed; it is thus excessively deterministic to deny the existence of a public sphere, with its own public opinion, to any historical reality prior to the European eighteenth century. There is no completely "uninformed" society. As Robert Darnton has written, every era is an information age, each in its own way, and systems of communication have always shaped historical events.[37] It continues to be a primarily conceptual issue.[38]

[35] On Habermas's 1961 work: "As we know, his is an approach bound to the eighteenth-century rise of the bourgeosie and the cultural shifts encouraged by the Enlightenment; it is thus all the more valid for the characteristics assumed by public space in the current age as an intermediate sphere between private life and the State. However, this not only limits its revision at an earlier stage, but instigates an experiment in intellectual archaeology to verify to what point the notion of the 'public sphere' could be applicable to pre-Enlightenment times and spaces" (Antonio Castillo Gómez and James S. Amelang, eds., *Opinión pública y espacio urbano en la edad moderna* [Gijón, 2010], 9).

[36] Inés Gómez González, "La justicia ante la opinión pública: Las Cortes y la administración de justicia durante el reinado de Felipe II," in *Las sociedades ibéricas y el mar a finales del siglo XVI*, ed. Luis Ribot García and Ernest Belenguer Cebriá (Madrid, 1998), 2:563–72.

[37] Darnton, "An Early Information Society."

[38] "If public opinion is broadly interpreted (as a fact), public opinion has always existed, because: history has shown us, from its very origins, the existence of groups,

This debate is not fundamental for us, given that we study a moment of transition toward an "orthodox" public opinion: the bourgeois liberal one. If followers of Habermas consider the eighteenth century to be the "prehistory of public opinion," we wish to consider its peculiar "neolithic" period in Spain. We can situate it in the reign of Charles IV, not only because it preceded the Liberal Revolution and the concurrent emergence of public opinion as a politically recognized category but also because it presented premature elements, antecedents of what was to come. The encounter between these incipient manifestations of modernity and other perfectly recognizable elements in the ancien régime (factions, opinion, and rumor) make this reign a particularly interesting object of study.

We must take into account that "in history, there are neither absolute births nor absolute declines."[39] The citizens who defined public opinion in 1812 are the subjects of 1808, who at that time had no more access to information than that provided by clandestine political rumors and official media. In this sense, it does not seem unreasonable to suggest the coexistence of an incipient public opinion and an absolutism in decline. In fact, many authors suggest that public opinion was "an essential instrument in the hands of the middle classes" to put an end to the ancien régime.[40] We therefore accept that, during an intermediate period such as that discussed here, terms such as "public opinion," "official propaganda," and "popular rumor" can go hand in hand.[41]

With regard to the Spanish eighteenth century, with its gradual expansion of the press and social institutions, allusions to the concept of public opinion on the

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communities, societies, and peoples whose members maintain relationships among themselves (horizontal relationships); in every community, there has always existed some sort of authority which imposes itself, which is accepted, or which directs the population (vertical relationships); between rulers and the ruled, even in the most authoritarian regimes, some sort of communication (political communication) can be detected; and although in some societies it has been poor or exercised by a minority, there has always existed the possibility of [political] opposition, and participation in public affairs" (Cándido Monzón, *La opinión pública*, 15).

[39] Javier Fernández Sebastián, "Política antigua—política moderna: Una perspectiva histórico-conceptual," in *La naissance de la politique en Espagne: Mélanges de la Casa de Velázquez*, ed. María Victoria López-Cordón and Jean Philippe Luis, n.s., 35, no. 1 (2005): 165–81.

[40] Javier Fernández Sebastián, "Opinión pública, prensa e ideas políticas en los orígenes de la Navarra contemporánea," *Príncipe de Viana* 50, no. 188 (1989): 575–640, 589.

[41] "There has been no lack of specialists who wonder if rumors may be considered a manifestation of public opinion. The question takes on important dimensions in periods of crisis or revolution, and singularly so during the French Revolution of 1789." Luis Miguel Enciso Recio, "Opinión pública, periodismo y periodistas en la época de Felipe V," in *Felipe V y su tiempo: Congreso internacional*, ed. Eliseo Serrano Martín (Zaragoza, 2004), 2:549–96, 553.

part of historians multiply,[42] even though the Spaniards of that era did not include it in their vocabulary with a meaning similar to that used today until the last quarter century, later than in France and, especially, in England.[43] In 1737, the *Diccionario de autoridades* contrasted the word "opinion" to the "truth"[44] (as the current *Diccionario de la Real Academica Española* (*DRAE*) continues to do[45]); but subsequent eighteenth-century Spanish dictionaries gave the word other meanings and related it to other terms, which implied a certain value judgment that was not necessarily arbitrary, as is commonly assumed. We may further observe that the expression *hacer opinión* (to make or form opinion) implied prestige, credibility, and leadership: "to be a man whose judgment serves as an authority on any subject."[46] But the *DRAE* lags behind the daily use of the language;[47] hence it is necessary to consult other sources in order to trace out the evolution that produced the gradual generalization of the term and concept of public opinion.[48]

During the first half of the Spanish eighteenth century, numerous authors used the word "opinion" as a synonym for "error"—among them Father Fei-

[42] Regarding the reign of Philip V of Spain, which almost spanned the first half of the eighteenth century, see Teófanes Egido, *Opinión pública y oposición al poder en la España del siglo XVIII (1713–1759)* (Valladolid, 2002); Luis Miguel Enciso Recio, "Prensa y opinión pública," in *Historia de España fundada por Ramón Menéndez Pidal. XIX. La época de los primeros Borbones*, ed. José María Jover Zamora (1985) (vol. 2, *La cultura española entre el Barroco y la Ilustración* [ca. 1680–1759], 195–258); and Eva Velasco Moreno, "Proyectos y obstáculos para la formación de la opinión pública en la España de principios del siglo XVIII," in Serrano, *Felipe V*, 2:613–26.

[43] "The term 'public opinion' of course exists in the 1770s and 1780s, and it is possible that it might be traced to an even earlier period" (Nigel Glendinning, "Cambios en el concepto de opinión pública a finales del siglo XVIII," *Nueva revista de filología Hispánica* 33 [1984]: 157–64, 159). In France it appears in the second half of the century, and in the '30s in England (M. Ozouf, "L'opinion publique," in *The Political Culture of the Old Regime*, ed. K. M. Baker [Oxford, 1987], 1:419–34). For the French case, see K. M. Baker, *Au tribunal de l'opinion: Essais sur l'imaginaire politique au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris, 1993).

[44] "Opinion [*dictamen*], feeling, or judgment formed regarding a thing, [although] there is evidence to the contrary" (*Diccionario de la lengua castellana*, 1737).

[45] *Diccionario de la lengua española* (Madrid, 2001).

[46] "Opinion [*dictamen*] or judgment made regarding something questionable" (*Diccionario de la lengua castellana*, 1737).

[47] I have not found the term "public opinion" in any edition prior to that of 1925, which defines it as "feeling or judgment [*estimación*] regarding certain matters upon which people in general agree" (*Diccionario de la lengua española* [Madrid, 1925]).

[48] Glendinning, "Cambios en el concepto de opinión"; Javier Fernández Sebastián, "The Awakening Public Opinion in Spain: The Rise of a New Power and the Sociogenesis of a Concept," in *Opinion*, ed. P. E. Knabe (Berlín, 2000), 211–30; López-Escobar, "La opinión pública"; or Claude Morange, "Opinión pública: Cara y cruz del concepto en el primer liberalismo español," in *Sociabilidad y liberalismo en la España del siglo XIX: Homenaje al profesor Alberto Gil Novales*, ed. J. F. Fuentes and L. Roura i Alinas (Lleida, 2001), 117–46.

joo,[49] the Benedictine monk whom many consider to have begun the Spanish Enlightenment. Feijoo dedicated his first speech, *Voz del pueblo* (Voice of the people), "to demonstrating the falsehood of the aphorism *Vox populi, vox Dei*."[50] But a fundamental transition would take place over the course of this century: "In the face of Feijoo's always or almost always isolated *voice of the people*, there emerges the 'democratic' principle of *public opinion* as an expression of the majority point of view, that can only be respected and upheld."[51]

In the *Plan de gobierno* (Government plan) of the count of Aranda,[52] written at the behest of the prince of Asturias (the future Charles IV) in 1781, the public plays an important role, especially as regards the men chosen to govern, who should be "persons of good repute" (*sujetos bien conceptuados*) and "clearly favored by public opinion" (*de opinión pública bien sentada*).[53] Tardily in comparison with England or France,[54] the term "public opinion," along with other terms such as "public" or "general opinion" (*voz general*), spread throughout Spain in the seventies and eighties as a synonym for "reputation."[55] In the latter sense, considering—like the Scottish philosopher Adam Ferguson—public opinion as equivalent to reputation or moral approbation,[56] we could say, for example, that public opinion attacked the Spanish queens of the eighteenth century.

[49] Father Benito Jerónimo Feijoo (1676–1764) was an essayist whose most important work, the *Teatro crítico universal* (1726–40), is considered by many authors to be the most influential of eighteenth-century Spain and the starting point of the Spanish Enlightenment.

[50] Pedro Álvarez de Miranda, *Palabras e ideas: El léxico de la Ilustración temprana (1680–1760)* (Madrid, 1992).

[51] Ibid., 581.

[52] Pedro Abarca de Bolea, Count of Aranda (1719–98). Notwithstanding his position as a member of the high nobility, Aranda actively served in the Bourbon administration and army. Among other positions, he was president of the Council of Castile, Spanish ambassador in Portugal and France, and secretary of state. Though he continued to be a convinced absolutist, his education and contact with the intellectuals of his time made an Enlightenment man of him. See Rafael Olaechea and José Antonio Ferrer Benimeli, *El conde de Aranda: Mito y realidad de un político aragonés* (Huesca/Zaragoza, 1998).

[53] Count of Aranda, "Plan de gobierno (1781)," in Rafael Olaechea, *El conde de Aranda y el partido aragonés* (Zaragoza, 1969), 157–82; see esp. pp. 169–81.

[54] T. C. W. Blanning, *The Culture of Power and the Power of Culture: Old Regime Europe, 1660–1789* (Oxford, 2002); K. M. Baker, *Au tribunal de l'opinion: Essais sur l'imaginaire politique au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris, 1993); Roger Chartier, *Les origines culturelles de la Révolution française* (Paris, 1990); Ozouf, "L'opinion publique"; Hamish Scott and Brendan Simms, eds., *Cultures of Power in Europe during the Long Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge, 2007); and James Van Horn Melton, *The Rise of the Public in Enlightenment Europe* (Cambridge, 2001).

[55] Álvarez de Miranda, *Palabras e ideas*, 582.

[56] María José Canel, *La opinión pública: Estudio del origen de un concepto polémico en la Ilustración escocesa* (Pamplona, 1993), 294–95.

But Aranda's conception of "opinion" went beyond reputation and approached that of a collective to be taken into account. "The public is usually the fairest judge, for it is guided by effects." Therefore, the "sovereign has only the public as his voice and his reference, which can open his eyes . . . it must be the scale . . . through it he will learn when he is in good or bad standing with his ministers, and why." The king must seek out the public in order that his secretaries may not deceive him. It would be desirable for an incantation to exist that might take each prince down "chimneys to *tertulias* [social gatherings, generally of an intellectual nature] to the taverns, where he might hear private speech [*el lenguaje privado*]"; thus would he discover the sycophants who betray him, and listen to his vassals.[57]

According to Aranda, the public is made up of the population as a whole,[58] millions of subjects who opine and to whom the king must listen when they speak of "good or bad government"; but Aranda was still an aristocrat who clearly distinguished between the people and the elite ("all vassals, and even more so the most distinguished or well informed, love and venerate their King and Lord"[59]). Given that Aranda spent so many years as ambassador in Paris, it is not surprising to find echoes of Rousseau in the importance he bestows on the "general voice" (*voz general*), even if he does so in a kingdom in which the monarch continues to be "the master," beyond the reach of any criticism.[60]

It is possible that Aranda's boldness could be attributed to the handwritten, confidential nature of his text. As a general rule, printed works continued to associate "opinion" with popular error. "Opinions" represent bad habits (*malas costumbres*), which it was the government's duty to change. Therefore, people's opinion (*la opinión del pueblo*) is not active but passive, and it does not directly intervene in government; rather, it is the government that must intervene in it, in the interest of the common good. This is the perspective of various authors with ties to the Bourbon administration, whom we will discuss in the next section.

