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978-1-108-01458-8 - The Inquisition in the Spanish Dependencies

Henry Charles Lea

Excerpt

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THE INQUISITION

IN THE

SPANISH DEPENDENCIES.

CHAPTER I.

SICILY.

THE island of Sicily, in the fifteenth century, was a portion of the dominions of Aragon. Like the rest of the possessions of that crown, it had enjoyed the benefits of the old papal Inquisition under the conduct of the Dominicans, but, as elsewhere, towards the close of the Middle Ages, the institution had become nearly dormant, and at most was employed occasionally to wring money from the Jews. An effort to galvanize it, however, was made, in 1451, by the Inquisitor Fra Enrico Lugardi, who produced a fictitious decree, purporting to have been issued in 1224, by the Emperor Frederic II, granting to the inquisitors a third of the confiscations, together with yearly contributions from Jews and infidels; this was confirmed by King Alfonso of Naples, and again, in 1477, by Ferdinand and Isabella.¹ When, in 1484, the Spanish Inquisition was extended to Aragon, Ferdinand did not at first seek to carry its blessings to his insular possessions. February 12, 1481, he had appointed Filippo de' Barbari, one of his confessors, as inquisitor of Sicily, Malta, Gozo and Pantelaria, who apparently did nothing to further the cause of the faith, for Sixtus IV, in

¹ *Páramo de Origine S. Officii S. Inquisitionis*, pp. 197-99.—Ripoll *Bullar. Ord. Fr. Prædic.*, III, 510.—*La Mantia, L'Inquisizione in Sicilia*, pp. 16-18 (Torino, 1886).

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letters of February 23, 1483, to Isabella, complained of the prevalence in the island of the same heresies that pervaded Spain; to repress these he had issued sundry bulls, which had proved inoperative in consequence of the opposition of the royal officials, to his no little grief. Seeing the zeal displayed in Spain, he prayed and exhorted that it should be extended to Sicily and that the necessary royal favor be exhibited to the measures which he had taken and might take in the future.¹ There is no evidence that this produced any effect, and the institution seems to have remained inert until, about 1487, Torquemada, as Inquisitor-general of Aragon, appointed Fray Antonio de la Peña as inquisitor who, on August 18th of that year, celebrated the first auto de fe, in which Eulalia Tamarit, apparently a refugee from Saragossa, was burnt. It seems that a Dominican, named Giacomo Roda, had been exercising the functions under a commission from the General of his Order, who subsequently instructed the provincial, Giacomo Manso, to dismiss him. In 1488 la Peña left Sicily, appointing Manso to act during his absence, when Roda reasserted himself and it required a brief from Innocent VIII, February 7, 1489, to make him desist. In fact, at this time there seems to have been some confusion between the claims of the papal and Spanish Inquisitions, for we hear of another Dominican inquisitor, Pietro Ranzano, Bishop of Lucera, to whom the senate of Palermo, on January 19, 1488, took the customary oath of obedience.²

In Sicily, as in Spain, the objects of the principal labors of the Holy Office were the converts from Judaism. The Jews were numerous and rich and, although popular hatred was perhaps not so active as in Spain, it was sufficiently vigorous, in 1474, to bring

¹ Pirri, *Sicilia Sacra*, p. 910 (Panormi, 1733).—Llorente, *Hist. crít. de la Inquisición de España*, Append. No. III.

² *La Mantia*, *op. cit.*, pp. 20–1.—Franchina, *Breve Rapporto del Tribunale della SS. Inquisizione in Sicilia*, pp. 23, 108–16 (Palermo, 1744).

If we may believe an inscription of 1631, Ranzano had been inquisitor in 1482.—Jo. Mariæ Bertini *Sacratissima Inquisitionis Rosa Virginea*, I, 385 (Panormi, 1662). He died in 1492.

