

THE SPANISH IMMIGRANT JOSEPH MARTÍN DE FUENTES:

A SELF-STYLED REFORMER, IMPERIAL WATCHDOG AND NATIVIST
IN PUERTO RICO AT THE END OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

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Abstract

One of the principal goals of the Bourbon reforms was the development of unexploited spaces in Spanish America. Due to the insufficiency of metropolitan settlers in the islands of Trinidad and Puerto Rico, after 1776 the Bourbons authorized foreign colonists from friendly Catholic nations to settle in both colonies. This paper traces the experiences of one Spanish immigrant, Joseph Martín de Fuentes and his futile year-long attempt to compel Jayme O'Daly, the Irish Director of several themes of interests to scholars of the Bourbon reforms, such as immigration, economic development, government corruption, and the rise of colonial élites.

Key words: Trinidad, Puerto Rico, Bourbon Reforms, Colonial immigration.

Resumen

Uno de los principales objetivos de las reformas borbónicas era la ocupación de espacios inexplorados en la América española. Ante la insuficiencia de asentamientos metropolitanos en las islas de Trinidad y Puerto Rico, después de 1776 la Corona española autorizó que colonos de otras naciones católicas se establecieran en ambas colonias. Este escrito traza las experiencias de un inmigrante español, Joseph Martín de Fuentes, y su inútil intento de imponerse a la autoridad del director irlandés de la Factoría Real de Tabacos de Puerto Rico, Jayme O'Daly, que lo contrató. El caso comprende varios temas de interés para los estudiosos de las reformas borbónicas, tales como la inmigración, el desarrollo económico, la corrupción del gobierno, y el surgimiento de las élites coloniales.

Palabras clave: Trinidad, Puerto Rico, reformas borbónicas, inmigración colonial.

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EL INMIGRANTE ESPAÑOL JOSEPH MARTÍN DE FUENTES:

REFORMISTA AUTODIDÁCTICA, VIGILANTE IMPERIAL Y NATIVISTA
EN PUERTO RICO A FINALES DEL SIGLO XVIII

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Résumé

L'un des principaux buts des réformes des Bourbons fut le développement des espaces sous-développés de L'Amérique espagnole. Dans une Caraïbe hispanique sous-peuplée, cet objectif appelait la promotion de l'immigration, à la fois pour exploiter les ressources agricoles et pour renforcer l'autorité espagnole dans la région. A cause de l'insuffisance des établissements en provenance de la métropole dans les Iles de la Trinité et de Porto Rico, les Bourbons permirent après 1776 que des colons étrangers provenant de nations catholiques amies s'installent dans ces deux colonies. Cet article retrace l'expérience de l'un des colons espagnols, l'immigrant Joseph Martinez de Fuentes et ses années de vains efforts pour obliger Jayme O'Daly, Directeur irlandais de divers secteurs d'intérêts pour les spécialités de l'étude des réformes des Bourbons, tels l'immigration, le développement économique, la corruption gouvernementale et l'émergence des élites coloniales, à agir.

Mots-clés: Trinité, Porto Rico, réformes des Bourbons, immigration coloniale.

Samenvatting

Een van de voornaamste doelstellingen van de Bourbonse hervorming was de ontwikkeling van ongeexploiteerde gebieden in Spaans Amerika. In de dun bevolkte gebieden van Spaans Amerika kon deze doelstelling alleen gerealiseerd worden via de bevordering van immigratie, zowel ten behoeve van de exploitatie van de landbouw bronnen als voor het in stand houden van het Spaans gezag. Wegens onvoldoende migranten uit het moederland werden na 1776 vreemdelingen van bevriende katholieke naties toegelaten op de eilanden van Trinidad and Puerto Rico. Het artikel analyseert de ervaringen van een Spaanse immigrant, Joseph Martinez de Fuentes, zijn tevergeefse jarenlange pogingen om Jayme O'Daly, de Ierse directeur, over te halen rond thema's die van belang waren voor de Bourbonse hervorming zoals immigratie, economische ontwikkeling, corruptie op regeringsniveau, en het opkomen van koloniale elites.

Kernwoorden: Trinidad, Puerto Rico, Bourbonse hervormingen, koloniale immigratie.