For all followers of Enlightenment ideals—let us consider Kant—the people inhabited a nonage from which they must be removed. Once general education was instituted, the economist Francisco Cabarrús affirmed, "you will see, amidst

[57] In the words of Aranda, the public is an element that the sovereign should strive to please and to attract. A bad secretary takes credit for what pleases the public and blames the king for unpopular measures: "If the public favors a certain issue, [bad secretaries] appropriate it as the product of their own idea; if the public is hostile to it, they blame it on the Lord of them all" (Aranda, "Plan de gobierno," 169).

[58] "The public is the mass recipient of everything that is done, and without the whole of the mass that provides men, Sciences, Arts, crops, assets . . . what would the Sovereign be? The public family recognizes him as their Father; it respects him; it sweats for him, devotes itself to him; it dedicates lives, honor, property to him; and it is made up of many millions of vassals" (ibid., 175).

[59] Ibid., 176.

[60] Ibid.

the conflicting passions and disagreements, the shining torch of public opinion, which will safely guide you."[61] But adherents to Enlightenment ideals were not democratic; they merely strived to persuade the people to let themselves be better governed and to comply with the reforms necessitated by the times—hence the aforementioned European debate on the advantages and disadvantages of deceiving the people.[62] In the ancien régime, more than the "voice of the people," one might speak of "voices *for* the people."[63]

The fundamental word in the evolution of the term "public opinion" is "public." It was the prestige of an elite known as the "public" that made its opinion into a qualified judgment immune to the prejudices and superstition attributed to the people. The term "public" (*el público*) began to represent a "respectable" group that was considered superior to the "people" (*el pueblo*); the latter term was often used as a synonym for the lower classes (*el vulgo*).[64] Feijoo himself, in his speech on the "voice of the people," contended that "the worth of opinions must be measured according to their weight, not by the number of souls."[65] This assertion has the same spirit as the one expressed by José María Blanco White nearly a century later.[66] In relating the uprising against the French occupation of Madrid on May 2, 1808, Blanco White refers to the "intense popular outcry" (*fuerte grito popular*) which, "although it may have expressed the feelings of the majority, does not merit the name of public opinion."[67] Effectively, "when the power of public opinion emerges, defined as the superior authority before which all individual opinions should be presented, its distinction with respect

[61] Francisco Cabarrús, *Elogio de Carlos III. Rey de España y de las Indias, leído en la Junta General de la Real Sociedad Económica de Madrid de 25 de julio de 1789 por el socio D. Francisco Cabarrús, del Consejo de S. M. en el de Hacienda* (Madrid, 1789), 48–49.

[62] Lucas, *¿Es conveniente engañar al pueblo?*

[63] María Victoria López Cordón, "'Vox populi': Guerra, propaganda y representación de dinastías," in *Gobernar en tiempos de crisis*, ed. José Manuel Nieto and María Victoria López-Cordón (Madrid, 2008), 307–35, 335.

[64] An anonymous letter addressed to Aranda in 1792 differentiated between the love of an elite or a public for its king and the attitudes displayed in popular gossip: "Your Excellency's birth and talents inspire trust in the public . . . [which] is angered nowadays as it cannot bear with patience that it is said, 'there goes the one who sleeps with the queen, the poor King doesn't deserve it'" (Archivo Histórico Nacional [Madrid] [hereafter AHN], *Estado*, leg. 2.858). We can deduce from this that the public did not like the people's commentaries about the king.

[65] Cited by Glendinng, "Cambios en el concepto de opinión," 157.

[66] José María Blanco-White (1775–1841) was a Spanish journalist of liberal leanings who, despite having been educated in absolutist Spain, carried out the majority of his literary activity in England, where he settled in 1810. See Martin Murphy, *El ensueño de la razón: La vida de Blanco-White* (Seville, 2011).

[67] Ignacio Fernández Sarasola, "Opinión pública y 'libertades de expresión' en el constitucionalismo español (1726–1845)," *Historia constitucional (revista electrónica)* 7 (2006).

to popular opinion becomes essential."[68] Along these lines, liberal Spaniards of the nineteenth century associated public opinion with the educated, landed elite, the true bearer of national sovereignty.[69]

In order for public opinion to become the guiding "torch" of government, there must first be a unified, critical public that concerns itself with political affairs. Nevertheless, absolute monarchs exclusively tolerated the existence of a literary—rather than political—public. The king presided over the Republic of Letters, but the public formed its parliament. The most faithful reflection of this abstraction may have been that seen in controversies surrounding the reform of the theater.[70] Worried about the morality promoted by baroque cloak-and-dagger comedies, the government directly supported a neoclassicist intellectual minority during the last quarter of the eighteenth century, but it also allowed a debate in the form of reviews in print, satires, and polemics between opposing factions, intervening only when the discussion became excessively heated. Other polemics, such as those surrounding smallpox inoculation, the Spanish translation of the Bible, the refutation of the famous article by Masson de Morvilliers,[71] and the authenticity of the apparitions of Saint James before the Spanish armies fed the interest of a public that would soon also take an interest in politics. This literary and scientific public is a clear predecessor of the political one.

Although the public is a vaguely defined group—as late as 1832, the journalist Larra wondered who they were and where they could be found[72]—we can consider the eighteenth-century public to have been made up of the military, literati, businesspeople, clergy, members of the administration, and aristocrats. It could be found in centers of social activity, both official (royal academies, economic societies [*sociedades económicas*], universities, etc.) and informal (*tertulias*, cafés, public plazas, etc.).

As regards official centers of social activity, the proliferation throughout Spain of the Associations of Friends of the Country (Sociedades de amigos del país), institutions in which urban elites met with the objective of promoting the common good and in which they were not seated in order of rank but in the order in which they arrived at the meeting, greatly fomented the notion of citizenship. In the funeral eulogies read to honor their members in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the nation progressively displaces the king, and subjects

[68] Chartier, *Les origines culturelles*, 43.

[69] José María Blanco White, *Cartas de España* (Seville, 2004), 316.

[70] René Andioc, *Teatro y sociedad en el Madrid del siglo XVIII* (Madrid, 1987).

[71] In 1782, Nicolas Masson de Morvillier's critiques in the "Spain" entry of the *Encyclopédie métodique* provoked strong responses throughout the country, both positive and negative.

[72] Mariano José de Larra, "¿Qué es el público y dónde se encuentra?" (1832), in *Artículos de costumbres* (Madrid, 2006), 75–85.

make way for citizens.[73] For their part, the various academies propagated the new message of the Bourbon monarchy, in which the king gradually substituted his sacred image with that of the patriotic first citizen.[74]

As for the unofficial centers of social activity,[75] perhaps the best known and most studied are the *tertulias*, where egalitarian dialogue was established among participants and contrasting opinions were debated in an atmosphere of tolerance.[76] In turn-of-the-century Spain, the best-known *tertulia* is that of the Countess of Montijo,[77] which dissolved after the "Jansenist" group fell into disgrace; but there were many others that concerned authorities with their propensity to comment on political affairs. A report of the Secret Commission (Comisión reservada), a body formed in 1791 to spy on the conversations of the people of Madrid, El Escorial, and Aranjuez, includes a specific allusion to these meetings: "The commissioners shall attempt to gain entry into the homes of the Ambassadors, dispatched from all the courts, as well as into those of all the grandees of Spain, and into any others where *tertulias* are held, to determine what is discussed there, what class of people they are, if they are preparing to fight, or to talk."[78]

Toward the end of the century, sources testify to the importance of cafés. These locales favored the sociability of the middle classes. They were more sophisticated than taverns but of less restricted access than *tertulias* (although they did not provide the same degree of privacy).[79] In his *Letters from Spain*, Blanco White alluded to the proliferation of cafés during the period studied here, and Jovellanos[80] underscored the importance of the activities carried out in them,

[73] Antonio Calvo Maturana, *"Cuando manden los que obedecen": La clase política e intelectual de la España preliberal (1780–1808)* (Madrid, 2013).

[74] Pablo Fernández Albaladejo, *Fragmentos de monarquía: Trabajos de historia política* (Madrid, 1992).

[75] See Van Horn Melton, *The Rise of the Public*.

[76] Benedetta Craveri, *The Age of Conversation* (New York, 2005).

[77] Paula de Demerson, *María Francisca Sales de Portocarrero, Condesa de Montijo: Una figura de la Ilustración* (Madrid, 1975).

[78] "Instrucciones para los comisionados de Madrid," dated January 4, 1791 (AHN, *Consejos*, leg. 9.383).

[79] J. Fernández Sebastián, "Los primeros cafés en España (1785–1809): Nueva sociabilidad urbana y lugares de afrancesamiento," in *La imagen de Francia en España durante la segunda mitad del siglo XVIII*, ed. J. R. Aymes (París, 1996), 65–82; and María Victoria López-Cordón, "Diversión, orden público y acción política: Los cafés madrileños en 1791," in *Estudios en homenaje al profesor Teófanes Egido*, ed. Máximo García Fernández and María de los Ángeles Sobaler Seco (Valladolid, 2004), 1:345–62.

[80] Gaspar Melchor de Jovellanos (1744–1811), writer and magistrate, was possibly the most influential and prestigious of Spanish Enlightenment thinkers of the fin de siècle. He served in many positions in the Bourbon administration (attaining that of Secretary of Grace and Justice [*Gracia y Justicia*] in 1797) and was a member of many cultural in-

such as "the reading of public papers and periodicals" or "instructive conversations and conversations of general interest," which, in addition to offering "honest entertainment to many persons of integrity and good judgment . . . also instruct those youth that, neglected by their families, receive their education outside the home, as it is commonly said, in the world."[81]

On the street, as has been noted, the Spanish discussed the news of the day. Along with recurrent rumors, we see that events in France—and their consequences—were making a place for themselves, lending a truly political character to such conversations. An example of this is to be found in a letter from Pedro Estala to his friend Juan Pablo Forner, describing the state of turmoil in Madrid in 1794:

> When you come, if you do, this little world will be unknown to you. . . . Everyone has thrown themselves into politics; they speak of nothing but news, reforms, projects [*arbitrios*], etc. . . . Even the lads on the street corner buy the *Gaceta*. . . . Beside [the statue of] Mariblanca [at the Puerta del sol] and in the café, you hear talk of nothing but battles, revolution, the Convention, national representation, liberty, equality; . . . even [the prostitutes] ask you about Robespierre and Barrère, and it is essential to throw in a good dose of newspaper rubbish to humor the girl that you're courting.[82]

It is necessary to mention another type of interpersonal communication that doubtless fomented the exchange of ideas: correspondence. One need only consult the epistolary exchanges of enlightened characters of the age, such as the ambassador Nicolás Azara, the prestigious writer and politician Gaspar Melchor de Jovellanos, the playwright Leandro Fernández de Moratín, the poets Manuel Quintana and Juan Meléndez Valdés, or the cleric and journalist José María Blanco White, to confirm that it was a fundamental means of communication in which the correspondents expressed themselves sincerely and spontaneously, in a somewhat freer manner than that allowed by the restrictiveness of the printed word.

In the correspondence of Jovellanos, we find numerous allusions to public opinion and to the public as a general voice of authority.[83] In this vein, Jovellanos confessed to his friend Carlos González de Posada that he hoped public

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stitutions of the period. There exists a highly extensive bibliography on this figure; see, e.g., José Miguel Caso González, *Jovellanos* (Barcelona, 1998); Javier Varela, *Jovellanos* (Madrid, 1988).

[81] Gaspar Melchor Jovellanos, *Memoria sobre espectáculos y diversiones públicas* (Madrid, 1998), 196–97.

[82] Pedro Estala to Juan Pablo Forner, Madrid, ca. 1794, in François Lopez, *Juan Pablo Forner y la crisis de la conciencia española en el siglo XVIII* (Valladolid, 1999), 502.

