

**Reception and Reaction to French  
Enlightenment and Revolution in late  
colonial/early independent Spanish America:  
New Granada, Peru and Venezuela 1790-1812**

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# Abstract

This dissertation explores the reception of French Enlightenment thought and the reaction to French revolutionary events in late colonial and early independent Spanish America between 1790 and 1812, focusing on New Granada, Peru and Venezuela. The years leading up to the historical and political processes known as Spanish American Independence witnessed radical transformations; during this period accepted wisdom was questioned, new discoveries were made and questions of political rights were open to debate. This dissertation, through a close reading of the contemporary periodical press and early discourses of Simón Bolívar, assesses the dissemination of the French Enlightenment and news of the 'Age of Revolution' in colonial society. The initial rejection of Revolutionary events is examined in the *Papel Periódico de Bogotá*, whilst the *Mercurio Peruano* charts scientific discovery through the 1790s. Following the Napoleonic invasion of the Iberian peninsula, 1808, the *Gazeta de Caracas* is studied to demonstrate the change in attitudes and cautious desire for autonomy. Finally, the early writings of Simón Bolívar are used to assess the compatibility and appropriation of Enlightenment thought and revolutionary models within colonial society. It will be shown that a public sphere did exist amongst a small, but highly educated, colonial elite in the 1790s, and that French Enlightenment ideas had been transmitted to Spanish America and were in circulation. However, the arrival of the Enlightenment and news of Revolution in the Spanish colonies was partial and fragmented; some parts were strongly rejected whilst others were embraced. A detailed, logical development is recorded in the periodical press. Following the events of 1808, heightened Creole discontent and the acceptance of the principles of 1789 are shown to propel the Independence movement forward.

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Abstract.....	2
Acknowledgements .....	3
Introduction.....	6
Enlightenment Boundaries.....	6
Research Context.....	7
The Enlightenment and Revolution in France .....	8
Revolutionary Events.....	12
The Enlightenment and Revolution in Spain .....	14
Reception of the Enlightenment in Spanish America.....	18
Enlightenment and Independence.....	20
Identity in Nineteenth-Century Spanish America .....	21
Chapter 1.....	27
Reception and Reaction to French Enlightenment Ideas and Revolutionary Events in the Periodical Press of New Granada and Peru 1791-96.....	27
The Periodical Press .....	27
Sociedad de Amantes del País.....	29
Editors .....	32
Dr Hipólito Unanue – <i>Aristio</i> (1755-1833).....	32
José Rossí y Rubí – <i>Hesperiphylo</i> .....	33
José Ignacio de Lecuanda.....	33
Readership .....	34
Subscribers to <i>El Papel Periódico</i> .....	34
Subscribers to <i>El Mercurio Peruano</i> .....	35
Reception and Reaction to ideas and events .....	37
Questions of Governance .....	37
Enlightenment and the Subversion of Order .....	37
France and Irrationality .....	39
The Barbaric Enlightenment .....	41
Monarchy as an example of good Governance: <i>El Papel Periódico</i> .....	44
Notions of Virtue .....	46
Republican Failings .....	51
Religion and Science .....	53
God All Powerful.....	53
Defence of Religion to Maintain Order .....	59
Resistance or Attack .....	62
Scientific Understanding increases respect for God.....	64
Favourable Reception of Scientific Enquiry and Innovation .....	67
Agricultural and Economic Advancement .....	69
Satire in Science; Medical Curiosities .....	72
Conclusions .....	73
Chapter 2.....	75
The <i>Gazeta de Caracas</i> and Simón Bolívar: Theory to Practice in Venezuela 1808- 1812 .....	75
1808-1812: Changing Political Environment .....	75
Political Events.....	75
Simón Bolívar.....	78
Ideological Perspective and Problems .....	80
<i>Gazeta de Caracas</i> : A Political Tool.....	82
Origins and Aims.....	82

Content .....	84
Editorship and Publication .....	85
News from Europe: Allegiance to the Monarchy in ‘Las Dos Tiranías’ .....	86
Difficulties forming legitimate Government.....	90
Importance of Patria: Precursor to Independence .....	94
Increasing Uncertainty .....	97
Blueprint for Independence.....	98
Independence Declared in 1811 .....	104
Simón Bolívar .....	108
Genesis of Ideas.....	108
Enlightenment <i>Philosophes</i> .....	109
The Cartagena Manifesto, 15 <sup>th</sup> December 1812 .....	111
Conclusion .....	115
Conclusion .....	117
Pre-1808 Reception and Reaction .....	117
Philosophical and Scientific Enlightenment .....	117
Political Enlightenment: Natural Rights .....	118
Complex Impact .....	119
Post-1808 Reception and Reaction.....	120
Unknown Reality: Colonial Shadow .....	121
Bibliography .....	122

# Introduction

## Enlightenment Boundaries

The Enlightenment was a complex era in which multiple new ideas began to circulate in Europe and filter through to the rest of the world. One of the most comprehensive definitions of the philosophy of the Enlightenment is that of Molleret, a friend of Voltaire, as he discussed the traits the ‘encylopédistes’ shared:

Tous ces hommes ont eu une même philosophie; c’est cette ardeur de savoir, cette activité de l’esprit qui ne veut pas laisser un effet sans en rechercher la cause, un phénomène sans explication, une assertion sans preuve, une objection sans réponse, une erreur sans la combattre, un mal sans en chercher la remède, un bien possible sans tâcher d’y atteindre; c’est ce mouvement général des esprits qui a marqué le dix-huitième siècle et qui fera à jamais sa gloire.<sup>1</sup>

This spirit of enquiry and criticism cannot be applied to an equal extent across societies; the degree of Enlightenment varies considerably, but Adrienne Koch, in his study, highlights the following aspects that the French and Spanish American Enlightenment shared.<sup>2</sup> Firstly, a hospitality to scientific enquiry and acceptance that traditional beliefs could be overhauled; secondly, a struggle against irrational prejudice and belief which was manifested in human oppression; finally, a dedication to social and economic reform.

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<sup>1</sup> Aldridge, ‘Benjamin Franklin and the Philosophes’, *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century*, 24 (1963), p.43.

<sup>2</sup> Koch, ‘The Aftermath of the American Enlightenment’, *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century*, 56 (1967), p.735.

## Research Context

The turbulent events in Europe throughout the 1790s made a considerable impact in Spanish America. The notions of natural rights, reason and rationality questioned accepted political and social order. What began as a war of words would later evolve into a war of arms; from individuals subject to an absolutist monarch, Spanish Americans would soon become citizens in independent republics.

This difficult, messy transition was, in part, triggered by the dissemination of new Enlightened thinking through the periodical press. Although often cautious, ideas were discussed on a philosophical level, even if their actual application was thwarted. Certain principles, such as the divine right of monarchs, could not be dismissed, but there is plentiful evidence of a slow, cautious, conservative introduction to the Enlightenment.

In order to investigate this complicated dissemination of European, specifically French, ideas, a close reading of the contemporary periodical press is required. The press offers an insight into the questions of political rights, forms of government and scientific exploration; my research asks the following questions, Where do Enlightenment ideas originate? How are these ideas changed in terms of ideology and discourse to suit conditions in Spanish America? How are they received and how is reaction expressed? And finally, to what extent can this new thinking be considered as Enlightenment?

The issues of mixed race, an entrenched class system, a lack of national identity, and colonial authority in Spanish America further complicate such questions. However, it remains important to explore not how Spanish America was Enlightened, but what the Enlightenment meant to Spanish Americans.

## The Enlightenment and Revolution in France

The Enlightenment in eighteenth-century France was an extremely complex period, and it is difficult to make generalisations when ideas varied so greatly; however it is probably true that the French people discovered their own existence during this period, and their right to political power. This discovery is the result of the ‘philosophes’ destroying the association of social rights with aristocratic privilege. They condemned the institutions of the ‘ancien régime,’ political, religious and economic. Whilst these intellectuals did not cause the French Revolution, without them it would not have been the same Revolution. They provided it with the intellectual armoury from which its main weapons were drawn.<sup>3</sup>

In the rest of this chapter I will discuss the key features of Enlightenment thought relevant to Spanish America; the first is opposition to monarchical absolutism. The Enlightenment was not a spontaneous product of a group of thinkers. Louis XIV’s (reigned 1643-1715) personal extravagance and unnecessary wars triggered a complete breakdown of the French financial and economic system. His disastrous reign saw the breakdown of the alliance between the French people and their monarch; the Crown had failed to justify its power and men no longer looked to it for leadership. The growing realisation that the French people had played no part in their history gave a sense of urgency; they needed to shape their own destiny.

The intellectual movement had many different characteristics; one that cannot be omitted is rationalism. What does rationalism mean? Essentially the idea that truth is not sensory, but intellectual and deductive; common sense and reason are logically applied to draw conclusions. This common sense, the philosophers believed, would give the same results everywhere. Voltaire’s *Lettres anglaises* provide an

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<sup>3</sup> Laski, ‘The Age of Reason’, Hearnshaw, ed. *The Social and Political Ideas of Some Great French Thinkers of the Age of Reason* (London: Dawsons of Pall Mall, 1967), p.10.



account of English rationalism, Montesquieu's *Lettres Persanes* is a picture of France from a rational observer's point of view, and his *Esprit des Lois* tackles the legal nature of rationalism. The *Encyclopédie*'s entries are rooted in a rational view of the world.

In this rationalist climate, religion and religious authority had to submit to the demands of universal common sense. Religious faith had to be purged of all ancient superstition, and its only truth is what universal man can reason. The natural religion Voltaire and Montesquieu proposed states that there is a God who created the world, who gave men sense of right and evil, and a soul which may or may not be immortal. Any religious dogma attached to this is irrational and must be crushed. Voltaire added that the history of Christianity shows the population as an ignorant mass, fearful of a mysterious power, willing to pay an exploiting priesthood for protection.<sup>4</sup>

However, the power of the Church in the eighteenth century was immense, and its authority was difficult to successfully challenge. The philosophers began to promote the idea of tolerance; Montesquieu and Voltaire made the case for reasonableness and slowly they gained support. They argued a political state could not place itself at the disposal of a religious organisation, and in this way morality must find a basis other than that of religion.

Having addressed the problems of religion and morals, the philosophers extended their arguments to the political field. Their ideas reflected the contemporary situation; social freedom and the protection of the individual were key ideas. Voltaire cites the English example whereby the electorate controls Parliament, and the power of the purse restrains monarchical authority. Montesquieu sees the balancing of powers as key to achieving social freedom; he believes in individual citizens living

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<sup>4</sup> Laski, p.16.

free from fear of attack.<sup>5</sup> Apart from Rousseau, the general consensus amongst the ‘philosophes’ was to demand a constitutional government that encompassed religious toleration, civil freedom, the right to criticise, a rational legal system and the abolition of certain privileges for the aristocracy. They do not condemn a limited monarchy, although Voltaire does advocate the republican model, which gained popularity as ideas evolved. The ‘philosophes’ are not democratic, fearing the masses, and suffrage is heavily restricted; of course, they themselves form part of the elite, whose rights and privileges are different to those of the common masses.

Underpinning these political systems lays one fundamental concept: the theory of natural rights. The application of natural rights, whereby only popular government (the government of the people) can be legitimate clearly has revolutionary implications. The idea that all men have unalienable rights and that governments are instituted to secure those rights, as set out in the *Declaration of the Rights of Man*, 1789, provides much of the rationale behind Enlightenment argument.<sup>6</sup> Political legitimacy is only achieved when it is agreed that all men are born free and remain equal, that the basis of all sovereignty lies in the nation, and that all legitimate authority can be traced back to the people through popular government. The implications of this thinking propose a radical transformation of old regimes; the reaction in much of the Spanish American press would suggest that the transformation was thought to be too radical.

As reason and natural rights became more frequently discussed, the Catholic Church began to lose its legitimacy in France. One of the central Enlightenment theories that emerged was that of Republicanism, whereby government was that of

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<sup>5</sup> Laski, p.21.

<sup>6</sup> Kors, ed., *Encyclopaedia of the Enlightenment* (Oxford: OUP, 2003), p.451.

free citizens and their elected representatives, not that of a monarch.<sup>7</sup> Modern versions invoked the classical Greek and Roman Republics, where *res publica* dictated politics and government. Plato, Aristotle and Cicero stressed the importance of civic virtue, character traits that would repel Kings and tyrants, the liberty of citizens and communal understanding. These classical models informed the European ‘philosophes’. In *l’Esprit des Lois*, Montesquieu characterises the Republic as his ideal type of government, praising the political liberty and civic virtue of small republics, although at the same time doubting certain aspects of liberty, security and commerce. Rousseau on the other hand, in *Du Contrat Social*, 1762, questions the modern day suitability of ancient republican forms; he revives classical republicanism by ensuring that all legitimate government must be derived from popular sovereignty, from the ‘general will’.<sup>8</sup> Thus, according to Rousseau, popular sovereignty and representation are incompatible, yet a participatory republic, in the true sense of the word, would be virtually impossible.

Other ‘philosophes’ claim, in the *Encyclopédie*, that a republican system of government was outdated on the grounds that modern men are solely concerned with self-fulfilment and are thus unwilling to devote themselves to the common good.<sup>9</sup> Although discredited by many Enlightenment thinkers for its instability and tendencies towards anarchy, the Republican model has remained enduring. In Spanish America as Republican ideas began to emerge, the intellectual elite began to question the legitimacy of the colonial regime. In an increasingly rational sphere material progress became the base for political legitimacy, Bourbon reforms seemed only to profit Spain and the French Republican model offered a pathway for development that further heightened Creole dissatisfaction.

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<sup>7</sup> Kors, p.423.

<sup>8</sup> Kors, p.426.

<sup>9</sup> Kors, p.428.

The philosophers had discredited a system of ideas and institutions, showing them to no longer serve the French national interest. Civil liberty and constitutional self-government became the only accepted route forwards. However, the ‘philosophes’ alone cannot be cited as the causes of the Revolution; financial mismanagement, bad harvests, a complex taxation system and reckless military expenditure triggered the crisis. The ‘ancien régime’ could not deal with its own ineptitude nor could it maintain its own institutions. It was necessary to find a new basis for authority.

## Revolutionary Events

In 1789 an economic crisis hit France, one month before the monarchy collapsed into bankruptcy, and severe storms swept across northern France destroying most of the harvest. The political crisis that ensued took place against a backdrop of financial nightmare.<sup>10</sup>

Necker, Louis XVI’s finance minister, was unable to deal with the crisis as he was preoccupied with the antagonism surrounding the role of the third estate, who were clamouring for more equal representation.<sup>11</sup> In the spring of 1789 they were granted double the number of deputies, although voting was still by order rather than by head, so this concession meant little. Questions now emerged over how the estates were to be constituted and what they were actually to do. When they met at Versailles on 5<sup>th</sup> May, their calls to unite with the clergy and nobility were initially shunned. After six weeks the privileged orders began to give in and a new body was formed on 17<sup>th</sup> June: the National Assembly. In the founding act of the French

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<sup>10</sup> See Doyle, *The Ancien Régime*, which traces the political, social, economic and cultural instabilities that were characteristic of the years preceding the outbreak of Revolution.

<sup>11</sup> In 1614, the Estates-General had sat in three separate orders: clergy, nobility and the Third Estate – meaning everyone else. Such a distribution of powers no longer reflected the realities of education, wealth and property.

Revolution, the assembly had seized sovereign power in the name of the French nation. On 20<sup>th</sup> June, they took an oath never to separate until they had given France a constitution. Although the King was no longer sovereign, Louis attempted to reassert his authority, instructing the orders to reconvene separately; they refused and the King did nothing, his surrender virtually complete.

Royal troops converged on Versailles to secure public order, and were overrun when hungry, dissatisfied insurgents and military deserters stormed the Bastille prison on 14<sup>th</sup> July. This move put Paris into rebel hands; the King was powerless and the National Assembly stayed. The demolition of the Bastille, a symbol of royal power, signified the deconstruction of a discredited old order. The National Assembly began work on a Declaration of Rights, but a climate of fear pervaded the nation. As upheavals in Paris began to spread to the countryside, there was a fear that crops would be pillaged; the dramatic abolition of tithes and feudal duties aimed to stem the anarchy that was unfolding. Many privileges of the ‘ancien régime’ were abolished and in doing so, much of the fabric of French social life had been condemned to destruction.

Despite these events, the Assembly produced a Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen on 26<sup>th</sup> August 1789; it set out the principles of a constitutional monarchy, granting the King limited powers of veto on new laws.<sup>12</sup>

Following the abolition of tithes, already mentioned, on 4<sup>th</sup> August, the source of the Church’s income was now unknown. In addition, Church land was sold off, to finance public debt on 2<sup>nd</sup> November. To the triumph of the ‘philosophes’, who had attacked Catholic dogma, the Assembly proclaimed civil equality for Protestants and prohibited monastic vows. It refused to declare Catholicism the state religion, and in

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<sup>12</sup> See Lefebvre, *The Coming of the French Revolution*, Part V, for a detailed account of the events of 1789 and the philosophy of the Declaration of the Rights of Man.

July 1790 the civil constitution of the clergy was enacted, which dictated lay election of priests and bishops. Acceptance of the sacraments from a priest under this new constitution signified adherence to the Revolution. Counter-revolutionaries meanwhile claimed that Christianity itself was threatened.

Louis, now disgraced and held in Paris after his attempted escape, was distrusted. He became increasingly identified with the enemy during the War with Prussia, declared in April 1792, continuing to veto laws against émigrés, the people who were amassing on the borders to invade. The Prussian commander threatened to destroy Paris if the King was harmed; this was the final straw, and the Assembly voted to suspend the monarchy and form a new body, the Convention, to draw up a republican constitution.

The first act of the Convention was to abolish the Monarchy; a new Republican calendar was started from this point, the year 1 (1792) of liberty. The question of what to do with the King arose; trial before the Convention was agreed, and in less than two days Louis was sentenced to death. He was executed in public on 21<sup>st</sup> January 1793.

The execution was followed by a period known as the 'Great Terror' (1793-94); nobody was safe as many were executed for their counter-revolutionary potential alone. There was no end in sight, as to express any doubt about the need for terror was inviting suspicion.<sup>13</sup>

## The Enlightenment and Revolution in Spain

There is evidence of the Enlightenment in Spain, although it was much slower in its development compared to France; as early as 1713 Philip V founded the Spanish Royal Academy, based on the French model. The Royal library incorporated books

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<sup>13</sup> See Schama, *Citizens*, Chapter 17 for an account of the Terror.

brought from France by the King and volumes confiscated from the libraries of rebellious nobles demonstrate awareness of foreign ideas. Italian styles flourished under the early Bourbons; Italian architects, sculptors and painters came to the court at Madrid due to Philip's marriage to the Italian Princess Elizabeth Farnese. New standards of culture and learning emerged. The Spanish elite were more prepared to accept foreign ideas, particularly the thinking of French writers.

The accession of Charles III (1759-88) witnessed a period of 'enlightened despotism'; Charles' policies were developed without reference to public opinion, although he did compromise and achieve considerable social advances. Well-educated nobles pushed through political and economic reform, whilst other nobles maintained cultural links with France and England, and other countries; the Count of Aranda, friend of Voltaire and ambassador to France and the Duke of Alba, friend of Rousseau and also ambassador to France, are two such examples. Foreign books were circulating, amongst them the works of Locke, Rousseau, Newton and Montesquieu. However, the reception of such works was mixed; Catholicism remained potent and Inquisition officials were amongst the members of the recently founded 'Sociedades de Amigos del País'. An uneasy mix of new and traditional forces coexisted.<sup>14</sup>

Despite clashes between the old and the new, economic progress in the late eighteenth century was positive; by 1789 there were fifty-six of the aforementioned economic Sociedades, which promoted technical knowledge and encouraged investment. Coupled with government legislation there were considerable practical improvements; roads were built, internal free trade implemented, and a ban on the acquisition of land by the Church all signalled progress. Although there was

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<sup>14</sup> See Herr, 'Flow and Ebb 1700-1833', in Carr, ed. *Spain: A History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), ch.7 pp.173-205.

promotion of industry, however, agriculture suffered considerably; intellectual progress went side by side with deterioration in the condition of the lower classes.<sup>15</sup>

Charles IV had been in power for only one year, before the French Revolution broke out; it was impossible to stop news of the Revolution spreading given trade with France and the French refugees pouring into Spain; the Spanish government suspended all private periodicals in 1793 in an attempt to quell the Republican propaganda coming from France.<sup>16</sup> However, the execution of Louis XVI, in 1793, and the ensuing Jacobin terror significantly reduced the pro-French sentiment; the French invasion of Spain (1793-95) obliged Godoy, the prime minister, to ally with France against England. This proved to be a disastrous decision given the overwhelming power of the British Navy; by 1797 Spain had been forced to allow the Spanish American colonies to trade with neutral powers. This signalled the beginning of the loss of South America for Spain.<sup>17</sup>

Spain gradually became totally subservient to France, as Spanish regal power had all but disappeared; the Napoleonic invasion of the Peninsula, 1808, precipitated the abdication of the Spanish royal family.<sup>18</sup> Napoleon's brother, Joseph, was installed as the King of Spain and the Spanish Americas, replacing Ferdinand VII, who became King briefly in 1808 following his father's abdication. Whilst pro-French Spaniards (*afrancesados*) thought the appointment of José I would lead to liberal reform without the chaos of the French Revolution, many more Spaniards (pro-monarchy and liberal) rejected French rule outright. They began to fight for

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<sup>15</sup> See Sarrailh, *l'Espagne Eclairée de la Seconde Moitié du XVIIIe Siècle*, especially Part 3, 'Panorama de la pensée nouvelle'.

<sup>16</sup> Kamen, *A Concise World History of Spain* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1973), p.111.

<sup>17</sup> See Lynch, *Bourbon Spain, 1700-1808* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989).

<sup>18</sup> Napoleon was a general during the French Revolution. In 1799 he staged a coup d'état to install himself as First Consul of France; five years later he crowned himself Emperor. Meanwhile, during the first decade of the nineteenth century the armies of France under his command fought almost every major European power, and gained control of most of continental Europe either by force of arms or by alliance systems.



Independence and in September 1808 a central Junta was established in Seville, in the name of the captive Ferdinand VII to exercise the rights of the Bourbon Monarchy to govern the colonies. The Junta was, however, short-lived; Napoleonic forces invaded Andalusia and the Junta dissolved itself in January 1810, making way for a Council of Regency that would act in the name of the deposed King. Operating out of Cadiz, the Regency proclaimed equality of political status between Spaniards and Creoles, although the dominance of French forces threw Spanish independence into doubt, and made many Creoles unsure of the eventual outcome. However, the Spanish populace rose against the French invaders in the name of Ferdinand and in 1812 independent Spaniards adopted a liberal constitution, which Ferdinand overthrew on his return as King in 1813 to rule in an absolutist style until 1833.

The Spanish Enlightenment however was not totally dependent on France. England provided economic attitudes and scientific methods and France itself did not boast an 'enlightened despot' such as Charles III. Unlike the French enlightenment, Spain did not reject religious devotion. Despite the reforming efforts of the Bourbon Kings in this respect, any real progress was hindered by the passive resistance of the Spanish majority, especially after the French invasion of 1808. Liberal ideas were identified with France, Spain's enemy. However, despite the excesses of the French Revolution, the Enlightenment had spread its roots, as Sarrailh concludes,

Il reste que dans l'histoire de l'Espagne libérale, le XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle a droit à une place d'honneur. Les grandes idées de liberté, de justice sociale, de fraternité, qui rassemblaient mystiquement alors tous les hommes de bonne volonté, il les a lancées, et elles ont trouvé un écho dans tout le pays.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Sarrailh, p.712.

## Reception of the Enlightenment in Spanish America

The ideas of the Enlightenment were transmitted to the Spanish American colonies in many ways. Spanish Americans travelled and studied in Europe, bringing back progressive European ideas and active French contrabandists introduced revolutionary literature at the same time.

In the Spanish colonies generations of racial and social intermingling had produced a society full of economic and social pressures that could not be controlled by restrictive Spanish legislation. Rich in resources, the colonies eventually reached a stage where they could push for Independence. Contraband flourished as foreign literature and material goods fuelled the intellectual movement; the Spanish government could do little to restrict the movement of goods. The colonial domains of Spain were in a receptive mood in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century; books, pamphlets, newspapers and travellers carried across the Atlantic anti-authoritarian ideas of liberty and equality. Many Creoles welcomed these ideas and saw them as a route out of the political oppression they were experiencing. However, such theories undermined church and empire, encouraging uprising against authority, yet offering no substitutes and solving few problems.