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EXPULSION OF JEWS

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about a massacre, under the pretext that they were endeavoring to undermine the Catholic faith by argument. The viceroy, Lope Ximenes de Urrea, hanged six of the leaders of the movement, in the hope of suppressing it but, undeterred by this, the populace, in many places, sacked the *Juderías* and put the inmates to the sword; five hundred thus were slain in Noto, six hundred in Modica and, for several years, the Jews were in constant fear of massacre, in spite of royal and vice-regal edicts.¹ The number of victims in these troubles indicates how considerable was the Jewish population; indeed, in 1450, they petitioned that, in the assessment of a donation to King Alfonso of 10,000 florins they might be reckoned as a tenth of the population, a favor which was refused and, when in 1491, the Jews were banished from Provence, a large portion of them flocked to Sicily, attracted by the favorable conditions which had long been accorded there to the race.²

The edict of expulsion from Spain, in 1492, was operative in Sicily, under conditions even more repulsively cruel. It was published June 18th, and the day of departure was fixed at September 18th, under pain of death and confiscation. At once all their valuables were seized, in a house to house investigation, and inventories were made of their other possessions. They were required, within the three months, not only to collect what was due to them and to pay their debts, but also to indemnify the king for their special tributes by capitalizing the annual aggregate, on a basis of four per cent. interest. On August 13th an order was issued to license each to take a suit of common clothes, a mattress, a pair of worn sheets, a coverlet, three *tari* in money (equivalent to half a florin), and a few provisions for the journey. Reduced

¹ Zurita, *Añales de Aragon*, Lib. XIX, cap. xiv.—Giov. di Giovanni, *L'Ebraismo della Sicilia*, pp. 190–1 (Palermo, 1748).

² Giovanni, pp. 21, 96.

Isidor Loeb considers the ordinary computations to be grossly exaggerated and, from the statistics of several places, assumes the total to have been not more than from twenty to thirty thousand.—*Revue des Etudes Juives*, 1887, p. 172.

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to despair, the Jews of Palermo petitioned to be allowed to retain money enough to pay their passages; that the rich could leave their property on deposit, and that poor debtors might be discharged from prison a month in advance. This drew from the viceroy an edict allowing the rich to take twice as much as the poor, except in the matter of clothes. Not only their mattresses were to be searched for money and jewels, but even the cavities of their bodies, for which examiners of both sexes were appointed. A payment of fifty thousand florins to the king procured a postponement of three months, until December 18th, and during the interval the composition for their tributes was agreed upon, at a hundred thousand more, on payment of which they were to be allowed to take what was left of their inventoried goods, but all precious metals and jewels were required to be turned into merchandise. There was delay in collecting these sums, causing a further postponement of departure until January 12, 1493.¹ As the object of the measure was the salvation of souls, the alternative of conversion was offered, to which the Jews were urged by a proclamation of Torquemada and by promises from the bishops and the viceroy. Ferdinand, however, was not disposed thus to forego the opportunity of despoiling his Jewish subjects, and issued an order requiring them to purchase the privilege of baptism with the surrender of forty-five per cent. of their property, which must have brought him in a considerable sum for, in spite of it, the rigorous terms imposed upon the exiles drove many into the Christian fold.²

These compulsory Christians, always suspected, and generally with reason, of secretly cherishing their ancient faith, furnished a larger and more lucrative field for inquisitorial operations, but

¹ Giovanni, p. 210.—This *celeste beneficio*, as the pious author terms it, proved so destructive to the commercial prosperity of the island that, in 1695, the Jews were invited to return, under certain rigorous restrictions. As they manifested no readiness to avail themselves of the permission, the invitation was repeated in a more attractive form in 1727 and, this proving unavailing, still further inducements were offered in 1740. Even this, however, did not produce the desired effect and the edict was revoked in 1747.—*Ibidem*, pp. 239–42.

