



## HISPANIC CONSERVATISM

*Posted on December 1, 2023 by Pedro Carlos González  
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It is rare for a magazine of political thought to survive for forty years—that is almost three generations. A lot of water has passed under the bridge since the founding of the leading Hispanic conservative magazine *Razón Española* in 1983, but this exceptional longevity deserves to be highlighted. Throughout this period, "RE" has been a veritable miracle. I said it ten years ago, and I repeat it today. The magazine was born in an extremely hostile context, both politically and intellectually, at the start of the long socialist period (1983-1996). At the time, there was a right-wing party represented by Alianza Popular which, after the demise of the Union of the Democratic Center and the defeat of late October 1982, was on the defensive, ashamed of its status as a right-wing party and anxious to define itself above all as "centerist." Not for nothing was ex-minister Manuel Fraga, with his usual rudimentary expressions, the first Spanish politician of the time to attempt to theorize the political "center." Of course, nobody believed him because of his Franco past. It took the emergence of a man as empty, without substance or ideas, as Adolfo Suárez, for the "center" to impose itself in the Spanish political arena, with the consequences that we know today for the whole of society.

For all these reasons, *Razón Española* has suffered, from the outset, from obvious media, social, political and economic marginalization. Not only from the left, but also from the right. The Alianza Popular refused to acknowledge its existence; it founded a magazine, *Veintiuno*, an organ of the Cánovas del Castillo Foundation, which soon disappeared without a trace; its political heir, the Partido Popular, also failed to carry out any rigorous or even remotely effective work in terms of debating ideas. The PP abolished the Cánovas del Castillo Foundation to create the Foundation for Social Studies and Analysis (FAES), which proved incapable of providing the party with any kind of coherent ideology. Its organ, *Cuadernos de Pensamiento Político*, failed to rise to the challenge of the cultural war. Its historical frame of reference remained the Spain of the Restoration (1874-1931), even if, in the erratic wake inaugurated by José María Aznar, it did not spare its "extemporaneous" praise for the minister and president of the republic, Manuel Azaña.

*Razón Española* was even subjected to a permanent and disgusting smear campaign by Christian Democrat historians such as Javier Tusell Gómez, who publicly demanded in the press, particularly in the Socialist newspaper *El País*, that it should not be financed by banks and businessmen. But it is also true that today, nobody remembers this mediocre author.

In such an unfavorable context, the normal thing to do would have been to throw in the towel and disappear. Fortunately, this was not to be. Against all odds, the magazine managed to survive and, above all, to unite nearly three generations of intellectuals of often very different sensibilities, united by

a clear defense of the traditional worldview. How can we explain this miracle of longevity? In my opinion, there are two main reasons.

Firstly, it is thanks to the energy, will and "charisma" of its founder, Gonzalo Fernández de la Mora y Mon, whose figure and work once served as a binding force, a knot for the magazine's contributors. His intellectual, personal and moral vigor largely explains the survival of *Razón Española*, which the Catalan journalist Josep Maria Ruíz Simón once described as "Don Gonzalo's forge."

Secondly, it is thanks to the will of its contributors who, free of charge, defying silence, danger and disqualification, decided to collaborate in its pages. For many, including myself, this collaboration was a veritable "catharsis," a challenge to the prevailing "political correctness," the conquest, in short, of an authentic space of intellectual freedom. For all of them, RE was the magazine in which it was finally possible to write and say what could not be written or said in most of Spain's political and intellectual journals. And, alas, we are still here.

Despite its economic, political and media marginalization, *Razón Española* has, I believe, succeeded in making significant contributions to Spanish conservative thought. As a historian of ideas, I would like to mention just a few.

Firstly, Gonzalo Fernández de la Mora's exposition of his "*razonalista*" ("reasonalist" or "reasoning") philosophy and the political-intellectual project contained in his works. I am referring to *La partitocracia* (*The Partitocracy*)—a truly prophetic book—*La envidia igualitaria* (*Egalitarian Envy*), *Los teóricos izquierdistas de la democracia orgánica*, (*The Left Theorists of Organic Democracy*), *Los errores del cambio* (*The Errors of Political Change*), *El hombre en desazón* (*Man in Distress*) and *Sobre la felicidad* (*On Happiness*).