With increased freedom of commerce came self-sufficiency; the inability of Spain to achieve any success in the struggles with other European nations increased the eagerness for Independence. The reorientation away from Spanish leadership further weakened the bonds that held the colonies to the mother country.<sup>20</sup>

The centre of the intellectual attack on traditional authority in the late eighteenth century as stated was France. As we have seen French thinkers dominated the scene, questioning social order, rejecting classical authority and insisting on the

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<sup>20</sup> See RA Humphreys and John Lynch, ed. *The Origins of the Latin American Revolutions, 1808-1826*, (New York: Alfred a Knopf, 1965).

necessity for experimental investigation. These ideas reached Spanish America in various forms; between 1695 and 1795 some 175 French ships traded in Chile and Peru.<sup>21</sup> The enfranchisement of natural science, a testimony to the enlightenment of the Bourbon monarchs, brought French scientific expeditions to the colonies; foreign explorers and experts such as La Condamine, Jacquin and Humboldt spread French Enlightenment thought.<sup>22</sup>

In the final years of colonial rule a reading knowledge of French and the use of French books was common amongst the intellectual elite; the writings and teachings of famous intellectuals such as Baquijano and Unanue in Lima, Mutis and Socorro Rodríguez in Bogotá and Marrero in Caracas fostered a generation that would go on to win Independence. It was this elite group of men who wrote the periodicals and formed the liberal ‘Sociedades Económicas de los Amigos del País’. The influence of French enlightened philosophers and scientists cannot be mistaken in the work of these men; Baquijano mentioned Montesquieu and Raynal, amongst others, in his *Elogio de Jauregui*, (Lima, 1781), in his *Observaciones sobre la física, historia natural, y artes útiles* (Mexico, 1787), and Alzate names Montesquieu, Reamur and the *Encyclopédie*.<sup>23</sup> He says the Encyclopaedia was an ‘obra bien conocida’. The editors of the *Mercurio Peruano* (Lima, 1791-1795) mention Reamur, Newton, Leibniz as well as Raynal and Montesquieu. Similar references are found in the *Papel Periódico de Bogotá* (1791-97). The curriculum at Universities reflected French ideas and by 1808 students at the University of Caracas heard openly of Condillac, Buffon, Descartes, Locke and Newton.

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<sup>21</sup> Hussey, ‘Traces of French Enlightenment in Colonial Hispanic America’, in Whitaker, ed., *Latin America and the Enlightenment* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1961), p.30.

<sup>22</sup> The Laws of the Indies had barred foreigners from the Spanish American colonies since the reign of Philip II, except by royal license. Although the law remained unchanged, it was greatly relaxed and the Crown sometimes invited distinguished foreign scientists to the colonies such as experts in mining and naturalists.

<sup>23</sup> Hussey, p.38.

Another source that points to the dissemination of French thought are the inventories of libraries of both private individuals and academic institutions. Viceroy-Archbishop Caballero y Góngora and Nariño's private collections in Bogotá are such examples; Caballero's library numbered approximately two thousand volumes, four hundred of which were in French, including Montesquieu's *l'Esprit des Lois*. Nariño's fifteen-hundred volume collection was one third French, and included the *Encyclopédie*. In addition to these private collections, the University of San Carlos, Lima (1806) and the Biblioteca Palafoxiana, in modern-day Mexico (1810), included large numbers of prohibited French books.<sup>24</sup> Clearly to properly assess these sources a detailed study of each region and subject would be required; what these traces show, however, is that French influence was almost everywhere, and it was stronger than that of any other nation. The French Enlightenment impacted greatly on the educated elite who formed the generation that led the struggle for Independence in the early years of the nineteenth century.

## Enlightenment and Independence

Although it is becoming clear that leading Creoles were familiar with the theories of natural rights and were following arguments that propelled liberty and equality, it is less certain whether Enlightenment thinkers such as Montesquieu and Rousseau exerted a precise political influence.

These ideas were only a means to action, and political, military and financial factors need to be considered alongside intellectual stimulus when looking at the Independence movement as a whole. The distinction between Europe and Spanish America was that liberty did not necessarily mean freedom from an absolutist regime, which is what the Enlightenment assumes, but autonomy from a colonial power and

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<sup>24</sup> Hussey, p.41.

an independent, liberal constitution. Indeed, Spanish liberals in Cadiz believed it was possible to offer the freedoms of the Enlightenment to Spanish Americans, yet paradoxically refused them independence; this was little more than reformed imperialism in reality.<sup>25</sup>

Whether or not the Enlightenment was a source for Independence as well as for liberty is debateable; the ‘philosophes’ ignored national identity, not recognising nationality as a historical force. Unaware of the possibility of new nationalities they did not apply their ideas of liberty to relations between peoples. Although Rousseau argued a nation could be assigned a national character through appropriate institutions, he did not apply his ideas to colonial peoples. With few Enlightenment intellectuals addressing Independence as distinct from liberty, it was up to leaders of Spanish American Independence to develop their own concept of colonial liberation, as men such as Bolívar did.

Whilst not the main cause of Independence, Enlightenment thinking was used to justify and legitimise pro-independence actions throughout the age of Revolution. Creoles were acutely aware of these sources and were increasingly politicised, but in the interests of their own safety they had to remain cautious in their application of Enlightenment ideas.<sup>26</sup>

### Identity in Nineteenth-Century Spanish America

The so-called ‘Age of Revolution’ (c.1760-1850) saw huge social, political and cultural changes, bridging Spanish America’s late colonial and early independent history. E.J. Hobsbawm uses this term to describe the political and economic

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<sup>25</sup> Lynch, *Latin America Between Colony and Nation* (London: Institute of Latin American Studies, 2001), p.101.

<sup>26</sup> See David Bushnell and Neill Macanlay, *The Emergence of Latin America in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), Uribe-Uran, ed., *State and Society in Spanish America during the Age of Revolution* (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources, 2001) and Herring, *A History of Latin America* (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1961) especially Part III: The New World breaks with the Old.

transformations that occurred in different regions of the world during these years.<sup>27</sup>

These events witnessed the birth and growth of a public sphere in civil society in Spanish America. The actions of a particular group of people, who Rama refers to as the 'letrados' (university graduates and intellectuals), promoted the development of open discussion and participation in politics.<sup>28</sup>

Whilst these individuals began to discuss ideas in a more public arena, which witnessed the development of the printing press, the issue of national identity remained; Creole elites, before 1808, did not think in national terms but stayed loyal to the imprisoned Spanish sovereign; the word 'nation' was used rarely. Benedict Anderson famously argues in *Imagined Communities* that the presses of Creole publishers played a distinctive role in forming national identities in early independent Latin America. He asserts the existence prior to 1808 of Creole independence movements in various Spanish American regions, based on social and economic grievances.<sup>29</sup> In this way, newspapers became key to community life. However this really only applies post-1808 when the press entered a significant period of growth and became more financially viable. Where newspapers existed before this they were erudite periodicals devoted to geography, science and technology; whilst they did deal with local identity they often folded due to financial difficulties, the *Mercurio Peruano* is one such example. However, these periodicals offered little more than regional and local identities, they were not 'national' in character. Official newspapers, from before 1808, were organs of government control, submissive to the

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<sup>27</sup> Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

<sup>28</sup> In his study, *La Ciudad Letrada*, Rama links writing, urbanism and the state in Latin America. A group of men, 'letrados', wrote the official language of the empire in documents, reports and memoranda. These men had unique access to power in the colonial state; literacy and education remained the possession of a privileged few, synonymous with elevated social status. They exercised an influence as spokesmen in the new public sphere of debate on issues of the *res publica*. An expansion of all sorts of publishing, but particularly the periodical press ensued. Rama shows how newspapers played an essential role in the evolution of the lettered city.

<sup>29</sup> Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991).

Spanish monarchy. Anderson's argument therefore does not fully apply to Spanish America; he takes for granted that before 1808 Spanish America had divided into national communities aspiring to Independence. Guerra highlights the paradoxes that this argument unmasks; if Creole elites thought in national terms before 1808 why did they not take the opportunity presented by the invasion of Napoleon and imprisonment of the Spanish King to declare Independence? How can the support shown to the captive Spanish sovereign be explained? Finally, how could the problem of defining new nations once Independence had been gained be explained?<sup>30</sup>

The role of print as a creator of identity must be carefully considered; the Enlightened ideas it disseminated did not foster national identity, instead they offered a set of values that would have to be adapted to suit a colony seeking autonomy. Given low literacy rates, the press occupied a dual role in enlightened thinking; it permitted a wider circulation of ideas, as well as news and information, amongst the elite, whilst also exercising a pedagogical function to foster the diffusion of Enlightenment ideas and create a larger thinking public.<sup>31</sup> The narrowness of this enlightened elite explains the small scale of the late eighteenth-century periodical press.

The crisis of the Spanish monarchy witnessed a new wave of political writing, most of it rejecting the usurper Napoleon (and Joseph) and declaring loyalty to the legitimate King. A 'public' consensus emerged with the flourishing of this patriotic literature. A liberty of expression, previously unseen, emerged from civil society.<sup>32</sup> Censors in Spain and the Spanish dominions found it hard to limit expressions of patriotism that characterised the writing in the press and would not have wished to

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<sup>30</sup> See Guerra, 'Forms of Communication, Political Spaces, and Cultural Identities in the Creation of Spanish American Nations', in Castro-Klaren and Chasteen, ed., *Beyond Imagined Communities* (London: John Hopkins University Press, 2003).

<sup>31</sup> Guerra, p.11.

<sup>32</sup> Guerra, p.15.

ensor expressions of allegiance to the legitimate King. Although periodicals were published with the permission of the authorities, so free discussion of some political issues raised by the monarchical crisis existed but was limited, there was a growing public sphere and sense of local identity. The American identity had been gaining strength in the second half of the eighteenth century, spurred on by rivalry between Peninsulares and Creoles, and after 1808 new political debates widened the existing divide. The periodical press played an important role in disseminating the ideas that encouraged independent thought and then the process of creating a local and later national identity.

The periodical press affords us a clear insight into the nature and progress of the Enlightenment in Spanish America. In the first half of the eighteenth century there were few newssheets, and those that were in production amounted to little more than lists of ships arriving and departing, religious feasts, births, marriages, and deaths of important citizens. After 1760 a new breed of periodical was established, still officially biased, but there is an element of rational criticism and an expression of loyalty to a certain part of Spanish America, as well as a desire to work for the public good. In these early years, the printing press made public opinion conform to the principles of government; for example, government sponsorship of the press was viewed as beneficial in the Peruvian viceroy's eyes to disseminate politically expedient ideas.<sup>33</sup>

The growth of the press needs to be situated within a wider communications network; gossip, rumour, song, books, and salons should be acknowledged as other agents for the spread of ideas. This is relevant given the high rates of illiteracy. Beyond this the small number of printing presses limited the spread of printed

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<sup>33</sup> Uribe, *The Birth of a Public Sphere in Latin America During the Age of Revolution* (Florida: Florida International University, 2000), p.441.



material, in regions saturated with printing the periodical press could exert influence even amongst the illiterate. In Nueva Granada the first printing press was set up in 1738, and by 1800 there were four presses, located in the capital and in Cartagena. Their geographical location in two cities denied individuals not living in the environs access to print. Thus, there were very few readers, and even fewer presses; despite this picture of backwardness the *Papel Periódico de Santa Fé de Bogotá* (1791-97) does show signs of a 'reading public' in the late colonial era, which will be demonstrated. We are, however, talking about a very small community; there were 150 subscribers to this periodical amongst a total population of 1.8million. Participation was confined to a small minority of the educated colonial elite.

One of the first South American periodicals appeared in Lima, in 1791; the *Mercurio Peruano*, and by 1800 there were four printing presses in Peru. This newspaper typifies the shift from overwhelmingly religious documents in the early 1790s to agricultural, commercial and cultural matters at the turn of the century. A new literate culture in Peru was reflected in the press; Lima's cafés and 'tertulias' accounted for this, they were however aristocratic venues and so developing opinion in Lima was thus aristocratic opinion. Venezuela, in which no newspapers of any sort had been printed before 1808, experienced considerable growth of the press; some 16 journals were published in the following ten years.

The establishment of printing presses and the newspapers that followed provided the basis for the creation of new public spaces, and a means to shape an alternative political legitimacy. They moved from simply discussing information to reporting 'news'; from the spread of practical enlightenment to devising philosophical and legal justifications for independence and contributing to republican institution building the press, although read by a minority, mirrored broad transformations in

society. A close reading of the *Papel Periódico de Santa Fé de Bogotá* (1791-97), the *Mercurio Peruano* (1791-95) and the *Gazeta de Caracas* (1808-24) show the press as a functioning vehicle for the reception of Enlightenment ideas, the evolution of these ideas and the political consequences. Furthermore, they provide a contrast of views; the *Papel Periódico*'s rejection of French Enlightenment is distinct from the *Mercurio*'s hospitality towards enquiry, whilst the *Gazeta* is progressive and charts the previously unimaginable rejection of Spain.

# Chapter 1

## **Reception and Reaction to French Enlightenment Ideas and Revolutionary Events in the Periodical Press of New Granada and Peru 1791-96**

### The Periodical Press

The press in late Colonial Spanish America provides us with a unique insight into society. As a means of disseminating ideas it served to educate, influence and in some cases transmit various forms of Enlightenment, practical and philosophical, to the wider population. In some cases it was a tool in the service of the 'Patria',<sup>34</sup> for the benefit of the 'utilidad pública', in others it was an organ of rigid colonial authority.

Throughout the eighteenth century a lively flow of contraband ideas accompanied the growing trade between the colonies and non-Spanish territories. Spain, under the control of the enlightened bourbon king, Charles III, contributed to the intellectual renovation of the colonies. Spanish or foreign scientific expeditions to Spanish America stimulated the growth of scientific interests. Significant cultural activity took place in the economic societies, organised for the promotion of useful knowledge, and in private gatherings, where young men discussed free trade and the rights of men. Colonial newspapers, in which the new secular and critical spirit found articulate expression, appeared in increasing numbers in the period after 1790; more important than the routine news items they reported were the articles on scientific, economic and social questions.

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<sup>34</sup> 'Patria' refers to the promotion of a locality's riches: natural, man-made or intellectual. There was no sense of nationalism, instead a regional identity was forged; this was image boosting on a local scale.

The first issue of the *Papel Periódico de Santa Fé de Bogotá* came off the press on 9<sup>th</sup> February, 1791, at a time when the intellectual climate in New Granada was heating up, demonstrated by the Colegio Real de San Fernando's most recent addition: 'un título [Chair] de humanidades.' In an attempt to combat material poverty with rational thought the Viceroy of New Granada, José Manuel de Ezpeleta, was keen to promote this first official press organ; supreme political authority meant he was able to control the supply of information, whilst moralising articles controlled local customs and codes of conduct. Upon receiving some twenty-one copies, the Secretario for the *Mercurio Peruano* wrote back in thanks, 'los asuntos a que se contraen merecen todo aprecio y lo util de ellos nos ha hecho su lectura divertida'.<sup>35</sup>

The *Mercurio* itself was the first major newspaper in Spanish America; between 1790 and 1796 Peruvian Viceroy Gil de Taboada Lemus stimulated literary activity in Lima by gathering together individuals from the vice-regal court who were interested in the diffusion of knowledge. This small group decided to issue a literary and historical periodical, approved by the Viceroy; indeed healthy relations with the Viceroy were essential, he granted access not only to the public records office but also to a printing press. Under his sanction a private literary association was formed (Sociedad de Amantes del País) which provided the necessary articles; the viceroy took the position of 'Protector' in this society, whose official organ was the *Mercurio*. The first issue of the *Mercurio Peruano* appeared on 1<sup>st</sup> January 1791 (a month before the *Papel Periódico*), edited by Jacín de Calero y Moreyra;<sup>36</sup> it dealt with matters scientific, political, commercial, historical and statistical. That same year a further

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<sup>35</sup> *Papel Periódico de Santa Fé de Bogotá* (Vol.I pX). All quotes are as they appear in the original, spelling and punctuation remains unchanged.

<sup>36</sup> Moses, *Spanish Colonial Literature in South America* (London: Hispanic Society of America, 1922), p.599.

society was formed; the 'tertulia poética' discussed articles and poems, and some of their work was published in the *Mercurio*.

Amongst the most significant developments in these years was the appearance of the *Gaceta de Lima* (1793-1804); published and accredited by the same Viceroy. Its readers were warned of the excesses of the French Revolution. Heavy propaganda against revolutionary doctrine was common, free criticism of the Church and republican attacks against the absolutist state were suppressed. The *Gaceta* ran until 1821 and made information public as the government wished. Essentially falsified reporting, the newspaper was used by the Viceroy to control the population; it could thus be asked why was the *Mercurio* not given this 'official' status? There are several reasons; the number of elite individuals associated with the *Mercurio* could potentially make control of published material difficult and secondly, these were men of ideals, not necessarily prepared to conform to government views, thus leaving the Viceroy open to potential embarrassment. The *Mercurio* was the publication of the Sociedad de Amantes del País which would not easily submit to extensive government control.

### Sociedad de Amantes del País

Throughout Colonial Spanish America a number of government sponsored Sociedades Económicas de Amigos del País were established; often declaring themselves 'hijos de la Enciclopedia' these groups of enlightened men produced many of the periodical press' contributors and editors.<sup>37</sup> Societies were established in Quito (1791), Havana (1791), Lima (1793), Guatemala (1795-1796) and Santa Fé de

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<sup>37</sup> Novoa, *La Sociedad Económica de Amigos del País. Su influencia en la emancipación colonial Americana* (Madrid: Prensa Española, 1955), p.2.

Bogotá (1801-1802);<sup>38</sup> members were predominantly white, politically moderate and landowners. R.J. Shafter states they ‘represented organised opinion and study on an unofficial basis, with a unique programme of publication – which threatened the traditionally rigid system of intellectual control’.<sup>39</sup>

The Sociedad de Amantes del País in Peru was established to study and illustrate the country’s history, literature and public affairs. Royal and religious authority were to be respected and the development of the public good was the prime objective, ‘el Patriotismo, la humanidad y la filosofía fueron sus principios’.<sup>40</sup> As an institution, the Sociedad made a major contribution to the change in outlook in Peru as it brought in new ideas. Aside from their Peruvian studies, the members were familiar with European thought. Dr. José Baquíjano y Carrillo, President until 1793 when he left for Spain and was replaced by Joseph Rossi y Rubí, lent out books he had acquired on his visit to Carlos III’s Spain. Dr. José Hipólito Unanue, Secretary, had Rousseau, Voltaire and Condillac in his private library, whilst Fr. Diego Cisneros possessed many of the books that were banned during the Inquisition.<sup>41</sup> The *Mercurio* depended almost entirely on the Sociedad for its content and editorship. The Sociedad, although broad in its functions, was not really a Sociedad Económica, rather its focus was on improving public well-being through a more in-depth knowledge of Peru, specifically scientific. It did, however, extend a spirit of criticism and philosophical curiosity in its work, similar to that seen in France before the 1789 Revolution.

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<sup>38</sup> Uribe, *The Birth of a Public Sphere in Latin America During the Age of Revolution* (Florida: Florida International University, 2000), p.439.

<sup>39</sup> Shafter, *The Economic Societies in the Spanish World (1763-1821)* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1958), p.353.

<sup>40</sup> Zeta Quinde, *El Pensamiento Ilustrado en el Mercurio Peruano 1791-1794* (Peru: Universidad de Piura, 2000), p.52. It is worth noting here that ‘Patriotismo’ does not equate to nationalism; a much more isolated, local sentiment it signified loyalty to a certain province.

<sup>41</sup> Zeta Quinde, p.53.

The Sociedad accumulated and edited material for publication in Peru. The founders, Rossí y Rubí (who wrote under the name Hesperiphilo), Unanue (Aristio), Joseph María Egaña (Hermogas) and Demetrio Guasque (Homotimo), were authorised by the Viceroy who only sought approval from the King once he had given permission. In this way, in 1792 the Sociedad received Government authorisation and protection. The Government set out guidelines for the organisation of activities; the structure of the society was essentially academic consisting of, a President, Vice-president, two Censors, a Secretary, Treasurer and Press-director who oversaw the members. These were divided into three categories: academic, consultant and honorary. Members needed to be approved by the Viceroy; they submitted two essays and then if accepted were required to give an address.

The hierarchy was mirrored in that of the *Mercurio Peruano*; of the thirty academics, twenty were men of letters (*letrados*) who resided in Lima, the headquarters of the newspaper, and were charged with developing topics that would be of interest to the whole of Peru. The ‘researchers’ (*Consultores*), also resident in Lima, were to provide the academics (*Redactores*) with relevant data and information to write the content, and were specialists in geography, agriculture, mining and commerce. The issue of funding was central, and lack of funds explain the irregular issues and the abrupt end to many of the newspapers. The *Mercurio* relied on subscriptions and was in a perpetual state of concern with regards to its resources; whilst the Sociedad did not levy a fee from its members, many of them provided subsidies from their own pockets, believing such backing would increase the quality of the academic membership.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Zeta Quinde, p.60.

The Sociedad was varied in its areas of research, however all its activities had one aim: to enlighten, in the broadest sense, the Peruvian literate elite, and to impart knowledge of their own country which could enhance not only their quality of life, but also Peru's global image. Although read and written by the elite, there exists a desire to improve conditions for the masses; methods for landowners to increase production, for example, were for the benefit of all.

### Editors

Relatively little is known about the editors of the *Papel Periódico*, other than that they were all government sanctioned and they promoted information as instructed. This is not the case with the *Mercurio Peruano*, whose editors were members of the Sociedad Amantes del País, as stated. The structure of the *Mercurio* editorial team was straightforward; three Directors: Egaña, whose house was used for editorial meetings; Baquíjano y Carrillo, and Cedrán y Pontero who headed up the paper. The Chief Editor, with responsibility for the text to be included in 'copy', was Unanue until 1793. When Cisneros took over, this post was held concurrently with that of Secretario de la Sociedad. One step down the hierarchy was the Editor; below him the academic members, los Redactores, were the writers. Consultants assisted with material gathering, and Correspondents carried out interviews abroad and oversaw foreign subscriptions. This well-organised team represented a broad cross-section of disciplines; Unanue was Professor of Anatomy, Egaña a Police lieutenant, and Rossí y Rubí a mining expert. Other editors hailed from the Church, the Military, the medical and legal professions, and of course the academic world. It is worth considering further the background of the main contributors to ascertain the degree to which it could be said they were enlightened.

Dr Hipólito Unanue – *Aristio* (1755-1833)



Peruvian born, Unanue abandoned plans to enter the Church for his scientific studies, gaining a reputation for his expertise in medicine, mathematics, physics and natural history. As well as being Professor of Anatomy in Lima, he wrote a political, ecclesiastical and statistical account of the Peruvian viceroyalty between 1783 and 1797. His most famous writing, however, was, ‘Observaciones sobre el clima de Lima y sus influencias en los seres organizados; en especial el Hombre’, published in Lima 1806, and Madrid 1815.<sup>43</sup> Although Unanue’s main motive was to overcome ignorance and illness through the study of anatomy, his notions on Government are relevant too: respectful of Religion, he believed in enlightened Monarchy, attacked despotism and stressed reason and ‘humanidad’ as key to public happiness and good governance; a ruler should ‘hacer feliz al pueblo a quien rige; nada le detiene, todo lo aventura y sacrifica por el bien de sus subditos’.<sup>44</sup>

#### José Rossí y Rubí – *Hesperiophylo*

The most prolific writer, with forty-four articles and twelve notes to his name, Rossí y Rubí deals with a wide range of subjects: mining, charity, customs, culture, literature. An Italian who lived in Lima from 1787, he travelled widely in Peru identifying species of birds and mammals and cataloguing rock; he intended to set up a ‘Gabinete de Historia Natural’. The *Mercurio Peruano* provided him with the ideal means of disseminating the ‘espíritu’ of the Enlightenment.

#### José Ignacio de Lecuanda

Although Ignacio de Lecuanda published fewer articles, and wrote under his own name, he highlights the range of expertise the Chief Editor had to master; he was an accountant by profession in government in Lima. He wrote on geography, agriculture, industry, politics and administration. His greatest work tackled the

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<sup>43</sup> Moses, p.564.

