

The "Leyenda Negra" and the Circulation of Anti-Catholic and Anti-Spanish Prejudices

by Friedrich Edelmayer

The concept of the "leyenda negra" gathers together all the accusations against the "Spanish", the subjects of the crowns of Aragon and Castile, that circulated in Europe from the late Middle Ages and also in the New World since the 16th century. The term was created by Julián Juderías in 1913, and other authors developed it further. At that time when Spain seemed to be suffering from internal problems and a collective inferiority complex due to the loss of the last remnants of its empire, the goal was to prove that for centuries domestic and foreign enemies had done everything they could to drag the glorious Spanish past through the mud.

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The Emergence of the Concept of the *Leyenda Negra*

According to the *Diccionario de la Real Academia Española*, the *leyenda negra*, the black legend, is an anti-Spanish disposition that has spread since the 16th century. Even this short and not very illuminating statement shows clearly that the *leyenda negra* is primarily a negative concept. In addition, it also creates the impression that outside "Spain" people have been systematically talking badly of the "Spanish" ever since the beginning of the early modern period. Therefore, it almost seems strange that the concept itself only emerged in the 20th century. In 1913, a functionary of the Spanish foreign ministry, Julián Juderías y Loyot (1877–1918) (→ Media Link #ab), received a prize from the weekly *La Ilustración Española y Americana* for the best work describing the image of Spain abroad. His winning text first appeared in five parts between 1913 and 1914 in this journal and then as a monograph in 1914 under the title *La leyenda negra. Estudios acerca del concepto de España en el extranjero*¹ ("The Black Legend. Studies of the Image of Spain Abroad"). In 1917, Juderías published a completely revised edition, which was repeatedly reprinted – the last time in 2003, and created with his work a term that from that point onwards was a fixed part of the repertoire not only of historiography, but also of journalism and other humanities.

▲1

Juderías wrote his work at a time when Spain was in deep crisis, not only due to the loss of the last parts of its empire in 1898 and 1899, but also because of the numerous social conflicts within the country. In 1909, the latter reached a temporary climax in the so-called *Semana Trágica*, the "tragic week" in August during which many people died in clashes between workers and the Spanish army in Barcelona and Catalonia. At a time when the blame for the decline of the Spanish world power was being accorded solely to external enemies, and the nation seemed to be suffering from a collective inferiority complex, it was not impractical to look for an explanation for this situation in early centuries and prove that domestic and foreign enemies had always sought to drag Spain's glorious past through the mud, minimise the great successes in Spanish history or even invert them into negatives. In his essay, Juderías concluded that ever since the 16th century a Hispanophobia had existed which posited the Spanish as intolerant, brutal and fanatical and demonised their supposedly negative behavioural patterns for propagandistic reasons. This is how it sounded in the words of Juderías:

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By the *leyenda negra* we understand the atmosphere created by the fantastical stories about our fatherland, which have seen the light of publicity in almost all countries; the grotesque descriptions made again and again of the character of the Spanish as individuals and as a collective; the denial or at least the systematic ignoring of everything that is advantageous and honourable in the various manifestations of our culture and art; the accusations constantly levelled against Spain for this purpose which are based on depictions of events that are exaggerated, incorrectly interpreted or indeed entirely false, and finally the claim found in books that at first sight seem respectable and truthful, which is repeatedly reproduced, commented upon and magnified in the foreign press, that our fatherland should be seen as a lamentable exception among the group of European nations with regard to tolerance, culture and political development. – In a word, we understand by the *leyenda negra* the legend of an inquisitorial Spain, ignorant, fanatical, incapable of existing among cultivated peoples today as in the past, always prepared for violent repressions, the enemy of progress and innovation or, in other words, the legend which began to spread in the 16th century because of the Reformation that has been repeatedly used against us since then, above all at critical moments in the development of our state.²

Without doubt, the international protests in 1909 against the execution of the Europe-wide renowned pedagogue Francisco Ferrer y Guardia (1859–1909) (→ Media Link #ac)³ were the impetus for Juderías to write his work. He was also criticised for this in different ways. For example, he was said to be a representative of conservative reaction. This accusation is, however, false: Juderías, who had a French mother and spoke 16 languages (among them German and Russian), was a well-known social scientist who contributed significantly to the reform of Spanish social legislation at the beginning of the 20th century. And he knew the scholarly and other literature on Spain in which he observed the repetitive prejudices that led him to formulate the concept of the "black legend".⁴