[83] Nevertheless, at a moment in which this concept was still being formed, Jovellanos also occasionally used the term "public opinion" as synonymous with "reputation" or even with generalized error (as in the first of his series of letters to Godoy).

opinion would support his *Informe sobre la ley agraria* (Report on the agrarian law) so that the government would be obliged to put it into practice: "I hope to completely fulfill my desire, which is only that it be read everywhere, and that its principles thus shape public opinion, the only arbiter that might some day provide for its establishment, given that it has no place in the current ideas of our *golillas* [jurists]."[84] The influential Enlightenment thinker Campomanes,[85] upon congratulating Jovellanos for his appointment as Secretary of Grace and Justice, spoke of the "general acceptance with which his appointment has been received by the public."[86]

In another manuscript—the draft of an essay, rather than a letter—Jovellanos set out his thoughts on public opinion, or "the opinion of the greatest mass of individuals of the social body," to which he granted the ability to judge the government and influence its decisions. In contrast with liberals, Jovellanos—in line with Enlightenment ideals—aspired to establish universal education so that a real public opinion might exist, for "where there is no education, there is no public opinion, because ignorance holds no resolute opinion; and the few that are educated, well or poorly, impose their own opinion upon those who do not have one." For this Enlightenment thinker, the elite does not define public opinion, but it controls it, taking advantage of the ignorance of the many who end up "at the mercy [*arbitrio*] of the few." Without naming them directly, he accused the nobility and the clergy of using the admiration of the people to mobilize them with their "erroneous opinions."[87]

Consequently, in late eighteenth-century Spain, there was a self-recognized public—one that differentiated itself from the ignorant people. Although the

[84] Jovellanos to Carlos González de Posada, Gijón, January 20, 1796, in *Obras completas de Jovellanos. III. Correspondencia* (Oviedo, 1986), no. 855, 195. However, in the *Report*, Jovellanos refers to "[public] *opinión*" as an "obstacle to be overcome" (Glendinning, "Cambios en el concepto de opinión," 161). *Golillas* was a pejorative reference to a group of the lower nobility that studied law at university and worked in the administration of the kingdom; the term is derived metonymically from the collars (*gola*) they wore.

[85] Pedro Rodríguez Campomanes (1723–1802) was a magistrate and intellectual who occupied various influential positions within the Bourbon administration (until he became the head of the Council of Castile), where he was always a strong partisan of reformism and the rights of the Crown. In 1780, the king granted him the title of Count of Campomanes. His important role in the institutions protected by the monarch should also be noted, especially in the Royal Economic Society of Madrid of the Friends of the Country, and in the Royal Academy of History (Real Sociedad Económica Matritense de Amigos del País and the Real Academia de la Historia) (database *Fichoz*, no. 000709).

[86] Campomanes to Jovellanos, Madrid, November 23, 1797, in ibid., no. 1.130, 356.

[87] Due to the modern sense in which Jovellanos uses this concept, it is believed that this draft cannot predate 1790. See Gaspar Melchor de Jovellanos, "Borrador de reflexiones sobre la opinión pública," in *Obras completas de Jovellanos. XI. Escritos políticos* (Oviedo, 2006), 15–17.

Crown did not recognize this politically and culturally elite public as an equal interlocutor, it was forced to interact with it in order to rule the kingdom. In the next pages, we will see how enlightened thinkers (many of whom were members of the government, as well as of the public) perceived the relationship between the sovereign and the public. How should authorities use the virtual monopoly over propaganda and the literary market? Should the king inform the public? Was it in the interest of absolute power for public affairs actually to become "public"?

The Political Advantages of Informing the Public

The debate over abolishing or attenuating the practice of royal secrecy arose in absolute monarchies because it could be considered on pragmatic rather than moral grounds. Spanish intellectuals in the period examined in this article were more interested in the ways communication could benefit the effective power of the king and the state than in notions of ethics and justice. In the majority of cases, these enlightened thinkers—though preliberal stirrings may be discerned in some of them—were faithful adherents to absolutism.

One of the benefits the king could obtain by diminishing his hermetic behavior was the establishment of a more trustworthy voice, which would increase his moral authority over his vassals. A policy based on active communication with the people and ostensible transparency rather than the repression of rumors and pamphlets was the most effective means of imposing a single vision of events.

In the periodical *Correo de los ciegos de Madrid* (1786–91), the military serviceman and author Manuel Aguirre[88] showed his sympathy for Necker's ideas con publishing State expenditures. The administration's lack of transparency ended up making vassals into "enemies of the government" out of sheer ignorance. "What good is opacity or mystery in the affairs of public administration?" asked Aguirre. Using instruments such as the theater and the printing press, the government should communicate "with its people," as this was the best way "to correct bad habits and give proper direction to individual education and opinions."[89]

[88] Manuel Aguirre (1747–1800) was a member of various institutions that enjoyed the protection of the monarchy, such as the Royal Basque Society of Friends of the Country (Real Sociedad Vascongada de Amigos del País) and the Royal Academy of History (Real Academia de la Historia) (database *Fichoz*, no. 009584). His works are compiled in Manuel Aguirre, *Cartas y discursos del Militar Ingenuo al Correo de los ciegos de Madrid* (San Sebastián, 1973).

[89] Manuel Aguirre, "Discurso sobre la conveniencia de educar al pueblo para gobernarlo mejor," *Correo de Madrid* 167 (1788): 955–58. The speech has no title; the one included here appears in Francisco Aguilar Piñal, *Bibliografía de autores Españoles del siglo XVIII* (Madrid, 1981–2001).

Without a doubt, the press was a direct means of access to the only public whose opinion counted.[90] Between 1789 and 1790, two candidates hoping to replace Ramón de Guevara as editor of the *Gaceta de Madrid* (Madrid gazette), the official periodical of the monarchy,[91] issued statements regarding how they would improve the operation of the periodical as a political instrument.[92] The second candidate's statement is of particular interest, because it calls for greater official transparency in the "News of the Kingdom" section of the *Gaceta*.[93] Information about disasters should not be concealed from the Spanish people, given that "every time some public event transpires, the people are puzzled by the silence of the *Gaceta*." According to the author, *La gazette de France* did not proceed in this way; rather, "it never omits such events, nor others of any sort, as calamitous as they may be." The statement mentioned two recent cases in which news had been denied to readers of the *Gaceta de Madrid* due to a lack of media transparency: the fires of the Plaza Mayor (Madrid) and of the ship *Brillante* (at Cartagena).[94]

This candidate's proposal reveals a Spanish public that demands trustworthy news. Although this public "must content itself with whatever is given to it, it complains of the silence, and this complaint results in the discredit of the *Gaceta* and the least of its dispatches." Silence undermines the credibility of the periodical and detracts from the information it does contain. If the reader knows that the official news outlet does not report news accurately and hides many things, he will seek out other sources, breaking the king's attempted monopoly on information.[95]

[90] Francisco Aguilar Piñal, *La prensa española del siglo XVIII: Diarios, revistas y pronósticos* (Madrid, 1978); P. J. Guinard, *La presse espagnole de 1737 à 1791: Formation et signification d'un genre* (Paris, 1973); Alejandro Pizarroso Quintero, "La prensa en España y en Europa a caballo entre dos siglos: Panorama comparado," in *1802: España entre dos siglos*, ed. Antonio Morales Moya (Madrid, 2003), 3:295–320; Inmaculada Urzainqui, "La república periodística al filo del 800," in Morales, *1802. España entre dos siglos*, 3:321–50.

[91] It was virtually the only newspaper not closed down after the French Revolution.

[92] "Sobre mejorar la *Gaceta de Madrid*," Madrid, January 26, 1789, in AHN, *Consejos*, leg. 11.280, exp. 6.

[93] The author's name does not appear in the document.

[94] "Algunas apuntaciones sobre los auxilios de que necesita la *Gazeta de Madrid* y las mejoras de que es susceptible," Madrid, November 29, 1790, in AHN, *Consejos*, leg. 11.280, exp. 6.

[95] The canon Juan Escoiquiz expressed the same opinion in a statement submitted in 1795 to the secretary of state, Manuel Godoy: "When some disastrous event transpires, the People hear the bad news so manipulated by the timid or the malevolent that they become disheartened, and it is necessary to avoid this by making it known to them, in some of the aforesaid papers and without a moment's hesitation, that the loss is not so great" (AHN, *Estado*, leg. 3.237, exp. 5).

Even though the only permitted nonliterary daily was the *Gaceta*, some authors tried to offer the public an alternative. In 1794, the cleric Joaquín Traggia presented the Ministry of State (Secretaría de estado) with a proposal for a newspaper entitled *El desengañador político* (The political truth-teller).[96] With this journal he hoped "to make known to the people the evils that necessarily accompany every democracy and aristocracy." The applicant believed that there was no way to keep the people ignorant of what was happening in France ("it is not possible to completely prevent them from drinking the poison of evil doctrines") and suggested that it would be better for the public to be well informed by the government than for it to feed on information leaked to it by enemies of the Crown. To rival the clandestine revolutionary campaign rather than ignoring it would provide "the firmest and most robust support for our constitution, and an immovable base for the Spanish Throne."[97] Traggia's proposal was rejected.

But credibility was not the only potential benefit arising from a more communicative political practice. Intervening in people's opinions could improve their attitudes toward legislation and their day-to-day obedience.[98] For Enlightenment thinkers, the reformation of people's *opiniones* depended on the government, just as did channeling rivers or building roads. This point of view stands out especially in Francisco Cabarrús's *Sobre los obstáculos de opinión y el medio de removerlos* (On the obstacles of opinion and the means of removing them),[99] which begins with a commentary on how hard it is to "make man see and act according to his true self-interest." Previously, in his *Elogio a Carlos III* (Praise for Charles III, 1789), Cabarrús had argued that it was very much in the interest of a good king to educate his people, in order to create a trustworthy

[96] Father Joaquín Traggia (1748–1802) was an academic and librarian of the Royal Academy of History and a member of the Royal Basque Society of Friends of the Country (database *Fichoz*, no. 026515). See María Asunción Arija Navarro, *La Ilustración aragonesa: Joaquín Traggia (1748–1802)* (Zaragoza, 1987).

[97] AHN, *Estado*, l. 3.248.

[98] "Could I but succeed so as to afford new reasons to every man to love his prince, his country, his laws; new reasons to render him more sensible in every nation and government of the blessings he enjoys, I should think myself the most happy of mortals. Could I but succeed so as to persuade those who command, to increase their knowledge in what they ought to prescribe; and those who obey, to find a new pleasure resulting from obedience—I should think myself the most happy of mortals" (Montesquieu, *The Spirit of Laws*, "Preface").

[99] Francisco Cabarrús (1752–1810) was a French businessman, merchant, economist, and diplomat residing in Spain. He played a key role in the founding of the Bank of San Carlos (predecessor of the current Bank of Spain). As a reward for his service, he was granted the title of Count in 1789. See Ovidio García Regueiro, *Francisco de Cabarrús: Un personaje y su época* (Madrid, 2003).

public opinion that—from an evidently liberal point of view—could eventually guide him.[100]

Another enlightened writer committed to reshaping the opinion of the Spanish was Juan Pablo Forner.[101] In his speech *Amor de la patria* (Love for the homeland, 1794), he noted that the government was powerless, reforms were in vain, and the population did not obey new laws ("the laws have varied, but the old customs and opinions resist change"). Despite the official attempts to turn old, chivalric Spain into a mercantile nation rather than a military one, the fact was that "we want business, but loathe the businessman; we want agriculture, and diminish the farmer."[102] Thus, according to Forner, the first task of government should be to change "the public and general opinions," as it is those opinions that "make nations happy or unhappy."[103] The people's assumption of a norm was far better than employing thousands of police to enforce their compliance with it. A *Manual for Princes* from the period speaks of the many sovereigns who, "sincerely [desiring] the well-being of their vassals," had been unable to achieve it since the latter were not "well informed about their obligations, nor the manner of fulfilling them."[104]

Attempting to demonstrate that the lack of information only generated disobedience, some authors—followers of the trend established by Cesare Beccaria's *Dei delitti e delle pene* (On crimes and punishments)—contended that the best means of getting the people to obey the monarch's legislation was to explain it to them. The governments of Charles IV were aware of this and used the power of church influence.[105] During those years, priests went one step further in their legitimization of royal power and put themselves at the service of civil leg-

[100] Francisco Cabarrús, *Elogio de Carlos III. Rey de España y de las Indias, leído en la Junta General de la Real Sociedad Económica de Madrid de 25 de julio de 1789 por el socio D. Francisco Cabarrús, del Consejo de S. M. en el de Hacienda* (Madrid, 1789), 48–49.

[101] Juan Pablo Forner (1756–97) was a writer and magistrate, as well as a member of various cultural institutions. He eventually became *fiscal*, or public prosecutor, for the Council of Castile. See François Lopez in his *Juan Pablo Forner et la crise de la conscience espagnole au XVIII siècle* (Bourdeaux, 1976).

[102] Juan Pablo Forner, *Amor de la patria: Discurso que en la junta general publica que celebra la real Sociedad económica de Sevilla el día 23 de Noviembre de 1794 leyó* (Seville, 1794), 51–53.

[103] Ibid., 52–53.

[104] "Manual de príncipes o máximas para la felicidad de un Estado," in Jaime Albosía de la Vega, *El amigo del príncipe y de la patria o el buen ciudadano; traducido del francés y dedicado a los Excelentísimos Señores Grandes de España, a los Ilustrísimos títulos de Castilla, y demás Señores y Caballeros de la Nación Española* (Madrid, 1788–89), 2:139.