<sup>44</sup> *El Mercurio Peruano*, 1792 (Vol.IV Fol.31).

problem of the vagrants in Lima and how best to employ them; he claimed that two thirds of the population supported the remaining third through charity as these had developed an unwillingness to work.<sup>45</sup> Sons of artisans, he claimed, refused to take up their fathers' work, whilst women preferred to attach themselves to their families for subsistence. The uneasy mix of race and class was a contributing factor, according to Lecuanda; whites and mestizos refused to treat blacks and mulattoes as equals, whilst blacks and mulattoes refused to take on labour in the fields.

The increasing interest in Peruvian natural resources is reflected in the editors' choice of subject material; over a four year period (1791-1795) articles concerned with knowledge of the country (geographical, biological, zoological, historical) increase by 33%, scientific entries also rocket by 25%, contemporary politics increases by 3%, religion remains constant whilst articles containing official notices and economic information decline in numbers.

Practical utility and logical thinking are considered necessary for the country's well-being. New discoveries in natural history and medicine are occurring, yet precious few of the population are aware of this. Hence the aim of the *Mercurio*: to spread ideas.

## Readership

### Subscribers to *El Papel Periódico*

Of the 103 recorded subscribers in 1791, some 40% were from government backgrounds (lawyers, judiciary, civil servants), 22% were military officers (there is little information available on the army, but these were high ranking officials); 17% were academics; 10% Clergy, and 8% employed in commerce.<sup>46</sup> Even though these

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<sup>45</sup> Moses, *Spanish Colonial Literature in South America*, p.565.

<sup>46</sup> Renan Silva, *Prensa y Revolución a finales del Siglo XVIII* (Colombia: Banco de Republica, 1988), p.31.

figures are useful, there is some overlap; men from a military background could also fulfil a government role. In any case, they were all part of the white, elite professional classes.

Nonetheless, the figures show that the intellectual class, that is the clergy and the academics, formed one of the most active sectors, and yet the clergy was conceivably the least open to Enlightenment. The military presence is also important, given that many children of important army officers were at university; these formed a group of young men dedicated to gaining prestige, learning and improvement. These enlightened sons of military officers would serve to combat fanaticism and irrational thought. However, such groups were a minority, and the extent to which they were truly enlightened is to be seen. Society was clearly divided into two: ‘los ilustrados’, equipped with judgement and discernment, sought to reform society and govern. But this minority group was outnumbered by ‘la muchedumbre’, who did not possess the reason that nature has given ‘la minoría ilustrada’, and who were incapable of articulating a coherent ideology, and had problems reading and writing. Thus, it is doubtful how receptive the uneducated masses were to the spread of ideas through the periodical press. Despite this limited readership, the *Papel Periódico* focused primarily on the maintenance of political and social order, attacking the pernicious ideas that were causing anarchy in France.

### Subscribers to *El Mercurio Peruano*

The social composition of the 517 subscribers to the *Mercurio Peruano* did not differ greatly from that of the *Papel Periódico*: 51% were landowners, 27% were classified as nobility, whilst 15% were clergy, leaving 5% unaccounted for.<sup>47</sup> Within this grouping, Clément’s study goes on to distinguish between professions; the editors

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<sup>47</sup>Clément, *El Mercurio Peruano Vol I: Estudio* (Peru: Instituto Nacional de Cultura, 1979), p.33.

were fairly evenly split between ‘Administración’ (19%), ‘Hacienda’ (12%), ‘Actividades Económicas’ (17%) and ‘Iglesia’ (13%) (p34). Clearly these are broad groupings; administration encompassed both colonial (viceroys, ministers) and local and municipal (mayors), ‘Hacienda’ covered chiefly financial administration, whilst economic activities included mining, industry and commerce. Again, subscribers were part of an elite minority, approximately one third of these subscribers fulfilled an official role in political or financial activities.

However, all these subscribers are interested in knowing more about their own country, the vice-royalty of Peru; they are keen to harness knowledge to develop their locality, hence the strong sense of ‘patria’ that underlies many of the articles. In many cases ‘patria’ is inseparable from Enlightenment thought. Following Carlos III’s reforms of 1777-78 Peru was divided into 51 ‘partidos’, and each one of these localities was keen to rectify foreign criticism of its backwardness and to progress. The Spanish Government was also interested in articles that focused on development and as we have seen the *Mercurio Peruano* provided an official, controlled outlet for such writing. The new concept of welfare and the idea of finding the ‘greatest happiness for the greatest number’ (beneficencia pública) was integral to European philosophy. In this sense the Enlightenment was adopted and made Peruvian, and the *Mercurio* aimed to spread these new ideas through its subscribers.

Finally, it is interesting that this already limited list of subscribers is even narrower than appears at first sight given that many of those who received the *Mercurio* were, in fact, related. The lists of subscribers ignore family ties and marital links, as Clément has shown; he traces some fifty related subscribers in his study.<sup>48</sup> Not only are the individuals who receive the newspaper from the same social sphere

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<sup>48</sup> Jean-Pierre Clément, *El Mercurio Peruano Vol I: Estudio*, p.232.

and similar economic groups but they are also family members. It is perhaps their own personal and family interests that motivate them to promote Enlightenment and improve the quality of life in their Peruvian localities. However, given that 53% of subscribers are resident in Lima it is questionable how far new ideas actually spread (geographically), which adds fuel to the argument that it was a very small, isolated community amongst which these modern ideas circulated.

## Reception and Reaction to ideas and events

### Questions of Governance

#### Enlightenment and the Subversion of Order

It is impossible to ignore the broad theme of politics and social order as discussed in the *Papel Periódico de Bogotá*. Staunch support for the monarchy, colonial rule and a highly stratified society strongly discouraged enlightened thinking. Ecclesiastical conformity, loyalty to the monarchy and obedience to traditional authority were all dependent on a rigorously controlled society. However, although this was an official newspaper, the editors could not ignore the curiosity about contemporary events in France; learned people wanted to know why there was so much discontent with the monarchy there. Articles were published to satisfy this public curiosity. Full of ‘avisos’, often defensive in tone, the *Papel Periódico* served as a screen onto which the editors could project an image of a degenerate France, destabilised by Enlightenment thought. The Revolution is shown to be unable to recognise the limits of reason; liberty, ‘una sentencia tan racional y verdadera’,<sup>49</sup> is debased and misconstrued as lack of reason and chaos.

The editors of the *Papel Periódico* were deeply suspicious of the quest for knowledge, ‘el hijo de Adam se ha olvidado[...]se quiere levantar sobre los montes de

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<sup>49</sup> *Papel Periódico de Santa Fé de Bogotá*, ‘La Libertad bien entendida’ 1<sup>st</sup> July 1791 (Vol.IV No.21), p.173.

la Sabiduria, y por eso se ha caido en tantas ignorancias' (p173). They claim that attempts to enhance knowledge and to question accepted truths are feather-brained; the Enlightenment is dismissed as whimsical, 'el no quisiera depender de otro que de su capricho'(p174). The editors respect the general principles of natural law, reason and liberty but it is the application of these principles that is misguided in their view, especially where God is concerned.

It is alleged that support for Enlightenment ideas in France is feigned, and that individuals only follow the 'philosophes' for fear of punishment, 'finge [n] amar el espiritu de las leyes; aparenta el respetarlas;[...]pero casi todo es por miedo del castigo'(p174). Reference here, although brief, to Montesquieu's *l'Esprit des Lois* acknowledges the presence of Enlightenment thought, yet simultaneously discredits it. Whilst the Enlightenment seeks to discredit religion, the Bogotá editors continue to accentuate the legitimacy of the Catholic Church; they state that in New Granada the sovereignty of the King and his Divine Right remains unquestioned 'no solo por la ley natural sino por la Divina'(p174). It is then dubious as to why these so called 'hombres sabios' are enraged by the idea of being subordinate to 'esas sagradas personas constituidas por Dios en el Gobierno de la tierra'(p174). Montesquieu's logic is flawed according to the *Papel Periódico*, as the authority of the Crown cannot be questioned.

It is stated that Enlightenment pronouncements 'tan lleno de fuego y artificio'(p174) defeat exactly what they set out to affirm, 'la Naturaleza y la Razon'(p174). Liberty is defined as capricious, paying little heed to reason and natural law. This view however twists Montesquieu's ideas. When Montesquieu discusses liberty in *l'Esprit des Lois*, he maintains that a nation is most free when it

does things in accordance with collective natural tendencies, ‘nous ne faisons rien de mieux que ce que nous faisons librement, et en suivant notre génie naturel’.<sup>50</sup>

The editors claim the development of a ‘filosofia demasiado odiosa a la razon’, has wrecked the happiness it was attempting to find.<sup>51</sup> Enlightenment values of virtue and reason are thus subverted. Whilst Montesquieu believed his laws emanated from nature, ‘les lois, dans la signification la plus étendue, sont les rapports nécessaires qui dérivent de la nature des choses’,<sup>52</sup> the editors of the *Papel Periódico* were insistent that this thinking incites an atmosphere of anarchy which ‘llena de terror á las aves que vuelan por el aire, a los brutos que corren por la tierra’.<sup>53</sup> Despite this negative interpretation, or deliberate misinterpretation, these new ideas did nonetheless circulate. Conceivably it was their application that was flawed, rather than their philosophical value. As they attack the ideas the editors paradoxically disseminate them and readers may decide to agree with the philosophers rather than the editors.

### France and Irrationality

To illustrate the danger of this new enlightened philosophy it needed to be shown in context. In response to growing curiosity about the French Revolution, articles were published reporting the current situation, ‘por contemporizar con los deseos y curiosidad pública’.<sup>54</sup> With a moralising and instructive tone the *Papel Periódico* states that an educated man, such as ‘un Filósofo’ who has studied ‘la Sabiduría’ and ‘la Naturaleza’, can only experience ‘sensaciones de asombro y de dolor

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<sup>50</sup> Montesquieu, *l'Esprit des Lois* (Paris: Seghers, 1972), p.209.

<sup>51</sup> *Papel Periódico de Santa Fé de Bogotá*, ‘La Libertad bien entendida’ 1<sup>st</sup> July 1791 (Vol.IV No.21), p.174.

<sup>52</sup> Montesquieu, *l'Esprit des Lois*, p.69.

<sup>53</sup> *Papel Periódico de Santa Fé de Bogotá*, ‘La Libertad bien entendida’ 1<sup>st</sup> July 1791 (Vol.IV No.21), p.175.

<sup>54</sup> *Papel Periódico de Santa Fé de Bogotá*, ‘Idea General del Estado Presente de las Cosas de Francia’ 21<sup>st</sup> February 1794 (Vol.IV No.130), p.614.

superiores’(p614) when confronted with the Parisian Constituent Assembly. Faced with the French Revolution, the *Papel Periódico* was vigorous in its condemnation. The perceived threat to order in Spanish America was to imitate France’s deviation from Catholicism, which had turned ‘las luces mas sobresalientes de la prudencia humana[...]en insensatez y barbarie’(p615).

The rejection of the Catholic religion and Divine Rule were extremely radical ideas in the deeply conservative colonial context. The extent of the negative reaction to the French Revolution cannot be underestimated; the editors were horrified and appalled,

esa funesta metamorfosis que ha cubierto de horror y empapado en lágrimas y sangre a toda la Europa, y que quizá va a borrar la memoria de todos los grandes acontecimientos del Universo (p615).

This vision of the Revolution as an unprecedented barbarity is confirmed by the description of the death of Louis XVI; the day of his execution signalled the beginning of ‘la funesta época del desorden y calamidad del Pueblo Galicáno’(p615). Each Revolutionary development is treated with outrage and horror. The editors discredit the new Assembly, whose only triumph (the execution of the King) would also prove to be its destruction.

The *Papel Periódico* interprets Enlightenment thought as irrational and harmful. Not content with overthrowing Religion and the Monarchy, the Revolution breeds suspicion and superstition which eat away at society from within,

ya el interés de la conservación es el destructor de ella misma, porque viviendo cada uno sospechoso del ótro, procura arrojarlo al sepulcro ántes que aquel consiga verificar el propio intento (p616).



Utterly destructive, liberty is seen as lack of self-restraint and order, existing ‘en los deseos’(p617), while its implementation results in oppression. New systems of government bring in contradictory sanctions owing to the fact that ‘han desaparecido la Gerarquias del Estado[...]Todos los legisladores[...]no hay ni Nobleza ni Plebe que constituyan la armonia politica’(p617). Implicit is the repudiation of Rousseau’s *Du Contrat Social* according to which each citizen is a full participant of the legislative assembly that exercises authority,

A l’instant que le peuple est légitimement assemblé en corps souverain, toute juridiction du Gouvernement cesse, la puissance exécutive est suspendue, et la personne du dernier citoyen est aussi sacrée et inviolable que celle du premier magistrat, parce qu’où se trouve le représenté il n’y a plus de représentant.<sup>55</sup>

Thus, the French Revolution is shown to disrupt all areas of life; religious, political, social and cultural. Enlightened thinking is the catalyst that leads to confusion and fanaticism that destabilises society’s previously solid foundations.

### The Barbaric Enlightenment

In the *Papel Periódico* the pitfalls of the Enlightenment are shown to abound as politically calculated reporting depicts France descending into barbarism. Although many Enlightenment philosophes also saw Revolution and anarchy as a failure (their ideas were designed to bring about change through debate and reform), the principles informing political activity in France were nonetheless heavily influenced by their ideas.

The *Papel Periódico* reports that new legislators in France have begun to whittle down the Church’s authority, and as the revolutionary wave gathers momentum widowed or unmarried women are obliged to find a suitable husband

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<sup>55</sup> Rousseau, *Du Contrat Social*, CE Vaughan, ed. (Manchester: MUP, 1918), III.xiv p.81.

within three months, the motive being to ‘remediar la perdida diaria y sensible de la poblacion del Reyno’.<sup>56</sup> Reported with scathing criticism, this detail is selected to demonstrate the failings of the Enlightenment and to frighten the ladies of Bogotá; why attempt to replenish the population when the guillotine is still claiming so many lives, the editors ask? The confusion of revolutionary ideas does nothing but discredit France, ‘créamos, pues, que esto es querer mas gente para la Guillotina’(p694). In this atmosphere advancements in science are acknowledged but rendered useless in such a wretched nation, ‘como ha de convalecer un enfermo que desprecia y arroja todas las medicinas’(p695). It would seem that France could not descend any further into chaos; in this sense the Enlightenment has defeated itself as the state has ended up depending on prisoners, emigrants and Royalist troops for the ‘defensa y el establecimiento de la pretendida República’(p695).

This calculated attack on the Enlightenment and its results in France is designed to show that the Revolution has surpassed the limits of reason and descended into barbarism. The editors infer this in their examples; like the Amazonian woman, France’s women ‘han renunciado toda la delicadéza y dulzura características de su sexo’(p696). Notions of liberty and equality have been cast aside by the Jacobins, ‘corriendo las calles y plazas insultaban a las que no iban vestidas como ellas’(p696). The liberators become tyrants. The climate the Enlightenment has encouraged is one of suspicion; everybody’s behaviour is under close scrutiny, ‘los Republicános Franceses hubiesen de tutearse sopena de declarar sospechosos a los que no lo hiciesen’(p697).

The purpose of illustrating the situation in France is to demonstrate how a break from God and tradition leads to destruction, not to peaceful reform. New ideas

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<sup>56</sup> *Papel Periódico de Santa Fé de Bogotá*, ‘Sigue la Misma Materia del No. Anterior’ 2<sup>nd</sup> May 1794 (Vol.IV No.140), p.694.

drive individuals past the limits of reason; base human nature becomes the principal obstruction to successful government. Renan Silva states that the *Papel Periódico* distinguishes between two classes of men; the selfish and hypocritical who lack principles, among whom are the false reformers and intellectuals, and the reasonable minority who are content with their place in society, whose virtue and obedience preserve their happiness and tranquillity.<sup>57</sup> The editors maintain that revolutionary ideas are mere rhetoric and whilst they do acknowledge the presence of intellectual arguments in France there is little toleration for them. ‘Patriotismo’ and ‘honor’ have become associated with mass execution whilst new forms of government, the deputies, the Convention, and the various Committees for Public Health and Safety, are shown to embody the opposite of progress: ‘ni puede haber jamas unos fanaticos de este tamano?’<sup>58</sup> Whilst the editors argue that this fanaticism is a product of enlightened intellectuals, Voltaire in fact claims in his *Dictionnaire Philosophique* that an ‘esprit philosophique’ is an antidote to fanaticism. He defines reason as the search for the true and the good; the concept of justice is central to his thinking. Voltaire was obsessed by man’s ignorance of himself and his surroundings; he would be in agreement with the editors as to the extent of the savagery in Paris, yet he believed rational thinking was the cure, not traditional authority, ‘il n’y a autre remède à cette maladie épidémique que l’esprit philosophe[...]les lois et la religion ne suffisent pas contre la peste des âmes; la religion[...]se tourne en poison dans les cerveaux infectés.’<sup>59</sup> Of course, these ideas are not disseminated in the *Papel Periódico*.

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<sup>57</sup> Renan Silva, *Prensa y Revolucion a finales del Siglo XVIII*, p.137.

<sup>58</sup> *Papel Periódico de Santa Fé de Bogotá*, ‘Sigue la Misma Materia del No. Anterior’ 2<sup>nd</sup> May 1794 (Vol.IV No.140), p.698.

<sup>59</sup> Voltaire, *Dictionnaire Philosophique: FANATISME*, pp.264-265.

‘Civicismo’,<sup>60</sup> that is, the civic society set out by Rousseau in *Du Contrat Social*, which gives men civil liberty, is shown to have been disastrous for France.<sup>61</sup> Popular sovereignty has proved to be impossible to carry out as the Convention is increasingly associated with ‘tirania’ and ‘conjuraciones contra lo que alli llaman la libertad’(p699). Such massive social decomposition in a short period confirms an unprecedented downwards spiral into savagery, painting a picture of a degenerate nation wrecked by a misguided and erroneous ‘esprit philosophique’.

### Monarchy as an example of good Governance: *El Papel Periódico*

In Spanish America a stable monarchy was essential for the Creole elite to maintain their authority and for the Clergy to remain powerful. Numerous articles affirm that it is in the interest of everyone to preserve the monarchy; ‘Interés del pueblo en el restablecimiento de la Monarquía’<sup>62</sup> is just one of such articles. However, philosophes including Montesquieu argue strongly against Monarchical rule, as will be shown. In the early, cautious years of the Enlightenment the elite, although open to new thinking, were chiefly concerned with preserving the status quo; thus, when they saw the reaction to the fall of the King in France they were expedient in their condemnation.

In this climate, thinkers such as Montesquieu who recognised the disadvantages of monarchical rule were quickly suppressed. In his *Lettres Persannes*, Montesquieu proposes that when a King rules the Troglodytes, they cease to shoulder

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<sup>60</sup> *Papel Periódico de Santa Fé de Bogotá*, ‘Sigue la Misma Materia del No. Anterior’ 2<sup>nd</sup> May 1794 (Vol.IV No.140), p.699.

<sup>61</sup> In Book 3, Chapter I of *Du Contrat Social*, Rousseau sets out government as an intermediary body between citizens in their sovereign capacity as subjects bound by law. Sovereignty is governed by the General Will and government can take on different configurations dependent on the needs of the population.

<sup>62</sup> *Papel Periódico de Santa Fé de Bogotá*, ‘Sigue la Misma Materia del No. Anterior: Interés del pueblo en el restablecimiento de la Monarquía’ 10<sup>th</sup> October 1794 (Vol.IV No.161).

their individual responsibility and fail to maintain their civic mindfulness; citizens lose their virtue,

vous aimez mieux être soumis à un prince et obéir à ses lois, moins rigides que vos moeurs. Vous savez que, pour lors, vous pourrez contenter votre ambition, acquérir des richesses et languir dans une lâche volupté, et que, pourvu que vous évitez de tomber dans les grands crimes vous n'aurez pas besoin de la vertu.<sup>63</sup>

This piercing analysis intimates that monarchy offers too much comfort, absolving citizens of the duty to take responsibility. It is countered by the *Papel Periódico*'s claim that monarchy is the most natural form of rule, offering maximum stability, 'baxo el regimen Monarquico la guerra estaba reparada por largos intervalos[...]la paz el orden y la opulencia reinaban siempre en lo interior[...]ninguna persona combatia contra su voluntad'.<sup>64</sup>

Such a stance, whereby Monarchy is seen to offer the greatest happiness, avoids modern thinking concerning individual virtue, and safeguards the Clergy and minority elite, who would lose their power if the Monarchy were overthrown. Without the Clergy and educated elites, the country would be desolate: 'aun suponiendo asimismo que el Cléro y la Nobleza viniesen à alistarse baxo las Vanderas de la anarquía, serian 300 mil individuos los unicos que partirian las calamidades de 24 millones de hombres' (p878). Further arguments in favour of the King are systematically listed, inextricably supported by Divine Right and natural law. In God's order, as in nature, Monarchy is the original, and only, system of rule that

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<sup>63</sup> Montesquieu, *Lettres Persannes* (Paris: Garnier, 1960), Lettre XIV p.37.

<sup>64</sup> *Papel Periódico de Santa Fé de Bogotá*, 'Sigue la Disertación' 2<sup>nd</sup> October 1794 (Vol.IV No.163), p.879.

satisfies natural reason.<sup>65</sup> Again, Enlightenment principles are twisted to suit colonial authority; it is clear the theories of natural reason, liberty, the balance of power and the notion of greatest happiness are circulating and might pose a threat. In this instance they are applied to affirm authority in the King and to underline weaknesses in other forms of government. In short, for Rousseau, freedom and equality can only exist when there is no sovereign apart from the entire body of citizens,

Si l'on recherche en quoi consiste précisément le plus grand bien de tous, qui doit être la fin de tout système de législation, on trouvera qu'il se réduit à ces deux objets principaux, la *liberté* et l'*égalité*: la liberté, parce que tout dépendance particulière est autant de force ôtée au corps de l'Etat; l'égalité, parce que la liberté ne peut subsister sans elle.<sup>66</sup>

For the editors of el *Papel Periódico* freedom and equality can only exist under a King 'por cuyas leyes y sabiduria se ha establecido el orden'.<sup>67</sup>

### Notions of Virtue

It is evident that enlightened thinking reached Spanish America and that its reception was extremely cautious. As we have seen, its principles were often applied to confirm colonial authority. What is less clear for the *Papel Periódico* is whether Spanish Americans were susceptible to Enlightenment philosophy and whether they were virtuous. 'Retrato Historico de Luis XVI Sobre el Trono' questions whether Enlightenment virtue leads to good governance and discusses the exact motives of these so-called 'virtuous' individuals.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> *Papel Periódico de Santa Fé de Bogotá*, 'Sigue la Materia del No. Anterior' 5<sup>th</sup> December 1794 (Vol.IV No.169), p.926.

<sup>66</sup> Rousseau, *Du Contrat Social*, CE Vaughan, ed., I Ch.XI p.44.

<sup>67</sup> *Papel Periódico de Santa Fé de Bogotá*, 'Sigue la Materia del No. Anterior' 5<sup>th</sup> December 1794 (Vol.IV No.169), p.928.

<sup>68</sup> *El Papel Periódico*, 'Retrato Historico de Luis XVI Sobre el Trono', 18<sup>th</sup> April 1794 (Vol.IV No.138).

The meaning of virtue changed considerably during the European Enlightenment; the shift involved the relation between morality and self-interest. These two elements are interlinked: whilst Aristotle emphasised virtue in human character through justice, wisdom, temperance and fortitude, virtue in the public and political realm meant a commitment to foster and defend the public good. This idea was overlaid with Christian discourse encouraging faith, hope and the love of God.<sup>69</sup> Religion is never far from the surface in colonial Spanish America. As Zeta Quinde points out in her analysis of *el Mercurio Peruano*, ‘la virtud es un esfuerzo que el hombre hace sobre si mismo para el bien de los hombres, con la intencion de agradar a Dios’.<sup>70</sup> In Peru virtue or self-abnegation and altruism is inseparable from God.

Enlightenment thinkers questioned whether a commercially orientated society, and thus a more self-interested society, threatened moral or civic virtue. Rousseau claimed the strength (virtus) of a state depended on the virtues of its citizens; in a society where commerce is dominant and luxury is established man fails to exhibit virtue, devoting himself instead to private ends. Commerce is considered to be uncertain, as it is reliant on sales which cannot be guaranteed; stability and security is found in land owners who, in their fixed position, can practice virtues such as constancy and fidelity.