▲ 3

Moreover, Juderías was at that time by no means the only one who had taken it upon himself to defend Spain against unjustified criticism from abroad. The famous writer and philosopher Miguel de Unamuno y Jugo (1864–1936) (→ Media Link #ad) had already in 1909 written in a commentary on the execution of Ferrer in the Argentinean newspaper *La Nación*:

▲ 4

This hostility to Spain began in the 16th century. Since then, it has become stronger in many ways. Our history has been systematically distorted, above all by the Protestants and Jews, but not just by them.⁵

The quotation from Unamuno clearly shows that the worry of supposed discrimination against Spain by its enemies was widespread at the beginning of the 20th century. And two originators are named that always crop up in connection with the *leyenda negra*: the "Jews" and the "Protestants".

▲ 5

Juderías did not go beyond the European roots of his *leyenda negra*. It was not until nearly 30 years later that the scope of the concept was extended again, this time to America. It was the Argentinean Rómulo D. Carbia (1885–1944) (→ Media Link #ae) who dismissed the depiction of the atrocities of the Spanish in the New World as being part of anti-Spanish vilification.⁶ Since these two "classics" in the description of the phenomenon of the *leyenda negra* in the first half of the 20th century, there have been many other attempts to find a short and incisive explanation. That of the American Philip Wayne Powell (1913–1987) (→ Media Link #af) is representative:

▲ 6

The basic premise of the Black Legend is that Spaniards have shown themselves, historically, to be *uniquely* cruel, bigoted, tyrannical, obscurantist, lazy, fanatical, greedy, and treacherous; that is, that they differ so much from other peoples in these traits that Spaniards and Spanish history must be viewed and understood in terms not ordinarily used in describing and interpreting other peoples.⁷

After Juderías and Carbia, various authors sought further roots of the *leyenda negra*. The Dane Sverker Arnoldsson (1908–1959) (→ Media Link #ag) saw its origins in the epoch of Aragonese expansion in the Mediterranean area from the 14th century and thus in anti-Catalan and anti-Aragonese prejudices in Italy which later were broadened to encom-

pass all inhabitants of the Iberian kingdoms.⁸ Furthermore, he traced many of the anti-Spanish prejudices to the Holy Roman Empire, for example to Martin Luther (1483–1546) (→ Media Link #ah) and the Protestant criticism of the Schmalkaldic War.⁹ In an influential study, the American historian William S. Maltby (*1940) (→ Media Link #ai) drew attention to the fact that the English roots of the *leyenda negra* should not be ignored. In 1971, when the book first appeared, he also related the *leyenda negra* to the present. According to him, it still influenced the complicated relationships between the United States and its Spanish-speaking neighbours and British policies towards Spain and was therefore a factor in international relations. In addition, he compared the criticism of the United States in the 1970s to that of the Spanish monarchy in the 16th century.¹⁰

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In the 1990s, it was above all Ricardo García Cárcel (*1948) (→ Media Link #aj)¹¹ and Alfredo Alvar Ezquerro (*1960) (→ Media Link #ak)¹² who questioned the existence of the *leyenda negra* and saw it as nothing other than the Spanish reaction to the image of Spain abroad. In his introduction, García Cárcel put it succinctly thus:

▲8

This book ... does not want to bury the *leyenda negra* because, among other reasons, the cadaver would be imaginary. Rather, it attempts ... to help lay to rest the belief in the myth of the *leyendra negra*. This is neither a legend nor is it black, because the blackness is counterbalanced by other colours – from pink to yellow.¹³

This statement makes clear that his aim was a paradigm shift: naturally there were and are in the history of all communities positive and negative aspects which are easier to interpret after the fact than by the contemporaries affected by them – one thinks of the fervour with which the 1986/1987 German *Historikerstreit* (historian's dispute) was conducted. García Cárcel reminds us with his mention of the colours pink and yellow that there were and are also other legends, namely the pink-coloured and the golden. Their content is connected to America; they propagate the idea that it was a commendable act to proclaim the word of the Christian God and to transmit the European civilisation to the peoples of the New World. The Spanish Inquisition did not really burn many people, says another of these legends, when one considers that the St. Bartholomew's day massacre alone claimed more than 3,000 lives and that many more "witches" died at the stake in the Holy Roman Empire (as late as the 18th century) than victims at the hands of the Spanish Inquisition. The list could go on.