Secondly, his critical analysis of the current political system, born of the 1978 Constitution, based on his denunciation of partitocracy, the state of autonomous regions, the openly secessionist tendencies of peripheral Catalan and Basque nationalism, the weak political functionality of the monarchy, etc.

Thirdly, his critique of left-wing ideologies. Not only of Marxism, now in decline, but also of what Jean Bricmont has called the "moral Left," centered not on projects of economic and social transformation, but on the defense of radical feminism, woke culture, so-called alternative sexualities, the

stigmatization of demonological and imaginary fascism, racism, xenophobia or a generic "far right." To put it in Marxist language, the "moral Left" appeals to consciousness rather than to social being, to superstructure rather than infrastructure. The fiscal crisis that began to manifest itself in Europe three decades ago, the end of the "Cold War" and the need for competitiveness engendered by economic globalization have, as we know, led to the obsolescence of the traditional discourse of the Left, including that of social democracy, and to the acceptance of the free market economy, in its neoliberal variant. As Marxist philosopher Nancy Frazer has denounced, the current politics of the entire European and North American Left, championed by the Democratic Party, can be conceptualized as "progressive neoliberalism," i.e., ultra-liberal economic policies and escapist cultural policies. The current Spanish PP is not far from this political horizon in its day-to-day practice.

Fourthly, the development of alternatives to the 1978 system, summarized in Gonzalo Fernández de la Mora's article "Las contradicciones de la partitocracia" ("The contradictions of partitocracy"), published in *Razón Española*. This article advocated, among other measures, the independence of the various powers, the internal democratization of parties, the breaking of the partitocratic monopoly of political representation, the prohibition of party discipline, secret voting, the representation of social interests, referendums, single-member constituencies, open lists and the control of members of the political class. He also defended the presidential republic, opposed to partitocracy, and the defense of the market economy.

Fifthly, it criticized the policies of "historical memory" supported by the Spanish left as a whole.

Sixth, the insistence on the primacy of ideas and the cultural struggle against economic determinism, on both the Right and the Left. Today, as we have already pointed out, a sector of the Left has transformed its intellectual horizon, becoming "idealist" or "culturalist," while a certain Right has converted to the most static and materialistic economism. Not for nothing did the social-democrat Luis García San Miguel speak of Marxist-Thatcherians some years ago. The PP is a striking example of this.

Seventh, the recovery of authors considered "cursed" by today's politico-cultural-media system, such as Ramiro de Maeztu, Eugenio D'Ors, Marcelino Menéndez Pelayo, Rafael García Serrano, Joaquín Costa, Eugenio Montes, Ernesto Giménez Caballero, Aquilino Duque, Carl Schmitt, and so on.

And, eighthly, the critique of so-called "centrism," i.e., the politics of "consensus," in favor of a politics of "agonistic pluralism" (Chantal Mouffe).

## II.

When it comes to taking stock of these forty years, what can we learn from them? In my opinion, for the sake of coherence and realism, this assessment must be ambivalent.

On the one hand, it must be stressed that most of the diagnoses of Spain's socio-political situation defended in the magazine have been confirmed. After a relatively long period of euphoria, triumphalism and obtuse optimism, the flaws inherent in the 1978 regime have become apparent. There is no doubt that some, starting with the PP elites, have not yet understood this, and are acting as if nothing had happened, nostalgic for a "consensus" which, in reality, never existed, because it masked a clear hegemony of the Left on a global scale. They will realize this one day; but, as usual, they will realize it late and badly. For several years now, the most aware minds in Spanish society have been realizing that many historical problems, thought to have been overcome, have reappeared in broad daylight with singular virulence.

