

## **ABSOLUTISM VERSUS ENLIGHTENED DESPOTISM: PABLO DE OLAVIDE, A VICTIM OF CARLOS III**

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Carlos III was, first and foremost, an absolute king. Incapable of imagining that the power of a monarch of Catholic Spain could ever be limited, he retained control over the Inquisition, conserving the right to appoint inquisitors and thwarting any attempts to reform the Holy Tribunal, a channel that he had definitively considered closed in 1762-63 when he shelved the reform project of the advisors of the Supreme Council of the Inquisition, Cantos and Ric. The “*Prevenciones y Precauciones*” (Preventions and Precautions) that these two advisers, recommended by Wall himself, delivered to the monarch started by affirming “that he had the power to appoint all servants of the Inquisition”; but not even this helped them earn his blessing, nor that of his confessor, Father Eleta.<sup>1</sup>

This friar from the Convent of St. Giles was in fact the recalcitrant counterpoint to the monarch’s acknowledged, but nevertheless scarce, enlightenment. Generally relegated in pro-Carlos III historiography, his involvement in the taking of the monarch’s decisions was spectacular and of course as, or even more, evident than in the case of his predecessors, Rávago or Quintano Bonifaz. Many of the terms used to describe Eleta would appear to be insults - Azara called him the “alpargata” (a type of rope-soled scandal), “Great Mufti”, “Jupiter del cordón” (literally “the monks’ Jupiter” – the term *cordón* means “monk’s girdle”)” or “fray pernetas” (bare legged friar)<sup>2</sup> but in fact they are not. According to Ferrer del Río, he had a superstitious mind. In terms of his influence on the king, Casanova writes: Carlos III “was as stubborn as a mule, as weak as a woman, as sensual as a Dutchman, extremely devoted and willing to die before staining his soul with the least of mortal sins. Anyone can see that such a man had to be a slave of his confessor”<sup>3</sup>.

Despite everything, the confessor is overshadowed in historiography, surely due to the powerful personality of the *politicians*

of *Carlos III* and the direction of the reforms, which, in relation to the Church, reached their zenith with the famous success *de famille* of the expulsion and subsequent suppression of the Jesuits (1767-73). Royal Absolutism had triumphed through its military arm, Aranda, and social control – the main duty of the old Inquisition - had already been guaranteed. In fact, Aranda himself was the one who did most to strengthen the notion that Carlos III became an absolute monarch (unlike his half-brother Fernando VI, who Ensenada and Carvajal convinced of his role as a “reformer”), another contradiction on the part of the leader of the Aragonese “party”, supposedly more “pactist”, and who in this way came to confuse the traditional absolutism of the king with modern enlightened despotism, which was the true force behind the reforms<sup>4</sup>.

Thereafter the reforms were skilfully presented as not only the work of the “triad”, formed by Aranda, Campomanes and Olavide<sup>5</sup>, but of the king himself, who in this way made it seem that he was enlightened in the same way as the other European kings were meant to be. However, the “political” reaction – we will now discuss the very symptomatic reaction of the Marquis de la Corona – and the scandal caused by the new developments in the world of the ideas and customs (the Enlightenment) would not diminish throughout the kingdom, finding their most active representatives in the king’s entourage itself, notably Father Eleta. All that was needed were the events to spark off the crisis; one event was the Algiers disaster in 1775, which created a climate of tension similar to that experienced in 1766<sup>6</sup>.

It was in this context that the *Arandist* Pablo de Olavide y Jaúregui (Lima, 1725 - Baeza, 1803) was reported to the Inquisition.

### ***Olavide, the enlightened Francophile***

As wealth was one of the key elements for enjoying freedom and the necessary degree of nonchalance, the prerequisites for cultivating the enlightenment –*Voltaire dixit* –, the young and rich Olavide travelled through Italy and France, met philosophers, visited the *Señor de les Delices*, purchased books and ...philosophised openly. When he arrived in Madrid in 1765, where he had had thousands of books in French sent after obtaining a licence to read prohibited works (money worked wonders), it was easy for him to create a niche for himself among the

capital's aristocracy<sup>7</sup>, including some aristocrats called to serve Carlos III, whose brilliant work the Peruvian had the opportunity to admire when he passed through Naples. At the age of forty, the public career of this "Francophile" - one of many - enlightened by the *France des philosophes* and *l'Encyclopédie* was simply waiting for a powerful hand to usher him into a public post; this help came, of course, from the Count of Aranda, a military man, educated by Jesuits, and who had also travelled in his youth. He was also a "Francophile", Prussian in his passion for the military career, an ugly, rough, arrogant and bossy, but nevertheless enlightened, man.

*President* Aranda tried Olavide in various posts - as director of the San Fernando hospice and trustee in the municipal government of Madrid - before entrusting him with the control of the century's enlightened work, the New Settlements of Sierra Morena, a new world created based on rational rules, a New Arcadia where to test a concept that was highly suspected at the time: *le bonheur*. As the beloved Ernest Lluch observed, the second line of Olavide's *Instrucción* of 1767 already contained the word "happiness"<sup>8</sup>, a dangerous term if it was not used to refer to true happiness, which could be none other than the reward in heaven for hardships and troubles suffered on earth.