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Most recently, Bethany Aram (→ Media Link #al) examined the legends critically in 2008, again in connection with America. The title of her book can be translated as "black legends and golden legends in the conquest of America". Pedrarias Dávila (ca. 1468–1531) (→ Media Link #am), the first governor of Panamá und Nicaragua, had the reputation of being one of the most brutal and cruel of the conquistadors, while Vasco Núñez de Balboa (ca. 1475–1519) (→ Media Link #an), the discoverer of the "south sea", was depicted as a martyr, a victim of the blood-thirsty governor who executed him: Pedrarias, the epitome of a representative and agent of the *leyenda negra*, against Balboa, the innocent victim and hero of the *leyenda dorada*, the golden legend. Aram's book is very successful in clearing up myths, both the positive and the negative, whose emergence she also locates in the 16th century.¹⁴

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After all these critical examinations of the *leyenda negra*, one could almost expect that there was nothing left to say about the topic. However, in November 2009, the great French authority on Hispanic studies, Joseph Pérez (*1931) (→ Media Link #ao), published a study in which he presented all the elements of the *leyenda negra* since its beginnings in an exemplary and very balanced manner.¹⁵ The book was an immediate success; March 2010 saw already its third edition. Even García Cárcel's review praised the work of his colleague,¹⁶ who at the end of his introduction puts the question "was there a conspiracy against Spain in the past?"¹⁷

▲11

The Genesis of Anti-Spanish Prejudices from the 13th to the 16th Centuries

Like Arnoldsson, Pérez also traces the origins of the *leyenda negra* back to the end of the 13th and beginning of the 14th centuries.¹⁸ After the so-called Sicilian Vespers, the rising against the French rulers which began in 1282, the An-

you were driven from Sicily, where the Aragonese under Peter III (1240–1285) (→ Media Link #ap) took control with the permission of the pope. Between 1322 and 1324, the Aragonese also conquered the Kingdom of Sardinia. At the beginning of the 16th century, the Kingdom of Naples came under the rule of Ferdinand II of Aragon (1452–1516) (→ Media Link #aq), the husband of the Castilian queen Isabella I (1451–1504) (→ Media Link #ar). The extension of Aragonese power in the 15th and 16th centuries coincided with the rule of two popes who were subjects of the Aragonese kings, namely Kalixt III (1378–1458, pope from 1455) (→ Media Link #as) and Alexander VI (1431–1503, pope from 1492) (→ Media Link #at). Both came from Valencia, one of the kingdoms of the crown of Aragon, and as members of the Borja (Borgia) family are today seen as the epitome of corrupt and nepotistic Renaissance princes on the Holy See. And they were "foreigners", subjects of the Aragonese king, who was extending his power in Italy at the cost of its ruling families and the French royal line. One therefore talked of the Aragonese, who at that time controlled the western Mediterranean, in critical tones.

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The increasingly worsening reputation of the Aragonese, many of whom spoke Catalan, began to include the Castilians in the 16th century. Ferdinand II's grandson Charles I (1500–1558) (→ Media Link #au), who also became emperor of the Holy Roman Empire under the name Charles V, ruled Castile from 1516 as regent for his supposedly mentally ill mother Joanna (1479–1555) (→ Media Link #av). In Italy, the image of Catalans, Aragonese and Castilians gradually merged into an image of the "Spanish", who were increasing their influence on the Apennine peninsula. A few dates suffice to give an overview: in 1525 the "Spanish" were victorious in the Battle of Pavia over the French king's troops; in 1527, the *sacco di Roma* took place. Many *landsknechts* from the Holy Roman Empire also participated in the sack of Rome. However, they were perceived as the soldiers of the "Spanish" emperor. If they were recognised as hailing from north of the Alps, they were seen as Lutherans and thus "heretics".