To defend commerce, so that it is no longer perceived as a threat to virtue, new strategies needed to be developed to re-evaluate exactly what virtue meant. Montesquieu argued in *l’Esprit des Lois* that the natural effect of commerce was peace, as it was defined by a shift from warlike virtues of courage and glory to gentler virtues such as decency and moderation. In this sense, enlightened virtue is

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<sup>69</sup> Kors (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of the Enlightenment*, p.225.

<sup>70</sup> *El Mercurio Peruano*, (Vol.II Fols.112-113) in Rosa Zeta Quinde, *El Pensamiento Ilustrado en el Mercurio Peruano 1791-1794* (Piura: Universidad de Piura, 2000).

associated with civilised, respectable men. According to Voltaire virtue had to be socially useful; it must enhance the public good.<sup>71</sup>

The changing values of virtue must also be considered in the political realm; of the three forms of government identified by Montesquieu (Republic, Monarchy and Tyranny), it was the freest Republican form that was associated with virtue. In book 3 of *l'Esprit des Lois* virtue describes a love of equality, an appropriate system of laws that embodies patriotism and encourages citizens to pursue the public good,

C'est au législateur à suivre l'esprit de la nation, lorsqu'il n'est pas contraire aux principes du gouvernement; car nous ne faisons rien de mieux que ce que nous faisons librement, et en suivant notre génie naturel.<sup>72</sup>

Whilst Montesquieu believed virtue was to be derived from citizens following a set of laws, Rousseau believed that political virtue lay in citizens willing the common good; in other words for Rousseau direct participation, through the General Will, guarantees political virtue.

Therefore, it is unsurprising that the editors of the *Papel Periódico* refuted this reworked definition of virtue, with its increasing emphasis on civic values and more representative forms of government. The new European model of virtue is not acknowledged in the paper; furthermore it is asserted that when man is split into his seven divisions (virtuous, selfish, talent less and useless, those who deceive to further their own aims, the uneducated masses, and philosophers and philanthropists – so called 'reformers') it is only the smallest subset of men who exhibit virtue.<sup>73</sup> Virtue, recognised as an important quality, is closely associated in the *Papel Periódico* with subordination; men who recognise the divine providence of the sovereign are

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<sup>71</sup> Voltaire, *Philosophical Dictionary*, T Besterman ed., pp.398-400.

<sup>72</sup> Montesquieu, *l'Esprit des Lois*, p.209.

<sup>73</sup> *Papel Periódico de Santa Fé de Bogotá*, 'Retrato Historico de Luis XVI sobre el trono' 18<sup>th</sup> April 1794 (Vol.IV No.138), p.679.



virtuous, ‘porque su fiel y virtuosa subordinacion conserva sus espiritus llenos de alegria y tranquilidad en cualquiera fortuna’ (p680). So, whilst virtue remains an admirable quality, and can only be found in the most upstanding citizens, it is a far cry from the enlightened values that are emanating from France.

The remaining six divisions of man identified in the *Papel Periódico* either attempt to deviate from this traditional interpretation of virtue because they are consumed by their own selfishness, or are totally unsusceptible to virtue in the first place. The second type are selfish men, too interested in themselves; thus, they are perpetually unhappy and are aggrieved by just laws, their ‘espiritu de murmacion contra las leyes y disposiciones mas justas’ (p680) is evil. Whilst it is stated here that obedience to a system of laws and an unselfish nature are desirable (cf Montesquieu), the system of government is that of colonial authority. This deliberate misinterpretation of French thinking is evident in the analysis that follows: a system where individuals win votes to represent the masses is shown by the *Papel Periódico* to be open to abuse, rather than fostering virtue it detracts from it. Rulers take advantage of the ‘ignorante multitud’ to further their personal designs, ‘aparentan el mas zeloso y desinteresado patriotismo, y baxo de este hermoso pretexto interpretan maliciosamente las intenciones mas puras del Gobierno y las obras mas útiles al bien comun’ (p680).

The editors highlight the accommodation of Enlightenment thought in colonial New Granada; virtue is acknowledged as important, however here it is traditional virtue based on courage and zeal rather than the respectable, civic virtue that French thinkers are proposing. The *Papel Periódico* agrees that Government is interested in the good of the masses, yet it argues that there is no one suitable, sufficiently virtuous,

man to rule this government. Thus, the most suitable form of authority is not Republicanism but the more sensible, stable Monarchical rule.

This view is further affirmed when the remaining divisions in society are considered; the uneducated masses, idle and miserable due to their circumstances, aspire only to a material world. It can be inferred that commerce has stripped them of their virtue, ‘se vende el gusto de todos aquellos que pueden suministrarle el alimento diario, sea del modo que fuere’ (p680); the pernicious and potentially disastrous consequences of this new, material society are hinted at. Ultimately, enlightenment thinkers are blamed for alienating mankind. Instead of enriching man with fresh notions of virtue, the editors claim, reformers threaten the order of the universe,

Quando estos reformadores del Universo empiezan a disertar sobre la Naturaleza, la Religion, la Filosofia, las Leyes entonces ya no hay soberanos, ya no hay Vasallos, ya no hay Dios...¿Pues qué es lo que hay? – Fanatismo, Anarquia, y Revolucion. (p681)

The dangers of reformulating people’s beliefs and values are clear. While the values may be acceptable on a philosophical abstract level, they cannot be applied in reality. Either the threat they pose to order is too great, or mankind is not susceptible to them in the first place.

Increasingly in the *Papel Periódico*, these new, deceptive values are coupled with Republicanism, whilst stability and reason remain with the monarch. Irrational thinking and superstition are central to France’s downfall. Enlightenment thinking is, however, praised for its scientific, enquiring approach,

¿Quien creyera que la mas gloriosa y mas floreciente época de la Francia, aquella que dió un genio mas ilustrado y sublime a sus naturales, habia de ser la precursora de su lastimosa ruina? (p682)

The sense of regret in the editors' words suggest that there was an attraction towards Enlightenment ideas on philosophy, governance and science, yet the practical applications of these ideas was simply too radical, and too rushed.

### Republican Failings

*El Papel Periódico* has been shown to intervene strategically and put forward anti-Enlightenment, counter-revolutionary arguments. With the aim of re-affirming the Monarchy as the most natural way to govern men, the failings of Republicanism are mercilessly exposed.

Although discredited, Montesquieu's theory of democracy is referred to explicitly, 'la virtud es el gran principio en que estriba el edificio de la Democracia'.<sup>74</sup> His philosophy is criticised however for being based on speculation, not fact. Whilst the concept is not disregarded by the *Papel Periódico* it is made to seem so distant that it could never become a reality, 'ellos [democratic principles] no existen, ni han existado jamas debaxo el Sol' (p217). The reaffirmation of God as creator of all men further discredits the republican model, 'el gobierno de toda Republica, ya sea democratico, aristocratico, o mixto, es un gobierno repugnante a la razon' (p218). God as the absolute ruler of men will always exist in Spanish America according to the *Papel Periódico*; Republics are founded on whim, extravagance and ambition. Only societies founded on religion can be stable.

Montesquieu foresees a monarchy working when fundamental laws limit the King's powers and intermediary powers, such as those of the nobility; however for him the lurking fear of despotism is always present. Yet the editors of the *Papel Periódico* consider that without a King the danger is greater: '*porque ya no hay Rey,*

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<sup>74</sup> *Papel Periódico de Santa Fé de Bogotá*, 'Sigue la materia del no. Anterior' 28<sup>th</sup> November 1794 (Vol.IV No.168), p.217.

y cada Ciudadano pretende serlo'.<sup>75</sup> The alternative, Republicanism, has never produced happiness in their view, '¡Esta verdad escrita con tanta sangre en los voluminosos fastos del Universo!' (p933). In Colonial New Granada conservative rule views untested theories with suspicion. Whilst it is acknowledged that good unselfish men exist, there is no guarantee that these men will not concede to destructive whims, upsetting public order. The Athenian Republic is cited as an example. Moreover the *Papel Periódico* questions whether such an outmoded model (republicanism) possesses any contemporary relevance. The editors argue that if citizens have the right to govern themselves directly, as was the case in Athens, too much demand is placed on civic virtue, it becomes too easy for avarice and ambition to undermine order, 'el sistema politico de Athénas fundaba todo el interés de su gloria y seguridad en que no prevaleciesen los hombres de bien, en que no hubiese Espíritus virtuosos à quienes amar con distincion' (p935). When the whim of the people is the only law, the Republican system is shown to fail; it is the tool used by 'hombres turbulentos, amotinadores, sediciosos, destesados' (p935) to unleash havoc. Interested chiefly with 'hechos' and specific examples, the editors dismiss the 'reflexiones' on Republicanism. The Roman example attests to this, 'los nobles se volvieron intigrantes y ambiciosos, y los plebeyos se hicieron insolentes y engreidos' (p938).

Perhaps the most relevant strand of French thought here is Montesquieu's reference to climate in Book XIV of *l'Esprit des Lois*,

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<sup>75</sup> *Papel Periódico de Santa Fé de Bogotá*, 'Fin de la Disertacion' 12<sup>th</sup> December 1794 (Vol.IV No.170), p.934.

la caractère de l'esprit et les passions du coeur soient extrêmement différents dans les divers climats, les lois doivent être relatives et à la difference de ces passions, et à la difference de ces caractères.<sup>76</sup>

The concept that freedom is not the fruit of every climate, that freedom is not in everyone's grasp, shows sensitivity to local situations. Whilst the editors do not explicitly use this argument, preferring to discredit Republicanism altogether, it does suggest that colonial Spanish America, in the early 1790s, was not in a position to adopt a Republican system of rule.

## Religion and Science

### God All Powerful

One of the cornerstones of French enlightened thought stresses that good governance can only be achieved through the separation of Church and State; religious and political authority should be distinct. The *Declaration des Droits de l'Homme* is at the centre of this. All French thinkers acknowledge this argument and add their interpretation. Montesquieu insists that laws belong to different spheres and must not be mixed indiscriminately whilst Rousseau's civil religion is secular in its approach. The editors of the *Papel Periódico* and the *Mercurio Peruano* are unforgiving in their criticism of this new thinking; they combat those who promote Christianity as anti-reason; those who support the Rights of Man are said to be destroying Religion and thus undermining society. Their aim is to convince the readership that natural reason dictates Divine Right of Kings as advantageous and to refute any notions that freedom can be derived from this new 'filosofía'.

Reason and wisdom cannot be separated from Christian morals and thus Rousseau and others are discredited as 'hijos de la maldición[...]desnudos del espíritu

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<sup>76</sup> Montesquieu, *l'Esprit des Lois*, p.180.

de Dios'.<sup>77</sup> Religion is shown to be the root of all happiness, 'el suelo feliz de la libertad racional y de la Religion Catolica',<sup>78</sup> whilst anything challenging this embodies 'el rubor, la ira, el odio[...]el entusiasmo de la independendencia [from God] y singularidad los ha conducido a lo sumo de la ridiculez' (p686). The belief that society can live without subordination and without religion and yet be stable is totally rejected in the periodical press. The secular French Convention, where barbarism and excess ruled, is shown to be a failure. The ruling elite in Spanish America were keen to avoid such failure and this meant stemming the spread of anti-Christian ideas and re-enforcing Catholic dogma.

The editors of the *Papel Periódico* attack all elements of the new, secular society emerging in France. They use fact and logic, the very qualities secularity is founded on, to defeat it, 'he aqui los hechos que lo acreditan' (p685). In this way, the new order is shown to be not only anti-Religion, it is also perceived as illogical and unrealistic; the new calendar is a prime example. In an attempt to rationalise society, the revolutionary Convention in France set down a starting point from the founding of the Republic in September 1792; the months were rescheduled and renamed, seven day weeks were replaced by ten day 'decenas'. The names are clearly stated according to climate or agricultural activities, not the names of gods or emperors, 'los nombres de las meses seran Octubre *Vindemiarie*, Noviembre *Brumario*, Diciembre *Frimario*, Enero *Nivarie* [sic]' (p686) and so on. This new system, on the surface, seems perfectly logical 'no se puede negar que este Kalendario es una pieza muy digna del sistema revolucionario' (p686). However, the editors were keen to show it as a failure of reason in the face of religious authority. By highlighting the source of the name Enero, derived from the Latin *janarius*, the famous King Jano who was

<sup>77</sup> *Papel Periódico de Santa Fé de Bogotá*, 15<sup>th</sup> April 1796 (Vol.VI No.240).

<sup>78</sup> *Papel Periódico de Santa Fé de Bogotá*, 'Continuación del Estado Actual de las Cosas de Francia' 25<sup>th</sup> April 1794 (Vol.IV No.139), p.685.

worshipped as God of Peace and Prudence, they are able to discredit the new calendar which starts in October on the grounds that it defies the qualities associated with Dios, ‘Rey, paz y prudencia son y deben ser las cosas mas aborrecidas de los que profesan la Facultad revolucionaria, o bien sea la Filosofia exterminadora’ (p687).

By arguing that Razón, Verdad and Filosofia are illogical and the cause of horror, the natural choice is to maintain faith in Dios. In examining ‘los principios constitutivos y esenciales sobre que se fundan la doctrina, autoridad, y merito de esa *Verdad y Filosofia* tan aplaudidas’, the reality is exposed: ‘unos fenomenos incomprendibles’ (p688). Razón y Sabiduria herald from divine beginnings, ‘el Soberano principio’ (p688); to deny this is not only ignorant and blasphemous it also discredits Razón itself. Reason is thus shown to be a self-defeating value; true Razón can only be born out of religious belief.

French philosophers continued to regard Catholicism as a source of irrational superstition that exploited human credulity. The editors of the *Papel Periódico* therefore remained unrelenting in their attack against this new interpretation of Razón. Montesquieu, however, was marginally subtler in his approach to Religion, believing that it was important to avoid petty quarrels over dogma and to live as a morally and politically virtuous citizen. In the separation of church and state dogma becomes less important than civil respect and harmony, ‘dans quelque religion qu’on vive, l’observation des lois, l’amour pour les hommes, la piété envers les parents, sont toujours les premiers actes de religion.’<sup>79</sup> His criticism of Religion was mixed; whilst its principles are erroneous and it has no apparent purpose, it does contribute to the public good, and is still admirable for social order,

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<sup>79</sup> Montesquieu, *Lettres Persannes*, Letter XLVI p.94.

Comme la religion et les lois civiles doivent tendre principalement à rendre les hommes bons citoyens, on voit que lorsqu'une des deux s'écartera de ce but, l'autre y doit tendre davantage: moins la religion sera réprimante, plus les lois civiles doivent réprimer.<sup>80</sup>

This moderate view, whereby civil and moral virtue provide the foundations for Democracy, although less inflammatory than the Revolutionary destruction of the Catholic church, is still dismissed by the *Papel Periódico*. The editors argue that pure speculation and a lack of facts cannot challenge God as 'el Ser supremo'; when asked where Montesquieu found evidence for 'la perfeccion y utilidad del Gobierno Democratico', the reply is 'ellos no existen, ni han existado jamas debaxo del sol'.<sup>81</sup> The attack could not be stronger; God is affirmed as absolute ruler, and the separation of secular and spiritual authority is deemed impossible, as the rhetorical questions suggest, '¿Quien sera tan feliz que no crea en Dios el principio eterno de la Sabiduria, de la Justicia, y de la Perfeccion?' (p217).

With this unrelenting belief, the editors are emphatic that any Republic, democratic, aristocratic or mixed, is 'un gobierno repugnante a la razon' (p217). The only government to be derived from Razón is a Monarchy with God, 'como Criador Padre y Rey absoluto de los hombres' (p217) at its head. The malignant spirit in Paris has only one origin: 'el capricho, la extravagancia, y la ambicion' (p219). Enlightened thinking, with its lack of factual proof, is made to look totally irrational and speculative when compared to existing knowledge. For example, Samuel as King of Israel is cited to demonstrate God's absolute rule,

Sino quieras por tu rey al mismo Dios que te ha dado la existencia, que te ha sacado de la esclavitud, que te ha hecho sobre ti millares de prodigios, y que te

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<sup>80</sup> Montesquieu, *l'Esprit des Lois*, p.232.

<sup>81</sup> *Papel Periódico de Santa Fé de Bogotá*, 'Sigue la material del No. Anterior' 28<sup>th</sup> November 1794 (Vol.IV No.168), p.217.



ha colmado de tantas felicidades; ya tendras por Rey a un hombre hijo de la miseria y capaz de caer en todos los vicios. El Dios altisimo, el immutable Jehova te habia distinguido de los demas Pueblos. (p223)

The almighty nature of God cannot be disputed; Razón is shown to be inseparable from Divine Rule.

The Peruvian approach, in the *Mercurio Peruano*, differs. In his article ‘Análisis de la Humanidad Contrahida a la Caridad Christiana; y exemplos praticos de su ejercicio’, Hesperióphylo identifies new values in Humanidad, Filosofía and Caridad. As the Church’s authority was whittled away, increasing emphasis was placed on these secular values, Humanidad and Caridad. In the *Mercurio* these values are shown to be natural Peruvian characteristics, yet it is Christianity that fortifies them, not secularity, as was the trend in France.

For Hesperióphylo, Humanidad is a Christian, charitable term in homage to ‘el Ser Supremo’. The concept of ‘Caridad Christiana’ does not sit comfortably ‘en los labios de un Filósofo’,<sup>82</sup> thus it has been disguised as a new concept, ‘Humanidad’ (fol.13). It is argued that if Humanidad is the effect, then Filosofía is the cause, thus the ‘filósofos’ have replaced Religion with Humanidad, removing religious devotion in the process. It is not surprising that this modern thought is dismissed in the government-controlled *Mercurio*, which exposes its flaws. Given that all actions are in homage to God, Humanidad is pure fantasy. The paradox is uncompromising, ‘*la Humanidad es un puro fantasma de virtud, si le concebimos independiente de la Caridad, y separable de aquel espiritu de Religion, que consagra todas las acciones de los humanos en homenaje al Ser Supremo [sic]*’ (fol.13).

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<sup>82</sup> *El Mercurio Peruano*, ‘Análisis de la Humanidad Contrahida a la Caridad Chritsiana’ (Vol.I Fols.13-16), fol.13.

Again, the argument relies on lack of tangible proof. New thought is dismissed as abstract, and examples highlight that there is no plausible philosophy without Religion. Human motives cannot produce true virtue as all actions are ultimately a homage to God. All other principles, secularity included, are short lived, ‘llegue a alucinar con el resplandor de un afectado heroismo; pero esta luz es un fósforo, un fuego fatuo’ (fol.14).<sup>83</sup> Human motives alone, governed by impulse and mood, do not produce ‘una verdadera virtud’ (fol.14). The only true virtue is to be found in Christianity; only thus does Humanidad become ‘pura, magnánima y constante’ (fol.14).

Practical examples attest to this; individuals demonstrate the Christian nature of Humanidad y patriotismo. Sr. Don Manuel de Arredondo and Sr. Don Antonio Boca use their ‘empeño christiano’ to improve life for prisoners by constructing new living quarters in prisons. Similarly it is the ‘zelo christiano’ of Don Francisco Calatayud which improves the nation’s hospitals; it is an ‘espíritu evangelico’ (fol.15) which drives this improvement. Without doubt, it is Christianity that fortifies ‘la Humanidad filosofica’. The propensity to do good for the rest of the country is the best characteristic of Humanidad. In this sense Rousseau’s *Du Contrat Social* seems relevant, as there is an attempt to ensure the greatest happiness for the greatest number. However, in the *Mercurio Peruano* happiness is dictated along religious lines, not according to the general will of the people, as the article states,

los citados bastan para el intento de probar que solo la Religion puede hacer que la humanidad y la filosofia tengan un exercicio virtuoso, y duradero (fol.15).

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<sup>83</sup> It is interesting to note the scientific terminology and imagery here, which is a characteristic of this periodical; although suggestive that Enlightenment ideas are short lived it is indicative of the increasingly scientific climate.

It is accepted that man conforms to natural laws, and Humanidad is at the centre of society; this interest in Humanidad is chiefly concerned with the welfare and the improvement of society, which is an Enlightenment train of thought.<sup>84</sup> Yet its fundamental conflict with French thought is that here Humanidad brings individuals and society as a whole closer to God, 'la Religion la perfecciona, la purifica y la eleva'.<sup>85</sup> Frenzied, unbridled ambition is shown to ruin society, only when 'el Rector Supremo, cuya fuerza viene de la gracia, cuya ley establece el amor' (fol.141) is emulated, does society become stable.

### Defence of Religion to Maintain Order

It is clear through close reading of the colonial periodical press in the early to mid 1790s that el Ser Supremo has absolute authority and that obedience to God and his representatives on earth is mandatory. With this divine authority established, the editors of the *Mercurio* show how it is employed to shape and construct society in order to maintain and control stability, which in turn favours a more efficient and happier way of life. When religious values are fused with commerce, virtuous governance is achieved; the sense that Religion is all pervasive and essential to order cannot be mistaken. In this way, all authority and moderation can be traced back to God.

Accounts of expeditions to Manoa and the Rio Ucayali in Northern Peru by distinguished priests are serialised in the *Mercurio*; this type of article reinforces the idea that Religion is the only ground on which society can be built and at the same time provides a history of Peru. The Church is shown to be a civilising influence;

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<sup>84</sup> Humanidad is a benevolent value; the desire to do good to others. Human interests, values and dignity predominate in a system of rules based on Humanidad. Here, the interpretation differs radically from French thought with regards to God, where human fulfilment in the natural world rejects the importance of belief in God.

<sup>85</sup> *El Mercurio Peruano*, 'Continua la disertacion antecedente' 1<sup>st</sup> March 1792 (Vol.IV Fols.140-147), fol.140.

hence its inclusion in the *Mercurio*'s articles is a sensible one. It is the power of God that makes possible the successful development of remote regions. With 'su direccion espiritual y temporal'<sup>86</sup> an ordered society can be built, 'con el auxilio de Dios, y con su fervoroso zelo han de abrasar la maleza de aquellos vastimas regiones' (fol.92). Padre Guardian de Ocopa, Fray Manuel, proceeds to set out a detailed, 25 point plan of how Religion is the only route to order 'en los corazones de aquellos bárbaros' (fol.92). This plan typifies the ultra-conservative essence of the Peruvian Enlightenment. The intention to improve the life of the 'uncivilised' masses exists, though through subordination to the Church and minority elite; religious conformity is set out as the only route to happiness.

Initially, total devotion and regular worship is essential for the local inhabitants, 'no faltando jamas por la mañana y tarde el ejercicio de la oracion y comunicaci3n con Dios' (fol.92). Once this obligation is understood and applied the practical aspects of living can be addressed to gain control of the indigenous population. Settlement must be near a river with plentiful fish supplies and situated on a fertile plain, and streets need to be planned logically. Most importantly, Point 4, 'la Iglesia, el Convento y Casa de Cabildo se fabricar3n en la Plaza' (fol.93), which establishes central control of Church and State, safeguarding order in the settlement. An obedient society, through submission to God, is thus achieved via the careful application of practical thinking. A large garden in the Convent will grow maize, vegetables and herbs, as well as rearing animals, and if necessary it will cater for the sick and those unable to work. This desire to serve the native population is new and demonstrates the penetration of Enlightenment ideas, 'para dar a los sirvientes, a los huespedes, y a los enfermos del pueblo, 3 inhabiles para el trabajo' (fol.93). This

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<sup>86</sup> *El Mercurio Peruano*, 'Segunda Peregrinacion del Padre Predicador Apost3lico Fray Narciso y Barcel3, 3 los Pueblos de Manoa' 10<sup>th</sup> June 1792 (Vol.V Fols.89-98), fol.92.

charitable line of thought is conceivably part of the Enlightenment, despite the fact that it is Christian charity, and it is engendered to promote religious conformity.

The suppositions of innovation and improvement run through the 25-point plan. It is argued that genuine practical thought is new to Peru, the detailed construction of the convent walls to defend against attack (fol.93) attests to this. However, these innovations have to be considered within the religious framework the priests were promoting; these measures are little more than the practical application of God's word to guarantee order and conformity. The process of building a community through religious devotion is detailed through points ten to fifteen. It is important that 'los infieles' are not given jobs that could render them corrupt, equally the moderation of fervency is critical when the population is still fledgling. Concealed in the warning in point 12 to 'moderen el fervor y zelo' (fol.94) is a subtle attack on the dogma of the Catholic Church; zeal and fervour are destructive forces that destroy a community. This shows a critical attitude to religious excess that has not been seen before in the *Mercurio Peruano*; the article is not anti-Religion, on the contrary, but it does attack religious superstition. Until there is large population with a distinct spirit the risk of factions forming and vying for power exists, as point twelve explains. Infieles need to be converted to increase and stabilise the population, yet this process involves 'caridad y amor' (fol.94); it is essential 'para la seguridad, y para introducir la civilidad entre los Infieles', to mix old Christians with new ones so they can learn 'subordinacion': submission.