Colonisation was an old concept: the larger the population, the greater the wealth, or, to quote the Marquis of Ensenada, "more subjects (means) more taxpayers". *Populationism* was championed by Felipe V's planners, and even by an old-fashioned minister like José de Carvajal, who came up with the idea of searching for colonials from among pilgrims in Santiago de Compostela (in this way he could be sure of their Catholic faith)<sup>9</sup>. This notion was diversified by men such as Ward in his *Proyecto Económico*<sup>10</sup>; Ward was well aware of certain objections, "Firstly, such are the impressions of people in all parts of the Inquisition that even the most jealous Catholics are afraid of it and hate it vehemently"<sup>11</sup>.

The arguments in favour of colonisation were retuned in the economic field by Campomanes, who read everything on the subject, including the practical proposals put forward by the Frenchman Beaumarchais and the Bavarian adventurer Thurriegel. Meanwhile, Aranda contributed German experience, namely his knowledge of the settlements that were being established, *manu militari*, by Frederick II,

whom he admired<sup>12</sup>. The enlightened mission in the century flourished from the best sources, both Spanish and foreign, and was “blessed” by Carlos III himself, in whose name taxes were collected by the most important settlement, La Carolina, a town where the brilliant superintendent Olavide built his palace, a robust and comfortable building crowned with the royal coat of arms. To one side, off centre with respect to the town’s main street, stood the humble parish church...

### *Olavide, the freethinker*

The colonials arrived and so, of course, did the problems. Casanova, who was aware of the current of criticism that was developing against Olavide, joked about the origins (Switzerland) of the settlers: “the people most affected by nostalgia”, even going so far as to offer recommendations to the superintendent “on matters relating to their moral faculties”. Aware that “Olavide strongly claimed that all types of friar establishments had to be avoided”, the Italian advised him- at least that is what he wrote in his memoirs – that “it would be necessary, at least initially, to give them Swiss priests and magistrates”, which Olavide unwillingly had to accept since the colonials did not speak any Spanish and were unable to understand the Spanish parish priests. He quickly resolved the troublesome affair by bringing in German friars. He then moved on to deal with other matters, including those of an economic nature, and which were already proving to be very problematic<sup>13</sup>.

At the beginning of the 1770s criticism had become widespread: one matter that generated great criticism was the excessive expenditure that these settlements entailed, their poor administration on the part of the superintendent and his friends, and even extravagance and certain personal criticism about the licentious Olavide that inevitably appeared; such was his fame as a freethinker with no prejudices. The fiscal Carrasco, Marquis de la Corona, wrote a scathing allegation that may be seen as the most conservative attack on the Peruvian. To summarise, this resentful figure claimed that the cause of the abovementioned failures was the fact that “the task had left in such discredited man hands as those of Olavide”. La Corona, which he also mentioned in his letter on the reform of the Inquisition, ended up giving its opinion: “Poor king

and poor Spain, with ministers so frail and so insensitive to their duties”<sup>14</sup>.

The criticism increased and with it the “unity of the enlightened team”<sup>15</sup> began to crumble. The change was evident but not for Olavide, who continued championing his ideas before everyone, unaware that everything he did was exaggerated and reported *to those in high places* and that he was becoming more and more vulnerable. He continued to act, as he was told by Menéndez Pelayo, like a “philanthropic dreamer”<sup>16</sup>. Paradoxically, Olavide was pleased when he discovered the identity of his new and ferocious enemy, Friar Romualdo of Friburg. He believed that he had finally put one problem behind him. The bearded Capuchin Friar, a large serious German with a special talent for leadership, arrived after the first “brothers” sent from Friburg in order to bring matters under control since the friars had begun to create problems. This is what Olavide innocently believed after meeting Friar Romualdo on 13 May 1770, despite having had an earlier “disagreement” with him, since the proud Capuchin friar would under no circumstances accept that Olavide did not accept his *outright* leadership of the *mission*, which he claimed by simply presenting the corresponding “certificate” confirming his order. To the surprise of Olavide, who had already conceded enough, the friar persevered and he quickly discovered his sinister intentions: nothing less than to change the *Arcadia Feliz* (“Happy Arcadia”) enlightened by a “Fraternum Foedus” or “Marianum Foedus”, something like “a mixture of business enterprise, savings bank and insurance company”, to quote M. Defourneaux<sup>17</sup>.

The climate of hostility among the colonials increased and was fuelled by the Capuchin friar and his brothers. The initial laughter of Olavide’s friends gradually turned to gestures of concern. Olavide, the accused, later wrote that initially “we had fun discovering his ignorance (that of Friar Romualdo) and the nonsense and absurd things that he said”<sup>18</sup>. But the friar did not laugh, he wrote.

The Swiss friar wrote pages and pages recounting details of Olavide’s daily life, scandalising and exaggerating his actions, and sent these documents far and wide; some were sent to the bishops of Jaén and Seville. Surprised that Olavide even had support among prelates, he aired his scathing comments in higher circles: in Madrid. After many

attempts, Friar Romualdo eventually got his way. Finally, in 1775, his complaints reached the court inquisitors and the dreaded Father Eleta. At such a politically turbulent moment, Carlos III's confessor had in his hands the perfect portrait of an unscrupulous, deistic, corrupt figure: the most detailed description of the *spirit* of a *freethinking* man who had nothing to fear from a God similar to himself, immensely good and understanding. In addition to this portrait, he also had rumours celebrating the end of the Inquisition, and which had spread all round Europe: "Aranda deserves the recognition of all Europe for cutting the claws and filing the teeth of the monster", wrote Federico to Voltaire. The sanctimonious king himself, obstinate and jealous of his rights, one of which was the control of the Inquisition, used Olavide to show that this was not true and that the Inquisition had not only not disappeared but was necessary. He was helped in his task by the Father Confessor Eleta and the devious "free-thinking" minister of *Gracia y Justicia* (Grace and Justice), Manuel de Roda<sup>19</sup>.