▲ 13

The image of the heretic, however, also fit the "Spanish" well, who had lived under Islamic rule for a long time and whose faith was therefore suspect. In addition, many of the Jews whom Ferdinand II of Aragon and Isabella I of Castile had expelled from the Spanish domains in 1492 had come to Italy. It is hardly surprising that they did not speak well of their former homeland. Step by step, therefore, the Italian image of Spain worsened, even when some of the terrible deeds ascribed to the Spanish possibly had been committed by subjects of the Holy Roman Empire. But, asked the Italian travellers to the Iberian peninsula as early as the 15th century, were there not in Spain, too, many heretics, crypto-Jews and followers of the prophet Mohammed (ca. 570–632) (→ Media Link #ax), who were up to no good, now as in the past? Many Spaniards had strange customs which clearly originated in the Orient, ate strange dishes, sang foreign songs and danced foreign dances. And was it not precisely the Spanish who doubted the Holy Trinity? In this regard, the Italians quoted above all Miguel Servet (1511–1553) (→ Media Link #ay), who had questioned the existence of the Holy Trinity in a 1531 publication. Servet was at first persecuted for his teachings by the Spanish Inquisition without success, ended up in the dungeon of the Franco-papal inquisition in Lyon, was able to escape only to be sentenced to death at the stake by a Calvinist ecclesiastical court.¹⁹ Was Servet, many contemporaries asked, such a *maximus haereticus* because he was Aragonese? Were the Aragonese, and thus all "Spaniards", born heretics who should count themselves lucky that Ferdinand II of Aragon and Isabella I of Castile had founded the Spanish Inquisition? At the same time, the existence of the feared Spanish Inquisition was held against Spain, a fact which reveals one of the contradictions often present in the criticism of Spain.

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In addition to this, the Spanish continued to expand their power in Italy in the 16th century. In 1527, the Republic of Genoa dissolved its alliance with France and sided with Charles V. From that point on, he enjoyed clear political dominance over the western Mediterranean due to the Genoese galleys. Charles V also extended his power on land, with for example the Duchy of Milan going to the emperor in 1535 after the Sforza line died out. Some of the elements of anti-Spanish criticism can therefore be traced back to Italy, which was dominated by the Spanish well into the 18th century.

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Let us return to the reign of Charles V. (→ Media Link #az) From 1516, he ruled not only the Burgundian lands, which he had inherited from his paternal grandmother, but also the territories that came to him from his maternal grandparents: the Aragonese kingdoms on the Iberian mainland, on the Mediterranean islands and in southern Italy, as well as the most important part of the kingdom – Castile. This also included the American territories, where precisely at this time

the Castilians were extending their control at breakneck speed – for instance through the conquest of Mexico in the 1520s and of Peru in the 1530s. Following the discovery of large silver deposits in Potosi in Peru, and later in Mexico, the Castilian-Aragonese king, who in Europe was increasingly perceived as a "Spanish" monarch, became ever more powerful. In the time of Charles V, this may not have had too great an impact, although after the Schmalkaldic War there was ever more criticism of the Spanish regime, above all when Charles V sought to ensure the succession to the imperial throne for his son Philip II (1527–1598) (→ Media Link #b0) at the Diet of Augsburg in 1550/1551. The project certainly failed, but the imperial request alone provoked massive criticism, as is evident in a song popular at the time: "Kein Walch soll uns regieren, / Dazu kein Spaniol, / Sie tun uns nur verführen, / Sein aller Untreu voll"²⁰ Supporters of Luther in particular increasingly saw the imperial policy as Spanish and Catholic, and for this reason the princes of the Holy Roman Empire rejected the so-called "Spanish succession".

▲ 16

Nevertheless, Philip II received from his father an inheritance which encompassed half the world. He reigned not only over the Iberian kingdoms together with a large part of Italy and the Netherlands (the latter from the Burgundian inheritance), but also over the Spanish territories in the New World and the lands in the far reaches of the Pacific that still carry his name today. Furthermore, in 1581, the Portuguese estates in Tomar recognised Philip II, who had married (→ Media Link #b1) a Portuguese princess (→ Media Link #b2), as their king. And this meant not only rule over Portugal, but also Brazil, many coastal regions of Africa and India, and numerous islands of the Indonesian archipelago and far-away Macao in China. Philip II was thus genuinely the first world ruler, whose word could be ignored in only a few parts of the world, not even by his political opponents or those who resisted him. This enormous accretion of power meant that everywhere criticism of the king mixed with criticism of Spain and the Spanish.