Foreign immigrants who settled or traded in the Indies, whether they did so clandestinely or legally, were always a source of anxiety for the Spanish Crown, which maintained several bans and close surveillance over them during the entire Spanish colonial period (Campbell, 1972, 153). This restrictionist activity was designed to check the danger—real or imagined—that foreigners posed to Spanish religious, economic as well as military interests in the Americas. However, keeping foreigners at bay was no easy matter. For one, the European side of the Spanish Empire was multinational at various historical junctures, rendering the term *foreigner* a slippery legal category (Ots Capdequí, 1940, 369-370). Given the vast size and ethnic diversity of the empire on both sides of the Atlantic, weeding out the “illegals” was next to impossible. Moreover, Spanish American colonists proved less than diligent in carrying out imperial statutes on foreign immigrants (Tau Anzoátegui, 1992, 18, cited in Tejerina [1997, 138]). At the same time, Spain lacked the work force and technology to manage its colonial empire, and was thus compelled to draw on foreigners with specialized expertise and/or capital. In such cases, their presence would be conveniently overlooked or legalized via royal licenses, *cartas de naturaleza* (naturalization) and by the process of *composición*, or payment of a specific sum to the Spanish Crown.¹

The Bourbons’ pragmatic program of imperial renewal favored the selective recruitment or toleration of foreign colonists with professional or technical skills, making it easier to legalize their status in Spanish America (Domínguez Ortiz, 1955, 237-253; Newson, 1976, 177; Hull, 1980, 167-168; Morales Álvarez, 1980; Lynch, 1989, 213-214). Premised primarily on utilitarian grounds, the relaxation of controls on foreign immigration had important consequences in the Hispanic Caribbean. Successive royal decrees in 1776 and 1783, for example, enticed scores of Catholic planters from the Danish and French colonies to take

¹ Konetzke (1945, especially 283-299); see also Domínguez Compañy (1955, 108-117).

up residence in Trinidad as means of promoting its economic development (Newson, 1979; Sevilla Soler, 1988). In 1778, the Spanish Crown authorized *hacendados* in Puerto Rico to recruit experts in sugar cultivation from the non-Hispanic Caribbean. A number of non-institutional factors —most notably slave revolts and intra-European warfare— also impelled an additional influx of foreign planters and merchants from the Danish, French and Dutch islands into Puerto Rico.²

The presence in the Hispanic Caribbean of a small contingent of economically well off foreigners coincided with a revival of Spanish immigration into the region. A study conducted by the historian Rosario Márquez Macías found that Cuba was the main destination for immigrants who embarked from Cádiz to the Spanish Caribbean colonies during the period 1765-1824 (Márquez Macías, 1995, 166). Though at a modest scale, Puerto Rico drew a noticeable stream of Canary Islanders, Catalan merchants, and colonial officials during the second half of the eighteenth century. The Caracas, Havana and Barcelona chartered companies ferried Spanish colonists as part of their operations. Following the 1762 British occupation of Havana, Spain dispatched additional troops and convict laborers to the islands to revamp its military defenses. Iberian administrators, merchants and navigators also came in connection with the *asiento*, or slave trade contract, granted first to Miguel Uriarte and later to the business firm of Aguirre-Arístegui (Álvarez Nazario, 1966; Marazzi, 1974, 7-11; Pike, 1982).

How did the Spanish immigrants cope with being suddenly thrust into competition with the enterprising foreigners? The Colombian historian Juan Carlos Jurado Jurado suggests that we look beyond embarkation licenses, church registers, notarial records and population censuses to probe this question. He notes that while those are among the most widely used and studied of historical documentation on Spanish immigration to the Indies, they should be supplemented, whenever possible, with other materials to avoid reducing the study of immigration "to a simple

² See, for example, Morales Carrión (1976); Luque de Sánchez (1987-1988); Morales (1986); and León Borja de Zsázdí (1992).

enumeration of immigrants... [or] a simplistic account of registers of departure or arrival." One alternative, he proposes, consists of tapping criminal proceedings,

which by their own nature, permits us to reconstruct a part of the biography of people, the different ways in which foreigners were socially integrated, aspects of local social conviviality and attitudes toward the laws, uncovering stages rich in social content concerning the migratory process from Spain to America [Jurado Jurado, 2000, 665-666].

This essay is a modest attempt to take up Jurado's suggestion in an effort to help fill the historiographical lacuna on immigration in eighteenth-century Puerto Rico. It examines the legal problems faced by one such newcomer, Joseph Martín de Fuentes, who waged a lengthy battle to secure a position in the Real Factoría de Tabacos, which was being headed by the ambitious Irish planter Jayme O'Daly. The data consists of sixteen appeals and representations, numbering just over 500 folios, which Fuentes addressed mainly to the Minister of the Indies Fray Antonio Valdez y Bazán between 1789 and 1790.³ Despite the charged atmosphere under which they were generated, they provide partial but important insights on a number of themes of interest to historians of Latin America during the late Bourbon period, such as the administration of justice, foreign immigration, contraband, and governmental corruption.