### *Olavide, the victim*

The plan must have been prepared when the king summoned Olavide to Madrid in November 1775 "to discuss matters of his Royal Service". Olavide realised how serious the matter was as soon as he read the king's summons; he must have also received some information from Grimaldi. He abandoned his beloved settlements in December 1775 and moved to Madrid, where he stayed at the house of his brother-in-law, Luis Urbina, and began to prepare his defence. Aware of the impending danger, he thought of all his options, even of *theatrical* solutions, to demonstrate his religious life, free of licences and diversions. He got rid of any prohibited books. He purchased prayer books and other books about saints. He never forgot to wear his rosary – he had been accused of ridiculing that devotion–, nor the scapular of the Virgen del Carmen, which he now never took off his chest. On the *political front*, Olavide hastened to offer his version of events to all his friends, but he discovered that he had been abandoned. Aranda remained silent; he had also fallen out with Grimaldi, blaming him for the disaster in Algiers. He had to approach the people in power at the time and rely on royal trust: the inquisitor Felipe Beltrán and the Minister of *Gracia y Justicia*, Manuel de Roda. However, he even had to protect himself at the highest

levels of power – as, for example, Campomanes had done-, since there were new foci of tension, and some affected the king directly: the defeat in Algiers had created discord among his ministers; the organisation of the morganatic marriage of Prince Luis, a scandalous affair that revealed the worst side of Carlos III's temper; the great Tanucci fell in Naples; and it was rumoured that the Inquisition was returning by virtue of its own powers<sup>20</sup>. The words of Pietro Giusti, a Venetian serving the Austrian embassy in Madrid, are therefore not surprising; he claimed that at around that time the enlightenment penetrated Spain “with greater difficulty and more slowly” and described the country as a “*produttrice d'ingegni profondi e naturalmente giusti, ma ritenuti nell'inazione non dall'influenza del clima, come si declama da alcuni e si copia dagli altri, ma dal dispotismo religioso e politico e dalla cattiva legislazione*”<sup>21</sup>.

Nobody was surprised at Olavide's awful situation. Nor was Olavide himself surprised. He took further precautions just in case: in a stroke of audacity he visited the inquisitor himself on February 12 and justified his conduct as a Catholic and repentant sinner. The move could not fail: Felipe Beltrán, who had achieved his position on the basis of a very good reputation as an *enlightened prelate*, had to understand him; in the same way as many bishops and priests understood him when he talked (seriously that is) about matters relating to religion and moral sense.

Olavide's visit confounded the Inquisitor, who told Roda on 14 February 1776: “I found myself in the most confusing of situations because (Olavide) came to see me the night before last and held me in conversation for two hours and I did not know how to answer him”. Beltrán noted that “he is very nervous and shows great remorse”, which prompted him to believe that “he is very afraid”. The bishop added, with suspicious certainty: “and with reason”. Beltrán told Roda that “I am afraid that the news I have of the accusation is as reliable as was supposed”; it was clear that he was not a father capable of forgiving; this must have been suspected by Olavide, who had already written directly to the minister one week earlier<sup>22</sup>.

Olavide confessed in writing to Roda, justifying his position as a true Catholic using weighty arguments. The beautiful letter that he wrote on February 7, a truly exacerbated declaration of Catholic faith, was not only directed to the “free-thinking” minister and *Arandist*; it is clear that

Olavide also wanted it to be read by Carlos III, the only person at that stage of events who could stop the machinery of the Inquisition. For this reason, Olavide, who knew that the king “listens to him (Roda) since for years he has entertained him every morning in familiar conversation”, ended up by begging to the minister: “Your Excellency must approach the one who seeks enlightenment”, in other words, the king. Olavide still had trusted in the enlightenment and the king!<sup>23</sup>

In the meantime, the Inquisition continued to compile declarations from witnesses (as many as 78), which it eventually used to reach its terrible decision on 14 September 1776: “this subject shall be imprisoned in the Inquisition’s secret prisons, and all his property, books and papers shall be seized and his case shall be carried through until the end”. The sentence was executed just two months later, on 14 November of that year, but not before inquisitor Beltrán had obtained approval from Carlos III, which he requested on 29 October<sup>24</sup>. Thus, with the king’s acquiescence Olavide entered the secret prison of Madrid on at six o’clock in the afternoon on 14 November 1776.

### *Olavide, an instrument*

Many historians have let themselves be deceived by Ferrer del Río, the nineteenth-century panegyrist of Carlos III who led Olavide directly to the “autillo” (form of public punishment used by the Inquisition) on 24 November 1776, saving him two years of terrible solitary confinement in prison<sup>25</sup>. Menéndez Pelayo himself, who unintentionally seconded his hated pro-Carlos III historiography, hiding the cruelty of the king, silenced the two years of Olavide’s “disappearance”, when his family did not even know if the prisoner was alive. The Catholic Don Marcelino was perfectly aware of this drama, as well as of the harsh conditions in which the “disappeared one” lived since a huge amount of documentation about those two terrible years has been preserved.