The process of gaining control over the indigenous peoples stretches to language. A detailed methodology is set out to convert the Infieles; the importance of learning all their languages perfectly is stressed as '[de] saber la lengua con perfeccion depende la conversion de los Infieles' (point 17, fol.95). Yet the corner

stone that guarantees order is adherence to the gospels, the message which ‘lo enseño Jesu-Christo a sus Apostoles y discipulos’ (fol.95). The importance of working with and amidst fellow men is central; by adjusting to this new way of life ‘viviran siempre dos juntos para que puedan auxiliarse mutuamente y velar cada uno sobre la salud espiritual y temporal de su compañero’ (fol.95). Logically, the type of conformity proposed here required a structure. The only acceptable format set out authority in the name of the King, through ‘Alcaldes, Capitan y Regidores’ (point 22). This enabled the introduction of prisons and a more disciplined way of life, although no-one was sentenced without the King’s permission. The religious values in this new society, where the unfaithful are pacified by ‘amor y caridad’ (fol.96) to guarantee submission, are strong. The desire to benefit and improve the population is sincere, but it is also true that this can only be seen as an extremely cautious interpretation of the Enlightenment. The article provides an interesting example of rational planning, social welfare and Christian values coming together.

### Resistance or Attack

As we have seen, much of the writing in the press throughout the 1790s is aimed at influencing how people think, explaining the advantages of traditional authority and moulding new ideas to suit colonial government. The brutal attack against ‘la Filosofia’ in the *Papel Periódico*, Friday 8th April 1796, introduces a different sort of criticism; direct, unflinching and totally uncompromising.<sup>87</sup> Written several years after most other responses studied thus far, the editors had by then a greater picture of the turmoil France was engulfed in, and more widely circulated revolutionary material was beginning to trigger widespread discontent.

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<sup>87</sup> *Papel Periódico de Santa Fé de Bogotá*, ‘Pieza Remitida al Autor del Periodico’ 8<sup>th</sup> April 1796 (Vol.IV pp1395-1402).

Written as a warning, for young people and with an educational purpose, the article makes direct references to Enlightenment writing, ‘derechos del hombre destruyendo a la Religion que es la basa del bien publico’ (p1395). This is evidence that the revolutionary doctrine promoting equal rights for all citizens was circulating. The article claims irreligious thought is spreading in New Granada, the sense of danger and urgency explains the direct criticism and repudiation that is to follow, ‘casi por todas partes se ven regadas las semillas de la irreligion y de la Anarquía: la literatura superficial’ (p1396).

Philosophers are once again attacked on the grounds of their inconsistent, contradictory ideas; ‘la sangre humana’ (p1398) is the only result of their work. Their blasphemous writing is dismissed as total ignorance. The editors cite biblical references to prove their point: ‘ellos cayeron en la envidia de Cain, *en el error de Bablaam*, maldiciendo al Pueblo de Dios; y *en la rebelion* de Core, inspirando la insurreccion de los Pueblos, la independencia y la Anarquia’ (p1398). ‘Hijos de maldicion,’ the ‘philosophes’ are likened to clouds without water, trees without fruit; their challenge to God is useless, inconsistent and contradictory. Voltaire is lambasted for his dreadful contradictions; his intelligence is acknowledged, but his message is cynical and incites violence ‘imaginacion brillante y lenguaje cinico y revoltoso’ (p1398). This piercing criticism encompasses all Enlightenment philosophers who are unambiguously ridiculed and anathematized for challenging el Ser Supremo,

Si a Voltaire los consideramos como hijo de la Quimera, Rousseau debe ser ella misma. Dificil es hallar hombre mas extravagante.

Voltaire's 'refugee' status, fleeing from France to Geneva then to Berlin, like Rousseau, is mentioned to prove this disruptive philosophy could not establish any roots or have fruitful results (p1400).

The concept of Razón in the establishment of independent nations, without God as el Ser Supremo, is again attacked; it holds little credibility and the editors are insistent that the new philosophy has merely corrupted and twisted reason. Outside of the religious context, reason's 'debilidad y la estrechez de sus limites' (p1401) is only too apparent.

### Scientific Understanding increases respect for God

Despite attacks in the press such as the one discussed above, the 'sana filosofía' which employed 'luces, verdad and razón' in the pursuit of 'la felicidad común' began to take a hold in colonial Peru in the 1790s; the *Mercurio Peruano*, predominantly scientific in its subject matter, was intent on showing that an increase in technological and scientific knowledge was necessary and did not signify abandoning God. On the contrary, greater wisdom only served to increase man's understanding of God; man remained an intermediary obliged to serve el Creador.

As a didactic tool, the *Mercurio* provides its subscribers with a more solid understanding of the purpose of the Enlightenment. Scientific observations reinforce the wonders of natural laws, and a 'verdadero Filósofo' recognises this,

Un hombre de talento y de juicio se complace de ver que todas las producciones de la Naturaleza son un abismo de prodigios, y reconoce en ellas la mano omnipotente que las ha combinado.<sup>88</sup>

It is questionable whether or not this approach can really be considered as Enlightened; it is certainly a very conservative approach to science and runs against

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<sup>88</sup> *El Mercurio Peruano*, 'Rasgo Histórico y Filosófico sobre los cafés de Lima' 10<sup>th</sup> February 1791 (Vol.I Fols.108-109), fol.108.



the modern thinking that was circulating in contemporary Europe. Nonetheless it does foster a spirit of innovation and enquiry that encourages advancement for the Peruvian population as a whole. The article ‘Ensayo sobre la Estructura y Fisica de los Vegetales’ for example concentrates on a new area of enquiry, natural history.<sup>89</sup> A combination of direct observation and an inquisitive spirit attempts to explain the brilliance of nature, adding a scientific dimension to God’s natural laws.

Nature and natural law is shown to be the root of all life. The many uses of plants ‘ha fixado siempre la atencion del hombre’ (fol.124). Aside from beautifying our gardens, food, furniture, ships that circumnavigate the globe, oils, resins and medicines are all natural in their origins. Having accepted that God creates nature and the two are inseparable, the Peruvian scientists have examined the actual processes involved; vegetables have undergone considerable analysis, five distinct ‘vasos’ have been identified in the stem (fol.126). The logical approach identifies and describes each part of the plant taking into account variations; the stem, flower, fruit and seeds, ‘las semillas[...]se componen de dos lobos harinosas, de la *pluma* ó plantula, y de sus radículas’ (fol.128). A double strategy can be identified here: firstly, Peru is exhibiting its rich biodiversity and classifying it accurately, secondly knowledge of the organic life cycle, and set of natural laws, serves to increase respect for God’s work,

el principio de la vida que observamos en los vegetables, está sujeto á unas leyes constantes é invariables, que manifiestan de un modo admirable y visible la mano del Arquitecto divino que los crió (fol.129).

According to the virtue of these laws, each plant produces another seed, and no new species has been created since creation. When seeds are mixed the results are hybrid

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<sup>89</sup> *El Mercurio Peruano*, 24<sup>th</sup> June 1792 (Vol.V Fols.124-132).

‘monstruosidades variadas’. Science is shown here to support Religion. This work is Enlightened in terms of spreading knowledge and demystifying uncertainty, yet remarkably un-Enlightened in so far as it is totally submissive towards Religion, failing to recognise the need for independent investigation.

‘Historia de un Cólico Extraordinario’, which deals with the study of anatomy, specifically the causes of Colic, accentuates the unknown boundaries of the Universe, making the reader aware of man’s limitations.<sup>90</sup> This conservative approach again reaffirms the power of Religion, no medical discoveries or observations can challenge such authority. It is clearly stated that man is aspiring to share God’s secrets, yet his capacity is limited and thus he will never attain such knowledge. Control of knowledge is of primary importance, medical discoveries secondary,

deseando un rayo de la luz Criador, aspira en cierto modo áser su  
confidente[...]pero parece que los limites señalados a la razon humana, no la  
permiten penetrar este divino Santuario (fol.52).

Although this outlook may seem bleak on the surface, there is some enquiry behind it. The study of anatomy is uncertain, discoveries are continually made, and theories are proved false. Perhaps Peruvian Enlightenment is rooted more in practical reality than the French equivalent. The Peruvians have adopted a critical spirit towards European science here, and readily accept that limits to human knowledge exist and innovation is continuous, at the expense of accepted order. Whilst the European Enlightenment scientists believed nature could be explained by a set of rules or laws, the Peruvians remained convinced that only God possessed total knowledge. However, a newly found critical and rational spirit typifies the Peruvian Enlightenment, ‘arreglamos los sistemas, y deducimos métodos, al parecer invariables[...]pero quando mas

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<sup>90</sup> *El Mercurio Peruano*, 22<sup>nd</sup> January 1792 (Vol.IV Fols.52-59).

satisfechos creemos haber encontrado el origen de la vida[...]un nuevo orden nos sorprehende' (fol.53).

By citing the different symptoms of this colic, as deduced from the autopsy detailed here, 'la salud pública' benefits through shared knowledge. A precise cause of death is established, 'fallecio[...]de un cólico originado de una hernia formada por el colon, y el diafragma: hernia singular' (fol.58). The desire for scientific advancement and medical knowledge is clear, but it is also clear that man cannot rival God's absolute knowledge.

### Favourable Reception of Scientific Enquiry and Innovation

Aside from the overbearing presence of Religion, the new scientific methods had observation at their centre; this is empiricism. Particular facts are applied to general laws whereas previously general laws were applied at all costs to facts. The exact descriptions of plants and illnesses already mentioned attest to this. It is no longer sufficient to identify plants; they have to be classified, ordered and structured in relation to others. This drive for accuracy and knowledge is fuelled by the Peruvian desire to show Europe their rich biodiversity and disprove European thinking 'que trata las otras partes del mundo de barbaras'.<sup>91</sup> The *Mercurio* is the vehicle to exhibit Peru's 'sublimes descubrimientos' (fol.74). The small intellectual group in Peru was surging forward not to make discoveries for their own satisfaction, but as 'un servicio á la patria' (fol.75). They used new methods and theories from Paris, critically applying them to their own locality, for the improvement of the whole population. The entire Peruvian Enlightenment is summarised in this editorial: 'desenvolver las semillas del genio que la naturaleza derrama con profusion sobre los que nacen en

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<sup>91</sup> *El Mercurio Peruano*, 'Carta Dirigida a la Sociedad Remitiendola una obra intitulada Principios de Química Física, para servir de introduccion á la Historia Natural del Peru' 4<sup>th</sup> October 1792 (Vol.VI No.183 Fols.74-81), fol.74.

este singular País' (fol.75). The Enlightenment is a gestation of ideas, careful consideration is central to the reception of modern thought.

Changing scientific thought produced a new outlook in Peru; understanding and discovery were no longer limited to a particular locality, it was seen as a global phenomenon fed by creativity and experience. The happiness and progress of the country depended on observing others' scientific activities and the ability to 'poner todo nuestro contacto en aumentar por este medio nuestros conocimientos' (fol.76). Modern scientific methodology drives innovation and discovery, and for the first time in the *Mercurio Peruano* science is used to forge a link between theory and practice. At the centre of modern thought is la 'Química Física', a totally new science, which serves as a base to all knowledge, the starting point for all understanding. This knowledge provides the 'principios de todos los cuerpos compuestos' (fol.76). Existing knowledge is recognised as outdated, and rational thought is applied to identify new elements (fol.77), while the accepted boundaries of knowledge are extended, 'el descubrimiento de muchos fluidos aeriformes elásticos, ha hecho abandonar la teoría del flogisto' (fol.77). The accuracy in Peruvian science, the simplicity and clear methodology used to demystify nature 'ha fixado la atencion de muchos sabios de la Europa que lo han adoptado' (fol.77); this dissemination of scientific ideas across continents marks a totally new intellectual climate.

Another characteristic of this new climate is as mentioned its global nature. Peruvian scientists have enlarged their horizons, in an attempt to advance their country their wide-angle approach links disciplines. Scientific knowledge is not an entity in itself, it is relevant to all areas of life; 'conocimientos filosóficos, comercio, las artes' (fol.79) all depend on la Química Física, which simplifies tasks, increasing

utility, for example, by extending manufacturing knowledge in areas such as the production of glass,

el arte de la vidrieria, cuyo descubrimiento ha sido tan útil á la humanidad, este arte maravilloso que substancia salina unida con tierra vitrificable forma un nuevo ente duro, transparente, casi inalterable al ayre (fol.80).

Química Física provides the understanding of the elements at the base of this discovery, it makes manufacturing easier, and drives the thirst for modernisation on a large scale. Furthermore, the science of ‘los fluidos aeriformes elásticos’, the *Mercurio Peruano* argues, provides the foundation for the mining industry to expand. The concept of the utility of science is a new one and the Peruvian elite are determined to use it for the good of their Patria, and to advertise their advancement on a global scale.

#### Agricultural and Economic Advancement

Agriculture is understandably one of the central concerns in both the *Papel Periódico* and the *Mercurio Peruano*. It is seen to have an important role to play in economic development. Experimentation with new methods was common practice in late colonial Spanish America; productive agriculture was considered as a tool to increase ‘el bien común’, with improvements benefiting not only landowners but also the population at large. Increasingly associated with enlightened social values such as ‘felicidad’ and ‘prosperidad’, agriculture is the basis of the economy and society; it is thus logical that scientific methodology should be employed to improve it.

Whilst God remains infinitely knowledgeable, it is argued in the *Papel Periódico*, science goes a long way to optimising yield. Couched in technical language the article ‘Continuacion al Extracto de semeteras’ offers straightforward

advice to farmers producing wheat.<sup>92</sup> Experience from various landowners in ‘las inmediaciones de Paris’ (p.175) is passed on with patriotic intentions; by reducing the quantity of seeds sown by two thirds, yield can increase by one quarter, although it is important to take into account the soil quality – in light soil it is difficult for the seed to establish good roots and the risk of leafy plants with no shoots is greater (p.176).

Thus, the importance of adapting sowing methods to suit the land is made clear, ‘es preciso proporcionar la cantidad de la Semilla á la naturaleza del suelo en que se siembra’ (p.176). These are facts based on empirical science emanating from France; they serve to instruct landowners and landowners in new methods, pointing out the backwardness of current methods. To attest to this current lack of scientific thinking it is suggested that sand is mixed with seeds to prevent workers from over-seeding the land, ‘basta mezclar con el trigo la misma proporción de arena[...]de este modo se consigue lo que se desea sin desviarle de su costumbre’ (p.177).

The backwardness of Peruvian livestock raising can also be combated by science. Great inefficiencies in cattle farming are addressed in the *Mercurio Peruano* article ‘Proyecto Económico Sobre el Aumento del Ganado vacuno, propuesto por un vecino de la Ciudad de Ica’.<sup>93</sup> The article proves that science is no longer a means in itself; it is used to improve quality of life. Shortages of meat, often lasting for several weeks, hit vulnerable sections of the population; there is genuine concern for the poor ‘muchos pobres no pueden comerla, aun quando abunda; pues son pocos los que tienen ocho reales para comprarla’ (fol.27). The cause is logically identified: ‘la mala costumbre que hay [...] de matar vacas para sustenarse.’ Old fashioned thinking and methodology coupled with water shortages at certain times of the year means that meat shortages become problematic. These assumptions are based on statistics and

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<sup>92</sup> *Papel Periódico de Santa Fé de Bogotá*, 1<sup>st</sup> June 1791 (Vol.I No.21), pp.175-178.

<sup>93</sup> *El Mercurio Peruano*, 13<sup>th</sup> September 1792 (Vol.VI Fols.26-31).

lists of figures. Scientific reasoning is the only way forward, ‘conocida la causa de un mal se suele venir en conocimiento claro de su remedio’ (fol.28). The arbitrary, unscientific approach to slaughter is a contributing factor; for example, bulls are slaughtered at the wrong age. Observations are not interpreted and analysed, so it becomes impossible to draw accurate conclusions. Using scientific thinking it is possible to improve the ‘salud pública’, through a stronger economy,

la mitad de las reses paridas deben ser machos, y la otra mitad hembras,  
resulta que de las 62.400 paridas en el año presente de 92, deben existir dicho  
año 31.200 vacas (fol.28).

Evidently European scientific thought is circulating in Spanish America; it is received, interpreted and adopted to improve all areas of life. In some instances, scientists have harnessed the rich natural resources in their country and made significant advancements through accurate observation and scientific innovation. One such example of this scientific and thus economic modernisation is the mining industry in Peru. D’Alembert’s theory that success is only found by drawing on the best practice from all over the world is embraced in Peru; the importance of using ‘las facultades intelectuales’ is acknowledged (fol.34). Although modern French ideas have exposed multiple frailties in Spanish American agriculture, the editors of the *Mercurio* highlight that while Europe does boast much innovation, la Naturaleza ‘ha privado al Perú[...]muchos conocimientos indispensables para explotar con economía, utilidad y seguridad las abundantes minas[...]en todo su suelo’ (fol.34). Conceivably, the dissemination of new, scientific thought has triggered a new, more rational approach to life in colonial Spanish America, which is deeply Patriotic in its nature.

## Satire in Science; Medical Curiosities

Medical research, in addition to the well-documented study of anatomy, accounts for a significant number of entries in the *Mercurio*. It is important to note that whilst for the most part serious attention was paid to combating illnesses and identifying cures, the modern train of thought was also open to satire. In this way science could be used against the very people who proposed it, to discredit their ideas. Unsurprisingly such articles appear in the *Papel Periódico*. ‘Análisis de Algunos célebros humanos’,<sup>94</sup> first printed in *The Dreamer* (London), provides a doctor’s analysis of various brains. An absurd theory is constructed to ridicule science. Stereotypes are employed: the magistrate’s brain, when distilled, contains ‘mucha flema insípida’ (p931), while the poet’s brain ‘dio una luz fosfórica, pero sin calor’ (p931). Women are also a target, their brains ‘dieron gran cantidad de vapores’ (p932). It is shown that there is little substance in the human brain to hold things together; whilst this is clearly destined to be a humorous article, there is a more subtle attack against the sans-culottes. The complicated process of distillation, a modern method, is used to ridicule them. So-called scientific data describes what was found in their brains, ‘tres gotas solo sudáron/Locura, Insánia, y Demencia’ (p.932). The cutting final lines ridicule this demonstration of modern thought as ‘lecciones a la entusiástica Ciencia’ (p932).

The distinction between ridicule of scientific investigation and pure fascination is an important one; human mutations and disfigurements are the subject of the *Mercurio*’s ‘Noticia de la Extraña Disfiguracion de una Niño’.<sup>95</sup> Keenly observed and noted, there are few scientific causes attributed to physical abnormalities; mutations are not associated with divine intervention, but instead connected to a deformed embryo and derangement of the mother’s mind: ‘debidas a la fuerza de la

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<sup>94</sup> *Papel Periódico de Santa Fé de Bogotá*, 5<sup>th</sup> December 1794 (Vol.IV No.169), pp.931-932.

<sup>95</sup> *El Mercurio Peruano*, (Vol.II Fols.196-198).



fantasía de la Madre' (fol.196). A surprising change in outlook from previous scientific writing sees the human body as shrouded in mystery, despite the high volume of anatomical study. One particular individual, Juana Cénudo, is singled out for further investigation (fol.197). Born 'sin lesion alguna', at nine months of age 'comenzó á irse desfigurando' (fol.197). It was observed that her joints 'crecian con los aspectos de la Luna' (fol.197). Her irregular body is described in some detail and with great interest. There is no sense of satire here, merely a desire to explore, and draw conclusions,

El espinazo corre por el lado izquierdo, separándose de su situación natural desde el hueso sacro hasta el angulo inferior del omóplato en que su mayor distancia a su propio sitio es de tres dedos (fol.197).

Significant disfiguration cannot be explained, despite the fact it is a source of great interest; only Juana's face and hands correspond to her age. The mystery attributed to this signals a less enlightened school of thought, although ultimately a philosophical approach is adopted: answers will only be found if 'se penetra el obscuro Reyno de la Naturaleza' (fol.198). The address of this young individual is supplied at the bottom of the article; genuine curiosity is the overbearing sentiment here.

## Conclusions

There is undoubtedly ambiguity in the reception of French ideas in the colonial periodical press. It concerns a small group of elite men, who are eager to pursue scientific enquiry and to improve their country's status by investigating their rich primary materials. However, this exploration must not jeopardise social and political order. Despite the modern designs that are circulating, in Peru and New Granada there has not been the same break between God and Reason and God and Science that has occurred in France. To this end, certain principles, such as Divine Right, remain

untouchable. There are no political inferences in scientific investigation; it remains separate from government and politics.

In the immediate aftermath of the French Revolution, the colonial press cannot be considered as preparing for independence, but it has prepared the ground for a sense of autonomy and enquiry. The increasing sense of Patria and regional identity, an awareness of the natural qualities of the land of the region, an eagerness to explore and enquire into this local reality, and to join global scientific pursuits represents a continent undergoing change.

## Chapter 2

### **The *Gazeta de Caracas* and Simón Bolívar: Theory to Practice in Venezuela 1808-1812**

#### 1808-1812: Changing Political Environment

##### Political Events

The collapse of traditional authority on the Peninsula and the ensuing struggle for power across the Spanish empire heightened tension in the Spanish American dominions. In Caracas, Venezuela, a violent revolt deposed the Captain-General on 19<sup>th</sup> April 1810 and an independent Junta was set up, composed of members of the Creole elite. This move signalled the high point of a crisis that had been incubating for some time.

Spanish rule was reliant on unerring and unquestioned obedience to the monarch, whose authority was further enforced by the Church; as the legitimacy of the monarchy began to deteriorate and the state began to collapse, the Venezuelan people, Spaniards and Creoles, filled the power vacuum, considered their position and started taking action. Whilst historians often cite various grievances as a cause of discontent and revolt, namely the commercial and political discrimination of Creoles in favour of Peninsulares, Imperial trade sanctions curtailing economic expansion, and Spanish interlopers enjoying the luxuries of the vice-regal Courts, it will be shown that contemporary opinion, according to the *Gazeta de Caracas*, does not make excessive reference to these grievances, suggesting that initially immediate political problems were a far larger cause for concern than long-standing economic ones.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Bushnell, *Simón Bolívar: Liberation and Disappointment* (London: Pearson Longman, 2004), p.18, Herring, *A History of Latin America* (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1961), p.246.

As explained in Chapter one, Spanish regal power had all but disappeared with the Napoleonic invasion of the Peninsula, 1808, precipitating the abdication of the Spanish royal family. The events of these years fractured relations between Spain and the colonies; foreign occupation, a deposed King, and emergent juntas left colonial Spanish Americans with a wholly new situation to face. The only certainty was their dislike of Napoleon; uncertain was whether they could achieve autonomy, who they should acquiesce to, and how power should be divided between local Creole elites and Imperial commanders. With news of the French conquest of Spain reaching Caracas through two issues of *The Times*, 31<sup>st</sup> May and 1<sup>st</sup> June 1808, courtesy of the governor of Trinidad,<sup>97</sup> the Venezuelan elite had to decide whether or not to establish a local Junta, in Fernando's name, or merely follow orders from Seville. Capitan-General Juan de Casas, panicked by local pressure, decided to set up a Caracas Junta, remaining loyal to Fernando; however, fearing Republican revolution and subversive ideas that were circulating rumouring total independence, Casas had rejected any possibility of a Caracas Junta within a year.

The arrival from Spain of a new Capitan-General, Vicente de Emparán, in May 1809, coincided with the central Junta being pushed out of Seville; by April 1810 the *Gazeta de Caracas* had begun to communicate this Spanish news to the Venezuelans and efforts to form autonomous governments were increased, albeit still in the name of the captive Fernando. Governing Juntas began to spring up across continental Spanish America; Venezuela was first to take action and on 19<sup>th</sup> April 1810 young activists and Creole revolutionaries forced Emparán to meet their demands; he was forced to resign. A twenty-five strong Supreme Junta, made up of the local ruling class, not officers of the Crown, openly defied the Council of

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<sup>97</sup> Lynch, *Simón Bolívar: A Life* (London: Yale University Press, 2006), p.45.

Regency, questioning their authority, yet remained loyal to Fernando VII. Thus, despite the absent King, Venezuela remained loyal to the Bourbons and maintained a connection with Spain. The paradox is clear; although the Creoles were plotting to rid themselves of the Peninsulares and gain more power, they were simultaneously clinging to the Crown as a buttress against anarchy at home.