Fuentes was born in the Spanish city of Zaragoza, in the province of Aragón, where he also obtained a university education.⁴

³ AGI-SD, legajos 2369 and 2376, various dates. All archival references to communications between Fuentes, Valdez, Casa de Contratación president Manuel González Guiral and Governor Miguel de Uztáriz listed below are for leg. 2369, unless otherwise stated.

⁴ The dearth of studies on Iberian immigration to Spanish America during the Bourbon era makes it difficult to determine how Fuentes' educational attainment compares to that of other contemporaneous Spanish colonists. The historian John E. Kicza (1995, 109) has noted that few Spanish immigrants in Bourbon New Spain arrived with capital, artisan skills or a university education. Only six percent of the metropolitan colonists identified by Márquez Macías's work mentioned above (1995, 171) had professional occupations.

Before leaving for Puerto Rico, Fuentes had been employed as a clerk in the Cádiz mercantile house of Manuel Félix Riesch, and held a second, on-call job at the *Banco de San Carlos*. In 1786 Jayme O'Daly, an Irishman who relocated to Puerto Rico in 1776 from the Dutch colony of St. Eustatius and was later named Director of the recently established Real Factoría de Tabacos, asked for Riesch's assistance in identifying potential hires to fill three clerical positions in the Factoría. Riesch subsequently contacted the Marqués de Sonora, who then served as Minister of the Indies, and informed him that he was having difficulties finding the right candidates. In the meantime, O'Daly wrote to another merchant in Cádiz, Patricio Foyes, who recommended Juan Sayus for the position of bookkeeper. Sayus was a native of France who resided in Spain since 1768, and became a naturalized Spanish citizen in 1786 (Morales Álvarez, 1980, 325). O'Daly agreed, and Sayus departed for Puerto Rico on October 26, 1787 to take the job. Fuentes was apparently unaware of Sayus' designation, and also pursued a spot in the Real Factoría. Although Riesch had previously informed O'Daly that Fuentes was unqualified for the job of bookkeeper, Fuentes persisted. Eventually, he managed to persuade Riesch to write him a letter of recommendation addressed to O'Daly, which partly read that "he should meet your needs in the class of books." Armed with the letter, Fuentes went before the *Casa de Contratación*, which on September 21, 1787 granted him the required orders authorizing him to embark for Puerto Rico with his wife, Ana Santini and their two children. After Santini took ill, Fuentes was forced to delay his trip in order to request a waiver for traveling without his spouse. He received a new license on July 29, 1788 to leave for Puerto Rico on the condition that Santini joined him once she regained her health.⁵

After several more delays, Fuentes arrived in San Juan on June 14, 1789 dressed on a uniform befitting the position of royal bookkeeper, or *contador*. Accompanied by Pedro Gamón, Inspector of the Real Factoría of Havana and Francisco Maldonado, a

⁵ Fuentes to Valdez, July 28, 1788; Valdez to Manuel González Guiral, September 29, 1789; González Guiral to Valdez, October 16, 1789.

former officer of the Superintendence of Hacienda of Cádiz, Fuentes was escorted to O'Daly who briefed him regarding the Factoría's operations. Apparently convinced that he had been duly designated by the Spanish Crown to oversee the accounts at the Real Factoría, Fuentes disapproved at once of O'Daly's commercial operations, and boldly outlined changes which he deemed necessary to put the Factoría on a sound economic footing.⁶ From that day onward, the stage was set for what eventually turned into a bitter, protracted confrontation between the two men. In time the conflict drew in supporters and detractors on both sides, and culminated in the tragic death of Fuentes under suspicious circumstances.