▲ 17

On top of this was the tragic personal fate of the king. In 1568, his son Don Carlos (1545–1568) (→ Media Link #b3) died under circumstances that were never fully explained, and the king's third wife Elisabeth of Valois (1545–1568) (→ Media Link #b4) also died shortly after this. The widowed king then married his son's bride Anna of Austria (1549–1580) (→ Media Link #b5) in 1570, with whom he begat an heir, Philip III (1578–1621) (→ Media Link #b6). For the Dutch, who rebelled in the 1560s against their ruler due to his religious and economic policies, these events were perfect propaganda material. The king was not only the murderer of his son Carlos, claimed William of Orange (1533–1584) (→ Media Link #b7) later, but also the seducer of Carlos's bride. The Spanish were therefore seen among Reformed circles in Europe as representatives of fornication and immorality, who sought to hide behind the Spanish Inquisition and its atrocities. And the inquisition was supported by the monarch himself, who in 1559 for example, had been present at the gruesome ceremonies in Valladolid²¹ during which people had been burned to death for their Protestant faith. Within a war for independence that was also a propaganda battle, it was necessary to keep quiet about the fact that "heretics", above all Anabaptists, had also been burned to death in the Netherlands, mostly under the reign of Charles V, despite the absence of the Spanish Inquisition. The Netherlands, therefore, produced a substantial portion of the anti-Spanish propaganda, in no small part in response to the strict rule of the governor Fernando Álvarez de Toledo y Pimentel, the 3rd Duke of Alba (1507–1582) (→ Media Link #b9), who mercilessly persecuted political opponents. The executions of the Count Lamoral of Egmont (1522–1568) (→ Media Link #ba) and Philip of Montmorency, Count of Horn (1526–1568) (→ Media Link #bb) were just the tip of the iceberg. The reputation of the Spanish in the Netherlands was thus ruined, especially when the unpaid royal troops – which did not only include Spaniards – sacked and looted the city of Antwerp in 1576. About 1,000 houses were destroyed and 8,000 people murdered. This plunder of an important trade centre became a central component of anti-Spanish propaganda under the name of the *spaanse furie* (the Spanish fury), which acted as an umbrella term for all the atrocities of Philip II and his henchmen. The fact that not all Dutchmen, or *flamencos* as the Spanish called them, opposed the king became evident at the latest when the southern provinces reconciled with the monarch and returned to his rule.²² A myth that was useful for propaganda had nevertheless been created, and this was directed against Spaniards wherever they lived.

▲ 18

The anti-Spanish myth emerged in England in a similar way. England and Spain were closely tied together through the dynastic policy of Ferdinand II of Aragon and Isabella I of Castile, who had married their daughter Catherine (1485–1536) (→ Media Link #bc) to Henry VIII (1491–1547) (→ Media Link #bd). This was an attempt to strengthen the alliance against the French monarchy, which threatened not only the Aragonese in Italy and on the Pyrenean border, but also the English in their last foothold on the continent, Calais. It was not the fault of Spain that Henry wanted to divorce Catherine, who had only borne him a daughter, Mary (1516–1558) (→ Media Link #be), and not a son, and for this reason fell out with Rome. More grave, however, was the fact that Charles V supported his aunt Catherine and her

daughter Mary, who had been excluded from the succession by her father. When Mary nevertheless ascended to the throne after the death of Edward VI (1537–1553) (→ Media Link #bf), the king's son from his marriage to Jane Seymour (1509–1537) (→ Media Link #bg), England was once more ruled by a Catholic monarch. Her marriage to Philip II took place due to a dynastic manoeuvre by Philip's father. Blaming Philip II for the deaths of all the martyrs of the Anglican church, above all that of the Archbishop of Canterbury Thomas Cranmer (1489–1556) (→ Media Link #bh), was excessive in that Philip was not even in England at the time, but rather at his father's court in the Netherlands. Nevertheless, in England a further anti-Spanish myth took shape. According to this, the intolerant position of the queen towards any form of Protestantism was a product of her Spanish roots, her Spanish husband and her Spanish relatives. Moreover, many Spanish aristocrats and their retinues had accompanied Philip II for his marriage as his entourage and caused offence at every step of the way with their wealth and arrogance, thereby creating additional anti-Spanish sentiment in England.²³

