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## Library of a Revolutionary Leader, Antonio Narino, Precursor of Colombian Independence

Thomas Blossom

*Southern Arkansas University*

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THE LIBRARY OF A REVOLUTIONARY LEADER,  
ANTONIO NARIÑO, PRECURSOR OF  
COLOMBIAN INDEPENDENCE

Thomas Blossom  
Southern State College

Antonio Nariño, Precursor of Colombian Independence, 1760-1823, printer of The Rights of Man in Bogota' (1794), is an important transitional figure. Nearly seventeen years he spent in jails. Again and again he managed to escape to continue the fight for his supreme dream: a free, independent Republic of Colombia.

His victories (1812-1813), were tempered with defeat (Pasto, 11 May, 1814), his place in high offices alternated with long years in nine or more jails. His years of acclamation were followed by years of oblivion. His moments of happiness were sharpened by misfortune. Petty enemies dogged his footsteps to the bitter end. When he died in 1823, a few months after a famous speech on the Senate floor, he was still trying to guide the Republic of Colombia toward wisdom.

In some ways Nariño was typical of the group of wealthy, educated creole leaders who rose nearly to the top under Spain and became the top during the Revolution and the early days of independence.

Under Spain, he rose to the lucrative, honored posts of Royal Treasurer of Tithes and Royal Monopolizer of the Quinine Export of New Granada, owner of the official press and close friend of the Viceroy Ezpeleta. Under Colombia, Narino became President (1811), dictator, and General of Colombia (1813), and was briefly presiding Vice-President appointed by Bolivar in charge of the Congress of Cúcuta, (1821). Like most Colombian Presidents since then, he was owner and editor of a newspaper, (La Bagatela, July 14, 1811 -- April 12, 1812), through which he vaulted into the presidency. He was also the owner of a very large library which played a significant part in his early life in converting the wealthy creole from a royal official into a revolutionary republican leader. .

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Through his library<sup>1</sup> Nariño acquired much of the learning of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment, a very critical attitude toward the Spanish empire, a burning desire to speed up the process of reform already under way in Spain's dominions, and an unbounded admiration for the United States and republican France. The vast number of Nariño's books on lists condemned by both the Roman Index and the Spanish Indice add further proof to a growing mass of evidence of two important facts: (1) Spanish censorship in 1794 was extremely weak; and (2) the books and ideas easily available to the wealthy creole and future revolutionary republican, Nariño, were extremely modern in every field of learning, including, among many others, such a wide variety as Montesquieu, Voltaire, Diderot, Mably, Raynal, Destutt de Tracy, the Koran, the Bible, Milton, Franklin, Linnaeus, and Buffon.

This library was truly "catholic" in that it was universal, heterodox, heretical, and hence "damnable" in the very literal sense as applied by the Inquisition. It is worthy of consideration for three reasons. First, the ideas contained in his library led Nariño into revolutionary thought and action, culminating in his printing the Rights of Man in 1793. Second, when no copies of the translation of the Rights of Man could be found, the discovery by the Inquisition of the physical existence of his library was used to prove his guilt. Third, the ideas contained in his books provided the source for his brilliant defense of himself which became so exasperating to his prosecutors that they not only condemned printed copies of it, but ordered them burned by the public hangman along with the book from which he had copied the Rights of Man.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Posada and Ibánñez, El Precursor, pp. 164 - 190. Documents listing properties and books of Nariño confiscated by court action between August 29, 1794, and September 3, 1794.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 621. Document contained in the November 25, 1799, report to Don Mariano Luis de Urquijo and the Council of the Indies by the Audiencia of Santa Fé relative to the case of Don Antonio Nariño and Don José Antonio Ricaurte.