[105] Antonio Calvo Maturana, *"Aquel que manda las conciencias . . .": Iglesia y adoctrinamiento político en la monarquía Hispánica preconstitucional (1780–1808)* (Cádiz, 2011).

islation. Sermons and pastorals defended controversial decisions, such as the requirement that cemeteries be established outside cities, the introduction of vaccinations, or the crackdown on contraband.[106]

The diplomat and writer Valentín de Foronda,[107] another adherent to the ideals of the Enlightenment and a fervent proponent of recognizing the need to inform the people in order to govern them better, discussed this issue throughout his work.[108] Necker's influence is evident in Foronda's effort to publish a comparison between Spanish and English accounting records in an attempt to boost confidence in the economy of his country.[109] With respect to contraband, Foronda explained in a speech that this crime "wreaked havoc on agriculture, industry, navigation, and commerce" and that it was, in sum, a vice contrary to the well-being of the entire nation.[110] Like a good Enlightenment thinker, he believed that the education of the individual, beginning in very early childhood, was the best system; but what to do with adults? How might their "erroneous opinions" be combatted?

The pulpit was important, but it was insufficient. To this "spiritual weapon" Foronda added secular ones related to public opinion. "In Spain," he wrote, "where it is generally believed that contraband does not constitute theft from the public, but a mere violation of or disobedience to the law of the Sovereign," executed smugglers were, in the eyes of the people, "victims of the whims of

[106] Contraband was a major problem for the authorities of the period. See José Luis Bermejo Cabrero, "Dos aproximaciones al contrabando en la España del Antiguo Régimen," *Cuadernos de historia del derecho* 4 (1997): 11–59; and Miguel Ángel Melón Jiménez, *Los tentáculos de la hidra: Contrabando y militarización del orden público en España (1784–1800)* (Madrid, 2009).

[107] Valentín de Foronda (1751–1821) fits the profile of the majority of the authors discussed here: he served the Hispanic monarchy as a diplomat, as a member of official bodies, and—above all—as the author of works sympathetic to the Bourbon reforms. See José Manuel Barrenechea, *Valentín de Foronda: Reformador y economista ilustrado* (Vitoria, 1984).

[108] For example, in his works for the *intendentes* (regional administrators of the monarchy), he constantly used expressions such as "make clear" (*haga ver*), "incline," "extend," "convince them," "get to the bottom of" (*desentrañe*), "promote," "praise and distinguish," "fill with enthusiasm," etc. See Valentín de Foronda, "Carta sobre los intendentes," *Espíritu de los Mejores Diarios . . .* , vol. 10, no. 247 (1790), 394–403; and Valentín de Foronda, *Colección de máximas, preceptos y consejos para los señores intendentes, corregidores y alcaldes* (Madrid, 1801).

[109] *Carta en que se prueba que las deudas de España son infinitamente más pequeñas que las de Inglaterra, que tenemos tantos recursos para pagar nuestra deuda y que por consiguiente la Gran Bretaña es pobre respecto de la España*, 1801. The text is found in AHN, *Estado*, leg. 3.238, exp. 16, doc. 10. It is also included in Barrenechea, *Valentín de Foronda* (336–45), and Robert Sidney Smith, "La riqueza de España y de Inglaterra en 1801," *Boletín: Real Sociedad Bascongada de los Amigos del País* 22 (1966): 3–15.

[110] Foronda, "Carta sobre los intendentes," 394–403.

authority." Consequently, harsh laws generated more terror of the monarch than deterrence of the crime and only inspired "compassion for the criminal." This popular reaction proved that "the public" did not think like the legislator. A law alien to public sentiment was therefore a form of repression rather than a reform of common custom. Thus, "it would be advisable to explain how the public should view the crime prior to imposing the punishment, or to make the punishment proportionate to the crime, in accordance with public consideration." In this battle over *opinión*, the king should introduce an explanation of the evils of contraband into the wording of the law and reduce the punishment,[111] making it a crime that stains the honor of its perpetrator and disqualifies him from holding any honorific position.[112] This was not the only occasion on which Foronda expressed opposition to laws that blatantly disregarded "the opinions of the people, [which are] a highly respectable matter [*propiedad*], even when they may be erroneous."[113]

Responding to this quandary born of the disconnect between law and common custom, eighteenth-century monarchs attempted to change conventions.[114] The third definition of the word "convention" (*convención*) in the current edition of the *Diccionario de la Real Academia de la Lengua* is: "tacitly accepted norm or practice, responding to precedent or common custom."[115] The modification of such conventions is fundamental if a law is to be accepted and obeyed. Otherwise, the lawmaker must constantly resort to force in order to uphold the law, and this is the beginning of the law's delegitimization. We can trace this argument—so brilliantly elaborated by M. Foucault—among thinkers of the ancien régime such as the Italian Nicolo Donato[116] and the Spaniard

[111] "In moderate governments . . . a good legislator is less bent upon punishing than preventing crimes; he is more attentive to inspire good morals than to inflict penalties" (Montesquieu, *The Spirit of Laws* [1748], 6:9).

[112] Foronda, "Carta sobre los intendentes," 104.

[113] Quoted by Robert Sidney Smith, "Valentín de Foronda, diplomático y economista," *Revista de economía política* 23 (1959): 425–64, 456.

[114] Jean Pierre Dedieu employs this term very opportunely in *Après le roi: Essai sur l'effondrement de la monarchie Espagnole* (Madrid, 2010).

[115] *Diccionario de la Real Academia de la Lengua* (Madrid, 2005).

[116] "Any State that resorts to forced obedience degenerates into a lack of proper respect, in addition to the grave harm brought on by the violation [*tortura*] of the sacred bond of vassals' [voluntary] submission to their Prince. Such a State will also see that [forced obedience] undoes another, equally inviolable bond: the respect that vassals owe to their Prince, as well as to his decrees and his ministers. It is true that he can use force, and impose punishments, and confiscate the property of the rebellious in order to make them comply with their duty; but in healing one wound, these violent remedies open up many others; and in seeing themselves compelled to submit by force, to obey against their will an obligation from which they were exempt prior to their punishment; although through their punishment they serve the State, their resulting fear of the State will produce an aversion toward it, which can only produce tremendous disturbances in such a disas-

Lázaro Dou.[117] As the state's demands on its subjects increased, it became increasingly reticent about using and making a show of force, something incompatible with the paternal image developed by the propaganda of Charles IV.[118] Persuasion seemed to be more efficient.

According to absolutist authors, the law (*ley*) ("instrument or conduit whereby public law [*derecho*] is communicated to the people"[119]) was as absolute as the monarch.[120] For orthodox absolutism, there was no room for concessions if the law went against common custom. "The laws," wrote the Count of la Cañada in 1793,[121] "receive all their worth from the mouth of the Sovereign," and vassals, who are "notoriously inferior . . . are simply to obey."[122] The jurist Lázaro Dou knew that "according to our royal law [*derecho*] . . . no custom nor practice [*estilo*] in Spain has the force to abrogate the law [*ley*]"; but he did not seem to agree entirely with this maxim. Realistically, the famous axiom "it is respected, but not obeyed" (*se acata pero no se cumple*) applied to the majority of laws. Dou favored the notion that—with the sovereign's consent—a law could be abrogated when "it is contravened every day before the eyes and in the presence of the legislator . . . and this contravention is neither punished, nor the observance of

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trous situation" (Nicolás Donato, *El hombre de Estado* [Madrid, 1789]). See David A. Bell, "The Public Sphere and the World of the Law in Eighteenth-Century France," *French Historical Studies* 18, no. 3 (1992): 912–34; Jeremy L. Caradonna, "The Death of Duty: The Transformation of Political Identity from the Old Regime to the French Revolution," *Historical Reflections* 32, no. 2 (2006): 273–307.

[117] Lázaro Dou, *Instituciones del derecho público general de España con noticia particular de Cataluña y de las principales reglas de gobierno en cualquier Estado* (Madrid, 1800).

[118] Time and time again, this king recalled that he had the legal authority to impose "voluntary" recruitment and loans but that he preferred to give himself over to the solidarity of his vassals. For example, in the military levy of 1794: "I could and should use that supreme power and authority [*facultad*] granted me by law to demand service from those of my vassals . . . that are especially suited to the exercise of arms . . . but I have preferred more equitable and generous means of justice than those stipulated by the Ordinances and Laws [*Pragmáticas*]" (Santos Sánchez, *Colección de pragmáticas, cédulas, provisiones, circulares, y otras providencias publicadas en el actual reinado del Señor Don Carlos IV* [Madrid, 1793], 2:13–17).

[119] Dou, *Instituciones*, 29.

[120] The great concern of eighteenth-century jurists was to gather and compile the laws of the Hispanic monarchy. This concern, which to a certain extent was shared by those in power, inspired works such as the *Novísima recopilación de las leyes de España* [Newest compilation of the laws of Spain] (Madrid, 1806). On these topics, see the prolific work of the legal historian José Luis Bermejo Cabrero.

[121] Juan Acedo y Rico (1726–95), a jurist who became governor of the Council of Castile. In 1789, Charles IV rewarded his service by naming him Count of la Cañada (database *Fichoz*, no. 000006).

[122] Juan Acedo y Rico, conde de la Cañada, *Apuntamientos prácticos para todos los trámites de los juicios civiles* . . . (Madrid, 1793), 11.

the law renewed."[123] In his recommendations for bringing about compliance with the law, Dou proposed that laws should be promulgated taking into account "the customs and inclinations of the subjects." Laws should be imposed tactfully, he advised, in such a way that the subjects hardly notice: "The greatest prudence in legislation consists in preparing things without violence toward or the repugnance of those that are to obey; in making laws without it seeming that laws are being made, and ordering them by such common, straightforward means, that they facilitate one other; whereby considerable, lofty, and difficult ends are achieved, with no disturbance of regular order."[124]

In the periodical *El regañon general* (The general grumbler), we find the same need to reconcile legislation with *opinión* in order to achieve observance of and respect for the law. An adequate moral education would allow public opinion ("which is no more than the sum of individual opinions") to drive government, rather than to burden it.[125]

The bibliographer Juan Sempere y Guarinos wrote along these same lines.[126] In 1797, in response to an official questionnaire, he once again linked people's opinion to their compliance with the law. The author favored "public education" both inside and outside the classroom. He contended that people learn more in the "universal school of practical customs that is the world" than in the schoolhouse. Customs should guide "the purpose of the civil constitution, which under any form of government is none other than public safety, calm, and comfort." Before addressing the means of improving state-regulated education, Sempere—who was prosecutor in the Royal Chancery of Granada—alluded to the need for the government to persuade the public to uphold the law.[127]

The example Sempere uses is, once again, contraband: "the hydra; the most horrific, monstrous, and prolific of vices, abuses, and recklessness." The author denounces the state's inability to control this plague with patrols of riflemen and troops, in spite of whom contraband "neither ceases, nor is diminished; rather it

[123] Dou, *Instituciones*, 49–50.

[124] Ibid., 36. This notion of dissimulating power in order for measures to be effective recalls a famous maxim of government: "that the effect be achieved without the effort being noted" (*que se consiga el efecto sin que se note el cuidado*).

[125] "Concluye la educación particular," *El regañón general* 18 (July 30, 1803), 137–39, 139.

[126] Juan Sempere y Guarinos (1754–1830) was a jurist, author, academic, advisor, and friend of the country. For more on this author, see Juan Rico Giménez, *De la Ilustración al liberalismo: El pensamiento de Sempere y Guarinos* (Alicante, 1997); and Rafael Herrera Guillén, *Las indecisiones del primer liberalismo español: Juan Sempere y Guarinos* (Madrid, 2007).

[127] Juan Sempere y Guarinos, "Informe dirigido al Príncipe de la Paz sobre la educación del Reino" (1797), in Joaquín Rico Giménez, "Godoy y Sempere y Guarinos," in *Manuel Godoy y su tiempo*, ed. M. A. Melón, E. La Parra, and T. Pérez (Mérida, 2003), 2:265–86.

grows, it multiplies, it affronts and triumphs over the power of a great monarch; it demonstrates contempt for the troops, it intimidates the People, and makes Justice tremble." Contraband was deadly not only for the economy but also for "public education," since it made fraud more attractive in the eyes of the people than "honorable daily work." Sempere definitively tied the *opinión* (smugglers were admired by the people) to legislation (without just laws, the people would disobey a government whose coercive methods would never be sufficient).[128] Clearly these authors were strongly influenced by optimistic enlightened confidence in education.