The religious question is still topical, even if the Catholic Church has unquestionably ceased to be an important social and moral force. The Catholic Church retains many social, economic and symbolic advantages, but its role is increasingly marginal. Perhaps it is the persistence of its old privileges, which prevent it from exercising its pastoral work more effectively in the face of a state which defines itself as non-denominational, but which in everyday practice, through its legislation, acts as an aggressively secular body. Perhaps a freer Church, with fewer state commitments, could be more effective in its public function. Whatever the case, it seems clear to me that Spanish society has entered the historical period that the Italian philosopher Augusto del Noce called "natural irreligion," i.e., a spiritual attitude characterized by absolute relativism, where all ideas are considered in relation to the psychological and social situation of those who assert them and, consequently, valued from a utilitarian point of view, as a stimulus for life. Catholics have been unable to prevent legislation on abortion, euthanasia or homosexual marriage. More importantly, when the PP came to power, these laws were not abolished or even reformed. What is more, as we saw recently with [Alberto Núñez Feijóo](#), the [PP](#) has taken them on board, making them virtually irreversible. For a consistent Catholic, today's Spain is undoubtedly a land of mission. That said, issues such as abortion, euthanasia, radical feminism, woke culture, etc. are not essentially confessional; they are negative in themselves, irrespective of religious beliefs. Indeed, there are even theologians, such as the ineffable Juan José Tamayo, who agree with these ideas, asserting that Christian ethics is the heir to Epicurus. Nothing less. In any case, these issues can also be criticized from a secular and agnostic perspective, although the collaboration of Catholics continues to be

important here.

Another question, that of the form of government, does not seem to have found a definitive solution either—far from it. In June 2014, Juan Carlos I was forced to give way to his son Felipe VI. The institution and its figure have not withstood the erosion of criticism over the king's tumultuous private life, the corruption of certain members of the royal family and, most importantly, obvious political inefficiency. As has often been asserted in the pages of *Razón Española*, we must demand that the monarchical institution be legitimate not only in its origin, but also in its exercise, especially in the defense of national unity, which is increasingly under threat.

Similarly, as the magazine also prophesied, the failure of the political decentralization model is now obvious. Not only has the autonomous state failed to integrate peripheral Catalan and Basque nationalisms, it has also encouraged and consolidated secessionist aspirations. It has also entailed excessive economic costs, making it unviable in the medium term. Finally, its intrinsic dialectic leads to "confederalization" or fragmentation. This process has historically vindicated those who, in the speeches preceding approval of the constitutional text, such as Fernández de la Mora and López Rodó, opposed the autonomist pseudo-solution. The 1978 regime was incapable of creating an integrating symbolism as an expression of national unity. Today, it may be too late.

During these nightmarish years (from the late 1970s onwards), Spain became one of Europe's most de-industrialized countries, under the guise of integration into the European Economic Community. A process that must one day be analyzed rationally and without triumphalism. Industry's share of GDP has fallen from 39% in 1975 to 19% today. On this point, see the economic articles by professor and academic Juan Velarde in the magazine. In addition, what has come to be known as the "Spanish demographic winter," denounced and analyzed in the magazine by Alejandro Macarrón, fundamentally calls into question, among other things, social and cultural continuity and the foundations of the social state.

At the same time, the crisis of representativeness of the political system has worsened. Today, the liberal-democratic model is in crisis, as it is in all Western countries, due to the process of economic globalization and the questioning of the nation-state model. The current political system appears to the Spanish population as a whole to be closed, oligarchic and crudely partitocratic. The two hegemonic parties, the [PSOE](#) and the PP, along with peripheral nationalist parties, have, as Fernández de la Mora predicted, colonized all institutions. Partitocracy has reached such a degree of extremism that, as these lines are being written, the country's political stability depends on the will of a fugitive or convict like

Carles Puigdemont, who, at the rate things are going, God forbid, will become the next Catalan president. We do not even know whether it will be the Generalitat or a possible independent Catalan Republic. We have reached the highest level of political cynicism, with Pedro Sánchez, but the horizon is still open to greater heights of ignominy. In fact, I have no confidence whatsoever in the so-called political alternative represented, it is said, by Alberto Núñez Feijóo, the acolyte of his compatriot Mariano Rajoy Brey. With the PP, anything is possible, but especially the worst.

Despite their lucidity, or perhaps because of it, the diagnoses and solutions defended in the pages of *Razón Española* have not been listened to or followed by the political and media elites who claim to be conservatives. Nevertheless, we are now witnessing a clear renewal of the conservative political camp, which may be more receptive to our messages in the future. In any case, the cultural battle goes on.

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