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When Nariño discovered that his printing of the Rights of Man would get him into trouble, he proceeded as soon as possible to hide all traces of his boldness. He was completely successful in destroying copies of the Rights of Man,<sup>3</sup> but in destroying his immense and valuable library of forbidden books, he was less thorough. His first step was to separate those works most likely to indicate the subversive nature of his republican and revolutionary sympathies. These books he placed in trunks and shipped out to his brother's place, "La Serrezuela."<sup>4</sup> In the middle of the night, his brother became frightened and, with the aid of a friendly priest named Gijon, transferred the books to an empty cell in the Capuchin monastery. There the spies of the Inquisition<sup>5</sup> located the books -- still damp from having been immersed in water somewhere -- and proceeded to identify the real owner, Antonio Nariño.<sup>6</sup>

In spite of missing title pages, the examiners began to identify some of the books, and to trace their provenance. Among the books in French were titles by such condemned authors as Jacques Necker, Montesquieu, William Robertson, Louis de Montalte, Voltaire, Diderot, d'Alembert, Raynal, Jean Berru-

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 95.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp. 152-154. The servant, Ildefonso Rico, on being questioned about the trunks he had helped to move, told his questioners that he had been informed that the trunks were heavy because they contained "unos quesos" -- some cheeses.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., pp. 62, 146. See also José Toribio Medina, Historia del Tribunal del Santo Oficio de Cartagena de las Indias (Santiago, Chile, 1899), p. 387. (Hereinafter Medina, Historia del Tribunal.)

<sup>6</sup>Posada and Ibáñez, El Precursor, pp. 143-150. Document containing the report of Oidor Mosquera on hearings held September 13 and 14, 1794, in the Convent of the Capuchins, Santa Fé de Bogotá, and on September 20, 1794, in the courtroom of the audiencia and royal chancellery, Santa Fé de Bogotá.

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yer,<sup>7</sup> Destutt de Tracy,<sup>8</sup> and Mably.<sup>9</sup> Rousseau was significantly missing, probably destroyed, for Nariño in his defense showed great familiarity with Rousseau and could quote passages verbatim from Foranda's version of the Social Contract.<sup>10</sup>

After the government investigators and the Inquisition<sup>11</sup> had listed seventy-eight<sup>12</sup> volumes of Nariño's choice collection of condemned books, they confiscated all of his properties and proceeded to draw up a list of books found in his home. This tremendous compilation of nearly two thousand volumes<sup>13</sup> included many anonymous and unknown au-

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<sup>7</sup>Indice último de los libros prohibidos y mandados expurgar (Madrid, 1790), p. 291. (Hereinafter Indice ultimo.) Not all books in the Spanish Indice of 1790 are condemned in the Roman Index of 1786. Conversely, not all books in the Roman Index are condemned in the Spanish Indice. It should also be noted that while some authors, Voltaire for instance, were to be condemned for everything they wrote, others were placed on the list for only particular volumes. Many books were condemned "donec corrigatur" and new editions of the expurgated works could be approved. (Index Librorum Prohibitorum (Rome, 1786), pp. 185, 233, 219, 279, 88, 133, 134.)

<sup>8</sup>Indice ultimo, suplemento de 1805, p. 291.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

<sup>10</sup>J. R. Spell, Rousseau in the Spanish World before 1833 (Austin, Texas, 1938), p. 226.

<sup>11</sup>An Inquisitorial document from the Inquisition of Cartagena de las Indias, dated November 20, 1794, includes a receipt given to Luis de Mendoza, president of the royal audiencia in Santa Fé, for information on "the prohibited books belonging to Dan Antonio Nariño." Cf. Posada and Ibanez, El Precursor, pp. 157-158.

<sup>12</sup>Seventy-eight was the total named by the Inquisitors, but an actual count of their list indicates a total of eighty-five. (Ibid., 144, 147-150.)

<sup>13</sup>The Inquisition listed volumes found, the author (when known), and, in some cases a few descrip-

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thors not specifically named either in the Spanish Indice<sup>14</sup> of 1790 or in the Roman Index of 1786.<sup>15</sup> Many of these, however, because of their anonymity or their heterodox character, were of such a nature as to be automatically suspect by reason of title or similarity to some of the most violently condemned works of the Enlightenment.<sup>16</sup>

Sermons in English by English "padres,"<sup>17</sup> dictionaries of "heresies,"<sup>18</sup> and titles concerning suspect or damnable words and phrases such as "Reason,"<sup>19</sup> "Nature,"<sup>20</sup> "Natural Law,"<sup>21</sup> and "essential

tive phrases. (Ibid., pp. 164, 190.) Roland D. Hussey, "Traces of French Enlightenment in Colonial Hispanio America," in A. P. Whitaker, ed., Latin America and the Enlightenment (New York, 1942), p. 42.