We will close this section with the poet and magistrate Juan Meléndez Valdés.[129] The inclination to win over the public to the policy of the monarchy stands out especially in the report on *hospicios* (shelters for the poor) that he completed in 1802. Meléndez partially blamed the failure of these establishments, which were supposed to provide an officially sanctioned alternative to church alms, on their "mysterious government . . . the public is not informed through news or printed accounts of investment in them, of their copious income, of the poor whom they support, of the aid that is given them, of the instruction that they provide, the assistance that they offer, etc." The nation is unaware of the utility of such shelters "because care has not been taken to make [their usefulness] known." Thus "the *opinión* is indifferent, or divided against itself"—a grave error, for without popular support "no public establishment can prosper."[130] Like Foronda, Meléndez advocated using the church as a conduit for channeling general opinion in favor of the *hospicios*: "get the clergy involved, that they may expound upon their innumerable benefits from the pulpit and the confessional, and how agreeable their benefactors are to the state and to religion, each of which so highly recommends charity and beneficence."[131] The author repeatedly insisted on the need to "win over" and "sway" public opinion by informing the public, illuminating "the nation with good writings" on the utility of these shelters.

[128] Ibid., 278.

[129] Although he is better known as the most important of Spanish neoclassical poets, Juan Meléndez Valdés served as magistrate under Charles III and Charles IV, as well as under José I Bonaparte as State Advisor. He is the subject of an abundant body of work, especially in the literary sphere. For a historical focus, see Antonio Astorgano Abajo, *Biografía de D. Juan Meléndez Valdés* (Badajoz, 2007).

[130] "Fragmentos de un discurso sobre la mendiguez dirigido a un ministro, en el año de 1802, desde la ciudad de Zamora con ocasión de darle gracias por haber conseguido de él una orden para que fueran admitidos en aquel hospicio diez niños desvalidos que había recogido el autor" (Fragments of a discourse on panhandling addressed to a minister, in the year of 1802, from the city of Zamora, giving him thanks for having obtained an order to admit to that refuge ten defenseless children that had been taken in by the author), in Meléndez, *Obras*, 1133–48, 1134.

[131] Meléndez, "Fragmentos de un discurso," 1135.

Meléndez is also the author of a revealing complaint addressed to the Council of Castile in 1798, which he signed as prosecutor of the Court of Magistrates of the Royal House and Court.[132] A supply problem had made it necessary to raise the price of wine, and the Court of Magistrates had drafted a lengthy public notice in which it explained the reasons for the price increase. The Council of Castile had shortened the text, however, publishing a meager notice that announced the increase without providing explanations that could have eased discontent (such as the necessity of the increase or the rationale for a tax on wine as a nonessential product).[133]

The offended Meléndez put his obedience before his individual opinion, but he could not refrain from bemoaning "the inconstancy he had assumed in the public eye" by accepting the shorter version of the announcement, when the full text would have taken "a step forward in illuminating the People" about the matter. The measure, he thought, was necessary and just, and the longer announcement would have corrected the population's erroneous belief that cheap prices are always in its best interest, making it aware of "the need that it is in, that we are all in, of suffering the effects of abundance or of shortfall." The author went so far as to speak of "the right of the public" to face the facts (*salir del desengaño*), contending that keeping the masses "in the dark" has "dire consequences." Meléndez believed as well that a well-informed people is more obedient than one simply commanded to obey the law: "May Justice and the Public Administration be always frank and truthful, and they will make even the man who hears the evidence and resists it (say what one will) bow his head and venerate the same hand that punishes him, just as he venerates Justice not only when it rewards him but also when it pursues and disciplines the miscreant."[134]

Thus far, we have considered the theories of various authors who wrote on the topic of communication (unidirectional, top-down communication, as is to

[132] Sala de Alcaldes de Casa y Corte, the institution in charge of the government and the administration of justice in Madrid.

[133] "Informe sobre la postura del vino," in Meléndez, *Obras*, 1163–64. The opposite stance—of hermetism and silence—is found in the political treatises of the ancien régime. In this sense, the words of the baroque author Diego Saavedra Fajardo are significant: "When resolutions are made public, they seem composed and organized according to fine judgment. They represent the Majesty and prudence of the Prince; we understand them to be motivated by causes and considerations that are beyond us, and we sometimes attribute to them many causes that they did not in fact have. If we were to overhear the conclave [*conferencia*], the grounds and intentions [for such resolutions], we would laugh. Thus it happens in the theater, where actors appear in costume and in character, and inspire respect; whereas there, in the dressing room, all is confusion and chaos, and their vileness is evident. It is therefore greatly imprudent for the mysteries of government to be communicated to strangers" (Diego Saavedra Fajardo, *Idea de un príncipe político y cristiano representado en cien empresas* (LXII), quoted in Mariano Baquero Goyanes, *Visualidad y perspectivismo en las "Empresas" de Saavedra Fajardo* (Alicante, 2010).

[134] Baquero, *Visualidad y perspectivismo*, 1164.

be expected from the ancien régime) between power and the public at the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth century. We have seen that a break with the official policy of silence could be made from various angles—by explaining laws to improve compliance with them, for instance, or by providing national and international political news to give the public an official version of events. In each case, the result is the same: the dismantling of secrecy, the progressive breakdown of the administrative silence that characterized the absolute monarchies, which had traditionally been limited to monarchic propaganda combining the cult of the monarch and the divine origin of his power, which legitimated everything. We will now consider how the Crown acted when faced with the many problems that emerged during the period when these works were written.

The Practice of Power

It was never to the liking of absolute power for political matters to be debated outside the government sphere. The baroque Spanish tradition encouraged public spectacles and appearances[135] endorsed by the political authors of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries,[136] including Diego de Saavedra Fajardo, an author of international renown who wrote in 1640:

> We would lose the opinion that we have of Princes and Republics, if we were aware of what transpires within their Councils. They are giants who appear great and powerful to the observer, and they inspire fear more than they offend; but if fear examines them [*si los reconoce el miedo*], they are revealed to be fantasies, governed and sustained by men of no greater stature than the rest. Empires that are secretive in their councils and designs inspire respect; others, contempt. . . . The grandeur conceived by opinion is lost in plain view. Reverence is greater from a distance.[137]

[135] José Antonio Maravall, 1975.

[136] There is an abundant bibliography on political practice (state, monarchy, etc.) in the early modern age in Europe in general and in the Iberian monarchies in particular that exceeds the scope of this study. See Peter Burke, *The Fabrication of Louis XIV* (New Haven, CT, 1992); Bartolomé Clavero, *Tantas personas como estados: Por una antropología política de la historia europea* (Madrid, 1986); Darnton, "An Early Information Society"; Domínguez, *Sociedad y estado*; Fernández Albaladejo, *Fragmentos de monarquía*; Antonio M. Hespanha, *Vísperas del Leviatán: Instituciones y poder político* (Madrid, 1989); Ernst H. Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology* (Princeton, NJ, 1957); José Antonio Maravall, *Estado moderno y mentalidad social (siglos XV a XVII)* (Madrid, 1972), 2 vols.; Maravall, *La cultura del Barraco*; Monod, *The Power of Kings*; I. A. A. Thompson, "Castile," in *Absolutism in Seventeenth-Century Europe*, ed. J. Miller (New York, 1990), 69–98; Francisco Tomás y Valiente, *Gobierno e instituciones en la España del antiguo régimen* (Madrid, 1982); and Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretative Sociology* (New York, 1968).

[137] Diego Saavedra Fajardo, *Idea de un príncipe político y cristiano representado en cien empresas* (LXII), quoted in Baquero, *Visualidad y perspectivismo*.

This same attitude was inherited and sustained by the monarchs of the eighteenth century. Hence it was not novel that in 1744 Philip V should order "the Council to abstain from licensing publications relative to matters of State, peace treaties, and other such documents."[138] Political matters, *raisons d'état*, were completely excluded from literary production; the only authorized version was the official one. In 1767, in the decree expelling the Jesuits, Charles III refrained from explaining his motives for such a traumatic decision, merely stating that it was a consequence of his "royal wishes" (*real ánimo*) and forbidding discussion of the matter.

The case of the Hispanic monarchy is especially interesting since in the years subsequent to the French Revolution censorship became radicalized and all unofficial periodicals were shut down, making centralized power the only source of news and information. Control over the written word was extremely strict, and the Bourbon state became "Foucaultian," transformed into a vigilant Argos.[139] But the press did not cease production, and other media—such as the pulpit or the theater—became, more than ever, instruments of civil power.

Today, historiography has broken with the traditional image of the reign of Charles IV as reactionary and hermetic, rightly considering it to be the turning point of the Spanish Enlightenment.[140] It was evident that the elite that had, in the course of the century, become accustomed to reading the press (some of which, such as the periodical *El eensor*,[141] was rather progressive for the time) and gathering in centers of social activity (such as *tertulias*, cafés,[142] academies, or the Royal Economic Societies of Friends of the Country)[143] was not going to settle for reading royal orders, public announcements, and the anodyne news provided by the Crown in the *Gaceta de Madrid*. This broad group could not be governed as though they were the biggest part of the third estate.[144]

[138] *Novísima recopilación de las leyes de España* (Madrid, 1806), libro 8, título 16, ley 17.

[139] Conde Naranjo, *El Argos.*

[140] Francisco Sánchez-Blanco, *La ilustración Goyesca: La cultura en España durante el reinado de Carlos IV (1788–1808)* (Madrid, 2007).

[141] F. Uzcanga, ed., *El censor* (Barcelona, 2005).

[142] María Victoria López-Cordón Cortezo, "Diversión, orden público y acción política: Los cafés madrileños en 1791," in *Estudios en homenaje al profesor Teófanes Egido*, ed. Máximo García Fernández and Mª de los Ángeles Sobaler Seco (Valladolid, 2004), 1:345–62.

[143] Gloria Á. Franco Rubio, "Captar súbditos y crear ciudadanos, doble objetivo de los 'Amigos del País' en el siglo XVIII," *Historia social* 64 (2009): 3–23.

[144] It would be inexact to say that the absolute monarchs ignored the common people. In daily life, in lesser political affairs, it was in the best interest of every government—absolutist as it may have been—to take the pulse of the population to know if the people were happy or, to the contrary, if they were restless. The spies of the Secret Commission (Comisión Reservada) were also charged with determining "whether or not the Public

We can appreciate from various handwritten, confidential manuscripts that power began to be conscious of the existence of that nonerudite public interested in the news of the day. A censor, the Count of Isla, rejected the publication of the newspaper *El desengañador político* (The political truth-teller) on the grounds that it might fall into the hands of those curious "idle youth," hungry for news, that "devour the newspapers." The count referred to this group as the "public," which he located in "the *tertulias*, cafés, shops, bookstores . . . the great amphitheater in which these athletes present themselves, and it is there that the newspapers offer material for them to make an ostentatious display of themselves." A gazette focused on political affairs would "open the door to censure and insults, for with the pretext of the periodical, their boldness might grow, leading them to speak with impunity and ponder the irreparable evils of the Monarchy."[145]

It is not surprising that the English ambassador Alleyne Fitzherbert, accustomed to the parliamentary debates in his own country, should speak in 1790 of the "little weight that the public voice has in this country, if it opposes the authority of the Crown."[146] In the space of a decade, Charles IV defied his entire court by making a member of the Royal Guard into a grandee of Spain, Prince of Peace, and *Generalísimo*; he then persisted in keeping him in power in spite of his growing unpopularity. This suggests that this monarch took absolutism to the extreme, disregarding the opinion of the most hostile sectors of the elite; but that does not mean that he governed completely at his own whim. Popular sentiment mattered greatly, and that of the elite even more so.

Kings were not indifferent to the criticism and opinions within their kingdom, which made their way to their secretaries and councils in the form of anonymous letters and denunciations.[147] In 1798, Godoy saw "the Government

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resents any Government decisions" (AHN, *Consejos*, leg. 9.383; "Instrucciones para los comisionados de Madrid," dated January 4, 1791). This attitude, rather than an expression of respect for public opinion, represents the classical fear of the people, always regarded as a bomb on the verge of going off. In 1800, Godoy confessed to the queen: "the voice of the populace horrifies me, and I fear the vigor of the people when they do not recognize authority" (Godoy to María Luisa, May 1800, in *Cartas confidenciales de la reina María Luisa de Parma y de don Manuel Godoy* [Madrid, 1935], 289). Scorn for the so-called *vulgo*, the irrational masses to whom it was not necessary to provide explanations, but merely sustenance and entertainment, prevailed in absolutist governments.

[145] AHN, *Estado*, leg. 3.248

[146] Fitzherbert to Leeds, Escorial, October 28, 1790, National Archives (London), Foreign Office, 72/19.