The Junta called for elections in all towns under its rule just two months after its creation, on June 11<sup>th</sup>, and the deputies were given powers to constitute a Congress named 'for the Conservation of the Rights of Ferdinand VII'.<sup>98</sup> Voting was restricted to the free classes; voters had to be twenty-four, or married with their own establishment, if they lived and worked for someone else that had to possess at least two thousand pesos worth of property. The National Congress, as the revolutionaries called it, gradually became more autonomous in its outlook, for example the oath the deputies swore mentioned independence of the Spanish government. Further to this, on July 1<sup>st</sup> 1811, the Congress proclaimed the rights of the people: popular sovereignty, liberty, security, enjoyment of property, equality before the law and the happiness of all were the main aims of society. The move towards Independence gained momentum and by July Congress had taken measures that were incompatible with the acceptance of the authority of Ferdinand.

Against this backdrop of divided regional loyalties, the reaction to Congress declaring an independent federal republic of Venezuela on 5<sup>th</sup> July 1811 was muted. The first Constitution of December 1811 was liberal in outlook, influenced by the draft Spanish constitution, the United States and French Declaration of the Rights of Man, although socioeconomic discrimination and the fact that executive power was placed in a triumvirate undermined this attempt at a Federal republic. It was seen as

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<sup>98</sup> Morón, *A History of Venezuela* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1964), p.103.

an abstract and uncertain concept, which was not wholly in line with Enlightenment ideas on representative government. The independence movement raised and dashed hopes; public order deteriorated as outlying provinces were not happy to recognise Congress' authority in the same way that they had recognised the former Capitan-General and Spanish authorities. However, it was an unpredicted event that eventually precipitated the Republic's fall. On 26<sup>th</sup> March 1812, Maundy Thursday, a huge earthquake ripped through Venezuela. Anti-independence royalists were able to seize the opportunity pointing to the earthquake as divine intervention and pave the way for Spanish reconquest.

### Simón Bolívar

Bolívar was one of the few leaders who was engaged in the fight for Spanish American Independence from beginning to end. More than a soldier and founder of new nations, he was a critical thinker who believed in the practical application of liberty and equality – ideas he inherited from Enlightenment thinkers. He analysed past and present conditions, political, social and economic, and drew up constitutions and decrees to improve future progress. Bolívar arrived back in Venezuela from Europe in 1807, before the Napoleonic invasion of Spain and forced abdication of the Spanish royal family, convinced from his European travels that Independence was feasible and imminent. However, his opinions challenged majority Creole opinion and were met with hostility. Initially he was content to observe and wait, outwardly conforming as a young, aristocratic landowner and army officer. Absent from Caracas in 1808 and 1810, Bolívar was a minor actor in developments leading up to the creation of the self-governing Caracas Junta. Bolívar's true beliefs became apparent on his diplomatic mission to London, 1810, as a colonel representing the

Junta, where he spoke on behalf of an independent Republic rather than as a subject of Fernando VII.

London united Bolívar and Francisco Miranda,<sup>99</sup> and upon their return to Venezuela, where Miranda was elected to the Venezuelan Congress in 1811, they were able to operate as the *Sociedad Patriótica*, a pro-independence group whose mouthpiece was often the *Gazeta de Caracas*. Bolívar and Miranda believed that national independence was the only road to improvement; they insisted that total rejection of Spain was necessary. However, increasingly involved in patriot fighting outside of Caracas, notably alongside Miranda in Valencia in 1811, Bolívar was of the opinion that the federal Republic itself was shaped on foreign models and was thus largely ineffective; strong centralised executive power was required. Unrelenting in the face of the earthquake, Bolívar took up a major role in the republican forces, of which Miranda was now commander. As the Revolution was losing momentum and royalist troops growing in strength he was faced with a near impossible task. In taking on the duty of protecting Puerto Cabello, a strategic port and location of royalist political prisoners, Bolívar was quickly overpowered by royalist forces and forced to flee to La Guaira. After the capitulation was signed, 25<sup>th</sup> July 1812, Miranda left the army and attempted to depart from Venezuela; in unclear circumstances Bolívar prevented his exit, branding him a traitor to the revolutionary cause. Miranda was apprehended by the royalists and died in a Spanish prison some four years later. Bolívar himself was granted asylum in Caracas, on the grounds of

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<sup>99</sup> Miranda, along with a number of other Spanish Americans, had been at work in France, England and the United States trying to interest the governments of these countries in the idea of revolution in the Spanish American colonies. Known as 'the great precursor,' he was one of the most active revolutionaries. Born in Caracas in 1756, Miranda joined the Spanish army and fought in the American war of Independence, and then took up a position in the French Revolutionary army. The British government, who financed him, took his plans for liberation seriously and in 1790 Pitt presented him with plans for an independent Latin America. Although a hugely impractical plan when compared to Bolívar's more sensible schemes, it shows the revolutionary outlook of this military adventurer.

good service for arresting Miranda. Bolívar was granted a passport on 26<sup>th</sup> August 1812, and left Venezuela to recover from his defeat in Curaçao. While friends looked after his estate he was able to consider his next move; at the end of October he received a loan and sailed to Cartagena where he produced the famous Cartagena Manifesto, which was his explanation of the defeat of the Venezuelan patriots and a call for New Granada and Venezuela to jointly recapture Caracas.

## Ideological Perspective and Problems

The political process known as Spanish American Independence has many dimensions, which are all cited by historians, as previously mentioned. Rejection of a 'colonial status' and thus political dependence on external authority was a new concept in Spanish America and in cutting the links with the Spanish monarchy, the link that held all Spanish American communities together was dissolved; no longer dependent on an external power, the local 'país' became all-important.

One ideological problem that emerged during these tumultuous years was the difficulty of constructing separate 'nations' distinct from a 'nacionalidad española'. Before 1808 there was little sign of a crisis in Spanish America and no nationalist movement; this can be attributed to homogenous culture, language and political tradition in a mixed race society.

Conceivably it was the desire for a modern autonomous state, as propagated by Enlightenment thinking, which encouraged colonies to abandon absolutism for politically legitimate sovereignty. It was the individual, not the group, who propelled the Rights of Man, freedom of opinion and separation of powers in a representative system of government. The ideological issues of how power was organised and the emphasis on equal individuals as opposed to privileged bodies were discussed at length in the *Gazeta de Caracas* between 1808 and 1812. Questions circulating



included how to make up for the absence of the individual King yet preserve the monarchy as an institution? Who had the right to assume power and constitute government? And on what basis could new political units be formed? The press disseminated these debates during the crucial period of political change.

It is easy to overlook the development of Independence. Much more than one event, a simple start and arrival point, the process itself requires careful analysis. Guerra likens it to a film in terms of the logic of the characters, the sequence of scenes, direction and rhythm.<sup>100</sup> By identifying the problems that deepened the crisis and the solutions that were attempted to rectify the problems, the ideology underpinning Revolution becomes clearer. Without a monarchy and religious patriotism it becomes uncertain what adherence to 'Patria' actually meant.

With an inferior number of representatives in the Supreme Junta at Cadiz and then the Regency, the American dominions remained politically subordinate; the intellectual elite began to adhere to new ideas, and with increasingly patriotic publications enlarging this public sphere, Independence was encouraged and developed as an idea. The divergence taking place on both sides of the Atlantic was a key phase in promoting a permanent rupture between Spain and the resource-rich colony in Venezuela. The shift towards patriotism and murmurs of Independence forms part of the progression of thought that can be read in the *Gazeta de Caracas* throughout these years.

Autonomous Juntas, springing up in Venezuela, New Granada, Río de la Plata and Chile, highlighted the ideological obstacles Independence faced. As a symbol of further disintegration, although not a total break from the Peninsula, the Juntas did open the gates that led to complete independence. However, the problem of equality

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<sup>100</sup> Guerra, 'De lo uno a lo múltiple: Dimensiones y lógicas de la Independencia' in *Independence and Revolution in Spanish America: Perspectives and Problems* (London: ILAS, 1999), 43-68 p.55.

between ‘pueblos’, the struggle to identify who was to govern whom, underlies the fragmentation of localities and lack of ‘national’ sentiment. Finally, war triggered an ideological change in creating identities; the Creoles wanted to be distinct from the Peninsulares. The difficulty of founding in Venezuela a nation with a fledgling nationalistic sentiment and an imaginary political system is constantly discussed in the *Gazeta*. The modern nation was shown to be multi-dimensional; society had to be broken down and reconstructed into individuals and citizens who recognised a common political consensus before Independence was possible. As the mouthpiece of the ruling party, be that the Captain-General, the Junta, or the independent Republic, the *Gazeta* attempted to implement this change in ideas and sentiments.

## *Gazeta de Caracas: A Political Tool*

### Origins and Aims

Throughout the final decades of the eighteenth century Caracas had undergone significant social, cultural and economic development; Humboldt noted its unusually high political curiosity in 1800.<sup>101</sup> Since 1790 Venezuelan patriots, alongside intellectuals from Nueva Granada and Lima, had been absorbing new ideas and foreign news from the European press; what had previously been nothing more than intellectual information or data was beginning to take on a more practical and ideological significance. Individuals who were interested in politics and philosophy could usually speak another language, which enabled them to gather a wider range of information on European conflict, French and English actions in the French Revolution and in the Napoleonic Wars, and to consider the economic monopoly Spain had on its colonies. There was great excitement at the port of La Guaira where

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<sup>101</sup> Picón Salas in *Prólogo, Gazeta de Caracas* Vol.I (Caracas: Biblioteca de la Academia Nacional de la Historia, 1960).

people waited for the foreign press to arrive, which only served to increase the clandestine, rumour-filled atmosphere.

Such excitement and confusion created an uneasy tension in Creole society; doubts over what was going to happen in Europe, over their own destiny and their political and economic future needed to be answered. To silence rumours, reinforce loyalty for the Spanish monarchy, and discourage support for Napoleon and pro-Independence ideas, the *Gazeta de Caracas* was brought into circulation on 24<sup>th</sup> October 1808. Although it was conservative in nature and encouraged landowners' devotion to the ruling order, it did highlight the indignity of the King's abdication and it provided a torrent of facts and commentary that prepared the way for the usurpation of the Crown. Essential to publication, was, of course a printing press, which was established in Caracas by US associates Mateo Gallagher and Jamie Lamb, October 1808. This modest press, initially under Spanish government control, would eventually bear witness to the birth of Venezuelan Independence. The rapid evolution of ideas would make the *Gazeta* one of the most significant publications in the new thinking. However, its original intentions were pragmatic and peaceful, as the first issue states:

En la época que acaba de transcurrir llena de sucesos gloriosos a España y satisfactorios para cuantos aman la nación y la humanidad, ha sido asombroso el número de papeles públicos de nuestra Península que por la elocuencia verdaderamente patriótica que los ha dictado, y por la importancia de los hechos a que son concernientes, merecen ser repetidos, muchas veces leídos y

conservados. He aquí el principal motor para el establecimiento de la *Gazeta de Caracas*.<sup>102</sup>

What began as a source of information, however, rapidly evolved into revolutionary discourse. It is intriguing to note that whilst Venezuelan governments changed, the *Gazeta* always remained the official mouthpiece. Three distinct stages can be identified: from initial publication (October 1808) to 19<sup>th</sup> April 1810 the *Gazeta* remained the official organ of the Captain-General of Caracas, with the backdrop of Napoleonic invasion to contend with. From April 1810, up to 5<sup>th</sup> July 1811, it was the outlet of the Junta of Caracas, preserving the rights of Fernando VII, but progressively autonomous in outlook. On 5<sup>th</sup> July 1811, it was taken over by the first independent Republic of Venezuela, which controlled its publication until the Spanish re-conquest in 1812.

## Content

Early issues of the newspaper were almost entirely devoted to foreign news; European events dominated the columns. Although offering information on agriculture and commerce, politics and ideas were important too; information from Seville, Cadiz and London gave way to more patriotic articles focused on the promotion of Venezuela as a modern nation, rich in resources. As more Venezuelan themes and issues were published in the *Gazeta* Creole readers were faced with an increasing dilemma; they began to recognise a new autonomous political personality in Venezuela.

Even before 19<sup>th</sup> April 1810, pre-revolutionary themes and articles were being published in the *Gazeta*. Histories of other independent Juntas formed across the continent appeared which, conceivably, provided a blueprint for Venezuela. As a part of Venezuelan history, the *Gazeta* was the medium through which complete

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<sup>102</sup> *Gazeta de Caracas*, 24<sup>th</sup> October 1808 (Vol.I). All spelling is that of the original text, and the facsimile copy used has no page numbers.

independence was announced in over four pages devoted to the events and ideas of July 1811. The *Gazeta* charted the concerns and dilemmas of a Venezuelan population on the verge of change. Its influence on Creole consciousness through its evolving content was crucial to the Independence project.

## Editorship and Publication

Andrés Bello was made editor of the *Gazeta* by the Captain-General in 1808, at the age of twenty-seven, in his first publishing job. Although there is no conclusive proof it is possible he remained editor in chief until his departure from Caracas in 1810. With the establishment of the Junta, the printers Gallagher and Lamb assumed the title ‘Impresores del Supremo Gobierno’,<sup>103</sup> with Secretario del Estado, Juan Germán Roscio, dictating the paper’s political outlook. The establishment of Independence saw an official dependent on the Executive take on the role of editor; the President of the government, Juan Antonio Rodríguez Domínguez, ensured that publications honoured Venezuela and did not incite political opposition.

The *Gazeta* took the form of a weekly paper, published every Friday, with the occasional extra edition or supplement. Layout was generally governed by the printers’ materials, initially a four page, two-column publication. It became a bi-weekly publication in 1812, published on Tuesdays as well as Fridays, until the earthquake struck, when the publisher had to be changed temporarily.

Although there is little information available on readership, it is known that subscribers paid eight pesos a year, in advance, to the printers and could collect their edition with a pass. Whilst arrangements were made for subscribers out of the capital, the reality was that the *Gazeta* was only read by a few hundred of Caracas’ 40,000-strong population.

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<sup>103</sup> *Gazeta de Caracas*, Prólogo por Pedro Grases, p.25.

## News from Europe: Allegiance to the Monarchy in ‘Las Dos Tiranías’

The French Revolution and the Napoleonic invasion of the Peninsula triggered pro-Spanish patriotic exaltation; traditional values such as loyalty to the King and the defence of Spanish ‘costumbres’ and ‘patria’ dominated. Although there was a small group of men who desired independence, as would be seen a few years later in the press, they were unable to manifest their aspirations in the public sphere at this stage.

The French Revolution, seen as regicide, coupled with Napoleon’s actions were strongly rejected by the *Gazeta*. Napoleon’s hostile reception is recounted in ‘Las Dos Tiranías’, an article published on 30<sup>th</sup> December 1808 and concluded on 17<sup>th</sup> February of the following year. Consistent with the Spanish periodical press of the 1790s, French attempts to achieve liberty are shown to provoke only anarchy and revolution: the two tyrannies are Napoleon and the Republic. Although the concept of independence is mentioned, in 1808 its reception is understandably adverse:

La nacion que al principio de la *revolucion* solo hablaba de vengar los derechos de la humanidad, que llamaba a los pueblos à la *independencia*, à la dicha; ¿esta misma nacion no ha sido, desde su pretendida emancipacion, mas que el instrumento para su propia destrucion ó la de los otros pueblos?<sup>104</sup>

Undeniably negative, there is nevertheless a major ideological shift here; notions of liberty, rights and equality have been amalgamated into one formula, that of Independence. The two tyrannies described in the article ‘Las Dos Tiranías’ are both reprehensible; whilst the first tyranny deals solely with Napoleon’s bloody atrocities and usurped power, the second tyranny is more sinister in its make up. The Republic, in theory, offers ‘*una libertad prudente, una igualdad razonable*’; le [the

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<sup>104</sup> *Gazeta de Caracas*, ‘Las Dos Tiranias’ 30<sup>th</sup> December 1808 (Vol.I No.17).

French citizen] prometia *leyes Justas* [sic]' (Vol.I No.17). The reality however is a type of despotism unrivalled in its violence. Napoleon's 'second tyranny', the Republic, is likened to 'la creciente de un rio que dexa cadaveres y aguas estancadas que engendran la peste' (Vol.I No.17). The *Gazeta* notifies its readers that the French Republic is more ruinous than the preceding revolutionary terror. Reducing the throne to obscurity, the French have installed 'un Gobierno cruel, hipócritica y ambicioso, debia dexarles aquel desnudo feroz, que en la epoca anterior habian desplegado contra los ejércitos extranjeros' (Vol.I No.17).

Napoleon's '*insaciable ambicion y su atroz politica* [sic]' threaten not only France with 'la degradacion interior'; he will only be satisfied with 'el trastorno del mundo entero' (Vol.I No.17). The French people are the Republic's victims; the gradual decomposition of traditional values and opinions has laid waste to 'el caracter nacional' and ruined the images of a respectable family and patria in that land. This new era of despotism has no geographical or ideological boundaries; with a grip on the resources of the French Empire, Napoleon is perceived as a monstrous threat, who 'forma una especie a parte que no puede clasificarse entre los seres conocidos' (Vol.I No.17).

In this atmosphere, the disquiet surrounding the future of the Spanish monarchy was considerable. The *Gazeta* reports the abdication of the Spanish royal family and denigrates Napoleon's usurpation. The letter Napoleon sent to Fernando recognising him only as the Prince of Asturias is considered in the *Gazeta*'s 'reflexiones'; this view of affairs through a Spanish lens affirms loyalty to the crown, 'la nacion Espanola reconocio por Rei à Fernando VII, dado por su mismo padre: y la nacion Espanola no tendrá otro [sic]' (Vol.I No.17).<sup>105</sup> Whilst Napoleon refuses to

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<sup>105</sup>Here 'nación Española' covers Spanish America as well as Spain.

recognise Fernando as a legitimate King, the Spanish people reaffirm their fidelity, comparing the loss of the monarchy to the loss of their '*derechos primordiales* [sic]' (Vol.I No.17). They contend that the only right the Napoleon has is '*fuerza*', the law of force. The system of legitimate rights and laws is shown to favour Monarchy. Napoleon's approach is satirised, his reasoning shown to be flawed with regards to Fernando's accession, '*¡O Fernando! Debias pues abandonar tus sagrados derechos á la ambicion de un favorito, que aspiraba a suplantarte* [sic]' (Vol.I No.17). The mocking tone seeks to discredit Napoleon as a petty, ambitious upstart and shore up support for Fernando, the only legitimate ruler.

Further to the exposition of the 'two tyrannies', letters between Carlos IV and Fernando are published in the *Gazeta*, 3<sup>rd</sup> January 1809, which attempt to justify the abdication and win back favour for the Monarchy. As a source of foreign information for the Venezuelan elite, the correspondence reassures them that Monarchy and its full restoration is possible and remains the strongest form of government; abdication, according to Fernando, is a temporary situation,

Aunque es cierto que hizo la abdicacion con toda libertad, todavia se reservó en su animo volver à tomar las riendas del gobierno quando lo creyese conveniente.<sup>106</sup>

Although it is difficult to justify an apparently voluntary abdication, the young King sets out a five-point plan to bring his father back to the throne.<sup>107</sup> The authenticity of this exchange of letters provides more than a foreign news update; reassuring in tone, the Royal family appear to remain lucid in their outlook. Carlos' reply to his son's letter is published and confirms royal authority; unable to deny the French invasion he

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<sup>106</sup> *Gazeta Extraordinaria de Caracas*, 'Exposicion de los hechos y maquinaciones que han preparado la usurpacion de la Corona de España, y los medios que el Emperador de los Franceses ha puesto en obra para realizarla' 3<sup>rd</sup> January 1809 (Vol.I No.18).



affirms that confidence still lies with the Crown, not Napoleon, ‘me ha declarado que no os reconocerá jamás como Rei, y que el enemigo de su Padre no podrá nunca inspirar confianza á los extraños’ (Vol.I No.18). Carlos’ loyalty to his nobles and governors cannot be mistaken; he cannot consent to rule by a Junta, in the same way that he did not want to leave the Spanish people faced with civil war and revolution. Such genuine loyalty inspires reciprocal loyalty, ‘he reinado para ellos; constantemente me ocuparé de ellos’ (Vol.I No.18). This underlines the responsibilities and obligations of the Crown.

The Crown cannot be defeated by military force alone; it is a fundamental right, as the abdicated King stresses,

Se trata de *excluir para siempre del trono de España nuestra dinastía, substituyendo en su lugar la Imperial de Francia*: que esto no podemos hacerlo sin el expreso consentimiento de todos los individuos que tenían y puedan tener derecho a la corona [sic]. (Vol.I No.18)

The force Napoleon has at his disposal maintains its power through brutal violence, inspiring only hatred and indignation. Furthermore, the *Gazeta* criticises Napoleon’s political and military actions. Initially praised for his military astuteness ‘ha destruido en un solo día las reputaciones militares más acreditadas’.<sup>108</sup> It is asserted that ‘en solo dos meses ha mudado la faz del mundo’ (Vol.I No.26). This achievement, however, is nothing more than a mask, as the Emperor’s true criminal character is uncovered ‘no es más que un asesino, un traidor, un ladrón, un malvado subalterno [sic]’ (Vol.I No.26). The difficulty of forming empires becomes apparent; the despotic French constitution cannot be indiscriminately applied to nations with different customs, habits and geographical locations. The blinded, obstinate approach the *Gazeta*

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<sup>108</sup> *Gazeta de Caracas*, ‘Las Dos Tiránias (Conclusion)’ 17<sup>th</sup> February 1809 (Vol.I No.26).

unmasks in Napoleon's campaign is shown to lack all compatibility with Spanish America. Just as the earlier press showed Revolution to be undesirable, this second tyranny, it is argued, leads only to ruin.

### Difficulties forming legitimate Government

The fervent rejection of Napoleon and spontaneous loyalty to Fernando VII gave way to the formation of provincial Juntas in Spain and Spanish America, the key problem facing Spain, and by logical extension, Spanish America was who would govern, and in whose name? The links between King and Country could not be totally cut; in theory the disappearance of the King left power in the hands of the 'nación' (popular sovereignty). The principle of absolutist doctrine, divine rule, was fatally undermined. However, it was generally assumed that the retreat of the monarchy was a temporary affair. As such, the question of political representation was unresolved; governments were provisional and temporary, waiting for the return of royal sovereignty. This debate dominated the Peninsula in the summer of 1808 and eventually the Junta emerged as the best form of legitimate authority; two members of each regional junta were to make up the Suprema Junta Central Gobernativa del Reino, a mix of political communities old and new.

As demonstrated, the colonies reacted to the invasion and abdication in the same way as the Peninsulares. They too needed an authority whose legitimacy could not be questioned. News of the Suprema Junta Central appeared in the *Gazeta* on 3<sup>rd</sup> February 1809, 'urgente la necesidad, y vivos sus deseos por este suspirado centro de la *Suprema Autoridad* [sic]'.<sup>109</sup> To allay fears that Napoleon had not taken total control in Spain, the Captain-General is clear in his recognition of the '*Soberana Junta Central* [sic]' (Vol.I No.24). Total obedience to Fernando signifies devotion to

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<sup>109</sup> *Gazeta de Caracas*, 'Publico Regocijo De la Capital de Caracas por la Feliz Instalacion de la Suprema Junta Central' 3<sup>rd</sup> February 1809 (Vol.I No.24).

‘los imprescriptibles derechos de la Nacion *Española* [sic]’ (Vol.I No.24). Juan de Casas, Captain-General, is praised for this allegiance in the *Gazeta*. Such unquestioning obedience to the Crown maintained Spain’s authority over its colonies, despite the tightening grip Napoleon had over the Peninsula. The *Gazeta*, still controlled at this point by the Capitan-General, encourages recognition of this authority, or ‘blind obedience’:

*Ciudad de Caracas*; así se explican los leales corazones Americanos, que a pesar del anchuròso oceáno, que los separa, se sienten inflamados de aquel mismo fuego, en que arden sus Hermanos en *Europa*; y así acreditan al Orbe su ciega obediencia á quanto tiene la relacion con la causa del *Soberano* [sic] (Vol.I No.24).