E. Taylor Parks and Roberto Liévano claim Nariño had six thousand volumes in his library, but since they give no clues as to their method of obtaining this figure, it seems that the actual list of two thousand is more nearly accurate. (E. Taylor Parks, Colombia and the United States, 1765-1935 (Durham, N. C., 1935), p. 27. Roberto Liévano, Viejas estampas (Bogotá, 1948), p. 8.)

<sup>14</sup>Indice ultimo.

<sup>15</sup>Index Librorum Prohibitorum.

<sup>16</sup>Anonymous books, called Class III, had been forbidden ever since the edict of 1559 of Paul IV and the Tridentine Index of 1564. (Indice ultimo, introduction, p. xii.)

<sup>17</sup>Many titles not included in the Madrid Indice of 1790 were nevertheless condemned in the New World by local edict, including English "sermons" as Dr. Dorothy Schons indicates in her Book Censorship in New Spain (Austin, Texas, 1950), p. lx, in which she disagrees with J. T. Medina.

<sup>18</sup>Posada and Ibanez, El Precursor, p. 167. Liguori was the author.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 172. French title, "Lève de la Raison."

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., pp. 186-187. Boyle's Introduction to Natural History and Almeida's Contemplation of Nature.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 176. Natural Law and Politica Natural.

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order of Nature,"<sup>22</sup> apologies for Spain,<sup>23</sup> paraphrastic manuals, customs of the Israelites, Arabs and Turks,<sup>24</sup> to say nothing of the heretical English -- all these were found, in addition to better known condemned works of Mably, Milton, and Voltaire.<sup>25</sup> They were not of a type which would help Nariño get out of jail.

The case of Nariño's fight for Colombian liberty and the rights of man against Spanish monarchy, despotism, and intolerance (shown both in what he said<sup>26</sup> and in what his enemies said against him)<sup>27</sup> indicates that a last desperate effort was being made after 1789 to use the Inquisition and the Index to stem the tide of revolution set in motion by the Enlightenment. The Indice of 1790 made a hasty gesture to include in its appendices some of the more prominent works assumed to have been instrumental in stirring up revolution in France. In a similar fashion they might stir up revolution in Spanish America.<sup>28</sup>

There was also a considerable effort made to prevent printed copies of Nariño's defense from being distributed to restless, inflammable Latin Americans, because it was so thoroughly saturated with quotations from J. Carli,<sup>29</sup> Antonio Capmany,<sup>30</sup>

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 173. By Antonio Pérez y López.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 176. By Juan Pablo Fernet.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., pp. 169, 174. By Padre Ricardo Balsolobre and Felipe de Serf. One of these, Balsolobre's, was a manual of service for the dead, for those who do not believe in the doctrine of Original Sin.

<sup>25</sup>In the 1790 Indice, Milton is classed "I" (very damnable). See p. 182. All of Voltaire was condemned (p. 279) and even forbidden to Catholic scholars granted dispensation in order to refute heresy.

<sup>26</sup>Pérez Sarmiento, Proceso de Nariño, pp. 89-145.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., pp. 33, 153.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., p. 77. Nariño quotes Cayetano Filangieri, Ciencia de legislación, which was condemned in the Indice último, p. 295.

<sup>29</sup>Pérez Sarmiento, Proceso de Nariño, p. 113.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., pp. 104, 117. Periodicals quoted by Nariño, pp. 100, 101, 113.



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and many enlightened Madrid, Bogotá, and Lima periodicals. In fact, Nariño's judges in special secret session of the audiencia urged the home government to be on the lookout for printed copies of the defense, which they considered far more perniciously subversive of the empire than the works included in the appendices of the Indice, for the Precursor shrewdly quoted non-condemned books to support revolutionary ideas of the rights of man.<sup>31</sup> It was therefore necessary not only to shut up Nariño and his ideas in jail, along with his defense lawyer, Dr. José Ricaurte, but it was also vitally important to get the Inquisition and the Index to add their support to the collapsing Spanish empire as quickly as possible. This was accomplished.