[147] Nor could they be indifferent to another form of external opinion: the perception of the economic solvency of the country. "Credit" was essential for getting loans abroad and selling promissory notes [*vales*] at home; therefore, official propaganda aimed at fomenting the economic confidence fundamental to good credit (Thomas E. Kaiser, "Money, Despotism, and Public Opinion in Early Eighteenth-Century France: John Law and the Debate on Royal Credit," *Journal of Modern History* 63 [1991]: 4–16; and López-Escobar, "La opinión pública").

discredited, and Majesty offended, in the convulsions of public sentiment, modesty failing to restrain foul and atrocious rumors."[148] Certainly Charles IV approached different court factions at different times, often in response to national and international pressure: for instance, the magistrates of the count of Floridablanca, the nobles of Aranda, the enlightened followers of Gaspar Melchor de Jovellanos, or the conservative party of José Antonio Caballero. According to the soldier Ignacio Garciny, Charles IV did not replace Floridablanca sooner because "in the beginning, they did not dare to clash so openly with public opinion."[149] The diplomat José García de León y Pizarro recounts that the introduction of Enlightenment thinkers (Francisco Saavedra, Miguel Azanza y Gaspar de Jovellanos) into the cabinet in 1797 was the result of advice that Cabarrús gave to Godoy: "that he win public opinion, putting people of reknown in high positions."[150] But it would soon become more urgent to placate the anti-Jansenists, to the detriment of the enlightened cabinet, whose membership—after a few years of support from Godoy—would pass over to the opposition. In 1801, from exile, Jovellanos would remind Charles IV that the injustice from which he was suffering affected all Spaniards. The idea of a court that judges political acts—call it public opinion, or call it the nation—was in the air: "I implore, my lord, Your Majesty's mercy, not only for me, but for my nation; for there is no respectable man in the nation unaffected by my redress. The oppression of my innocence threatens his, and the violation of my liberty puts all my compatriots in danger, and makes them wary."[151]

Information control was even more important for the monarchy than legitimizing and making understood changes within the government.[152] The example of greatest interest, that of filtering the news of national and international political affairs allowed to reach the Spanish, was the *cordon sanitaire* around revolutionary France, which demonstrates both the efforts and the limitations of the state under the ancien régime: undesirable texts, as well as works supposedly controlled by state censorship, continued to slip through. The government wanted direct control over all information disseminated about the great news event of

[148] Godoy to María Luisa, September 24, 1798, in Pereyra, *Cartas confidenciales*, 189.

[149] Ignacio Garciny, *Quadro de la España desde el reinado de Carlos IV* . . . (Valencia, 1811), 10.

[150] José García de León y Pizarro, *Memorias* (Madrid, 1998), 67.

[151] Gaspar Melchor de Jovellanos, "Segunda representación de Jovellanos a Carlos IV (8/10/1801)," in *Obras completas de Jovellanos. XI. Escritos políticos*, 608–9.

[152] A citation from Floridablanca from 1791 corroborates this attempt to manipulate the information that reached the streets: "This news having spread, and having informed the Assembly of it and of our need to defend and ready ourselves, we will avoid suspicion among our people and the people of France, and make our people take interest in the measures to be taken to defend their lives and property" ("Informe autógrafo que leyó al rey en el año 1791 el conde de Floridablanca," in G. Anes, *Economía e Ilustración en la España del S. XVIII* [Barcelona, 1969], 185).

those years. The so-called "Floridablanca panic"[153] constituted an attempt to proceed as though nothing had happened on the other side of the Pyrenees. In the *Gaceta de Madrid* "the Revolution simply does not exist . . . until 1793": the editors feigned normality in all the information they provided about France. Beginning that year (when the war made dissimulation impossible), the periodical began making reference to French politics, but—logically—from the counterrevolutionary point of view, painting that country as a hotbed of ambition, conspiracy, and executions.[154]

After an announcement was published in the *Correo literario de Murcia* (Literary post of Murcia) about the publication of a work entitled *Vida y muerte de Luis dieciséis* (Life and death of Louis XVI), the royal orders of June 7 and 17 and July 28, 1798, urged the Council of Castile to "take the greatest care in [their] watchfulness and scrupulousness that no news, either favorable or adverse, of any things pertinent to the Kingdom of France, be published in any paper or book."[155] It was forbidden to speak not only of events in France but also of what was transpiring in Spain in connection with France, "to prevent the Public from being given truncated or erroneous news." Central power attempted to remove all information related to France from the public sphere, forbidding even antirevolutionary works such as the aforementioned panegyric to Louis XVI or a *Defensa de los reyes por derecho natural y divino* (Defense of kings according to natural and divine law);[156] as late as 1803, the publication of the laudatory *Vida de María Antonieta de Austria* (Life of Marie Antoinette of Austria) was refused.

This policy was the one that frustrated Joaquín Traggia's project *El desengañador político* (The political truth-teller). Although proposals for works contrary to revolutionary maxims were common at that time, Traggia had defended his with solid arguments; thus, his idea was not immediately rejected with the rest. The secretary of state, Manuel Godoy, noted in the margin that "although it has been believed, until now, that it is advantageous to maintain silence regarding the rights of Sovereignty . . . I see that the present plan may be appropriate, provided that the author does not diverge in any way from what he has proposed." Godoy forwarded the proposal to the censors, and thanks to this we have a report from the Count of Isla dated February 13, 1795, in which he details the reasons for the proposal's rejection. He contended that it was best not to touch

[153] This alludes to the radicalization of civil and inquisitorial censorship carried out by the minister Floridablanca to avoid the spread of the French Revolution. See note 15.

[154] Alberto Gil Novales, "La Revolución Francesa a través de la *Gaceta de Madrid*," in *Estudios dieciochistas en homenaje al profesor José Miguel Caso González* (Oviedo, 1995), 1:347–64.

[155] AHN, *Estado*, leg. 3.235, exp. 13.

[156] Proposed in December 1795 by Ignacio María de Funes Ulloa. Godoy, in the margin: "may his zeal be appreciated, and may he be told that these writings are not advisable" (AHN, *Estado*, leg. 3.840, exp. 19).

on these debates, for they served "more to unsettle the spirits [*ánimos*] than to enlighten them." There are things that the people should not know, that should be forbidden to them, as unattainable as a deity: "To write about the Monarchy in the current circumstances, to inspire horror in the public regarding government affairs, is to draw people's attention to news that it is not appropriate for them to scrutinize; it is to awaken him who sleeps and, finally, to compel [the public] to think about a matter that it is not advisable for them to consider, and which for them should be a sacred mystery."[157]

But the French Revolution was not an isolated case in the Crown's efforts to establish a monopoly on public information. In 1790, Spaniards remained unaware of the fact that the Nootka crisis had brought them to the brink of war with England. The *Gaceta de Madrid* provided news on English combat maneuvers without in any way associating them with Spain, and only once an accord had been reached can we read that "the unresolved differences that this Cabinet had with Spain, which had been, in great part, the motive for our armament" had been settled.[158]

At any rate, it was very difficult to control information leaks. Many lesser publications (around ten pages in length) escaped the strictest censorship and went into circulation. One of Floridablanca's subalterns, upon observing the rapid dissemination of a *Romance o relación de los terremotos de Orán* (Romance or account of the earthquakes in Oran) noted that: "This rag is printed in Cartagena, and if so many copies arrived in Alcalá, how many must have scattered throughout the kingdoms of Murcia, Valencia, and Andalucía, where the lower classes enjoy such reading! I understand that these writings are generally forbidden; if this is so, the order is either insufficiently conveyed, or it is disobeyed, which is worse."[159]

Nothing was to undermine the official information monopoly. On December 16, 1791, Charles IV informed his vassals in a curious fashion of the loss of the North African stronghold of Oran. Following the earthquake that destroyed the fortress, his enemy, the king of Mascara, had besieged it; but the Spanish troops had valiantly resisted. In spite of it all, the king, in a pretended paternal act, had voluntarily decided to abandon the fort rather than putting pride before the blood of his men.[160]

Let us consider another example: the case of the human and material catastrophe provoked by the rupture of the Lorca (Murcia) dam on April 30, 1802.[161]

[157] AHN, *Estado*, l. 3.248.

[158] Calvo Maturana, "Génesis del II Imperio Británico," 159.

[159] Quoted in Fermín de los Reyes Gómez, *El libro en España y América: Legislación y censura (siglos XV–XVIII)* (Madrid, 2000), 1:661.

[160] National Archives (London), Foreign Office, 72/23.

[161] "The speed with which the construction was completed, and the pharaonic dimensions of the project, could perhaps be considered a symptom of technical precariousness. In 1802, eleven years after its construction, a deluge of water caused by excessive pre-

Two weeks later, before Charles IV had spoken publicly on the matter, the authorities discovered that a printed extract was for sale from a *Carta escrita en la ciudad de Lorca* (Letter written in the city of Lorca), which had been published without permission and without a license. The surprise was twofold, for the work had been announced in the *Diario de Madrid* (Madrid daily) on May 13; so this announcement was the first allusion to the floods that many Spaniards and residents of Madrid were able to read.[162]

The Council of Castile ordered the immediate recall of all printed copies of this letter, as well as an investigation into how it had been published without a license and how it came to be announced in the *Diario de Madrid*. The documentation is extensive, but it can be summarized with two names. The first is that of the printer, Ramón Ruiz, who admitted to having published the letter in order to free himself from the economic crisis in which the printing industry was stagnating as a result of the war. Ruiz defended his decision based not only on his need for money to support his family but also on his own opinion of the work, which he had read "without even remotely thinking that this publication was prejudicial in any way, for it contains no clause that either directly or indirectly maligns either the Region or the State."[163] If Ruiz had acted in bad faith, knowingly breaking the law, another man, the censor Pedro Estala, had committed a grave error by allowing the announcement to be included in the *Diario de Madrid* without first having verified that it had been granted the necessary licenses. An anonymous writer from Lorca, a printer from Madrid, and an insufficiently zealous censor had effectively thwarted Charles IV's preventive system.

This event troubled authorities for two reasons. First, not even the most innocuous work should escape the control of state censorship. Second, a clandestine pamphlet had informed the public of the event before the Crown itself had been able to compose an official message. The text was eight pages long and its contents alarmist (or realistic, depending how one looks at it), emphasizing the human tragedy ("here nobody sleeps, nor eats; all is confusion and shock") and including such details as the names attached to corpses and specific addresses in the city of Lorca where havoc had been wrought ("the *reservado*

cipitation caused the dam to burst, laying waste to the region and part of the city of Lorca, with a total of over seven hundred victims." Antonio T. Reguera Rodríguez, *Territorio ordenado, territorio dominado: Espacios, políticas y conflictos en la España de la ilustración* (León, 1993), 69. On this public work, see Juan Hernández Franco, Antonio José Mula Gómez, and Joaquín Gris Martínez, *Un tiempo, un proyecto, un hombre, Antonio Robles Vives y los pantanos de Lorca (1785–1802)* (Murcia, 2002).

[162] AHN, *Consejos*, leg. 5.565, exp. 40.

[163] Ibid. The printer was eventually fined ten *ducados*.

[tabernacle] of San Cristobal has been found swimming in the middle of the nave, for the water reached the cornice").[164]

It is impossible to know how Charles IV would have proceeded in the absence of this clandestine testimony. We cannot rule out the possibility that he would have maintained administrative silence, given that the article published in the *Gaceta* (on May 14, 1802) appeared after the publication in question and contains allusions to illegal versions of the event. The official announcement is addressed to the "public, lest it be frightened by vague and exaggerated accounts." The brief text can be divided into three parts. The first lines attribute the dam's existence to Charles III's "munificent spirit" and concern for supplying the arid soil of Murcia with water. After seeing plans for a canal frustrated, the "royal treasury" assumed the cost of building two reservoirs in the region, and in their construction "all measures dictated by the greatest prudence were taken in order that these great structures were made with the greatest skill and safety."[165]

Next, we find in the *Gaceta* article a narrative of the rupture of the reservoir, which had been in use since 1787 "without any breach having been detected in it." At approximately 3:30 in the afternoon on the thirtieth of April, a cracking sound was heard, which gave way to an outpouring of water that "at the speed of thought" flooded "the cultivated fields [*huerta*] of Lorca, an entire neighborhood of this city, and all the low-lying land along the Segura River, up to the city of Murcia." The *Gaceta*'s version is rather less alarmist than that of the confiscated letter. Although it describes the speed and violence of the flood "that swept along behind it everything in its path" and mentions the destruction of the neighborhood of San Cristóbal, it nuances the most apocalyptic versions of the disaster: "a good number of people died . . . although not in such great numbers as the first rumors of this ill-fated event could lead one to believe."[166]

Third and last, the official article relates the measures taken by Charles IV in response to the disaster. "As soon as the disagreeable news of this calamity reached the ears of the King, his paternal heart was grief-stricken by the misfortunes it had caused, and since that moment he has been constantly occupied providing aid to the poor wretches that the flood has left without homes and without property." The authorities of the region (the *corregidores* of Murcia and Lorca and the bishop of Cartagena) had received "the riches that they have had on hand [to provide relief], in greater quantity than had been requested."[167]

[164] "Extracto de una carta recibida de la ciudad de Lorca, cuyo contenido expresa los estragos que ha ocasionado el rompimiento del pantano que se hallaba entre las Sierras inmediatas a dicha ciudad," in ibid.