With Napoleon’s increasing dominance and the Junta’s downgrading to a Regency, coupled with the delay in communications, there was an increasing degree of uncertainty regarding the situation in Spain. Logically, Caracas could preserve the Monarchy by becoming independent from the Peninsula. In this atmosphere, the announcement of the creation of the Consejo de Regencia de España, 2<sup>nd</sup> June 1810, was met with increasing scepticism. Its legitimacy is questioned as the authority of Fernando is weakened. The unequal representation of the American deputies in the Regency is one such example; ‘hemos expuesto directamente al Consejo de Regencia sobre la desproporcion en que se halla el numero de estos Diputados con la poblacion de la America’.<sup>110</sup> Further abuse of power is found in magistrates who favour Spanish interests. With no King, the uncertainty over political and military authority in Spain increases, loyalty and obedience become less automatic as rumours of corruption increase:

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<sup>110</sup> *Gazeta de Caracas*, ‘Orden Reservada de la Regencia de Espana al Capitan General de Caracas’ 2<sup>nd</sup> June 1810 (Vol.I No.101).

¿Quien nos asegura que las nuevas disposiciones del cuerpo legislativo nacional serán mejor cumplidas, que tantos reglamentos saludables de que abunda nuestro código, y que por la mayor parte han caído en desentud? V.E. [the Caracas Captain-General] sabe muy bien la soberanía Nacional es nula, y su representación imaginaria (Vol.I No.101).

Favouritism amongst Viceroy and Capitanes Generales in the Americas is cited as dangerous, and the reported capitulation of Madrid furthers fears that law is once again based on the whim of the Captain-General, whose authority is waning. In a major u-turn, in June 1810, the *Gazeta* begins to encourage a rupture from this blind obedience to representatives of a non-existent monarchy, ‘nuestros destinos estan en nuestros manos, y ya no dependen, ni de los Ministros, ni de los Virreys, ni de los Gobernadores’ (Vol.I No.101).

However, and here is the paradox, this break from Spain, although a move towards independence, is considered necessary in order to legitimise Fernando’s sovereignty, it is ‘necesario à los intereses de la Monarquia Española, cuya integra conservacion à su digno, y legitimo Soberano, es el primero de nuestros votos’ (Vol.I No.101). Are the authorities here using the absent King as a justification? Is the Crown little more than a mask to hide the desire for full Independence? If so, it is typical of the step-by-step approach towards autonomy taken by the cautious ruling elite. The formation of a Venezuelan Junta would be complicated; although faced with the same political challenge as Spain, one of legitimacy, there was no foreign invasion, no impending civil war and no collaborating authorities. At a time of political crisis, the delay in communication and contradictory information became all the more serious; the ruling Venezuelan elite were prepared to accept Spanish provisional government on patriotic grounds for only so long. The independent

Venezuelan Junta was finally founded to conserve ‘los derechos de nuestro adorado Monarca Fernando Septimo’ and to restore legitimacy in his name by means of ‘una confianza reciproca que anima el orden y la unanimidad de sentimientos de las partes integrantes de Venezuela’ (Vol.I No.101). Changing ideology whereby sovereignty lies increasingly in the people, and notions of equality undermine peninsular laws and privileges, served to widen the divide between Spain and the colonies. As yet, royal authority was the strongest surviving link.

Despite this shift in outlook towards the sovereignty of the people and natural rights, the monarch remained indispensable to the nation; a crime against the King is interpreted as a crime against the nation. The disappearance of the King leaves the nation orphaned; the resulting danger is a lack of unity. The *Gazeta* aims to combat this dissolution by upholding obedience to the provisional authorities and Fernando himself whilst rejecting the foreign body of Napoleon.

Issue no.111 sets out the ‘Criterio del verdadero amor y lealtad al desgraciado FERNANDO VII’; order and obedience are necessary to stem anarchy. All individuals have a duty of loyalty to the captured King, irrespective of their social status, and the *Gazeta* claims that whilst there are many who support Ferdinand, ‘son pocos los que guardan las leyes fundamentales de su corona’ (Vol.I No.111).<sup>111</sup> This call to support the King but not necessarily the Spanish Junta is an enlightened one; the editors, at this point heralding from the semi-autonomous Venezuelan Junta, insist that the general will of the ‘pueblo’ is of utmost importance, along with the observation of a system of laws. This thinking is in line with the climate of new, modern European ideas. The break with Enlightenment thought occurs when it is asserted that the King still has executive power. The uneasy mix of modern thinking

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<sup>111</sup> *Gazeta de Caracas*, 3<sup>rd</sup> August 1810 (Vol.I No.111).

and traditional authority is full of contradictions; the press demonstrates clearly the wary transition towards autonomy. The King,

Como executor de la voluntad general del Pueblo, esta sujeto à las leyes, y debe reconocer que no hay cosa mas digna de alahanza en esta linea que el vivir subordinado a la magestad de ellas (Vol.I No.111).

A monarch offers a safety net that guards against anarchy as it becomes apparent that the Consejo de Regencia offers little to the colonies. It is nothing other than ‘una nueva cadena, derada con el nombre de Regencia[...]para mas esclavizar à los habitantes de la España Americana?’ (Vol.I No.111)

With high volumes of European news dominating the columns of the *Gazeta* it is argued that anyone abusing the name of the King is unsuited to rule in America,

Ni los Napoleones, ni la Francia, ni La España, ni los Sres. Castaños, Saavedra, Escaño, y Lardizabal estan comprendidos en el breve apostolico, ni en las leyes cardinales de estos dominios (Vol.I No.111).

The lack of compatibility with any other form of rule, seen as ‘el yugo y las cadenas de un Gobierno inconstitucional’ (Vol.I No.111), highlights the enlarging ideological gap between Spain and Spanish America. In Venezuela ‘amor y lealtad’ are little more than abstract words unless associated with the captive Fernando to create a sense of nation. But neither Spain nor Venezuela had a monarch at its head.

## Importance of Patria: Precursor to Independence

The characteristic allegiance to the monarchy already described was accompanied in the *Gazeta* by an exaltation of patriotic values. Established traditions such as devotion to the King, defence of customs, values and Patria are encouraged; but these coexist with new ideas that signal future change. The patriotic sentiment coupled with the rejection of those governing on behalf of the King trigger a new outlook.

Fresh, enlightened thinking seems abstract, until applied to a patriotic sentiment; the two combine encouraging independence.

The early stages of this regeneration of ideas bear witness to the strength of patriotic (i.e. pro-Venezuelan) feeling, as the 'Guia Universal de Forasteros' shows.<sup>112</sup> In the same way that the Peruvians were intent on demonstrating the richness of their region, the Venezuelans exhibited theirs. However, by 1809 Patria has acquired a new meaning. Previously a tool to disprove that America was backwards and unsusceptible to Enlightenment, it has become a concept on which to build an autonomous nation. Although published whilst still under the control of the Captain-General, the proposed 'Guide for Foreigners' was important as the *Gazeta* increasingly circulated 'en las otras Provincias y en las colonias extrangeras' (Vol.I No.68). Venezuela was a vast country with many localities and a united approach is required to 'conservar, organizar y poner en el estado de civilizacion y prosperidad' (Vol.I No.68) these territories.

The five proposed divisions in the Guide (Civil y Economica, Fiscal ó de Real Hacienda, Ecclesiastica, Militar, Mercantil) are themselves evidence of a developed society; such self-awareness highlights the extent to which modernity has penetrated Venezuela. Commerce is further divided into Agriculture, Industry, Internal trade, External trade and Imports; this level of organisation, and the way in which it is exhibited to the outside world, shows Venezuela as a, highly organised, modern society able to coordinate its own affairs without external interference. The increasing sense of identity and awareness of a Venezuelan Patria is strengthened by the weakness of the Madre Patria; by the spring of 1811 the Regencia is described in

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<sup>112</sup> *Gazeta de Caracas*, 'Prospecto para una Guia Universal de Forasteros' 27<sup>th</sup> October 1809 (Vol.I No.68).

the *Gazeta* thus: ‘no tenia valor para proteger su defensor’.<sup>113</sup> Critical of Spain, the article recounts the life and death of the Duke of Alburquerque, stressing that Patria is a matter of honour and of great value. The Duke is cited as an example of patriotic feeling in Spain, ‘el amor de la Patria le ha hecho ahogar en el fondo de su corazon sus sentimientos contra la Junta’ (Vol.II No.33).

The resurgence of the notions of virtue and Patria demonstrate how ideas that were in their infancy in the 1790s in the *Papel Periódico de Bogotá* and the *Mercurio Peruano*, which evoked traditionalism and conservatism, have now been politically mobilised to further the cause for Independence, ‘pueblos que amais la verdad, y vuestros derechos, no creais á la Junta, sino suspende vuestra opinion’ (Vol.II No.33). Patria as a concept is more evident than ever before. Previously encouraging greater productivity and stronger local government to increase public well being, for example through practical advice, it now stresses the values of pride, honour and collective self-interest. Venezuela does not want to be seen as subservient so whilst Patria cannot be substituted for nationalism, it does provide a sense of modern identity that propels the independence movement.

The letters in the *Gazeta* demonstrate the rejection of the tyranny in Spain and a heightening of Venezuelan identity. One contributor writes, 21<sup>st</sup> May 1811, ‘por Venezuela estoy pronto á dar la vida’ (Vol.II No.33). The Spanish nation has ceased to exist, the absent King has left no credible sovereign other than the sovereign individual. The writer of this letter, Manuel Cortes y Campomanes declares he is

Libre de elegir por patria, el pais que me parezca, y de asociarme al pueblo que mas me convenga, si este quiere admitirme en su seno (Vol.II No.33)

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<sup>113</sup> *Gazeta de Caracas*, ‘Concluye el Discurso del Senado Conservador de Francia’ 21<sup>st</sup> May 1811 (Vol.II No.33).



He adds, significantly, ‘me naturalize miembro de esta nacion’ (Vol.II No.33). Here a new set of words, employed with increasing frequency, demonstrates the shift towards Independence: ‘pueblo’, ‘nación’ and ‘patria’ begin to forge the idea of a separate national identity.

### Increasing Uncertainty

The fragmented arrival of news from Spain coupled with the changing ideological outlook resulted in an air of uncertainty over the future of the Peninsula and the Empire. The ‘Reflexiones Politicas’ of 6<sup>th</sup> November 1810,<sup>114</sup> reveal the suspicion Spain is viewed with; refusing to openly declare their legitimacy, the Regency is seen as less stable, less impartial than the monarch, ‘la Regencia nos prohibió saber las opiniones del otro hemisferio acerca de su lexitimidad[...]cada dia esperabamos ver aperecer un *Español* imparcial [sic]’ (Vol.I No.5). It is this perceived sway from reason and justice which bears witness to the first direct mention of Independence in 1810, ‘el estandarte de la independencia se ha empezado à levantar en America’ (Vol.I No.5); furthermore, this independence is not characterised by the anarchy that has consumed France, it is a sentiment typified by ‘madurez y conocimiento, y puesta en practica baxo los mejores auspicios, *la moderacion y la beneficencia* [sic]’ (Vol.I No.5).

Independence is promoted as there is little authority coming from Spain; America clearly desires a hearty, legitimate leader and neither the Regency nor Napoleon can provide this. The Empire was built on ‘la gloria, el saber y la felicidad’ which has become ‘un despotismo militar el mas barbaro’ (Vol.I No.5). The independence endorsed here does not suggest a total break from Spain, but suggests that America ‘libres de yugo’ would potentially be more powerful to help Spain as

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<sup>114</sup> *Gazeta de Caracas*, ‘Reflexiones Politicas’ 6<sup>th</sup> November 1810 (Vol.I No.5).

‘los Americanos no pensaran jamas en separarse de la corona de Espana’ (Vol.1 No.5). Without doubt, tolerance towards the Peninsula government was steadily decreasing and whilst this is seen as unfortunate the Regency remains respected to a degree. The open questions in these political reflections stress the lack of certainty over the future of this interim government and give way to grievance; after all French troops were marching towards Cadiz where this Consejo de Regencia was holed up claiming to exert sovereign authority.

This cloudy view of Spain opened up the debate surrounding free trade. Economic inequality is now addressed alongside political legitimacy as Venezuelans realise the power and wealth they possess in the face of a weakened monopoly,

Insistir en el espiritu de monopolio antiguo en este tiempo tratar de entretener à los Americanes con promesas vagas de mejoras, cien veces repetidas, y otras ciento olvidadas, es moverlos à indignacion; pasion la mas contraria à los menesterosos (Vol.I No.5).

The injustice of the colonial economy becomes apparent; prices are fixed and low, industry is capped to match Spain’s requirement despite the swelling colonial population, and goods which imported from Spain are of poor quality. This restrictive policy encourages the Venezuelans to take their destiny into their own hands, ‘los americanos son iguales à los españoles’ (Vol.I No.5). The author states these reflections are obvious ones, in that they refer to the interests of each individual. Independent discourse is gathering momentum by 1810 and absolutist rule is no longer tolerable in Venezuela.

## Blueprint for Independence

Alongside the information filtering through from Europe, the *Gazeta* publishes a minuted development of events unfolding in Santa Fé de Bogotá; news of Revolution

in New Granada provides a blueprint for the people of Venezuela. Following the French invasion of Spain, 1808, conflicting courses of action were taken by Colonial and Peninsula subjects in New Granada that inevitably led to strife and various declarations of Independence. In 1810 subordinated jurisdictions in New Granada threw out their Spanish officials, except in Santa Marta and Ríohacha, modern day Panama and Ecuador. On 20<sup>th</sup> July of the same year an uprising in Bogotá sparked Independence, although the government swore allegiance to Ferdinand and did not begin to declare full independence until 1811. Any remaining loyalty to the Crown was steadily alienated by the arbitrary conduct of Spanish and partisan troops, their actions validating an attack on Spanish civilisation which manifests itself in the contemporary press.

By reporting events in New Granada, the *Gazeta de Caracas* provides its readership, for the first time, with an example of the way in which enlightened thought is turned into practice. The edition published on 4<sup>th</sup> June 1811, with the leading article entitled ‘Estado de Bogotá’, describes the night of 20<sup>th</sup> July 1810 when Independence was declared there.<sup>115</sup> This official discourse focuses on the positive changes autonomy has brought to New Granada; emphasis is placed on the human side whereby the oppressors, that is Spanish rule, are defeated by local spirit and human passion. These words acquire positive connotations and are placed ‘bajo la sombra del árbol de la libertad’ (Vol.II No.35). In this way Independence is shown to unlock the potential of Patria, to remove despotism and create ‘un justo equilibrio contra las tentativas de los unos y de los otros’ (Vol.II No.35). Such powerful language serves to further discredit the *ancien régime* and demonstrates that autonomous rule has been received with enthusiasm. The importance of the human,

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<sup>115</sup> *Gazeta de Caracas*, ‘Estado de Bogotá’ 4<sup>th</sup> June 1811 (Vol.II No.35).

emotional side of Independence should not be underestimated, and this official article argues that equality has been achieved through zeal and passion. Without this example the Venezuelan population might conceivably doubt the possibility of gaining autonomy on the strength of human emotion.

Independent government once formed in New Granada, an article from the same edition entitled 'Cartagena, Consideraciones sobre el Gobierno de este Provincia' (Vol.II No.35) attempts to confirm that Independence has resulted in practical improvement. Written approximately twelve months after the uprising in Bogotá, these reflections set out 'las inapreciables ventajas que baxo el nuevo gobierno ha logrado la provincia de Cartagena' (Vol.II No.35). Once more words are used to advance political ends; 'beneficio' and 'dignidad' are strongly associated with the new regime. Almost an advert for Independence, the reform of agriculture and commerce is presented as innovative and in the interests of public prosperity. Rejection of Spain has witnessed 'la extincion del contrabando tambien se han extinguido esas leyes fiscales tan barbaras, tan iniquas, tan impolitas' (Vol.II No.35). Whilst positive words are associated with the new regime, the words increasingly used to describe the colonial system are harsh: 'polilla', 'plaga', 'enemigos', 'despotas insaciabiles'.

The substance of this 1811 issue should not be undervalued. News of a young, flourishing independent nation close to home is proof that liberty is attainable; '¡quantos bienes vamos á gozar la benigna influencia de una libertad bien entendida!' (Vol.II No.35). In the space of fifteen years the meaning of 'libertad' has changed considerably; in the *Papel Periódico* its connotations were anarchy, disorder and chaos, now it is associated with productivity, improvement and equality. The above sentence crystallises the development of Independence in the Spanish American

dominions; notions of libertad were cautiously received following French anarchy, but gradually as new scientific thought and practical reasoning filtered through sporadically to small sections of society the advantages of libertad became apparent. The Bogotan example, coupled with news of Napoleon's military action in Spain provided the Caracas elite with evidence that autonomous rule was beneficial.

Not only was Independence shown to have improved Nueva Granada in the space of a year; opinion in the press dictates that 'no puede ser mas moderada, ni mas propia de las circunstancias' (Vol.II No.35). Reassurance that it was the right political move is important. The ruling elite had the most to lose in such a large upheaval and this article attempts to reassure them that anything other than Independence would be unnatural and New Granada should 'ocupe el lugar que le corresponde entre las naciones del universo' (Vol.II No.35). The gradual change in ideas is near complete here; previously divine rule was the only natural form of government, now liberty is well understood as injustices of the colonial system are exposed. Armed with practical, local, evidence, the final sentence of these reflections pushes the Venezuelan elite towards Independence,

Unos pueblos encorbados baxo el yugo de un sistema colonial, despotico y opresivo ¿como podrian entrar repentinamente en el pleno goce de todos sus derechos naturales y civiles sin abusar de ellos? (Vol.II No.35)

An article written several weeks later, which appears in the *Gazeta* in 28<sup>th</sup> June 1811, entitled 'Estado de Bogotá', sets out the practical, geographical elements of Independence and alludes to progressive systems of rule, specifically federalism.<sup>116</sup> However, it should be noted that the autonomy discussed is still limited in its notion of equal representation; the author describing Independence in New Granada is Jorge

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<sup>116</sup> *Gazeta de Caracas*, 'Estado de Bogotá' 28<sup>th</sup> June 1811 (Vol.II No.35).

Tadeo Lozano, Presidente del Estado, who typifies the ambiguous Spanish American interpretation of the Enlightenment, accepting some parts and rejecting others. An advocate of Independence, Lozano was born into a noble, wealthy Bogotan family in January 1771. Following military service he studied chemistry in Madrid, 1792-3, and spent further time studying in Paris before returning to Nueva Granada in 1797. In Santa Fé he quickly became an active participant in the tertulias, introduced by Antonio Nariño. He began to study fauna and zoology specifically how exogenous plants adapted to the tropics, jointly founding the *Correo curioso, erudito, económico y mercantil de la Ciudad de Bogotá* in 1801.

From 20<sup>th</sup> July 1810 Lozano became involved in New Granada politics, and as President of the Colegio Electoral Constituyente he enacted the first liberal, representative constitution of the Estado de Cundinamarca. Ambiguous as to the extent to which the Creoles assumed control of the Viceroyalty, it acknowledged Fernando VII as sovereign, yet named a President at its head with the title ‘Viceregente’. Suffrage was restricted to landowning, self-sufficient males. The fudged reading of Enlightenment values led to the creation of an Independent state that favoured Lozano’s own interests and those of his friends and family. Relatively unknown in popular circles, as a privileged individual, his downfall was inevitable. However, he did form a state with a new system of government and his forward thinking is clear in the article, which provides the Caracas elite with a vision for their own independent rule. Lozano rejects the voices of Religion, the King, even Patria (meaning that of Spain and its Empire) and insists that French tyranny suffocates the general will. It is French occupation that releases the long accumulating tensions and discontent in the Empire. The futility of Spanish authority is the focus of interest in the description of the large southern province of Popayán. Governor Tacón and the

Cabildo of Popayán remained fiercely loyal to Spain, submitting to Fernando's emotional appeal based on a love of the country, attachment to religious faith, fear of conquest and repugnance of alien values.

This appeal, as well as the colonial system of rule, is shown to be defunct. The social edifice of the Province is not durable if the imperial model is followed, 'el fanatismo, y las falsas ideas tienen todavia embargada una porcion considerable del material que debe emplearse en tan grande obra' (Vol.II No.360). The repetition of 'fanatismo' throughout the article deepens the attack on Spain. This is an assault on the dogma of the Catholic Church, sovereignty of the King and precarious political reform. The alternative outlook, detailed in the *Gazeta*, that is Independence, is increasingly progressive and looks forward to a stable era where the people themselves are sovereign, in a peaceful and secure environment with 'el sistema mejor que les acomode' (Vol.II No.360). The encouragement for Venezuela to follow New Granada is obvious, and the minds of the ruling elite are wooed by future prospects of a federal system,

El sistema federativo no puede existir sino entre estados independientes, y constituidos capaces de equilibrarse mutuamente (Vol.II No.360).

Note the reference here to the 'independent states'. Diametrically opposed to monarchy, this system of rule, and its avocation in the press is radically new. The Venezuelan elite are being shown that Independence is far-reaching yet feasible; more than political upheaval, a federal congress appears to offer 'el Nuevo Reyno un lugar muy distinguido en la escala de los Estados Soberanos del Mundo' (Vol.II No.360). Interestingly, the autonomous system of government is still conceived as a 'Reyno' which demonstrates how Lozano's independent New Granada is selective in its application of Enlightened thought, yet it does show how views of autonomy were

being adapted to suit Spanish America and how ideas were steadily turning into practice.

## Independence Declared in 1811

PROCLAMA

HABITANTES DE CARACAS

Caraqueños podra anunciaros el Supremo Poder Ejecutivo que el Supremo

Congreso de Venezuela ha acordado en este dia la INDEPENDENCIA

ABSOLUTA; ya, Caraqueños, no reconocéis superior en la tierra: ya no

dependeis sino del Ser Eterno. (\*)

*(\*)En efecto, Estado independiente y soberano es aquel que no esta sometido a otro: que tiene su Gobierno: que dicta sus leyes [sic]<sup>117</sup>*

Venezuela declared Independence, specifically political freedom from Spain, on 5<sup>th</sup> July 1811 when a Declaration was made by the first national Congress. However, as press coverage suggests, Independence was a complex process and needed to be explained (as in the asterixed footnote above). The *Gazeta* sets out the intellectual, political and socio-economic roots of the movement. The ideas informing Independence can be set out in a few key words, ‘libertad’, ‘patria’, ‘derechos naturales’ and so on, which have been identified in the articles examined. Distinctly French in their meaning, it is somewhat contradictory that the ruling elite struggled against French power and remained faithful to the Spanish nation. However, the fear of revolutionary extremism in France offers some explanation; whilst the Spanish nation lacked government with a clear authority it was preferable to Napoleonic rule. Eventually, economic crisis led to further dissatisfaction with colonial rule; there was already a current of feeling for self-government in Venezuela and by 1811 the Creole element of Society felt it was capable of self-rule.

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<sup>117</sup> *Gazeta de Caracas*, ‘Independencia de Venezuela’ 9<sup>th</sup> July 1811 (Vol.II No.35).



It must be realised when reading these proclamations and reflections that Independence was not a popular movement. The mass of the population had no interest in Independence, it was organised and carried through by the elites – nobles, intellectuals and men who wanted to lead the Republic. However, what is certain from reading the *Gazeta de Caracas* is that the stated objective of Independence, and the first Republic, was Venezuelan progress and happiness, the dignity of freedom, and that each citizen should share in the glory of the new nation.

The *Gazeta* focuses on Spanish cruelty as the main motivation for autonomy; emotional appeal and intellectual arguments underpin this focus. Furthermore, ‘La ley divina y natural’ define man’s rights, this principle ‘de eternal verdad esta escrito en el corazon de todo hombre’ (Vol.II No.40).<sup>118</sup> In this way, Independence was, most importantly, a move to restore natural order; these principles give the movement authority and legitimacy. The Seville Junta and Cadiz Regency, with no King at their head, are referred to with hostility. Opposed to the dignity and rights of colonial subjects, the unfair nature of the colonial relationship is brought to the fore: ‘descreditarnos en sus papeles publicos, y hacernos la Guerra que su impotencia les ha permitido’ (Vol.II No.40).

Economic and geographic arguments reinforce the intellectual reasoning, underpinned by the core values ‘dignidad’, ‘derechos’ and ‘justicia’. Despotism, full of ‘ultrajes y violencias’ (Vol.II No.40), combined with the separation of ‘el inmenso Oceano’ (Vol.II No.40), add substance to the emotional argument for independence; the justifications for autonomy are made ever more watertight through the words of the printed press.

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<sup>118</sup> It is interesting to note Independence does not mean separation from a Christian (Catholic) God, and this shows up the selective interpretation of Enlightenment philosophy. Although critical of the Church, they are not anti-Catholic.