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In the end, Mary died, leaving her widower only the claim to the English throne. In Gibraltar, which today is a British Overseas Territory, this is still commemorated cynically: on the defensive wall erected by Philip II between the settlement on the coast and the tip of the Rock, a sign proclaims "Philip II of Spain, who called himself King of England ..., ordered the building of this wall in 1575". Elizabeth I (1533–1603) (→ Media Link #bi), the half-sister of the dead queen, rejected several half-hearted offers of marriage from Philip II. Instead, she "counter-reformed" the Counter-Reformation of her predecessor. This, in turn, could not but meet with disapproval at the Spanish court. When, on top of this, a trade war with the Spanish Netherlands broke out, and Elizabeth I supported English captains who penetrated the Spanish sphere of influence in the Caribbean, among them the well-known Francis Drake (1540–1596) (→ Media Link #bj), the conflict intensified. After Drake attacked Caribbean ports once more, Philip II decided to punish England and return it to Catholicism. Because from 1581 he also commanded the resources of Portugal, an occupation of England seemed possible. In 1588, the Spanish Armada left Lisbon and A Coruna in order to bring the English queen to heel. Its failure was due to bad weather conditions which forced the Spanish to break off the invasion. The English portrayed this "victory" as God's judgement and won the ensuing propaganda war.²⁴ A further element of the anti-Spanish myth had been created.

▲ 20

A large court such as that of Philip II was a hotbed of intrigue between different factions and rival groups of nobles, who all sought an important position at the centre of power. In particular, the clan around the house of Éboli, the Dukes of Pastrana, and the clan around the house of Alba fought for royal favour. In addition, there were the royal secretaries, heads of the administration without whom the rule of such a complicated and entangled power structure as the Spanish monarchy would have been impossible. Antonio Pérez (1540–1611) (→ Media Link #bk), one of these secretaries, who probably enjoyed using his power in the intrigues of the noble clans, was involved in one such plot that escalated into a scandal which would further contribute to the bad reputation of the Spanish: when Juan of Austria (1547–1578) (→ Media Link #bl), the half-brother of the king, went to the Netherlands in 1576 as governor, he was accompanied by his personal secretary Juan de Escobedo (1530–1578). Escobedo was an ally of the Éboli clan, who discovered in the Netherlands that Pérez, whom Juan de Austria trusted, was playing both sides in Madrid and trying to undermine Philip II's trust in his brother. Juan therefore sent Escobedo back to Madrid in order to clear up the situation, which alarmed Pérez because he now had to fear that Philip II would also become aware that he was playing both sides. He decided to have Escobedo eliminated and Escobedo was stabbed to death on 31 March 1578 near the Alcazar of Madrid by several masked men, an act which contemporaries saw as outrageous. Philip II is still today accused of having had prior knowledge of the planned assassination. Whether he really did give his permission for the murder remains, however, unclear. But it is a fact that Philip II did not do anything to prevent the killing of the secretary, which suggests that Pérez managed to present the removal of Escobedo as a political necessity.

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There is no doubt that Philip II initially protected the men behind the murder and sought to cover up the crime for reasons of state. The assassins hired by Pérez were at any rate not pursued. Not until several months later, when Madrid was teeming with rumours about the murder, did the king feel compelled to investigate the case. Pérez, against whom all suspicions now turned, sought to leave no doubt that Philip II was the true perpetrator. In 1598, having been in exile in France for some time, he published his *Relaciones*, a compendium of angry accusations against the king.²⁵ These writings were undoubtedly welcome material for those constructing propaganda against Philip II and Spain.²⁶