[165] *Gaceta de Madrid* 39 (May 14, 1802), 469.

[166] Ibid., 469–470.

[167] Ibid., 470.

In this way (in this and subsequent issues of the *Gaceta*[168]), the ministers of Charles IV attempted to counteract clandestine information, addressing "the public"[169] in recalling the philanthropic aims of the reservoir, denying its deficient construction, revising the most pessimistic versions of the event, and publicizing the king's pain and his palliative measures. Other works addressing the disaster of the Lorca reservoir were published,[170] some of which had no known editor or place of publication and may have been brought out clandestinely.[171] One of them was denounced to the Inquisition.[172] It is notable that one of these works, the *Nuevo y curioso romance* (New and curious romance), was addressed to the "curious reader."

If information control is necessary in every totalitarian system, every kind of government shares the need to enforce the law. It was not easy for the absolute monarchs to maintain a balance between their sacred hermeticism and the propagandistic needs demanded by reformism. One need only review the censorship records to observe that there were lingering reservations about the public knowing "too much." The following invaluable citation from the censor Francisco Pérez de Lema is revealing. In his view, the king should not lower himself by giving reasons for compliance with his orders:

> To wish, however, that by order of the King, a book be distributed among his vassals to move them to comply with their obligations, with no urgent cause or motive that could authorize it in other, more proper terms, is to ill-advisedly wish to taint and even destroy

[168] Four days after the official announcement, the curious could also purchase a "geometric map of the reservoir of Lorca [*Plan geométrico del pantano de Lorca*]" (*Gaceta de Madrid* 40 [May 18, 1802], 484). In another issue, the king announced new funds destined for the victims, as well as a public fund for contributions "so that all the Spaniards that have the means and are not devoid of compassion contribute to the succor of those in Lorca who have suffered so much." Pursuant to a royal order of May 24, 1802, a relief council was created, presided over by the bishop of Cartagena; the announcement of said council is not much less tragic than that of the confiscated text (*Gaceta de Madrid* 58 [July 20, 1802], 701–2). One year after the flood, the public fund was remembered for the small amount of money that had been collected (*Gaceta de Madrid* 41 [May 24, 1803], 431).

[169] This allusion "to the public" is repeated in another announcement related to the same issue in the *Gazette* on July 20, 1802. The mention is twofold, for the end of the text about the relief council promises a future accounting of expenses "to satisfy the public."

[170] *A la triste noticia de la repentina é inesperada avenida del Segura, acaecida en la noche del 30 de abril, en este año de 1802, entre diez y once de la noche, a causa de haberse roto uno de los pantanos de Lorca, por cuyo motivo, se vio la ciudad de Murcia en la mayor confusión y conflicto* (Murcia, n.d.).

[171] *Nuevo y curioso romance, en que se da cuenta y declara las lamentables desgracias acaecidas por haber reventado el Pantano de la ciudad de Lorca, y haber desolado todo cuanto encontró hasta entrar en la mar como lo verá el curioso lector: acaecida esta desgracia el día 30 de abril a las cuatro de la tarde de este año de 1802* (n.p., n.d.).

[172] I am referring to the *Cantos fúnebres sobre la inundación de los pantanos de Lorca*. The record is to be found in AHN, *Inquisición*, leg. 4.459, exp. 19.

his sovereign authority, which does not precisely depend on the just motives with which he exercises it or its subsequent examination and approval, but on the reverent opinion and ready will that his subjects should have to execute whatever they are ordered to do, firmly persuaded that he will not order them to do anything that is not necessary or conducive to their well-being and happiness.[173]

But this hermetic stance began to fall into disfavor, notably in the official attitude regarding certain measures related to public health for which official public opinion campaigns were always openly waged. At the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth, public announcements, periodicals, medical treatises published by the Royal Printing House, and sermons were riddled with allusions to the advantages of burying the deceased outside the cities,[174] of collaborating with preventive measures against yellow fever, and of being inoculated or, later, vaccinated against smallpox.[175] Of course, the official motivations were not merely philanthropic: epidemics were slowing the increase of the Spanish population, so necessary for the strengthening of the state.

Let us pause to consider the last of these three examples: the fight against the deadly smallpox epidemic. The first known means of fighting the illness, inoculation, awakened suspicion in some European countries due to the moral quandary it presented: a slight risk of death for the patient who received the viral inoculation and of contagion for those who surrounded him. In Spain, the treatment did not become widespread until the final third of the eighteenth century. After decades of controversy that was not only moral and religious but also scientific—doctors themselves were not in agreement about the matter—official media began to disseminate favorable news about the positive effects of the treatment in Spain and the rest of Europe. In 1792, Charles IV took a stand for science by receiving doctor Timoteo O'Scanlon,[176] author of an *Ensayo apologético de la inoculación* (Apologetic essay on inoculation), at the court.[177] In 1798, the royal family decided to lead by example—and to take precautions, given that the disease had attacked various family members throughout the century[178]—inoculating the prince, infantes, and infantas.[179]

[173] Francisco Pérez de Lema to Príncipe de la Paz, Madrid, November 28, 1796, AHN, *Estado*, leg. 3.247, exp. 7.

[174] Reguera, *Territorio ordenado*, 244–47.

[175] Antonio Rumeu de Armas, "La inoculación y la vacunación antivariólica en España (datos para la historia de la medicina española en los siglos XVIII y XIX)," in *De arte y de historia* (Madrid, 2004).

[176] "Timoteo O'Scanlan presenta a sus Majestades Ensayo apologético de la inoculación," *Gaceta de Madrid* 87 (1792), 767.

[177] Madrid, 1792.

[178] Luis I had died of smallpox in 1724. In 1788, the infante Gabriel, his wife, and his son died of the same illness.

[179] "Madrid, 23 de Noviembre de 1798: Se ha procedido a la inoculación de la viruela a los príncipes," *Gaceta de Madrid* 94 (1798), 1004–5.

That same year, the vaccine developed by the Englishman Edward Jenner was introduced. This time, the Hispanic monarchy was among those most engaged in the discovery, promoting vaccination campaigns on both sides of the Atlantic.[180] Charles IV's attempt to convey the importance of the vaccine to the general population without resorting to anything beyond paternal suggestion is striking. There is abundant documentation for this: for example, in February of 1802, the captain general of Catalonia was asked not to compel the population to be vaccinated, on the grounds that "it would be useless and even risky to take other measures that would inevitably result in the resistance of some, who would spread divisiveness, and the crucial purpose of inoculation would be abandoned." To the contrary, it was advised that he use "persuasion, to make them see the prodigious effects promised by this practice, and that they run no risk with the procedure."[181]

The authorities knew that information was much more useful than force, but they also knew such information had to be credible. In 1801, the Royal Academy of Medicine of Barcelona had authorized the publication of a text opposing the vaccine, a work by the French doctor Alphonse Le Roy. The academy "believed it was fitting that the public educate itself regarding opinions both favorable and contrary to the vaccine, in order that they see that nothing was being hidden from them nor any attempt being made to deceive them." But another doctor pressured the regent and the work was not published. The academy complained to the king that with this suppression, "the practice of this new inoculation had become suspicious in the public eye."[182] Academics considered the censorship of this work to be inconsistent with the monarch's policy on public information, and they let their feelings be known. Public opinion was forged under the ancien régime in disputes such as this, in which those in power permitted debate as long as it benefited and supported their point of view.[183]

Even in strictly political matters, we can perceive a clear shift toward the end of the Spanish ancien régime. Charles IV, moved by a loss of authority or by the desire to increase it, tended to distance himself from traditional hermeticism. Whether lying or telling the truth, raising consciousness or manipulating it, what

[180] There exists an ample body of work addressing the application of the vaccine in the Hispanic monarchy, especially surrounding the two hundredth anniversary of the Balmis Expedition. Prior to these commemorations, we also have the doctoral thesis of Susana Ramírez Martín (1999) and its reedition: *La salud del Imperio: La real expedición filantrópica de la vacuna* (Aranjuez, 2002). See also José Tuells and Susana Ramírez, *Balmis "et variola"* (Valencia, 2003); and Susana Ramírez, Luis Valenciano, Rafael Nájera, and Luis Enjuanes, eds., *La real expedición filantrópica de la vacuna: Doscientos años de lucha contra la viruela* (Madrid, 2004).

[181] AHN, *Estado*, l. 3.215-2.

[182] Ibid.

[183] This is evident in the case of the theater, the first public recognized by the ancien régime. See René Andioc, *Teatro y sociedad en el Madrid del siglo XVIII* (Madrid, 1987).

is certain is that the Spanish Crown embarked on the conquest of public opinion. We have seen that toward the end of the eighteenth century and at the beginning of the nineteenth, many of those in service to the Crown had accepted a paradox: to be absolute one must not be arbitrary, and the more the monarch accommodated public opinion, the easier it was to get the public to obey. This opinion won over Charles IV and Ferdinand VII, at least in the desperate crisis of 1807 and 1808.

At the end of the reign of Charles IV, everyone was talking about the affairs of the monarchy—"even the muleteers," as Lady Holland wrote.[184] The effects of the economic crisis and the war were compounded by the *partido fernandino*, a political party led by the prince and heir to the throne (the future Ferdinand VII) and made up of a good part of the high nobility and the church, which began to erode the image of the monarchs and their right-hand man, Godoy, through satire and rumors[185] (representing queen Marie Louise as a libertine, for instance, much as Marie Antoinette was portrayed in France).[186] Finally, Charles IV threw himself into a "war of public opinion" (*guerra de opinion*) against his son and his partisans. The reason for this desperate measure was none other than the terrible internal and external crises gripping the Hispanic monarchy: epidemics and shortages of almost apocalyptic proportions, economic strangulation by the financial exigencies of Napoleon and the British commercial blockade in the Atlantic, a series of military setbacks, the aforementioned opposition of the most traditional sectors, and the unpopularity of Manuel Godoy. Faced with this unprecedented situation of instability and disrepute, the monarch sought an equally unprecedented solution, opening up traditionally secret subjects to public knowledge, as Louis XVI had done in France in allowing the publication of the *Compte rendu* or permitting the French parliament to attempt the famous Affair of the Diamond Necklace.

We could consider the disaster of the battle of Trafalgar (1805) to mark a policy shift of this kind, since rather than concealing it, the Crown intensely

[184] Antonio Calvo Maturana, "Elizabeth Holland: Portavoz de los silenciados y cómplice de un tópico," *Cuadernos de historia moderna* 29 (2004): 65–90, 88.

[185] "[The *partido fernandino*] grew into an impetuous torrent, dragging popular opinion along behind it. It sent commissioners to the provinces to prepare the masses, relating the relevant qualities of the heir to the throne, his love for religion; and the despotism exercised, in their view, by the monarchs' favorite, who deprived Ferdinand of any role in affairs, going so far as to close the doors of the council to him. . . . The commissioners found the provinces fertile for sowing rampant discord" (Estanislao de Kosca Vayo, *Historia de la vida y reinado de Fernando VII de España, con documentos justificativos, ordenes reservadas y numerosas cartas del mismo Monarca Pío VII, Carlos IV, María Luisa, Napoleón, Luís XVIII, el Infante Don Carlos y otros personajes* [Madrid, 1842], 1:21).

[186] Antonio Calvo Maturana, *María Luisa de Parma: Reina de España, esclava del mito* (Granada, 2007).

publicized it; but the fact that the battle took place on the coast of Cádiz, within sight of numerous Spaniards, suggests that the event was impossible to cover up. To avoid repeating the same mistake they had committed in handling the breach of the Lorca dam, authorities preferred to offer their own version of the event, fomenting a great quantity of publications in verse and prose. These official versions did not ultimately lie—at no time was the military setback denied—but they did attempt to present a humiliating defeat as a heroic episode.

But the real milestone in the modus operandi of the Spanish monarchy, the event that catalyzed the new approach of informing the public about internal political affairs, was the so-called conspiracy of El Escorial.[187] Prince Ferdinand's plot against his father was not resolved secretly, as was the crisis of 1781 between Charles III and the Princes of Asturias,[188] or the Princess María Antonia's betrayal of her in-laws in providing information to the English enemy (1802–6).[189] Very much to the contrary: in 1807 Charles IV attempted to overcome his bad public image by portraying his son to the people as a traitor—an unprecedented scenario in the history of the Hispanic monarchy.