Olavide’s wife, Isabel, and his brother-in-law, Luis Urbina, wrote constantly to Carlos III during these two years, taking advantage of times of the year such as Christmas to try everything they could to all obtain the king’s piety: “Your Majesty’s heart is so pious, so sweet, so benign as accredited by your experience”, “the day will come when Your Majesty will pour your piety on him”, “Your Majesty has clemency for everything”, etc. Urbina’s letters are long, dramatic and



forthright, demanding that Roda consider the case once and for all and put an end to the irregular situation of this innocent individual. Eventually, his relatives understood the reasons for the royal silence, doubted the minister, which was too late by that time, and only requested for the case to be considered earlier in order for the innocent Olavide to be able to defend himself. In the meantime, the prisoner suffered the insufferable in the dark and cold dungeon in which he had been imprisoned, with no servant, his servant having been replaced by a spy, with no light or stove, which they took away for fear that he would start a fire. His legs swelled, he became exaggeratedly fat, and almost lost his mind. However, nobody moved a finger<sup>26</sup>.

The effect all around Europe was extraordinary: the Inquisition had once again vented its fury on a victim. But nobody said anything outside of enlightened circles. Aranda remained silent. The Aragonese, now an ambassador in Paris, bore no resemblance to the person who had in years past preached to the four winds that it was “in the interest of the clergy and friars to have a similar tribunal to intimidate laymen and prohibit anything that might open their eyes” or that “if the Inquisition does not have absolute power in Italy, not even Rome, as it does in Spain, why should it have absolute power here”. Everyone still remembered that he had branded all fellows of the Council of Castille as “pigheaded” individuals who “have always been destined to be inquisitors”<sup>27</sup>. He told his friend Roda that Azara shed “tears of blood” and suffered because these things still happened in Spain<sup>28</sup>. But everyone knew why they remained silent. Years later, some people who had spoken to the Count of Aranda in Paris claimed that he thought that the ambassador did not remain silent due to his fear of the Inquisition but because he was afraid of Carlos III, attributing the disgrace of his old friend to the king’s “stubbornness and bigotry”<sup>29</sup>. The count and those close to him knew that the sanctimonious king was capable of going much further. That is why they said nothing ...there should be just *one* victim<sup>30</sup>.

The king was not only informed of matters at all times but he actually directed the action and the actors. Proof of his *personal* interest is that when the Inquisition of Seville proceeded, in full light of day, “to seize all Don Pablo de Olavide’s property at his house in the royal fortress grounds”, the king refused to curb the public disturbances that were organised by those who celebrated the fall of the superintendent, who

was also the *Asistente* (Servant) of Seville. He actually did quite the opposite. We know this from a letter dated 5 December 1776 from Beltrán to the minister: “after informing Your Majesty,... it has been decided that not only shall the action that the Inquisition’s tribunal intends to take not be thwarted but that it shall be helped in its tasks”<sup>31</sup>.

The king’s attitude meant that the Olavide case continued to cause scandal and the Seville friars enthusiastically celebrated the fall of the man who they had always seen as the Devil in persona. As Bourgoing described, the friars “indulged in all heavenly excesses, venting their anger at the profane theatres that Olavide had tried to improve in this city. At the same time, the provincial inquisitors shared the triumph of this capital and pompously displayed their reborn strengths”<sup>32</sup>.

### ***Grief and disillusionment: Olavide, a Catholic***

After two years of silence a solution was eventually found for the “disappeared one”. This was not an easy task: if the offender was a *confirmed heretic* he should suffer the same fate as thousands of Spaniards who had lost their lives for the same reason; otherwise a formula would have to be found to justify no less than two years of imprisonment in the secret prison. Furthermore, everything had to be demonstrated in a public act, with the risk that the offender would be convincing and thus aggravate the scandal; everybody knew that he had friends in Europe. For all these reasons the decision was taken to use the *autillo*, a reserved public act in which the sentence would be read theatrically, all to the king’s taste.

The punishment took place on 24 November 1778, but the machinery had been greased earlier, even before 11 November, in fact thirteen days before the *autillo* when Beltrán, “pursuant Your Majesty’s decision and instructions in relation to this matter”, once again obediently and prudently notified the king who “dealt with this matter”, adding that in addition to “submitting the matter for the superior consideration of your Royal Person”, stated that he was going to “consult the resolution and sentence that had been agreed”. He could not have been more emphatic: the inquisitor subjected his will – and that of the tribunal- to the king, who was even set the date for the commencement of the “matter”<sup>33</sup>.

From the French ambassador we know that Beltrán visited the king three days before the *autillo* “in order to receive orders on the

individual”. Of course he was fully aware that “the decision on this matter has not been taken without first submitting it for examination by Your Majesty”<sup>34</sup>. The Inquisitor himself revealed new evidence of this when he wrote to Roda on 26 November, stating that the sentence of 24 November “is the one agreed with His Majesty and Your Excellence knows this”<sup>35</sup>. Then Beltrán apologised (for what reason?), offering the following justification: “this move troubled me because of the condition of my nature, it caused me to spend two nights during which I was almost unable to sleep and left me unable to think about anything”<sup>36</sup>.

It is strange: despite suffering the inquisitor was unable to pity the offender, writing: “he is not truly repentant”. Why did he suffer if he already knew what the result was going to be? Or did he have to do his utmost to prevent the “heretic and rotten individual” from being sentenced to death as ordered by the orthodox inquisition. Perhaps it was that conflict that “troubled” him. Despite everything, the kind-hearted (?) Beltrán was soon able to stop worrying: he knew that Olavide had been crying in the morning on the day after the *autillo* but that he “then dined well” at night. And he distorted the idea of the offender’s wife, who said that the only way out for her discredited husband was to leave Spain, by telling Roda: “I greatly fear that when free he will have to pass through foreign provinces, where individuals are allowed complete freedom to feel and assume religious matters and faith”<sup>37</sup>.