▲ 22

Finally, it is necessary to return to the arguments of Rómulo D. Carbia:²⁷ the behaviour of the Spanish in America was also repeatedly criticised. The sermon by the Dominican Antonio de Montesinos (ca. 1480–1540) (→ Media Link #bm) in 1511, in which he condemned the *Repartimientos*, the forced labour of the *Indios*, is well known. However, there were countless further protests, above all from the church, not only against the *Repartimientos*, but also against the brutality with which the *Indios* were treated. Particularly famous was the report by Bartolomé de Las Casas (1484–1566) (→ Media Link #bn) on the destruction of the West Indian lands (*Brevísima relación de la destrucción de las Indias Occidentales*), the accurate detail of which is unsettling, to put it mildly. A quotation, one of the more "harmless", should suffice here:

▲ 23

... in some Province of New Spain, A Spaniard Hunting and intent on his game, phancyed that his Beagles wanted food; and to supply their hunger snatcht a young little Babe from the Mothers breast, cutting off his Arms and Legs, cast a part of them to every Dog, which they having devour'd, he threw the remainder of the Body to them.²⁸ (→ Media Link #bo)

Not least due to the influence of Las Casas, in 1542 the New Laws (*Leyes Nuevas*) abolished both slavery and the reissuing of *Encomiendas* (estates distributed by the Spanish crown to colonists where the indigenous peoples living there had to provide forced labour). However, the reputation of the Spanish had already been ruined by this time. Above all, the Dutch quoted Las Casas to show that the cruelty of the Spanish was evident across the world. The book was translated into several languages. The foreword to the English edition published in London in 1689 explicitly mentioned the fact that it had already appeared in Latin, German, Dutch and French.²⁹ The year of printing, 1689, is also telling: after the so-called Glorious Revolution of 1688 had prevented the establishment of a Catholic dynasty, it could not harm to encourage anti-Catholic sentiment. In addition, the text by Las Casas dealt with the Caribbean, where the English were at that time trying to establish a foothold. It was therefore entirely opportune to conduct propaganda against the Spanish, who themselves accused the English of brutality.³⁰

▲ 24

The Image of the Spanish between the 17th and the 19th Centuries

During the 17th century, the accusations against the Spanish did not abate, although the expulsion of the *Moriscos*, the descendants of the Moors forcibly converted to Christianity, from the Iberian peninsula which began in 1609 did not interest the European powers considerably. After the Thirty Years War, the Spanish monarchy lost their position of hegemony in Europe through the Peace of Westphalia of 1648 and the Treaty of the Pyrenees of 1659. As a result, Spain also ceased to be the preferred object of European criticism, although even in the 18th century, along with France and Great Britain, Spain was still one of the most important world powers due to its extensive and constantly growing empire. However, after the Napoleonic Wars (→ Media Link #bp), the greater portion of the Spanish empire in America was lost. In Spain itself, the lamentation for lost former glory began.

▲ 25

In 1787, long before the collapse of the greater part of the Spanish overseas empire, Friedrich Schiller's (1759–1805) (→ Media Link #bq) work *Dom Karlos. Infant von Spanien* was performed in Hamburg for the first time.³¹ The play helped crystallise new anti-Spanish prejudices, above all in Germany. In his assessment of the piece, Juderías is unequivocal: "As a literary and poetical work, there are few that better it regarding drama and poetic art. As a historical work, it is an absurdity from beginning to end."³² Schiller had certainly read up on Philip II and his son Carlos, but he had mainly drawn on French depictions that were not particularly friendly towards Spain.³³ Schiller damaged the image of Spain considerably, at least according to Juderías. The play certainly disseminated negative impressions of Spain, and not just in the German-speaking areas, but also throughout Europe, as it was translated into numerous languages. Its influence became even greater when Giuseppe Verdi (1813–1901) (→ Media Link #br) drew on Schiller for his opera *Don Carlo*, first performed in Paris in 1867. Thus, anti-Spanish prejudices were also transmitted via music and wherever one listened to operas.

▲ 26

Finally, a further writer should be mentioned, namely Alessandro Manzoni (1785–1873) (→ Media Link #bs). Above all,

his most famous work *I promessi sposi* (*The Betrothed*), published in 1827 and considerably revised between 1840 and 1842, painted a bad picture of the Spanish in Milan in the 17th century. Manzoni was translated into all important world languages, so that once again an Italian view of the Spanish became widely spread.