In letters addressed to Minister Valdez and the Governor of Puerto Rico, Fuentes tried to depict O'Daly as inept, corrupt, and disloyal. He reported that the Factoría was filled to capacity, with enough tobacco to fill four frigates. According to a secret report he received from its warehouse keeper, the Factoría was holding back some 80,000 pounds of tobacco, which was decaying from the combined effect of heat, rain and insects. The same source alleged that there were additional quantities of cotton, coffee, hides, dyewood and pepper also awaiting exportation in the Factoría, at five warehouses which O'Daly had rented out in the city, and in depots in San Germán, Aguadilla and Quiñonez. Fuentes claimed that O'Daly cheated the local producers in weighting and pricing their tobacco; that some of them were being turned away, encouraging illegal trading with merchants from St. Thomas, Curaçao, St. Eustatius, Dominica and Jamaica. He referred to the tobacco farmers several times as "*Indios*" and reported that they were "moaning under the oppression of a tyrannical domination..." He observed that Cuba's Real Factoría faced similar problems until the contador Antonio Loinaz succeeded in turning it around. Clearly exaggerating, he added that under the leadership of Loinaz, the value of Cuba's tobacco yield amounted to 200 million *reales* and provided employment to over 800,000 farmers. In a typical reformist fashion,

⁶ Fuentes to Valdez, July 16, 1789.

he offered to draft a new *reglamento* or set of regulations for the Factoría to uphold the King's interests, promote Puerto Rico's economic development and curb illegal trade.⁷

While Fuentes initially complained of O'Daly's alleged failure or unwillingness to run the Factoría in the best interest of the Crown, he soon attributed these shortcomings to his status as a foreigner. In all probability, this nativist turn reflected Fuentes' apprehension about the growing economic, social and political clout enjoyed by foreigners in Spain. In the course of the eighteenth Cádiz had seen a steady increase in its foreign population, which rose from 2,080 in 1714 to 8,842 in 1791 (García-Baquero González, 1988, vol. 1, 488-491). In the last year, the bulk of the city's foreign-born population included 2,701 French, 5,018 Italians, 351 Portuguese, 272 English, 277 Germans and Flemish, and 115 among Luxembourgers, Swedish, and Polish (Domínguez Ortiz, 1955, 240). In 1762, Cádiz's 153 foreign traders comprised just over forty percent of its mercantile class, and their numbers rose to 386 by 1773. The Spanish historian Antonio García-Baquero González has concluded that Cádiz' international commerce was in fact in foreign hands during the last third of the eighteenth century (García-Baquero González, 1988, vol. 1, 491-497).

Fuentes had come to know some of these foreign merchants, and was familiar with what he believed were their deceptive business methods. He was particularly troubled by the frequency in which they declared bankruptcy, which Fuentes held they falsified in order to dupe creditors, defraud the Spanish treasury and repatriate capital to their countries of origin. Fuentes pointed out that O'Daly was a single man without family, and had ties to Jews, Protestants and other non-Spaniards in the nearby colonies, to which he could easily escape in short notice. Only by placing a Spaniard such as himself in charge of the Factoría's accounts, Fuentes argued, could an end be put to these underhanded practices. This would also prevent secretive, suspicious transactions, which he believed O'Daly had been carrying out with the Dutch in Amsterdam. By blocking his appointment, which

⁷ Fuentes to Lieutenant Governor and Interim Governor of Puerto Rico, June 29, 1789; Fuentes to Valdez, July 10, 1789.

Fuentes maintained had been officially endorsed by the Spanish Crown, O'Daly's behavior revealed a "spirit of independence and rebelliousness, which needs to be contained, and censured, to cut down the bad example that others might emulate, should they see that such loathing crimes remain unpunished..."⁸

Fuentes had underestimated Jayme O'Daly's wide support both in the Spanish Crown and within the local colonial administration. Taken as a group, the Irish seemingly enjoyed a privileged political status in Spain. From the reign of Philip III (1598-1621) onward, they had served on Spain's military. In 1623 Philip IV ruled that foreign Catholics with useful trades or professions could remain in Spain. Philip V reiterated this policy in 1701, and mandated that they be treated as subjects of the Spanish Crown (Morales Álvarez, 1980, 87; 156-157). O'Daly's brother, Tomás, was a protégé of Field Marshall Alexander O'Reilly, who was commissioned by the Spanish Crown to inspect conditions in Cuba and Puerto Rico following the 1762 British occupation of Havana. O'Reilly recruited Tomás to direct the massive defense projects of San Juan. Tomás later established a sugar plantation with Joaquín Power, the Iberian-born son of an Irish noble and a Spanish mother who came to Puerto Rico as factor of the *Compañía de Asiento de Negros*.⁹ Their estate was the largest and most economically profitable in the island, netting 15,000 pesos yearly around the 1780's.