Charles IV arrested his son and published the harsh decree of October 30, 1807, making public all that had transpired. He said that he did not wish to "refrain from expressing a source of chagrin to my vassals, which will be less so with demonstrations of their loyalty."[190] This decree was followed on November 3 by a communiqué to be read by all the priests of the kingdom to ensure that it reached the entire population.[191] After the internal crisis was apparently resolved with the prince's confession and the monarch's pardon, Charles addressed his vassals once again on November 5, this time going so far as to publish the letters of apology from the prince to his parents and attempting to persuade the people of his magnanimity in pardoning his wayward and regretful son. Once again, this decree was to be communicated "to my Councils and Tribunals, who are to circulate it among my People so that they may appreciate in it my mercifulness and justice, and so that the sorrow and misgivings in-

[187] In 1807, on the Royal Site of El Escorial, Charles IV found compromising papers in his son's rooms that proved he was conspiring to take the throne. See Emilio La Parra López, *Manuel Godoy: La aventura del poder* (Barcelona, 2002), 358–72; and Francisco Martí Gilabert, *El proceso del Escorial* (Pamplona, 1963).

[188] On this rapprochement of Prince Charles and the Count of Aranda, behind the backs of Charles III and the secretary of state, Floridablanca, see Juan Pérez De Guzmán y Gallo, "Reparaciones a la vida e historia de Carlos IV y María Luisa: La primera calumnia," *Revista de archivos, bibliotecas y museos* 8, no. 10 (1904); and Rafael Olaechea, *El conde de Aranda y el "partido aragonés"* (Zaragoza, 1969), 124–94.

[189] La Parra, *Manuel Godoy*, 350–58.

[190] Royal Decree of October 30, 1807.

[191] Joaquín Company, *Nos D. Fr. Joaquín Company . . . arzobispo de Valencia . . . a todos nuestros diocesanos, salud y paz en nuestro señor Jesucristo. En unos tiempos tan infelices, en que nuestros enemigos comenten ultrajes en los sagrados Templos . . .* (November 12, 1807).

spired in them by my first Decree may be alleviated; for in [that decree] they saw the danger to their Sovereign and Father, who loves them as his sons, as they love me [as their father]."[192]

Yet it was useless for Charles IV to throw himself into the arms of the public. On the contrary, this political maneuver was totally counterproductive; perhaps it came too late, when the people had already been completely won over by the *fernandinos*. The sources from the period show Ferdinand reinforcing his image as a martyr in the public eye and demonstrate that Charles IV's decree "consternated the capital and outraged the public."[193] The Council of Castile itself, in punishing Ferdinand's partisans so gently (by exiling them), proved the monarch's situation to be untenable. There was little to be done, given that at the beginning of the century "it was common to perceive Charles IV as good, but weak and foolish; and to consider the Queen a wicked woman" and Godoy "a monster."[194] Sources describe contempt for the king and hatred for the queen and Godoy. In contrast, prince Ferdinand had an almost mythological demeanor, "people of diverse and contrary opinions fancying his person to be endowed with all the qualities they desire in a future monarch."[195] Years later, the exiled minister Godoy would write in his memoir that Charles IV committed a great mistake by not concealing his son's betrayal, given that "what was more important than anything in such delicate circumstances . . . was to drown any seed of discord and preserve the union of the kingdom, the dignity of the throne, and respect for the government."[196]

It seems obvious that the king had lost the battle over public opinion. The politician Alcalá Galiano, a young man eighteen years of age at that time, admits in his *Memoir* that he "then participated in the common error" of considering Ferdinand and his followers "[to be] martyrs and confessors of a true faith, whose triumph was anxiously hoped for."[197] Every sort of rumor about the monarchs was taken to be true, from the queen's love affairs to the possibility that Charles IV would name his "favorite," Godoy, as regent.[198] A few months later, in March of 1808, besieged by rumors and with the French armies moving at will throughout Spain, Ferdinand's parents and Godoy ended up being overthrown in the mutiny of Aranjuez.[199]

[192] Royal Decree of November 5, 1807.
[193] García de León, *Memorias*, 122.
[194] Antonio Alcalá Galiano, *Recuerdos de un anciano* (Barcelona, 2004), 11.
[195] Ibid., 38.
[196] Manuel Godoy, *Memorias* (Alicante, 2008), 1352–62.
[197] Antonio Alcalá Galiano, "Memorias," in *Biblioteca de autores Españoles* (Madrid, 1955), 83:323–24.
[198] On the traditional black legend surrounding King Charles IV, Queen María Luisa de Parma, and the minister Manuel Godoy, see, respectively, Teófanes Egido, *Carlos IV* (Madrid, 2001); Calvo Maturana, *María Luisa de Parma*; and La Parra, *Manuel Godoy.*
[199] La Parra, *Manuel Godoy*, 382–97.

The mutiny had helped Ferdinand VII to dethrone his father—an event without precedent in the Spain of the ancien régime—but he faced grim prospects.[200] The population was very tense due to the uprisings against Godoy and his partisans in many areas of the peninsula. On the other hand, the French army, which had entered Spain with the excuse of conquering Portugal,[201] was beginning to arouse suspicions everywhere. Would Napoleon support Ferdinand VII or the deposed Charles IV?[202] Few yet suspected that the emperor wanted the throne for himself.[203] Both Charles IV (before losing the crown) and Ferdinand VII addressed the public intensively through announcements and edicts (which were in turn included in the press) to calm the mood of a population grappling with the presence of the French army.[204] The "public"[205] was mentioned in all the texts, clearly stipulated as an interlocutor and symbol of the population as a whole with phrases such as "I make it known to the public" or "may the news reach the Public." The announcement *Al público de Madrid* (To the public of Madrid) by the Council of Castile saved Ferdinand VII from the dishonor of practically begging the overwrought population to calm itself and go home, promising that the king "will act . . . to promote public happiness and to fulfill the wishes of the People of Madrid."[206] An absolute monarch promised to fulfill the wishes of the people!

Royal secrecy was shattered. In his struggle to legitimize his irregular ascent to the throne, Ferdinand made public his own version of the conspiracy of El Escorial, blaming Manuel Godoy and the naïveté of the king for all that had occurred.[207] In April, Ferdinand departed to meet with Napoleon, and once again the public was duly informed. A fictitious dialogue between the public and the

[200] Charles Esdaile, *The Peninsular War: A New History* (London, 2002).

[201] In virtue of the Treaty of Fontainebleau (1807).

[202] Although Charles IV's abdication was ostensibly amicable, he repudiated the agreement a few days later, alleging that he had been forced to abdicate.

[203] In 1835, the count of Toreno would blame this situation precisely on the lack of information and freedom of expression: "Until then, while some were suspicious of Napoleon's intentions, the majority only saw in his person strong support for the nation and a sincere protector of the new monarch. The perfidy of the capture of fortresses or other events that could only be interpreted as questionable were attributed to the vile machinations of Don Manuel Godoy, or to fair precautions on the part of the emperor of the French. Faulty judgment, to be sure, but only to be expected in a country deprived of news media [*medios de publicidad*] and free discussion to illuminate and rectify the errors of public opinion." Conde de Toreno, *Historia del levantamiento, guerra y revolución de España* (Madrid, 2008), 55.

[204] Adolfo Carrasco Martínez, "La crisis de 1808 en la opinión pública," *Cuadernos de investigación histórica* 24 (2007): 19–40.

[205] For example, the edict of March 16, 1808, on the peaceful intentions of the French army (in *Diario de Madrid*, March 18, 1808).

[206] *El consejo al público de Madrid*, March 20, 1808 (Archives Nationales de Paris, F7, 6517b).

[207] *Gaceta Extraordinaria de Madrid* (March 31, 1808), 317–23.

absolute king is established the moment the monarch responds to the public's doubts regarding the wisdom of that dangerous journey:

> The King is grateful for the extraordinary affection of his loyal people . . . but . . . he can do no less than to make everyone, each and every individual, aware that he would not resolve to embark on this important journey, were he not certain of the sincere and cordial friendship of his ally, the Emperor of the French, or that the journey will have the happiest of consequences: he orders them, then, to calm themselves and to wait, for in less than 4 or 6 days, they will give thanks to God and to the prudence of His Majesty for the absence that now disquiets them.[208]

But Ferdinand was mistaken. He was forced to stay in Bayonne and to return the throne to his father so that he could relinquish it to Napoleon, who would, in turn, cede it to his brother, Joseph Bonaparte.

In 1814, after the Peninsular War—six years during which a de facto freedom of the press had existed—Ferdinand recovered the throne and attempted to proceed as though nothing had happened.[209] Upon arriving in Spain, he abolished the Constitution of 1812, declared the liberals and the followers of Joseph I to be outlaws, and attempted to use the support of the church and the nobility to govern in a more conservative and reactionary way than had his father (whose enmity toward those two groups had ended up costing him the throne). But after all that had happened within the peninsula and beyond during the previous years, things would never be the same for the monarchy. Once his initial popularity had faded, Ferdidnand VII reigned (1814–33), plagued by fear of conspiracies and obliged to reach out to the less radical of his political enemies over the years. His daughter, Isabelle II, had to work closely with the liberals in order to rule.[210]

Brief Conclusions

Although the French model is usually considered "canonical," the disintegration of European absolutism came about in a variety of ways. The Spanish case is of interest due to the prolonged survival of the absolute monarchy, which ultimately had no choice but to adopt—albeit timidly—dynamics typical of liberal states. The reign of Charles IV, dramatically marked by the French Revolution, is an ideal period to observe the survival strategies of the ancien régime (between reaction and syncretism) when faced with the new regime.

[208] *Segunda Gaceta Extraordinaria de Madrid* (April 22, 1808), 407.

[209] Antonio Calvo Maturana, "'Como si no hubiesen pasado jamás tales actos': La gestión fernandina de la memoria histórica durante el Sexenio Absolutista," in *Culturas políticas monárquicas en la España liberal: Discursos, representaciones y prácticas (1808–1885)*, ed. Encarna García Monerris, Mónica Moreno Seco, and Juan Marcuello Benedicto (forthcoming).

[210] Isabel Burdiel, *Isabel II, una biografía (1830–1904)* (Madrid, 2010).

Without a doubt, the transition between the two models is marked by processes that are difficult to analyze and pinpoint chronologically. One of them is the emergence of public opinion as an authority in matters of state. This study has attempted to take a snapshot of a moment of transition between two political models: an older model in which discreet political action was taken without the knowledge of the public, who had no right to express an opinion or to be aware of the political process, and a contemporary liberal model, solidly founded in public opinion, news media, the ideal of freedom of expression, supposed political transparency, and so on. Obviously, the transition from one to the other could not be made overnight.

Tocqueville's idea of nuancing the idea of liberal revolution as a radical change continues to make sense.[211] In the preceding pages, we have analyzed the final years of the reign of Charles IV, a monarch of the ancien régime, and we have seen that it was the monarchy itself that broke with tradition. At times because it needed to change social conventions to get the population to obey its increasingly complex and intrusive legislation, and at times—less frequently—because it wished to offer its own version of political events, the Crown began conveying information to the people in greater depth.

It is clear that—although the sensibility of the Enlightenment did help—such official explanations were given on the basis of their utility, or in order to stifle crises that could not be resolved without shattering royal secrecy. The modus operandi of the monarchy was to adapt to reality, but this was only a new means of achieving the same old ends. Neither those who believed it was important to inform the people nor those who believed it was best to maintain them in a state of lethargy and ignorance argued from the moral point of view; rather, they sought the attitude most favorable to the *raison d'état*. None of the authors studied here wrote openly that it was advantageous to lie to the people, nor would any have dared to say that the king did not speak the truth; the debate oscillated between administrative silence, on the one hand, and the explanation of the spirit of regulations and decisions, as well as the communication of certain news traditionally concealed by the Crown, on the other.

But there is not much distance between an explanation useful for the *raison d'état* and a desperate justification, and the absolutists knew that the latter undermined royal majesty.[212] The authority of the king was at stake in new times that both provoked the crisis of the absolute monarchy and gave the monarchs a double-edged sword with which to attempt to overcome that crisis. Public opinion: so useful when it is favorable, and so dangerous when it is not.

[211] *L'ancien régime et la Révolution* (1856).

[212] The count of Vergennes, contrary to Necker's publicity measures, advised the king that he was playing with fire: "If Necker's public opinion gains force, your Majesty should prepare yourself to see those who once obeyed, command, and those who once commanded, obey" (quoted in López-Escobar, "La opinión pública," 29).