▲ 27

At first sight, the Philippine doctor and writer José Rizal (1861–1896) (→ Media Link #bt) has little in common with Schiller, Manzoni and Verdi. However, Rizal had lived in Europe for long periods and knew European culture well, including Manzoni, Schiller und Verdi. In 1887, he published a book under the title *Noli me tangere*, in which he sharply criticised the Spanish administration and above all the Spanish clergy on the Philippines, accusing them of corruption and sexual violations.³⁴ Following the outbreak of the Philippine revolt against Spanish rule, Rizal was arrested and executed for his supposed participation in an anti-Spanish conspiracy. He thereby became not only one of the most important heroes of the Philippine movement for independence, but his works were also published repeatedly and translated into many languages. Again a book came out in which the Spanish were described negatively and which was quoted – and indeed is still being quoted – with relish by their enemies.

▲ 28

Is there really a *leyenda negra* which systematically vilifies the Spanish? One can probably reject this idea. However, the phrase is very useful to denominate and summarise anti-Spanish statements. Above all, one must remember that for the Spanish it was an extremely useful concept. It provided a means by which any criticism of Spain and its inhabitants, in the past as in the present, could be rejected in a knee-jerk manner without further consideration.

▲ 29

Friedrich Edelmayer, Vienna

Appendix

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Notes

1. ^ Juderías, *La leyenda negra* 2003 (first edition Madrid 1914, the latest edition is based on the edition Madrid 1917).
2. ^ *ibidem*, p. 28 (transl. by C.G.).
3. ^ See Dittrich, *Hinrichtung* 2008.
4. ^ For a recent work on Juderías, see: Español Bouché, *Leyendas negras* 2007.
5. ^ Unamuno, *A propósito del caso Ferrer* 1997, p. 193 (transl. by C.G.). Unamuno had before this already repeatedly examined the crisis of Spain after 1898. See, for example, Unamuno, *La crisis actual* 1904–1906.
6. ^ Carbia, *Historia* 2004.
7. ^ Powell, *Tree of Hate* 1971, p. 11.
8. ^ Arnoldsson, *La leyenda negra* 1960, pp. 12–14.
9. ^ *ibidem*, p. 105.
10. ^ Maltby, *La leyenda negra* 1982, p. 16.
11. ^ García Cárcel, *La leyenda negra* 1998.
12. ^ Alvar, *La leyenda negra* 1997.

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14. ^ Aram, *Leyenda negra* 2008.
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16. ^ García Cárcel, *El problema de España* 2010.
17. ^ Pérez, *La leyenda negra* 2009, p. 14.
18. ^ For the following section, see *ibid.* pp. 15–25.
19. ^ For more detail, see Edelmayer, *Reforma* 2007, p. 112f.
20. ^ "No Walch shall rule us, / And no Spaniard, / They only seek to seduce us, / Unfaithful one and all...." [transl. by C.G.]. See Edelmayer, *Philipp II.* 2009, pp. 67–73.
21. ^ *ibidem*, pp. 97–107.
22. ^ On events in the Netherlands, see *ibidem*, pp. 204–235; on the image of the "other", see also Rodríguez Pérez, *The Dutch Revolt* 2008, in particular pp. 53–133.
23. ^ Edelmayer, *Philipp II.* 2009, pp. 73–84.
24. ^ *ibidem*, pp. 250–258; Maltby, *La leyenda negra* 1982.
25. ^ Alvar Ezquerro, *Relaciones y cartas* 1986.
26. ^ For more details on the events, see Edelmayer, *Philipp II.* 2009, pp. 144–158.
27. ^ Carbia, *Historia* 2004.
28. ^ [Las Casas], *POPERY Truly Display'd in its Bloody Colours* 1689; Alcina Franch, *Bartolomé de las Casas* 1985.
29. ^ [Las Casas], *POPERY Truly Display'd in its Bloody Colours* 1689.
30. ^ See Edelmayer / Grandner, *Santa Catalina* 2008.
31. ^ Schiller, *Dom Karlos* 1787.
32. ^ Juderías, *La leyenda negra* 2003, p. 248 (transl. by C.G.).
33. ^ On the development of anti-Spanish views in France from the 16th to the beginning of the 18th century, see the very good overview in Désos, *Les français* 2009, pp. 38–42.
34. ^ Rizal, *Noli me tangere* 1987.

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
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
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