The precarious nature of liberty is acknowledged, however, as is the importance of being ‘felizmente gobernado’ (Vol.II No.40). The strength of Enlightenment philosophy is clear here and it is this line of thought that is used to convince the readership that the best governance would be achieved without a King. In a complete u-turn in accepted wisdom, Venezuela states its interests are no longer compatible with Spanish ones. Whilst Fernando is acknowledged as a dignified man, there is no guarantee that ‘sus sucesores todos seran virtuosos, honrados, liberales y amigos de humanidad’ (Vol.II No.40). For this reason separation ‘de la España, y de toda otra potencia y nacion del Mundo’ (Vol.II No.40) is necessary for Venezuela. Although radical in outlook, faith remains key ‘el Cielo por fin ha escuchado sus votos en la tarde del 5 de julio’ (Vol.II No.40); dependency on God is still paramount, ‘solo dependemos de Dios y del Gobierno’ (Vol.II No.40). As stated, the Enlightenment was interpreted not as anti-Catholic, but against the fanaticism and superstition that was increasingly associated with religious zeal in France.

The balanced argument put forward, whereby Independence has emotional appeal, makes economic and geographical sense, and fulfils God’s design, is a convincing one and encourages conformity alongside the great excitement triggered when

Todos corrian por las calles exclamando – “Libertad e Independencia”- Por donde quiera se oian himnos y canciones, y el alborozo duro hasta las once de la noche, sin que el menor digusto viesese a turbarlos (Vol.II No.40).

The development from 19<sup>th</sup> April 1811, the establishment of the independent Junta, to the Republic, 5<sup>th</sup> July, is carefully documented; its route is shown to be guided by new, logical thinking. The ‘Reflexiones Politicas y Filosoficas sobre la

Independencia de Venezuela', written one week after the declaration, reassesses autonomy in terms of natural rights and Religion, attributing the movement with divine authority, and also seeks to establish the Republic as a long-lasting system of rule.<sup>119</sup> By stating that 'los preceptos divinos' and 'la santa Religion' (Vol.II No.361) are fundamental to political regeneration, the Republic falls back on Catholic values to encourage conformity. However, there has been a clear shift in emphasis with regards to God; the King no longer has any place as his representative on earth, and in theory all men are equal:

Todo hombre nace libre, y Dios no ha concedido dominio, y señorío a uno sobre otro; que si esto fuera cierto, hubiera dada al que habia de ser Señor y Soberano un caracter que le distinguiese en su misma naturaleza, y un poder tal que nunca pudiese perder sus privilegios (Vol.II No.361).

There is no such thing as Divine Right. The new vision for society embraces the sovereignty of the people at the same time as encouraging devotion to God; these principles are envisaged to be long-lasting 'los nietos sean obligados a guardar el gobierno que dejaron sus abuelos' (Vol.II No.361). Without doubt, diluted Enlightenment thought arrived in Venezuela, as it did in Colombia and Peru. The ruling classes accepted some parts and rejected others, however it was applied logically and the periodical press records a clear development from submissive colony to independent Republic. Radical new ideas alone were not sufficient to propel Independence, but they created the atmosphere and justification in which it became possible.

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<sup>119</sup> *Gazeta de Caracas*, 'Reflexiones Politicas y Filosoficas sobre la Independencia de Venezuela' 12<sup>th</sup> July 1811 (Vol.II No.361).

## Simón Bolívar

The study of Bolívar's early writings elucidates the impact of Enlightenment thought.

Through his discourse it is possible to trace the origins of Enlightenment, and crucially its reception and subsequent interpretation. He did not use the French example as a template; his own revolution was unique and his ideas developed according to the needs of Spanish America.

### Genesis of Ideas

Bolívar's extended stay in Europe from 1804 to 1806 was crucial to his intellectual development; this is where he began to make sense of ideas, politics and policies in a turbulent world. By August 1804, he had arrived in Paris, from Caracas, having passed through Madrid en route. Here he met Alexander von Humboldt who was impressed with the young Bolívar's thirst for liberty, but believed him to be a dreamer.<sup>120</sup> It was in Paris that Bolívar saw Napoleon crown himself Emperor in December 1804; the lure of power was attractive and the young traveller could see a future role for himself in Spanish American liberation, although he disliked the despotic characteristics of the regime Napoleon began to head up.

Bolívar continued through Europe, visiting Rome in August 1805, seeking inspiration from the classical republic; on the Monte Sacro, alongside his mentor Simón Rodríguez, he apparently swore 'that I will not rest body or soul until I have broken the chains with which Spanish power oppresses us'.<sup>121</sup> Throughout these two years in Europe, before his return to Venezuela in 1806, Bolívar acquired political experience, determination and ambition.

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<sup>120</sup> Lynch, *Simón Bolívar: A Life*, (London: Yale University Press, 2006), p.24.

<sup>121</sup> Lynch, *Simón Bolívar: A Life*, p.27.

## Enlightenment *Philosophes*

Whilst in Paris, Bolívar began reading widely to educate himself and acquire general knowledge. It is difficult to trace precisely his chief intellectual and ideological influences, but his daily reading included the works of the major Enlightenment thinkers. Familiar with theories of natural rights and social contract, Bolívar could employ arguments of liberty and equality, and claim reason as the source of all human action. His letter to General Francisco de Paula Santander, 20<sup>th</sup> May 1825, where Bolívar defends his intellectual formation against the claims of a French traveller G de Mollien, shows the breadth of his reading,

Ciertamente que no aprendí ni la filosofía de Aristóteles, ni los códigos del crimen y del error; pero puede ser que Mr. de Mollien no haya estudiado tanto como yo a Locke, Condillac, Buffon, D'Alembert, Helvetius, Montesquieu, Mably, Filangieri, Lalande, Rousseau, Voltaire, Rollin, Berthot y todos los clásicos de la antigüedad, así filósofos, historiadores, oradores y poetas; todos los clásicos modernos de España, Francia, Italia y gran parte de los ingleses. Todo esto lo digo muy confidencialmente a Ud. para que no crea que su pobre presidente ha recibido tan mala educación como dice Mr. de Mollien; aunque, por otra parte, yo no sé nada, no he dejado, sin embargo de ser educado como un niño de distinción puede ser en América bajo el poder español.<sup>122</sup>

This extract is a valuable source. Bolívar's own words reveal his sources of inspiration that govern his thoughts and actions. It is worth looking at several of these authorities, and their ideas, in more detail. Voltaire's defence of victims of the Inquisition, his fight in favour of freedom of conscience, speech and press and rejection of traditional authority made him one of the Liberator's most popular

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<sup>122</sup> Pérez Vila, *La Formación intelectual del Libertador* (Caracas: Ministerio de Educación, 1971), p.17.

authors, ‘en Voltaire se encuentra todo: estilo, grandes y profundos pensamientos filosóficos, crítica fina y diversion’.<sup>123</sup>

The influence of Rousseau was even greater, due to the tutelage of his mentor Simón Rodríguez, who shaped Bolívar’s formation from a young age. Exposed to new ideas regarding the rationality of natural laws through works such as *Emile*, the young Bolívar was inspired to be the hero of a democratic Spanish America.<sup>124</sup> There were differences between the two: whilst Rousseau was a man of theory and ideas, believing all men were born equal, he lacked the legislative and governmental skills of Bolívar. The Liberator embraced the sovereignty of the people, the separation of powers, civil liberty and abolition of the monarchy, shaping them to suit his vision, ‘el sistema de gobierno más perfecto es aquel que produce mayor suma de felicidad posible, mayor suma de seguridad social y mayor suma de estabilidad política’.<sup>125</sup>

Montesquieu was a favourite source for Spanish American intellectuals, and Bolívar was no exception. Méndez Salcedo’s detailed study reveals the presence of Montesquieu’s ideas in Bolívar’s correspondence, writing and speeches.<sup>126</sup> Heavily influenced by *l’Esprit des Lois*, Bolívar shows an appreciation for classical forms of government, a preference for republican government, the importance of equality between citizens, admiration for the English government, the separation of powers and finally the importance of establishing laws. The precision with which Bolívar interpreted these ideas is clear in his address to the Congress of Angostura, 15<sup>th</sup> February 1819,

Un Gobierno Republicano ha sido, es, y debe ser el de Venezuela; sus bases deben ser la Soberanía del Pueblo: la división de los Poderes, la Libertad civil,

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<sup>123</sup> Zapata, *Libros que leyó el Libertador Simón Bolívar* (Bogotá: Instituto Caro y Cuervo, 1997), p.58.

<sup>124</sup> Zapata, *Libros que leyó el Libertador Simón Bolívar*, p.61.

<sup>125</sup> Zapata, *Libros que leyó el Libertador Simón Bolívar*, p.66. These ideas suggest he was influenced by Jeremy Bentham and the utilitarians, who he met in London.

<sup>126</sup> Méndez Salcedo, *Dos estudios sobre Montesquieu y Bolívar* (Caracas: M A García y Hijo, 1995)

la proscripción de la Esclavitud, la abolición de la monarquía, y de los privilegios. Necesitamos de la igualdad para refundir, digámoslo así, en un todo, la especie de los hombres, las opiniones políticas, y las costumbres públicas.<sup>127</sup>

The Enlightenment did not provide the practical application of ideas of freedom and equality to peoples or nations, nor did it provide a framework for Independence from colonial rule; it needed the makers of Independence to do this. To achieve his basic goals of liberation and Independence, Bolívar would have to design his own theory of autonomous rule, incorporating political, financial and military elements with intellectual ones. Very few thinkers had applied Enlightenment ideas to colonies; many followers of liberal ideas had vested interests in colonial trade and were thus keen to retain empire. The first major statement of Bolívar's ideas, the *Cartagena Manifesto*, 15<sup>th</sup> December 1812, analyses the failings of the first Venezuelan Republic and calls for joint action between New Granada and Venezuela to regain Caracas.<sup>128</sup>

### The Cartagena Manifesto, 15<sup>th</sup> December 1812

The address to the citizens of New Granada not only analyses the causes of the disaster that had befallen the first Venezuelan Republic, but also looks beyond the short-term political and military issues, questioning more fundamental political concepts.<sup>129</sup> More than an assessment of Enlightenment values, Bolívar demonstrates his own critical ability. Bolívar criticises the adoption of a constitution that was

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<sup>127</sup> 'Discurso pronunciado por el Libertador ante el Congreso de Angostura el 15 de febrero de 1819, día de su instalación', in Lecuna, *Proclamas y Discursos del Libertador* (Caracas, 1939), p.215.

<sup>128</sup> As already stated, the First Republic did not fall only due to Miranda's surrender. The causes of the defeat of the first Republic were multiple and included the structure itself of the Confederation, the weakness of the government, the lack of military training of the patriots, the lack of enthusiasm of the people, administrative chaos which brought economic ruin, and the fact that people did not understand the change of regime, since government not in the name of the King was inconceivable.

<sup>129</sup> See Lynch, *Simón Bolívar: A Life*, (London: Yale University Press, 2006), pp.63-64, which charts Bolívar's life from 1810-1812 and explains the environment in which the *Cartagena Manifesto* was written. In short, Bolívar emerged from the ruins of the first Republic as a leader, showing a ruthlessness, inner fortitude, resolution in the face of adversity and an ability to pick himself up from calamity and come back fighting with the will to win.

poorly suited to the character of the people; popular elections allowed the ignorant and ambitious to get into government. People so inexperienced in representative government could not suddenly constitute a democracy; the social reality was they were not ready for democratic rule. He regarded strength and unity as key to defeating the royalists; centralised power was necessary to restore happiness and peace.

Following the catastrophic collapse of the Republic, Bolívar realised that the future of all of South America depended on the independence of Venezuela. The appeal to the citizens of New Granada for support for Venezuela sees a totally new person in Bolívar, ‘yo soy, granadinos, un hijo de la infeliz Caracas, escapando prodigiosamente de en medio de sus ruinas físicas, y políticas[...]he venido a seguir aquí los estandartes de la independencia.’<sup>130</sup> This is a more mature Bolívar compared to the soldier who emerged humiliated and beaten from the collapse of the First Republic in July, 1812. Several months of reflection have allowed the Liberator to ponder the causes of his country’s downfall; the primary agent he believes lay in the Republic’s false tolerance. Political errors were costly; its officials had not consulted works from which they might learn the art of government, but rather books compiled by visionaries, ‘por manera que tuvimos filósofos por jefes; filantropía por legislación, dialéctica por táctica, y sofistas por soldados’ (Lecuna, p12). The result was disintegration, which ate away at the Republic from within; crimes against the state were unpunished, the Spaniards were forgiven for their many conspiracies and there was disregard for public welfare.

These same political errors are to blame for the failure to raise regular armies; in place of experienced soldiers a poorly disciplined militia drained the state treasury

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<sup>130</sup> Bolívar, ‘Memoria dirigida a los ciudadanos de la Nueva Granada por un Caraqueño’, in Lecuna, *Proclamas y Discursos del Libertador* (Caracas, 1939), p.11.



and harmed the economy by removing peasants from their occupation. Bolívar rejects examples of classical republics that survived without an army,

estos antipolíticos e inexactos raciocinios, fascinaban a los simples; pero no convencían a los prudentes que conocían bien la inmensa diferencia que hay entre los pueblos, los tiempos, y las costumbres de aquellas repúblicas y las nuestras (p13).

Whilst the squandering of public funds and the printing of paper money disturbed the moneyed classes, Bolívar cites the system of government itself as the most significant reason for the failure of the first Republic.

The federal constitution consigned the nation to anarchy; each province in Venezuela was independent and each city demanded the right to govern itself as it saw fit,

Nuestros conciudadanos no se hallan en aptitud de ejercer por sí mismos y ampliamente en sus derechos; por que carecen de las virtudes políticas que caracterizan al verdadero republicano: virtudes que no se adquieren en los Gobiernos absolutos, en donde se desconocen los derechos y los deberes del ciudadano (p15).

Bolívar's attack extends to the heart of liberal democracy; there can be little doubt as to what he thought of parliaments and congress, claiming popular elections are hindered by the ignorant masses and scheming city inhabitants adding an obstacle to the practice of federal government; the former vote like machines whilst the latter's ambition feeds party strife.

Bolívar demonstrates that in spite of his enlightened ideas he was above all a realist; government had to be accommodated to the era and to the men that composed it. So what did the statesman want? He envisioned a country free from Spain, but

governed by a firm, aristocratic hand, led by patriotic sentiment. In his view the earthquake was a secondary cause; primary was the disunity the federal system encouraged,

Nuestra división, y no las armas españolas, nos tornó a la esclavitud[...]Si Caracas en lugar de una confederación, lánguida, e insubsistente hubiese establecido un gobierno sencillo, cual lo requería su situación política y militar, tú existieras ¡Oh Venezuela! y gozaras hoy de tu libertad (p17).

It becomes clear that society's ability to survive militarily and politically depends on the practical efficiency of its institutions. New Granada has seen its neighbour perish and is encouraged to understand the necessity of liberating Venezuela for the sake of its own safety. Bolívar proposes the conquest of Caracas, a vital move in ensuring the safety of New Granada and America as a whole. To convince the population, Bolívar cites the rebellion in the town of Coro which led to the fall of the entire Republic, 'aplicando el ejemplo de Venezuela, a la Nueva Granada; y formando una proporción, hallaremos que Coro es a Caracas, como Caracas es a la América entera' (p19). The astute military thinking is clear; the coastal regions of Venezuela were ruled by the Spanish, who could potentially send troops to penetrate the rest of South America. Venezuela was thus an entry point to the possible reconquest of the colonies, a strategy actively pursued by Ferdinand after 1815. This threat is met with stern, ruthless words; the swift recovery of territories was the only option,

Corramos a romper las cadenas de aquellas víctimas que gimen en las mazmorras, siempre esperando su salvación de vosotros: no burléis su confianza: no seáis insensibles a los lamentos de vuestros hermanos. Id

veloces a vengar al muerto, a dar vida al moribundo, soltura al oprimido, y libertad a todos (p22).

This first address shows Bolívar's intelligent political thinking and his brilliant rhetoric; confronted by political dissolution he wished to keep burning the ideal of a free nation. His use of key Enlightenment words such as 'libertad' and 'derechos' fixes them in their enlightened meaning. Bolívar thought in terms of the whole continent, whilst other revolutionaries did not look outside of their own country. He not only had to defeat Spain but also win over his compatriots to his vision of an independent South America. He saw that rooting constitutions in the Enlightenment was flawed in their circumstances; new institutions had to be based on reality, not imported ideas alone. Without a concrete national identity, a trait largely ignored by Enlightenment thinkers, and without experience of representative government, the new philosophy could not be directly applied in the colonies to forge a stable, independent nation. However, this notion of strong centralised and if necessary military rule was much more like the Napoleonic model than that of the Enlightenment. This was evident in later years when Bolívar ruled in Colombia (former New Granada) from 1820-29, where he was openly referred to as a foreign (Venezuelan) tyrant.

## Conclusion

Over a period of four years from 1808-1812 there was radical change in colonial Spanish America. A reading of the *Gazeta de Caracas* and Simón Bolívar's early works show that Independence was a transitional accumulative process, not a single, autonomous event. The fragmented arrival of the Enlightenment is carefully logged alongside the increasing discontent with Spanish rule throughout the Peninsular War.

By 1812 however, liberation from colonial authority becomes the common aim in Venezuela and New Granada.

## Conclusion

The French Enlightenment and ‘Age of Revolution’ was an immensely complex period; many conflicting ideas were circulating at the time. By various means, already discussed, these ideas reached colonial Spanish America and dissemination through the periodical press was considerable. It was a fragmented Enlightenment that arrived in the Spanish dominions; however, it was applied logically, step-by-step, in a clear process of development.

The relationship between Enlightenment and Independence falls outside the boundaries of this study, but it is difficult to ignore. The changing attitudes in the press were a symptom of broader transformations, so whilst the Enlightenment and its dissemination through the press were not necessarily a major force for change in themselves, they certainly formed much of the intellectual impetus for autonomy which came to fruition in the 1810s.

## Pre-1808 Reception and Reaction

### Philosophical and Scientific Enlightenment

The philosophical and scientific aspects of the Enlightenment are often left unexamined, with more emphasis being placed on the political. Taking into consideration only the political influence is too simplistic and does not address the full impact of the Enlightenment. The Enlightenment influenced Creole behaviour in Spanish America in a number of ways; one effect of the revolutionary age that proved critically important was the faith in reason as the guide for the human spirit in search of truth. Indeed, as has been shown, ‘razón’ was one of the key concepts to emerge from the press, whether it was invoked on behalf of the absolute authority of the monarch, the theology of the Catholic Church or in references to Enlightenment ‘philosophes’. The *Papel Periódico* and *Mercurio Peruano* are both imbued with this

concept; initially thought of as a natural attribute, ‘razón’ acquires a critical, deductive quality that promotes scientific discovery. Beyond this, it becomes a virtue in the fight against irrational prejudice. Integral to ‘la sana filosofía’, it is a principle that strongly indicates the spread of Enlightened thought from the 1790s onwards.

The new emphasis on virtue<sup>131</sup> and reason spurred on scientific innovation; the desire to promote public happiness, foster a patriotic spirit and exhibit rich local natural resources characterised the spread of Enlightenment thought in the late colonial years. Such promotion is consistent with the values ‘humanidad’, ‘caridad’, and importance of ‘patria’, which are all brought to the fore in the press. Despite this flourishing of articles in the press, the reception of Enlightenment was cautious, as in Spanish America philosophy and science remained inseparable from the sacred maxims of religion.

## Political Enlightenment: Natural Rights

Key to the political success of the Enlightenment in Spanish America was the adherence to the ‘ley divina y natural’. Independence would eventually be declared on the basis of natural rights, which were withheld by Spain; the origins of the notion that man had natural rights and that governments not based on such rights were tyrannies, were undoubtedly French. The dissemination of these ideas that heralded from Montesquieu, Rousseau and Voltaire was extensive in the press, and can be considered amongst the political ideas that caused revolution. Although seen as subversive principles, and leading only to anarchy, as the French example proved, these ideas were circulating in the 1790s and through discussion in the press there was an awareness of their existence and a gradual acceptance.

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<sup>131</sup> See Chapter 2 for an explanation of the changing values of virtue.

The transmission of Enlightenment has been shown to be effective through various channels; the sudden appearance of academic and literary groups, and cultural and scientific periodicals was remarkable in the 1790s and early 1800s. They made possible a means of literate expression that planted the seeds for revolutionary activity in the 1810s. However, the circulation of Enlightenment ideas was confined to the small intellectual elite, who were familiar with the works of the ‘philosophes’ and aware of contemporary European events. The forceful intelligence of this elite, which influenced literate creoles, should not be underestimated; as has been shown numerous individuals travelled in Europe, and were familiar with original, French ideas.

## Complex Impact

Throughout the 1790s the reception of Enlightenment was nervous and cautious; in Nueva Granada and Peru the zest for the acquisition and dissemination of practical and useful knowledge went hand-in-hand with the elite’s fear of social upheaval and concern to preserve the status quo.

In 1814, Alexander von Humboldt remarked of Spanish America that it was extraordinary to see the establishment of a press that followed rather than preceded a political revolution.<sup>132</sup> But whilst the press did flourish in the years directly after Independence, we have seen that it had strong roots in the late colonial period. The *Papel Periódico* created an environment for ideas to circulate, it demonstrated that enlightened ideas had reached the colonies and were circulating amongst a very small group of intellectuals. These ideas were considered too radical; French anarchy posed too much threat to order, and the authority of the Church could not be challenged.

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<sup>132</sup> Earle, ‘The Role of Print in the Spanish American Wars of Independence’ in Jaksic, ed. *The Political Power of the Word: Press and Oratory in Nineteenth-Century Latin America* (London: ILAS, 2002), p.9.

Nonetheless, the sentiment exists as early as the 1790s in New Granada that there is an open, promising future. The philosophy is termed malicious and the editors are appalled by it, but they see it as testing their own wisdom; their faith in the human race to produce honourable men is unrelenting, and there is the sense that the future will allow for this new thought to come to fruition once the chaos in France is controlled.

Whilst political and religious Enlightenment was perceived as too great a threat to colonial order, the practical nature of the Enlightenment was embraced, as the articles in the *Mercurio Peruano* show. In the aftermath of the French Revolution, Independence in the colonies is impossible to envisage. However, the press begins to foster a sense of Patria, local identity, and slowly prepares the ground for an autonomous spirit to exist. The natural richness of the land, and man's rational approach to explore it, represent a continent that is changing. The boundaries of accepted knowledge are being extended, and whilst religious and political Enlightenment are largely rejected, the scientific and practical characteristics of the Enlightenment are embraced.

## Post-1808 Reception and Reaction

In the years before 1808 the colonial authorities reacted to suppress Enlightenment thinking; the French terror threatened to destabilise the educated, wealthy elite, who paradoxically were the small group who were discussing these new ideas. The invasion of Spain by Napoleon was crucial in changing political attitudes; the Creole elite despised this French upstart and did not want to become his subjects, nor did they want Napoleon, or the interim Spanish Regency, to control their economy.

The *Gazeta de Caracas* highlights the increasingly unbalanced nature of the colonial economy, as economic arguments combine with the political. How can Spain



rule the colonies with no legitimate King at its head? The sense of Patria and identity that was fostered in the early periodicals becomes stronger and the heightened importance of 'libertad' and 'nación' in these years signifies an acceptance of the principles behind 1789, and a genuine desire for Independence. This was the style of the language of the press, even though actual behaviour and the acceptance of the need for independence may have been slower to develop.

### Unknown Reality: Colonial Shadow

Without doubt the Enlightenment bestowed on Spanish America a firm belief in rational progress; it was necessary for Revolutionary leaders to believe in the bright future in the midst of suffering and uncertainty. Independence signalled a radical, although necessary, change. Lynch states that the European Enlightenment and its liberal aftermath were too self-absorbed to offer political ideas or services to colonial peoples.<sup>133</sup> Although it is true the Enlightenment did not offer a model for autonomy, it has been shown here that its ideas were an important force in the progress of humanity in Spanish America. Simón Bolívar had to mould concepts of reason, liberty and equality to form a basis for colonial emancipation; the absence of political traditions and lack of consensus brought the first Venezuelan Republic to the edge of anarchy. Although order and security proved difficult to achieve in early independent Spanish America, Bolívar's perspective was a modern one, which embraced the Enlightenment values that had disseminated through the colonies from the early 1790s and brought them to political fruition.

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<sup>133</sup> Lynch, *Simón Bolívar and the Age of Revolution* (London: ILAS, 1991), p.26.

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