In May of 1795, fifteen months after Nariño had burned the last copy of the Rights of Man, the Inquisition in Cartagena put his translation under ban by special edict.<sup>32</sup> The Cartagena Inquisition had already damned the original declaration in the year of its issue, 1789.<sup>33</sup> In order to plug other gaps uncovered by the defense, Nariño's prosecutors issued a special plea to condemn specifically, and in toto, two books which Nariño had often quoted in his defense: Capmany's Philosophy of Eloquence and Carli's American Letters. At the time the library had been confiscated, these books had been previously listed without comment.<sup>34</sup> Needless

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., pp. 80, 81-89.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., pp. 39, 66.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., pp. 33, 153. Cf. Medina Historia del Tribunal, p. 387. "Since the first ban of 1789 had no effect, Viceroy Ezpeleta sent out on September 5, 1794, a secret Oficio to the Cartagena Tribunal stating that the object of this printed work was to seduce simple and incautious persons with pretenses of favoring liberty of religion, and disturbing the good order and government established in the dominion of your majesty ... to which the Inquisitor, Marianna y Zafrilla, heartily agreed in a letter of September 22, 1794, and said he would do all in his power to find and destroy the damned, pernicious book."

<sup>34</sup> Perez Sarmiento, Proceso de Nariño, p. 28.



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to say, Nariño's additional references to such commonly known condemned works as the Encyclopedia<sup>35</sup> tended to confirm the prosecutors in their belief that his quoting undamned books merely proved the old saying that the Devil himself could quote Scripture. Nariño they considered a devil and very "poisonous."<sup>36</sup>

An analysis of Nariño's shrewd defense makes it clear why his prosecutors considered it a more dangerous doctrine than the Rights of Man<sup>37</sup> and why it was to cost his lawyer, Ricaurte, a slow death by ten years of incarceration.<sup>38</sup> The principal argument throughout was that the ideas contained in the Rights of Man could be found in all sorts of

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 77.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., p. 81.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., pp. 85-89. "La censura que merece esta detestable obra se presenta visible en su lectura." The four judges sitting in session on September 19, 1795, indicated their further annoyance with the accused Nariño by stating that he had the temerity to "condemn the cruelty of the conquistadores, calling them assassins. He said they enslaved the natives, oppressed them, tyrannized them, bled them with horrible taxes like the alcabala . . . whereas it is well known that the proper attitude of loyal subjects is blind obedience to our superiors, the only fitting attitude for your majesty's subjects."

<sup>38</sup>Gonzalo Bulnes, Nacimiento de las repúblicas americanas (2 vols., Buenos Aires, 1927), I, 13, misleads the reader by stating that Ricaurte was freed by royal clemency in 1804 after having been jailed at the time of Nariño's return in April, 1797. Technically, this statement is true. However, it is misleading inasmuch as the prisoner died before the order to release him arrived in Cartagena. Ricaurte was not jailed originally because of any crime for which he had been tried and sentenced, but because of the "general principle" that his ideas were subversive. (Pérez Sarmiento, Proceso de Nariño, pp. 66-73.)

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acceptable books and magazines circulating both in Spain and in the colonies.<sup>39</sup> His brief is so shrewdly planned and so clearly indicative of an amazing mastery of the main ideas of the Enlightenment gleaned from his vast library, that it is worthwhile to follow Nariño and the thread of his argument in some detail. If proof were needed that the same Enlightenment which bred "Philosopher Princes" also bred "Revolutionary Republicans," we would scarcely find better evidence than in Nariño's defense. For example:

. . . in El Periódico de Santa Fé, which circulated widely in the hands of the people, one can read horrible sketches concerning the present French Revolution, and, reasoning as my accusers do . . . one could thus become an enthusiastic libertine . . . . Or take the GAZETAS of Spain and do the same . . . . If one can be so easily corrupted by reading about the actions of the National Assembly of France, it would be like saying one could be seduced from the truths of our HOLY RELIGION by the stupid expressions in the Koran . . . . or take EL ESPIRITU DE LOS MEJORES DIARIOS<sup>40</sup> published in Madrid, found here everywhere in the hands of children and women . . . approved by our monarchs who were initial subscribers to it as were also the Chief Ministers of the nation, and in Diary Number 156, Page 615, we find "MAN IS BORN FREE . . . . as soon as he reaches maturity and reason, he is entitled to choose his country, and entitled to choose the govern-

<sup>39</sup> Pérez Sarmiento, Proceso de Nariño, p. 99.

<sup>40</sup> Spell, op. cit., pp. 115, 144, indicates that Floridablanca, a frightened liberal in 1792, had already reversed himself and quickly suppressed the Espiritú, which he had originally so eagerly sponsored a scant three years previously. Nariño was therefore treading on very sore toes.