² Giovanni, pp. 233–5

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DISORGANIZATION

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there seems to have been no immediate haste to cultivate it, and there is no trace of increased inquisitorial activity during the remaining years of the century. In December, 1497, Micer Sancho Marin, inquisitor of Sardinia, was ordered to transfer himself to Sicily; he was in no haste to obey and, on March 11, 1498, Ferdinand wrote to him angrily that he was doing no good where he was and was much wanted in his new post, wherefore he was commanded summarily to go there and leave all the effects of the Sardinian tribunal for his successor. Short as was his career in Sicily, he managed to disorganize the Inquisition and to incur general detestation. Before the year was out, Ferdinand ordered him home and, on January 20, 1499, he sent for all the other officials to return. To get back, Marin borrowed three hundred ounces,¹ without making provision for repayment; to settle this and other debts and to pay for the homeward voyage of the officials, Ferdinand ordered his viceroy to give to the receiver of confiscations, who was practically the treasurer, eight hundred ducats, with a significant order to see that the parties were not maltreated, which indicates the feelings popularly entertained for them. The eight hundred ducats apparently were not easily raised, for correspondence continued during the rest of the year as to the payment of debts and salaries; Pedro de Urrea, the receiver, fell into disgrace and Ferdinand, in August, sent the notary, Ximeno Mayoral, to make copies of all the papers in the tribunal, in order to be able to straighten out matters.² Apparently the officials had been intent solely upon their own gains, allowing the affairs of the tribunal to fall into complete confusion, and had confined their operations to selling pardons and exemptions for, when the auditor examining Urrea's accounts asked for certificates of all who were condemned or penanced during his tenure of office, Ferdinand epigrammatically replied that, as there were none condemned or penanced, no certificates were required. It is true that there is mention of a certain Iñigo de Medina as having died

¹ The Sicilian *onza* was nearly equivalent to 2½ ducats.

² Archivo general de Simancas, Consejo de la Inquisicion, Libro 1.

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in prison, but he had not been arrested as a heretic and his sequestered property was ordered to be returned to his widow.¹

Evidently the Sicilian Inquisition thus far had been a failure and thorough reorganization was necessary. It was for this that Ferdinand had recalled the officials and, after an interval of some months, he proceeded to replace them. A letter of July 27, 1500, to Montoro, Bishop of Cefalù, announced his appointment as inquisitor, together with that of the bearer, Doctor Giovanni Sgalambro as his colleague, with whom were sent Diego de Obregon as receiver, and Martin de Vallejo as alguazil, the rest of the officials being left for his selection. At the same time the viceroy was instructed to show them all favor, to lodge them in some suitable building and to advance to Obregon 780 gold ducats for salaries, the sum to be repaid out of the expected confiscations.² The Sicilian tribunal, however, was doomed to be unlucky. Ferdinand speedily discovered that Sgalambro was utterly unfit for the position and, on November 6th, we find him writing in hot haste to Inquisitor-general Deza that, after it had had so unfortunate a beginning, Sgalambro's incumbency would destroy it; he had sent to Valencia to stop his departure, but too late, and now he instructs Deza to select some good jurist for the place, as soon as possible, and before some evil is wrought in Sicily.³ This eager-

¹ Archivo de Simancas, Inquisicion, Libro 2, fol. 23, 24.

² Under the same date Obregon was ordered to pay salaries as follows:

Doctor Johan Sgalambro, inquisitor	6000	sueldos	jaquenses.		
Martin de Vallejo, alguazil	6000	"	"		
Johan Crespo, portero	500	"	"		
A notario del secreto	} To be appointed by the	} inquisitors	2500	"	"
A notario de los secuestros			2500	"	"
A fiscal			2500	"	"
Diego de Obregon, receiver	6000	"	"		

—Archivo de Simancas, *ubi sup.*

Although no salary is here provided for the Bishop of Cefalù, it does not follow that bishops were expected to serve gratuitously. When Pedro de Belorado was sent to Sicily as Archbishop of Messina and inquisitor, Obregon was ordered, Sept. 10, 1501, to pay him the same salary as that of Sgalambro whom he replaced. —*Ibidem.*

The *sueldo* was one-twentieth of the *libra*, which was nearly equivalent to the Castilian ducat.