The public part of the Olavide’s sentence is fairly well known despite the fact that the original documentation describing this act does not remain. There are many accounts and an infinite number of descriptions of the punishment, which coincide on the important aspects, on the appearance of the “disappeared one” at eight o’clock on the morning of 24 November 1778, when an exhausting session began, and on the sequence of events.<sup>38</sup> As “public punishments are still being held in the Tribunal of the Inquisition with greater or less publicity, making the intended impression”, according to an account given to Coxe by a witness, the *autillo*, a closed-doors public punishment with “guests”, fulfilled the objective of setting an example since it was directed to “Olavide’s friends” present in the room; these included freethinkers, encyclopaedists, deists, etc., as well as those who might have been thinking about reforming the king’s mysteries.

In the midst of this enlightened concourse, Pablo de Olavide appeared, wearing a brown cloth garment without the insignia of the order of Santiago (he had already been discredited), and neither the *sambenito* (cloak worn by penitent convicts of the Inquisition) nor the Cross of St. Andrew, on the dispensation of Beltrán. However, he did hold the green candle of dishonour in his hand. Bourgoing said that the offender “allowed himself various untimely taunts”, but they must have informed him incorrectly since all the documents describing the hearing coincide in the terrible nature of this “spine-chilling event”. The secretary took several hours to read the compendium that contained more than 170 articles describing the case, as well as some evidence, including the famous letter of presentation by Voltaire “There goes Don Pablo de Olavide, a man who knows how to think”. The room echoed to the sound of the voice of an arrogant clergyman pronouncing solemn words describing the excesses, licentiousness, free opinions (expressed against the friars, marriage, the rosary), details extracted from declarations obtained from 78 witnesses, almost all reminiscent of the original declaration made by the dreaded Friar Romualdo, and which actually related to matters of custom and opinion and were lesser accusations against which Olavide was well prepared; although it was very pompous to accuse him of reading prohibited books or mocking the friars, he would not be condemned for this except to repair the damage done through prayer. It was sufficient to implore penitence to soften the sentence. Consequently, when the secretary began to read the conclusions and Olavide heard that he was officially being accused of “heresy”, he fell to the ground and almost fainted after saying “no, not that”. The offender was perfectly aware of what that declaration meant.

The Tribunal had celebrated its great victory even before reading out the sentence, the final demonstration of its usefulness, precisely what some had been doubting for a long time, since Don Pablo, after “reconciling with all formality envisaged in the sacred canons”, whipped on the back by four priests “during the Miserere”, “made the solemn declaration of his faith, bathed in tears, hence it was believed that this was a good demonstration of his repent”. The Holy Tribunal had managed to return another member to the Church, another individual who had lost his way; and for the greater glory of the *enlightened king*, it had taken place without the need for using the pyre or torture.

However, under no circumstances could the punishment inflicted on Olavide be considered to be lenient (as has been indicated repeatedly in the historiography)<sup>39</sup>. After having “disappeared” for two terrible years in the secret prisons, Olavide was deprived of all his honours and expelled forever from Madrid, Royal Sites, New Settlements and Lima, and forced to wear a “common robe”. Moreover, he was ordered to spend eight years in a convent under a director “who would teach and strengthened his Christian Doctrine”, pray to his rosary every day and read the *Guía de Pecadores* (“Sinners’ Guide”) by Friar Luis de Granada. Also, all his property was confiscated. It is strange that opinion has been so unanimous in considering a two-year sentence in the secret prison and eight years at a convent to be a “soft sentence”<sup>40</sup>.

Olavide’s first destination was the Benedictine convent of Sahagún in the cold province of León, where he spent the frozen winter. Then in June 1779 he was transferred to the convent of the Capuchin monks in Murcia, after passing through the thermal spa at Puertollano and staying briefly in Almagro. When he arrived in Murcia, the hardships were different: the offender’s room was suffocating, located on a second floor under the roof. On 29 August 1780, Olavide wrote to Beltrán: “I am dying, I cannot cure myself, I cannot cure myself here, the illnesses that I suffer are serious and diffuse”. The prisoner displayed symptoms of scurvy, his body had swollen once again and he had even lost his mind on several occasions. In the aforementioned letter, Olavide concluded: “The piety of the Inquisition has not sentenced me to death but to penitence and, Lord, it is little what I have done and what I do”<sup>41</sup>.

The doctors decided that he should once again try sulphurous waters and that the best place for him was Caldets (Caldas de Montbui) in Gerona, where Olavide was sent in October 1780 after receiving permission from the Inquisitor Beltrán. Olavide may have begun to think about fleeing at around that time. Although it has been claimed that this was facilitated *from above*, this is not true<sup>42</sup>. At most, the inquisitor may have displayed a certain degree of innocence by giving permission for the prisoner to be transferred to a place closer to the border, but there is no proof of connivance on the part of the governor, and even less on the part of Carlos III. Olavide was no longer a scandal but rather a penitent; he was not even under *civil jurisdiction*<sup>43</sup>.