Jayme had some support within imperial circles. While residing in St. Eustatius in 1772, he had put up some 30,000 pesos to assist a Spanish fleet that had run aground in Anguilla. In return, he requested and was granted a license to settle in Puerto Rico for a two-year period with the right to export its products to recuperate the funds advanced.¹⁰ He remained in Puerto Rico to manage his brother's sugar plantation. When Tomás died in 1781, Jayme became legal guardian of his brother's children. Bernardo Ward, who authored the influential reformist track, *Proyecto Económico* and served as economic adviser to Ferdinand

⁸ Fuentes to the Governor, Intendant and Captain General of Puerto Rico, no date; Fuentes to Valdez, July 31, 1789 and October 15, 1789.

⁹ AGI-SD, leg. 2389.

¹⁰ Bermejo García (1970, 169) mistakenly wrote that O'Daly did so in 1744.

VI (1746-1759), backed his appointment as Director of the Real Factoría de Tabacos in 1785 (Ortiz, 1983, 76; Hull, 1980, 158). The following year, Jayme was issued a *carta de tolerancia*, which granted him status as a Spanish subject while he administered the tobacco monopoly.¹¹

O'Daly reacted swiftly to discredit Fuentes' allegations. Although he was a foreigner, he had lived in Puerto Rico for over a decade and had also developed close ties with key members of the local elite. As a successful planter, he was part of a small but powerful tight-knit group of farmers who are credited with jump-starting commercial agriculture in Puerto Rico. According to Fuentes, O'Daly quickly rallied his supporters in the local administration, including Governor Miguel de Uztáriz, the Lieutenant Governor Manuel Chiquero, and the Fiscal of Hacienda Felipe Mexias. Fuentes had publicly declared that O'Daly had concealed or forged royal orders, which supposedly confirmed his appointment, and that he had hired Sayus, another foreigner, in order to avoid having a Spaniard look over his shoulder. He also accused Uztáriz of favoritism for failing to compel O'Daly to turn the Factoría's accounting books over to him. At O'Daly's insistence, Uztáriz charged Fuentes with what amounted to defamation of character. However, in the weeks that follow Fuentes refused to cooperate with the local authorities, believing that his many dispatches to the Spanish Crown would eventually restore his good name and lead to the dismissal of O'Daly. On at least two occasions, he rebuffed the attempts by several San Juan court-appointed scribes to take down his testimony in writing.

Pressured by O'Daly to silence Fuentes, Uztáriz authorized a party of soldiers and constables to take him to the San Juan presidio by force if needed. On August 6, 1789, just two months after his arrival, they dragged him out of his house to be taken to jail. Details about what followed are not clear. In one document Fuentes claims that he was violently removed from his

¹¹ AGI-SD, leg. 2389, Council of the Indies to King, May 18, 1775; leg. 2364, Jayme O'Daly to Council of the Indies, June 30, 1784; *ibid.*, leg. 2366, Jayme O'Daly to Council of the Indies, October 31, 1786; and leg. 2393, Jayme O'Daly to Governor of Puerto Rico, July 6, 1797; consult also Torres (1962, 49-52).

home, ill, shoeless, and half-dressed, and taken to a dark dungeon. On another, he stated that the commotion aroused the local residents, who shouted, stoned or otherwise turned on the authorities and took him back to his house. To avoid further civil unrest, Uztáriz rescinded the order to take Fuentes into custody and placed him instead under house arrest. On November 10, 1789, presumably at the conclusion of the investigation, Uztáriz admonished Fuentes for making a number of injurious remarks, and sentenced him to be banished within 30 days.¹²

Fuentes was adamant about leaving the island with his honor tarnished and his coveted position left in the hands of the two foreigners. He decided to stay put and attempt to expose what he considered to be the oppressive and illegal activities of the "Dominant Party", which he thought was made up of Uztáriz, O'Daly, Chiquero and Mexia.¹³ For instance, he questioned why O'Daly had been allowed to remain in the island despite an order of expulsion signed against him by the Fiscal Julian Díaz de Saravia, a magistrate from the *Audiencia* of Santo Domingo. Díaz de Saravia indicted O'Daly on illegal trading charges and uncovered irregularities in connection with the purchase of his plantation (Bermejo García, 1970, 282). Fuentes accused O'Daly of defrauding the Spanish Crown by employing the Factoría's slaves for personal gain; selling his own sloop to the Factoría through a second party; making unauthorized trips to the West Indies; exporting silver to the nearby islands; introducing foreign goods illegally; and with owing large sums of money to merchants in Cádiz. In fact, Fuentes personally delivered O'Daly a request for payment from the Cádiz firms of Phelipe Linch & Co., and Berton & Co. He narrated an episode reminiscent of the Boston Tea Party, in which the local bakers refused to purchase spoiled flour imported by O'Daly, eventually forcing him to dump it into the sea.¹⁴ Fuentes also charged Governor Miguel de Uztáriz with being the head of the Dominant Party; abusing his power by failing to seriously con-

¹² Fuentes to Valdez, September 11, 1789 and October 31, 1789; Fuentes to Uztáriz, August 7, 1789.