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ment which best suits him and his ideas.... If he has sacrificed a part of his liberty to government, it is to better his lot, and the most important truth to remember is that the rights of property, liberty, and security are the strongest supports of the well-being of all states . . . . The monarch has no right to disregard the laws in a fit of anger, superstition or tyranny.<sup>41</sup>

Words like those just quoted must have exasperated the viceroy and Nariño's accusers, for they all had been educated in the intellectual climate of the Enlightenment and had subscribed with enthusiasm to its revolutionary ideas only a few years or months before Nariño's arrest. To prove this true, and that some of them had committed their ideas to print, Nariño quoted from the 1785 doctoral dissertation of one of his prosecutors, Fiscal Manuel Blaya.<sup>42</sup> This dissertation, entitled "Means of Promoting More Marriages and of Increasing the Population of Europe," had as its main thesis that men would not willingly marry and beget children when they knew their children would inherit a miserable life of slavery in the unreformed, tyrannical, despotic, and irrational monarchies of that day (1785). Such shrewd proof that his enemies had earlier subscribed to the then praiseworthy liberal, but now subversive doctrines of the Enlightenment, was hardly calculated to win friends for Nariño, but does not seem to have deterred him from his daring, though, foolhardy, course.

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<sup>41</sup>Perez Sarmiento, *Proceso de Nariño*; pp. 100, 101.

<sup>42</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 76-80. Documento Number 26 in the Proceso seems to have called forth an explanation from Blaya who plaintively hastened to justify his dissertation as the "indiscretions of a young law student at the Academy of Saint Barbara." (p. 76.) He seems to have been alternately angered, annoyed, and worried at his youthful peccadillo, and stated that he thought allowance should be made for the dissertation as the work of a "muchacho que estava entonces aprendiendo." (p. 77.)

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He went right on embarrassing the erstwhile liberals. Quoting from number 155 of the *Espíritu de los mejores diarios*, he says:

The Creator of the world, having made all men equal, it is to their own interests to consult and realize their mutual happiness as individuals of one family, however much they may differ in color and in other things of little import, not essential and founded on whims of chance. Persons who profess to maintain for their own good the Rights of Mankind and of all living persons subject to the obligations of Christianity, must neglect nothing to help all to enjoy the delights of liberty and in particular to aid our fellow beings who have a right to them by the laws and Constitution of the United States, and who now chafe in irons of the most severe slavery. . . . Firmly convinced of the truth of these principles, animated with the desire to spread them to all parts of the world wherever the calamities of oppression reign, and filled with the greatest confidence in the favor and protection of the Universal Father, the subscribers of this society have joined together in Philadelphia to promote the abolition of slavery.<sup>43</sup>

Even when found imbedded in accepted Spanish periodicals, sponsored by the king himself, such subversive ideas as Nariño quoted were scarcely apt to be palatable to a harassed Spanish viceroy, even one reputedly liberal, like Ezpeleta. No more acceptable were similar ideas from the expurgated edition of the international legist Heineccius<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup>Ibid., pp. 102-103.

<sup>44</sup>Indice ultimo, p. 120. Hugo Grotius, the "Father of International Law," was condemned by name and all his works were condemned specifically by title. It is therefore not surprising to find that some lesser known commentator like Heineccius was similarly suspect. The Roman Index of 1786 lists and condemns by title seven

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concerning the "Natural Equality of Man," or, for that matter, Saint Thomas Aquinas. Any partially expurgated work like Heineccius was automatically suspect and even in far-away Bogotá it must have been common knowledge that the Encyclopedia was almost as damnable and devilish as Voltaire. Such publications were relisted clearly and condemned in toto in the new Indice of 1790.<sup>45</sup> Since Aquinas is not condemned, it was an unforgivable trick for Nariño to quote passages and phrases from the Angelic Doctor similar to those of Voltaire and Diderot.