Only when he crossed the border did he once again become the focus of attention of Carlos III's ministers, who responded accordingly as was their duty by asking France to extradite the fugitive. On the king's instructions, Floridablanca wrote to Aranda and the latter to Minister Vergennes, who diplomatically brushed the request aside saying that Olavide had not committed any crime in France. Aranda, who was still ambassador in Paris, had to notify Floridablanca that the French minister had informed him that if Olavide breached any French law then he would not hesitate to instruct the French judicial authorities to pursue him<sup>44</sup>. It seemed to be a joke: perhaps it was. But it was not a good idea to give publicity to the case and draw the attention of Enlightened Europe. Everybody knew that at that time the victim of the Inquisition, in reality a poor and ill 56-year-old man, and his eighty-year-old wife, had arrived in Paris after spending several weeks in Geneva and that the salons of the capital of the Seine would once again celebrate the fact that a Spanish victim had been freed from the Inquisitorial Hydra, which, in contrast to what was believed a few years previously, was not as inactive as it seemed.

Olavide spent seventeen years in France, under the name of Count of Pilos. Once again adversity showed him its cruellest face, since he was imprisoned by the revolutionaries and saved *in extremis* from the guillotine. In 1798 he prepared his return trip to Spain after playing his final card – what a genius! In 1797 he published *Evangelio en Triunfo* in Valencia, a voluminous work with an eloquent subtitle - “the disillusioned philosopher”, which received the best reviews from Catholic critics of the age: Olavide innocently recognised his mistake and returned to the bosom of the Holy Mother Church, a matter that is still the subject of great intrigue even today by the Spanish ecclesiastic hierarchy given the importance of this figure. Even Menéndez Pelayo, a rigorous man who described the work as “faultless, with not even remote signs of duality or hypocrisy”, was convinced by the sincere repent of a man who had suffered so much because of the Church.

However, the shrewd and prolific author from Santander was wrong. Gerard Dufour had shown that the *Evangelio en Triunfo* was “the most impersonal work that can be imagined”; all of it, with the exception of “the enlightened programme”, was a copy of perfectly-identifiable French texts; there was therefore nothing that indicated repent<sup>45</sup>. Old Pablo de Olavide had earned his peaceful repatriation with this leaden

work that returned him to the centre of Catholicism, from which he surely never consciously separated himself. However, by this time his only wish was to retire (although the work contains an interesting chapter in which Olavide once again reflects on an “enlightened programme of reforms”). He passed through Madrid where he rejected offers and died in Baeza on 25 February, two hundred years ago, “his body torn and his soul comforted” (Olaechea).

Neither the best Church judges nor the interpreters of divine intentions - and they do exist - will ever discover how repentant this “sheep” was. A man who, according to R. Olaechea, “could sometimes be rather scatterbrained, but never lost his way”<sup>46</sup>. However, more and more evidence appears everyday that reveals the conduct of a king as absolute as Carlos III.

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<sup>1</sup> See Ricardo Gómez-Rivero, *Ministerio de Justicia en España (1714-1812)* (Madrid: Centre for Political and Constitutional Studies, 1999), 673-674. Antonio Álvarez de Morales, *Inquisición o Ilustración(1700-1834)* (Madrid: Spanish University Foundation, 1982), 93-102.

<sup>2</sup> José F. Alcaráz Gómez, *Jesuitas y reformismo. El padre Francisco de Rávago (1747-1755)* (Valencia: San Vicente Ferrer Faculty of Theology, 1995), 75.

<sup>3</sup> Giacomo Casanova, *Memorias* (Madrid: Aguilar, 1982), vol. V, 162.

<sup>4</sup> As demonstrated by Rafael Olaechea, Aranda had “a theocratic concept of the monarchy”. In a letter to the future Carlos IV, Aranda even justifies the divine origin (which in Spain was generally considered to be eccentric): “Since His Royal Majesty exercises the vicarage of the world, which God almighty deposited on you, as a representative...”, Rafael Olaechea and J. I. Gómez Zorraquino, “The Aragonese party and enlightened policy in Spain”, *Los tiempos dorados, Estudios sobre Ramón Pignatelli y la Ilustración* (Zaragoza: Fernando El Católico Institute, 1996), 195.

<sup>5</sup> Together with Grimaldi, they formed the main group of reformists. This is described by Paolo Frisi in a document to Beccaria: “*gli sforzi di tre nuovi Bacchi, ovvero Orfei, i quali hanno cominciata the rivoluzione. Il marchese Grimaldi, coll’aperta protezione delle scienze e delle arti, il conte d’Aranda, col perfezionare the pubblica economia e polizia e il fiscale Campomanes col distruggere gli inveterati pregiudizi della giurisprudenza ecclesiastica*”. Frisi to Beccaria, 17 October 1775, Cesare Beccaria, *Dei delitti e delle pene* (Torino: Einaudi, 1965), 569.

<sup>6</sup> Teófanos Egido, *Los Borbones. Carlos IV* (Madrid: Arlanza, 2001), 41.

<sup>7</sup> According to Sarrailh, “after his marriage to the rich widow Isabel de los Ríos, his house had become a meeting place for anyone who followed fashion”; Jean Sarrailh, *España Ilustrada de la segunda mitad del s. XVIII* (Madrid: Economic Culture Fund, 1985) 620. Obligatory reading on Olavide: Marcelin Defourneaux,

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*Pablo de Olavide o el afrancesado* (Seville: Padilla Libros, 1990); and Luis Perdices Blas, *Pablo de Olavide (1725-1803), El Ilustrado*, (Madrid: Complutense, 1995).

