CHAPTER 10

The Exiled Spanish Jesuits and the Restoration of the Society of Jesus

Inmaculada Fernández Arrillaga and Niccolò Guasti

The Exile of the Spanish Jesuits

This essay offers an analysis of the role played by the exiled Spanish Jesuits in the process which led to the restoration of the Society of Jesus in 1814. The long Italian exile imposed on the Spanish Jesuits can be divided into three phases. The first began with the expulsion, ordered by Charles III (1716–1788) in April 1767, and the subsequent arrival of Jesuit contingents in the Papal States, and ended in the summer of 1773 with the promulgation of the papal brief *Dominus ac Redemptor*. The second phase lasted for twenty years (1773–1793). The third and final period began with the re-founding of the Jesuit residences in the duchy of Parma (1793) and ended with the worldwide restoration of the order in 1814 and the return of the few still-living Spanish Jesuits to the Iberian peninsula and Spanish overseas territories during the following years. This essay focuses primarily on the latter period, though references to the two earlier stages are necessary to better understand the role of the Iberian and South American Jesuits who took an active part in the process of reconstituting the order.

During the first phase of the exile (April 1767–August 1773), the superiors of the eleven provinces of the Spanish assistancy in exile—four of which were Iberian (Andalusia, Aragon, Castile, and Toledo) and seven of which were located overseas (Chile, New Spain, Paraguay, Peru, Quito, Santa Fe, and the Philippines)—tried to develop a “survival strategy”. While on Corsica (between the summer of 1767 and the autumn of 1768), the provincials had committed themselves to reconstituting the administrative structure of their communities by trying to re-found each province’s headquarters. Not infrequently, members of different colleges and houses had to associate together. This was due to the growing number of secularizations (incentivized by monetary rewards from Madrid’s government), the small number of novices, and the deaths of...
many of the eldest or weakest members during the deportation. There were many vacancies on the staffs of each community so it had become impossible to replicate pre-expulsion organizational structures. The main instrument which allowed the Iberian community to carry out its plans for reconstitution was financial: the superiors skillfully resisted the repeated attempts of both the Consejo Extraordinario (the commission of the Castile council in charge of Jesuit affairs) and of Bourbon officers (who were in charge of controlling the exiles, first in Corsica and later in Emilia-Romagna) to impose the individual drawing of annuities. Instead, the superiors pursued the common management of lifelong pensions for all Jesuits.2

The Spanish Jesuits deployed other strategies, of an ideological and cultural nature, to preserve the original identity of their community. These included adherence to cults and devotional practices that were typical of the Society, the diffusion of prophecies predicting an immediate return to Spain,3 the circulation of edifying letters that memorialized deceased Jesuits, and the writing of diaries, memories and stories—both personal and collective—concerning the exile.4 There was also an attempt to maintain secret epistolary contacts with relatives (initially prohibited by the Pragmatic Sanction that decreed the expulsion) and to ordain members of the next generation and of the few novices who had secretly accompanied their masters to Italy or had joined them later. It is worth noting that, in this period, the contribution of the secretariat of state of the Holy See and the general curia of the order (including Superior General Lorenzo Ricci) was minimal. In fact, after endorsing the decision of Clement XIII to deny the Spanish fathers hospitality in the Papal States (May 1767), Ricci and the Italian Jesuits limited their help to logistic matters, such as the negotiations to rent—at exorbitant rates—the buildings that should have

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