As for Antonio Capmany's Philosophy of Eloquence, it was considered so subversive, and angered Nariño's judges to such an extent that they secretly requested that the Inquisition issue a special edict condemning it and Carli.<sup>46</sup> Yet this work was also quoted by Nariño to support his main thesis that revolutionary republican ideas like those of the Rights of Man were to be found everywhere in acceptable books read by every educated person. A few passages will suffice to indicate the tone of Capmany: "No man has received from nature the right to command any other; liberty is the gift of heaven and each man has the right to enjoy it starting from the moment when he can use reason." In a similar vein Nariño quotes: "It seems also according to Heineccius that the power of kings emanates from the people and Heineccius is the legislator we are ordered to follow in our schools."<sup>47</sup>

In order to estimate the full exasperation of Nariño's judges, who, like Blaya, found their own words quoted to show that they had once thought and written like the accused, it is well to remember that events in France, from 1789 to 1794, had aroused fear and a rapid retreat from liberalism and from reform in Spain. The small but influential clique of liberals who had joined Aranda after

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works of Grotius (p. 127) and all of the works of Pufendorf (p. 235).

<sup>45</sup>Indice ultimo, pp. 9, 248. (Aeneas Seneca was

also condemned by name and in toto.)

<sup>46</sup>Pérez Sarmiento, Proceso de Nariño, p. 28.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., pp. 104-105.

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1765 in the formation of the Royal Basque Society of Friends of the Country<sup>48</sup> found themselves in disagreement as to how far they should retreat from their old liberalism and reformist plans in these hectic years. The Basque reformers who had so recently succeeded in ousting the powerful organization of that earlier Basque reformer, Ignatius Loyola, in 1767, found themselves now called on to revive the Inquisition which Aranda had once boasted he would have ousted along with the Jesuits except for his indiscretion in mentioning his hopes to Voltaire.<sup>49</sup> By the time Nariño was quoting from books and periodicals once sponsored by the crown itself for a third of a century, the Basque Society clique had been replaced by Godoy.<sup>50</sup> Aranda's brief return to power in 1792 lasted less than a year and was followed by such a complete overthrow of the reformers that Aranda himself was persecuted by the revived Inquisition whose plans for thorough revenge were only foiled by Aranda's sudden death.<sup>51</sup> Nariño's defense, therefore, fell on the unsympa-

<sup>48</sup>Jose Torre Revello, El Periodismo en America durante la dominacion espanola (Buenos Aires, 1940), p. 172. This work gives some valuable information on the Basque Society which bears directly on Nariño. He states that the first one, founded by Aranda and his friends in Madrid, was modelled on a similar British Economic Society. There were soon seventy branches in Spain and the colonies, that the first one in Colombia met at Mompos from September 12, 1784, to December 19, 1784. Their proceedings were printed by the royal printer Expinosa de Monteros. Espinosa was Nariño's printer of the Rights of Man.

<sup>49</sup>Spell, op. cit., p. 49.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., p. 144. Spell quotes Godoy's own admission that the reformers were forced into hiding and all periodicals except the Gazeta eliminated. The Gazeta was allowed to speak "less of France than if it had been China." (C. E. Chapman, History of Spain (New York, 1927), pp. 228, 432.)

<sup>51</sup>Spell, op. cit., pp. 51, 144.



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thetic ears of the new Godoy ministry. Almost every book and periodical quoted by Nariño was condemned in the new wave of censorship and this was especially true of the Espíritu de los mejores diarios,<sup>52</sup> so often quoted by Nariño in his defensa.

Nariño's possession of books<sup>53</sup> on how to organize a Basque model reform society would therefore constitute prima facie evidence of his interest in the newly unseated, dispossessed, suspect liberals. Though only recently and briefly reseated in the person of Aranda, by mid-1794 their popularity<sup>54</sup> and power had been rapidly reversed, and following Aranda's fall they were immediately persecuted as subversives, traitors, and revolutionaries.<sup>55</sup> Menéndez y Pelayo probably represents rather accurately the spirit of reaction when he damns the Aranda liberals for favoring such accursed heretical ideas as civil marriage, public education, and religious toleration. And, of course, he damns them for weakness and treason in the face of the French advance

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<sup>52</sup>Posada and Ibáñez, El Precursor, p. 632.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid., pp. 174, 176. The titles of the books were Ensayo de la Sociedad Vascongada de los Amigos del País and Estatuto para gobierno de la Real Sociedad Vascongada.

<sup>54</sup>Rafael Altamira, A History of Spain from the Beginnings to the Present Day, trans. by Muna Lee (New York, 1949), pp. 513-514, attributes the meteoric rise and fall of Aranda in 1793 to the queen who put him in only long enough to force Godoy to pay less attention to another woman and more to her. French pressure was a secondary influence.