<sup>8</sup> See Ernest Lluch, *Españas vencidas del siglo XVIII, Claroscuros de la Ilustración* (Barcelona: Crítica, 1999), 153.

<sup>9</sup> José Miguel Delgado Barrado, *José de Carvajal y Lancáster. Testamento político o idea de un gobierno católico (1745)* (Cordoba: University of Cordoba, 1999).

<sup>10</sup> Proposal of Mr. Bernardo Ward to establish farming and industrial colonies of Irish people in Spain. Ward to Ordeñana, London, 21 October 1753, in Antonio Rodríguez Villa, *Don Zenón de Somodevilla, marqués de la Ensenada. Ensayo biográfico* (Madrid: Librería de M. Murillo, 1878), 361.

<sup>11</sup> Which did not exist in the case of the “import” of English naval engineers by Jorge Juan under the auspices of the “great Jesuit” Ensenada. See José Luis Gómez Urdáñez, *Proyecto reformista de Ensenada* (Lleida: Milenio, 1996).

<sup>12</sup> See J. M. Sánchez Diana, “El despotismo ilustrado de Federico El Grande y su influencia en España”, *Arbor* XXVII, (1948): 100.

<sup>13</sup> Casanova, *Memorias*, vol. V, 163-164. On the economic situation, see Perdices Blas, *Pablo de Olavide*, 1995, and Manuel Capel Margarito, *Carolina, capital de las Nuevas Poblaciones* (Jaén: Institute of Jaen Studies, 1970).

<sup>14</sup> The original of *Cuadernos sobre gobierno y administración*, in the National Historical Archive (hereinafter referred to as the “AHN”), *Estado*, leg. 3211-2.

<sup>15</sup> See Janine Fayard and Rafael Olaechea, “Notas sobre el enfrentamiento entre Aranda y Campomanes”, *Pedralbes. Revista D’Historia Moderna* 3 (1983): 5-59.

<sup>16</sup> Marcelino Menéndez Pelayo, *Historia de los heterodoxos españoles* (Madrid: C.S.I.C., 1956). The erudite saw in him “true innocent and good faith”, which made him “sometimes friendly”.

<sup>17</sup> Defourneaux, *Pablo de Olavide*, 1990. According to a pamphlet “*consegnato al nunzio un anno prima che si decidesse la causa da un stretto parenti del detto Olavide*”, the friar’s intentions were completely different: “lose it to leave him in charge of the colony or at least be able to determine that the main fruits of the colony be transferred to Germany by making men come from there to settle and become wealthy with the production of the colony and then return to their land with everything that they have acquired (...). This was therefore proposed to the ambassador of that court, ensuring him that he had already taken steps to finish with Pablo de Olavide and that a representation that he had made to an upper class dignified person (whom he names) very close to His Majesty had been so successful that it had had an effect”, *Noticia del éxito de D. Pablo de Olavide*, Vatican Secret Archive (hereinafter referred to as the “VSA”), *Archivio Nunziatura Madrid*, 177.

<sup>18</sup> AHN, *Inquisición*, leg. 1866-2. Olavide to vicar Lanes, undated copy, but from 1776.

<sup>19</sup> The Marquis de la Corona said regarding the hypocrite Roda: “I remember having heard the Father Confessor (...) when there was much doubt that the Jesuits would be suppressed, and when there was even fear that they would return, say the following specific words: “this man is so good at hiding in what he has most part and even in what is eternally his work as he perceives even the remotest danger from afar, that if the question of the Jesuits was re-examined and those who had played a part in their expulsion, no evidence or even a scrap of his paper would be



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found. The Extraordinary Council, the confessor, certain subjects and prelates and the king himself would be the ones who would have to respond and he would remain highly protected and sheltered as if he had done nothing, having been the soul of everything that was done”. AHN, *Estado*, leg. 3211-2.

<sup>20</sup> See Rafael Olaechea, “Información y acción política: el conde de Aranda”, *Investigaciones históricas: época moderna y contemporánea* 7 (1987), 123-124.

<sup>21</sup> Pietro Giusti to Cesare Beccaria, 12 January 1775, Beccaria, *Dei delitti*, 567.

<sup>22</sup> AGS, *Gracia y Justicia*, leg. 628. Felipe Beltrán to Roda, 27 and 29 January, and 14 February 1776.

<sup>23</sup> AGS, *Gracia y Justicia*, leg. 628. Olavide to Roda, 7 February 1776. The letter reproduced in Antonio Ferrer del Río, *Historia del reinado de Carlos III* (Madrid: Department of Culture of the Autonomous Community of Madrid, 1988), vol. III, 47, which states that it is “impossible to read without at the same time becoming overwhelmed by the feeling of compassion and anguish”, such was the pathos with which Olavide wrote to him.

<sup>24</sup> The details on the charges, witnesses, pressures, etc., masterfully described by Defourneaux in *Pablo de Olavide*, chapters IX and X. As regards Beltrán’s performance, particularly his request to the king to approve the secret prison, AGS, *Gracia y Justicia*, leg. 628, Felipe Beltrán to the king, 29 October 1776.

