In compliance with the 1767 decree of Charles III that ordered the expulsion of the members of the Society of Jesus from Spain and its domains, on the night of 2 July of that year the governor of Buenos Aires, Francisco de Paula Bucareli (also spelled Bucarelli, 1708–1775), sent two companies of grenadiers to storm into the two Jesuit Colleges of the city (Colegio Grande and Belén). He had the royal decree read before each of the religious communities and imprisoned the 44 Jesuits that lived in a house next to the College of Belén.1 In no time, the governor issued an order prohibiting anybody in the city to talk to the prisoners. Similar episodes took place in the cities of Córdoba and Santa Fe. In April of the following year, Bucareli himself led an army strong of 1500 men to the Guaraní mission towns, seized the reductions which were handed down quietly by the missionaries, and by September he had dispatched the priests and lay brothers down the Paraná and Uruguay rivers toward Buenos Aires.2

Thus began the story of the eviction of the Society of Jesus from Paraguay and Río de la Plata, a process that took little less than a year and a half to complete. In all, 456 Jesuits were expelled from the gobernaciones of Buenos Aires, Tucumán, and Paraguay. Of these, 85 had been born in the country, 293 were Spanish, and 47 were from European countries other than Spain (most of these from Italy, Germany, and other lands of the Habsburg Empire). The totality of the 31 lay brothers were also foreigner.3 The first contingent, constituted mainly by Jesuits from the colleges, was embarked in five ships on 29 September 1767. The second group, less numerous and formed by priests from the Guaraní reductions, was put aboard one ship on 6 May of the next year. The Jesuits from the Chaco missions, such as Dobrizhoffer, Paucke, or Sánchez Labrador, were the last to leave, on 24 May 1768.4 All the Jesuits banished from Spanish America (around 2200) arrived in the Spanish port of Santa María and were eventually deported to the Pontifical States. Spanish and Creoles from Paraquaria ended up in Faenza; the “foreigners” were sent to their home

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1 Hernández, El extrañamiento de los jesuitas, 58–61.
2 Caraman, The Lost Paradise, 276–281.
4 Caraman, The Lost Paradise, 281.
countries. Few years after these events, in 1773, the Society of Jesus was suppressed by Pope Clement XIV.

The expulsion of the Jesuits from Spain and its territories, engineered by the ministers of Charles III Manuel de Roda (1708–1782) and Pedro Rodríguez Campomanes (1723–1802), followed their expulsion from Portugal (1759) and from France (1764). This momentous event in the history of Iberian America has been subjected to many and conflicting historical interpretations, for its causes were anything but simple.5 The Jesuits from Spanish America, Creoles as well as Spanish, went on as they could, living on the modest pension assigned to them by the crown, which was very irregularly paid.6 Many of them, dispersed in the cities of northern Italy, eventually took to scholarly pursuits. A rich and multifarious cultural production came out of those expatriates.7 We have mentioned in our first chapter the works of Spanish American Jesuits who wrote in defense of their lost homelands against those authors who argued for the inferiority of the New World, such as Buffon, the Dutch philosopher and diplomat de Pauw, the French former Jesuit Guillaume Raynal (1713–1796),

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5 Magnus Mörner underscores as the main cause the policy of “regalism”—the assertion of royal rights in ecclesiastical affairs at the expense of the Pope—. See idem, “The Expulsion of the Jesuits from Spain and Spanish America.” But the climate of opinion fostered in the European courts by those aligned with the Enlightenment and other anti-Jesuitical parties also played a critical role in the expulsion. See Jeffrey Klaiber, Los jesuitas en América Latina, 1549–2000 (Lima: Universidad Antonio Ruiz de Montoya, 2007), 156–159.

6 The money came from the produce of the confiscated possessions of the Jesuits. A royal decree of 12 December 1786 established the amount of 550 reales de vellón (two gold doubloons) as an annual maximum. Between that year and 1790, the number of Jesuits who received additional extraordinary support was 2240. See Niccolò Guasti, L’esilio italiano dei gesuiti spagnoli. Identità, controllo sociale e pratiche culturali (1767–1798) (Roma: Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 2006), 13–26.