<sup>55</sup>Antonio Ballesteros y Beretta, Historia de España y su influencia en la historia universal (9 vols., Barcelona, 1918-1941), V, 251-253, 257. This work states that Aranda was removed for vacillating and for failing to adopt a tough policy toward France that he was exiled to Jaen and finally jailed in the Granadine prison of the Alhambra for urging Godoy to make peace with France and for criticizing Godoy's failure in foreign affairs.

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of 1794.<sup>56</sup> There is probably a certain amount of truth in his charge that sympathy with French ideas weakened the Spanish will to resist French armies. There is also reasonable ground to believe the accuracy of his claim that the economic societies, hastily abolished by the ex-liberal, Floridablanca, in 1791-1793, had rapidly converted themselves into "Patriotic Societies of French Style"<sup>57</sup> when they went underground. Nariño, like Aranda, was thus caught in the reversed tide of conservative reaction set in motion by the excesses of the French Revolution in 1793. There seems good reason, therefore, to claim that the excesses of the French Revolution set back the cause of moderate reform and progress not half a century, as in England,<sup>58</sup> but until the present day.<sup>59</sup>

The events of 1789-1794 which threw Spain into a nightmare of revolution and counter-revolution were not likely to prove annoying or threatening to her greedy neighbors. The greatest empire in the world was now a plum ripe for the picking. As long as anything was to be gained by keeping Spain weak, neither England, France, nor the United States would be eager to end the chaos of revolutions in the Americas, or in Spain. Even in 1794, Spain still held the largest empire in the world. If Spain became another Poland, no one but Spain would care -- least of all American Spaniards like Nariño who dreamed of independence. England, France, and the United States all offered to aid the cause of Colombian independence for different, selfish and often conflicting reasons. From each Nariño hoped to borrow aims and ideas, but always it was independence he sought.

<sup>56</sup> Marcelino Menéndez y Pelayo, Historia de los heterodoxos españoles (2nd ed., 7 vols., Madrid, 1911-1932), VI (1930), 270.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., p. 296.

<sup>58</sup> W. T. Laprade, England and the French Revolution, 1789-1797 (Baltimore, 1909), passim.

<sup>59</sup> Joseph McCabe, Spain in Revolt, 1814-1931 (New York, 1932). This author was overly optimistic when he thought this period of violent revolution and counter-revolution had ended in 1931 with a moderate constitutional republic.

THE LIBRARY OF A REVOLUTIONARY LEADER

If there is any one model or hero whom Nariño admired more than any other, it was not a Frenchman, but an American, Benjamin Franklin. Before we consider the failure of his defense, his escape from the prison ship in Cádiz harbor, and his amazing Odyssey back to Bogotá via Madrid, Paris, London, Bordeaux, and Venezuela, it might be of value to summarize the Franklin influence on him. Besides his knowledge of the new scientists -- Condillac, Linnaeus, Buffon, and those who established the scientific spirit and method, Galileo, Newton and Descartes -- Nariño had a library<sup>60</sup> and laboratory equipped for experiments in electricity a la Franklin. In his "Santuario" he had a bust of Franklin and a motto on a scroll which read, "He snatched the lightning from the skies and the sceptre from the tyrant's hand." In his defense peroration, Nariño closed with the fervid hope that the land of reason, liberty, and toleration, the land of Franklin, Washington, Hancock, and the Adamses would never die.<sup>61</sup>

The audiencia in Bogotá found him guilty on November 28, 1795, of sedition, treason, and attempted overthrow of the government. It ordered the Rights of Man, from which he copied, to be burned by the hangman in the principal square of Bogotá, his property confiscated, and sentenced him to exile and confinement, preferably to the rockpile of a North African presidio.<sup>62</sup>

From that day forward, Nariño's life was one of jailings, escapes, recaptures, plots toward independence and finally of military campaigns for Colombian independence. By the time of his death in 1823, Nariño was the grand old man of Colombian independence, second only to Santander in Colombian politics, and still famous as the Precursor, whose library, ideas and printing of the Rights of Man had started Colombia toward revolution and Independence in 1794.

<sup>60</sup>Posada and Ibáñez, El Precursor, pp. 164-186. Over a hundred volumes in Nariño's libraries are recognizable as scientific and include such fields as medicine, botany, chemistry, physics, surgery, mathematics, and electricity.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., p. 80.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid., p. 620.