<sup>25</sup> Ferrer del Río, *Historia del reinado*, vol. III, 53. The same cannot be said of Coxe, who describes the prison: “After two years of confinement in a dark dungeon the case finally came to an end and the sentence was publicly announced”, William Coxe, *España bajo el reinado de la casa de Borbón*, (Madrid: Salas y Quiroga, 1846), vol. VI, 245. However, the error was tenacious: also see the excellent publication *Carlos III y su época* (Barcelona: Carroggio, 2003). This voluminous book describes how Olavide was a prisoner for eight years in La Mancha, and how “he was condemned in 1776 and his property confiscated...”, or how “he fled without too much difficulty”.

<sup>26</sup> The letters, in AGS, *Gracia y Justicia*, leg. 628. Roda’s responses are also evasive. One example is as follows: “And having informed the king of this request, His Majesty instructed me to pass to Your Excellency pursuant to his royal order in order to do with him what you deem appropriate”. This was met with silence on the part of Beltrán.

<sup>27</sup> Aranda to Wall, Warsaw, 28 November 1761, AGS, *Estado*, Book 154.

<sup>28</sup> “Is it possible for things like what has just happened to Olavide to happen? I am not his friend but humanity makes me shed tears of blood”, J. Nicolás de AZARA, *El Espíritu de Azara descubierto en su correspondencia epistolar con D. Manuel de Roda* (Madrid: Imprenta de J. Martín Alegría, 1846), vol. III, 57-58.

<sup>29</sup> Lautico García, *Francisco de Miranda y el Antiguo Régimen español* (Caracas: Gregorian Pontifical University, 1961), 362.

<sup>30</sup> Olaechea, “Información y acción política”, 81-130; also see his delightful short work *Viajeros españoles del XVIII en los balnearios del Alto Pirineo francés* (Logroño: University College of La Rioja, 1985).

<sup>31</sup> AGS, *Gracia y Justicia*, leg. 268. Bruna to Grimaldi, 20 November 1776, describing the “scandal”, and Beltrán to Roda, 5 December 1776. Defourneaux, who tried to avoid the responsibility of Carlos III, does not want to accept that the letter clearly states as follows: His Majesty “the decision has been taken...”.

<sup>32</sup> Cited in Defourneaux, *Pablo de Olavide*, 502.

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<sup>33</sup> AGS, *Gracia y Justicia*, leg. 628. Nor does Defourneaux mention these declarations by the inquisitor.

<sup>34</sup> Defourneaux, *Pablo de Olavide*, 506. Today it is difficult to understand why, given so much evidence, the famous French historian did not blame the king. Nor did R. Olaechea blame the king entirely, despite his suspicions.

<sup>35</sup> Defourneaux copies part of the text but eliminates this phrase. Defourneaux, *Pablo de Olavide*, 506, 52.

<sup>36</sup> The interesting complete wording of the letter in AGS, *Gracia y Justicia*, leg. 628.

<sup>37</sup> AGS, *Gracia y Justicia*, leg. 628.

<sup>38</sup> One of the least known descriptions, Olaechea, *Viajeros*, 1995. The classics, for example, *Breve y compendiosa noticia...*, National Library (hereinafter referred to as the "BN"), *Manuscritos*, 11.089.; V. Castañeda, "Relación del auto de fe en el que se condenó a D. Pablo de Olavide", *Revista de Archivos, Bibliotecas y Museos* XX (1916).

<sup>39</sup> As regards the severity of the punishment, Coxe shared the opinions of many at the time: "regardless of how severe the punishment may seem, it is still too lenient compared with the harshness of the punishment imposed in other times by the Inquisition to punish these types of offences". Coxe, *España bajo*, vol. IV, 247.

<sup>40</sup> One example: our dear master, who recently passed away, Antonio Domínguez Ortiz, *Sociedad y Estado en el siglo XVIII español* (Barcelona: Ariel, 1976), 366. Perhaps he also coincided with the views that had already been expressed by Coxe (previous foot note). Many have given opinions on Olavide. See Juan Antonio Llorente, *Historia crítica de la Inquisición en España* (Madrid: Hiperion, 1980), vol. V, 310; Manuel de Godoy, *Memorias*, (Madrid: Library of Spanish Authors, 1965), vol. I, 191.

<sup>41</sup> AHN, *Inquisición*, leg. 1866-4, various letters exchanged between Olavide and Beltrán. This one is dated 29 August 1780.

<sup>42</sup> The idea, put forward by Defourneaux, has been questioned by A. Cascales, "Pablo de Olavide's escape to France. Variations on the hypothesis of programmed negligence", *Archivo Hispalense* 71 (1988), 61-69. A review of the documentation suggests that in fact nobody helped the condemned man. Not even Olavide, who was sick, nor his wife, in her eighties, seemed capable of fleeing. Hence supervision simply waned naturally.

<sup>43</sup> Olavide's letters to Beltrán, in AHN, *Inquisición*, leg. 1866-4, reveal the resilience of the condemned man in managing to leave Murcia, but such is the tone of the letter that it is not likely that Beltrán would have thought that Olavide would use his permission to facilitate his escape.

<sup>44</sup> Correspondence between the ministers, in AHN, *Inquisición*, leg. 1866-3.

<sup>45</sup> Gerard Dufour, *Cartas de Mariano a Antonio. El programa ilustrado de 'El Evangelio en Triunfo'* (Aix-en-Provence: University of Aix-en-Provence, 1997). For Sarrailh "it was no more than an escape plan to enable him to return to his beloved Spain and receive help and favours from the monarch", Sarrailh, *España Ilustrada*, 621.

<sup>46</sup> Olaechea, *Viajeros...*, 1995.