³ Archivo de Simancas, Inquisicion, Lib. 1.

ness, however, speedily subsided and Sgalambro was allowed to retain his office for a year. On November 8th, Montoro and he issued an edict requiring the surrender of all official papers by those formerly connected with the tribunal; also one prohibiting all *Conversos*, or baptized Jews, from leaving the island without special licence, under pain of excommunication, confiscation and arbitrary penalties, and offering to informers ten per cent. of the confiscations. In December, the viceroy and all public officials took the customary oath of obedience and the inquisitors issued an Edict of Grace, promising relief from death and confiscation to all heretics who would, within fifteen days, come forward and confess fully as to themselves and their associates. This was accompanied with an Edict of Faith, ordering all cognizant of heresy to denounce it within fifteen days, threatening those who omitted to do so with prosecution for fautorship of heresy and promising secrecy for informers. This latter edict apparently brought in few denunciations, for it was repeated on January 14, 1501, and, at the same time, was published a decree of the inquisitor-general, announcing the disabilities of the descendants of those convicted of heresy. That these proceedings were as yet a novelty in Sicily is apparent from a monition issued by the inquisitors to the president of the states of the *Camera reginale* not to impede in those districts the publication of the edicts.¹

Evidently the Inquisition was rapidly becoming organized for work, but it still lacked a fixed habitation for, on August 22d, Ferdinand wrote to his viceroy that a house was necessary for it and, as the one occupied by Mosen Johan Chilestro, the royal carver, was suitable, it was to be taken for the purpose; he had no recollection that it had been given to the latter except for life but, if the heirs could prove a gift in perpetuity, they should be paid a suitable rent. Apparently the labors of the tribunal were beginning to promise results in the long-expected confiscations, for a letter of September 4th empowers the receiver Obregon to compound a suit against Johan de San Martin, for property

¹ La Mantia, pp. 23, 25, 26, 28.

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derived through his brother and father, for five thousand florins and more if it could be obtained. It would seem, however, that as yet the status and privileges of the officials were not clearly recognized in Sicily, for a letter of September 10th to the viceroy urges him to see that the inquisitors enjoy the immunities and exemptions conceded to them by the Holy See and that the officials are as well treated as in the rest of the Spanish dominions.¹

At length a successor was found for Sgalambro in the person of Pedro de Belorado, an old Spanish inquisitor, now Archbishop-elect of Messina, to whom Obregon was ordered, September 30th, to pay the same salary.² The people had not even yet become accustomed to the arbitrary methods of the Holy Office, for the earliest act by which Belorado makes himself known to us is his excommunication of the magistrates and judges of the town of Catania as impeters of the Inquisition, because they had prevented the alguazil Martin de Vallejo from removing from their city certain New Christians whom he had arrested. Vallejo had vindicated his office by imposing on the spot a fine of a thousand ducats on the offenders, and this Belorado confirmed. In 1502 we find him issuing fresh Edicts of Grace and of Faith and, in 1503, Deza empowered him and Montoro to act either independently or conjointly.³ It would seem that the governor of the districts of the Camera reginale was still recalcitrant, for a letter from Ferdinand, August 13, 1504, orders him to favor the operations of the tribunal, "for our officials have naught to do but what we ourself do, which is to obey the Holy Office."⁴

There is not much evidence of activity at this period, but an auto de fe was celebrated, August 11, 1506, in which was burnt

¹ Archivo de Simancas, Inquisicion, Lib. 1.

² *Ibidem*. Sgalambro managed to regain the royal favor, for a letter of Ferdinand, April 23, 1506, gratifies him with the Cistercian abbey of S. Maria di Terrana, burdened, however, with a pension of eighty ducats to the official chronicler, Luca de Marinis, better known as L. Marinæus Siculus.—*Pirri Sicilia Sacra*, I, 670.

³ *La Mantia*, pp. 27, 28.

⁴ *Parecer de Martin Real* (MSS. of Bodleian Library, Arch Seld., 130).

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COMMENCING ACTIVITY

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Olivieri de Mauro, a renegade Christian.¹ Probably this was followed by others, of which the records have not reached us, but the troubles of the tribunal were not yet over and, in 1509, it was practically suspended for awhile, for the Bishop of Cefalù was transferred to Naples, as we shall see hereafter; Belorado died, the receiver Obregon was in Spain, and the other officials apparently dispersed, as there was no money to pay their salaries. At length a successor was found in Doctor Alonso Bernal, whose appointment Ferdinand announced to the viceroy, January 19, 1510, but he was in no haste to assume the duties for, on April 2d Ferdinand was obliged to furnish him with sixty ducats to expedite his departure from Valencia. Obregon accompanied him and, as the whole staff of the tribunal had disappeared, he was empowered to fill their places and regulate their salaries, which were to be paid out of three hundred ducats to be advanced by the royal treasurer and to be repaid out of the first proceeds of the expected confiscations.² The need of money was doubtless an incentive to active work. Bernal lost no time in getting the tribunal into shape and, by August 27th, we hear of his having many prisoners, for whose safe-keeping he had spent fifty ducats in arranging a gaol.³ The result of this industry manifested itself in an *auto de fe*, celebrated June 6, 1511, in which eight persons were burnt.⁴

He was speedily furnished with a colleague, for royal letters of June 18th and 24th inform us of the appointment of a second inquisitor, in the person of Doctor Diego de Bonilla, promoted from the position of fiscal, to whom Obregon was ordered to pay a salary of 6000 sueldos, while the new fiscal, Leonardo Vázquez de Cepeda was to receive 2000 and the notary, Pedro de Barahona the same. It was one thing, however, to grant salaries and quite another to get them paid, in the habitual mismanagement of inquisitorial business. From a letter of September 17th we learn that Obregon

¹ La Mantia, p. 28.

² Archivo de Simancas, Inquisicion, Lib. 3, fol. 51, 52, 77, 81, 82, 83.

³ Ibidem, fol. 127.

⁴ La Mantia, p. 29.

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had left Sicily in the fleet, placing as his substitute his son, a boy of 15 or 16. The salaries had fallen greatly in arrears and the boy declared that he had no funds save twenty ounces, while Inquisitor Bernal asserted that he had imposed fines and pecuniary penances to the amount of thirteen hundred ducats, besides considerable confiscations, which should be ample to meet all salaries and expenses, whereupon Ferdinand ordered the viceroy to investigate the accounts and discover where the money had gone.¹

These were not the only difficulties which the tribunal had to encounter. Accustomed as the people had been for centuries to the existence of the Inquisition, the Spanish institution was a very different affair, not only as to activity and severity but still more from the privileges and immunities claimed and enforced by its officials and their servants and familiars, especially their exemption from taxes and import dues and their *fuero* or right to the jurisdiction of the Inquisition, whether as plaintiffs or defendants, giving rise to perpetual irritation through the oppression and injustice thus rendered possible. These innovations were not admitted without resistance, which Ferdinand sought to repress by a letter of September 10, 1508, ordering Belorado to see that his officials were as well treated in these respects as elsewhere in the Spanish dominions. This received scant obedience for, on November 14, 1509, he wrote to the *stratico* of Palermo expressing extreme displeasure on learning that he had arrested a scrivener of the tribunal and had deprived other officials of their arms; in future he must maintain their privileges and exemptions and show them every favor and protection.² Yet Ferdinand knew that the troubles arose from the over-weening pretensions of the tribunal and its officials for, in a letter of July 30, 1510, to Bernal he attributed them to the exorbitant invasions of the royal jurisdiction by the inquisitors and their appointment of men of evil

¹ Archivo de Simancas, Inquisicion, Lib. 3, fol. 134, 148, 153.

² Portocarrero, *Sobre la Competencia en Mallorca*, n. 38 (Madrid, 1624).— Archivo de Simancas, Inquisicion, Lib. 3, fol. 30.