¹³ Fuentes to Valdez, September 11, 1789 and December 10, 1789; Fuentes to Uztáriz, July 31, 1789.

¹⁴ Fuentes to Uztáriz, July 31, 1789; Fuentes to Valdez, October 15, 1789.

sider any grievances brought to his attention; raising the price of bread; imposing a new tax on rum without royal authorization; exacting high contributions from the various guilds to subsidize the celebrations in honor of Charles IV; forcing the local residents to repair the sidewalks in front of their homes at their own expense despite the availability of a fund for that purpose; illegally selling cattle to foreigners; and of allowing the introduction of clandestine goods from the foreign colonies.¹⁵

Fuentes went on the offensive regarding O'Daly's alleged mishandling of the Real Factoría. He objected to O'Daly's policy of furnishing commodities to the local farmers in exchange for their tobacco and other agricultural products, a policy he believed benefited only O'Daly, not the cultivators nor the king:

From this may be deduced that in harvesting enough products equivalent to the acquisition of two, three or four changes of clothes, they persist on their idleness and loafing on their hammocks, and do not wish to leave their *bohios*, huts and *barracas* where they live until they are forced, after an extended period of time, to repeat another expedition to reform themselves. And, inversely: the desire for money is inextinguishable: man always covets [it], even when he possesses [it]; and is always working to acquire it, as long as he lives. Money is the soul of the nations; and nations lacking in circulation are nothing more than a conglomeration of bodies without souls.¹⁶

To remedy this, Fuentes suggested that farmers receive no less than one-fourth of payment in cash. O'Daly's approach, he maintained, had contributed to keeping Puerto Rico underdeveloped and under-populated. By revamping the Factoría's antiquated methods, Spain would be able to take full advantage of Puerto Rico's vast natural resources and favorable geographical location. After all, he added, people gravitate toward the sound of money. "This, it seems to me, would be the magnet that would attract what we need; that is, hands for our fields,

¹⁵ Fuentes to Valdez, September 15, 1789; Fuentes to Valdez, April 18, 1790.

¹⁶ Fuentes to Valdez, October 15, 1789.

and families for the [island's] population." Only then, he concluded, would Spanish ships flock to the desolated but appreciable harbors of Puerto Rico, leading to its economic prosperity.¹⁷

Many of the observations and claims made by Fuentes are clearly tainted by his antagonistic feelings toward the Dominant Party, making it difficult to gauge the extent of the alleged conspiracy or offenses involving O'Daly, Uztáriz and associates. On the other hand, his criticism of the Factoría was not far off the mark. The Spanish historian Juana Gil Bermejo García wrote that the enterprise was ill-equipped and prone to corruption. Neither the local merchants nor the San Juan *cabildo* appeared to have been consulted before its creation. Frustration over its operations turned violent in 1790 and 1792, when its warehouses in San Germán and Arecibo were torched (Bermejo García, 1970, 175-178). According to the historian Birgit Sonesson, the Factoría shipped an average of 19,136 *arrobos* of tobacco to Amsterdam yearly between 1787 and 1792. By contrast, merchants in the Dutch colony of St. Eustatius claimed to have purchased between 48,000 and 68,000 *arrobos* annually from Puerto Rico prior to the establishment of the Factoría. The drop in left exports after 1787, she stated, left "ample margins for contraband and other channels." (Sonesson, 2000, 31). In addition:

The Royal Factory was the only one of the privileged companies that really made any profit, and in doing so provoked opposition from the islanders. On two occasions the outlying warehouses were burned. The resident merchants in San Juan complained that because it entered duty-free, the Dutch merchandise undersold what was brought from the Peninsula. The consumers were unhappy because the price of the Dutch merchandise, even without duty, was still 40 percent higher than that of the smuggled goods. Because tobacco had to be stored for long periods, the quality and sale price suffered. The value of imported goods thus exceeded that of exports, creating a currency drain. All in all, the opportunity to export tobacco this way was limited since only two vessels were engaged in the Royal Factory's traffic. Neither the Puerto

¹⁷ Fuentes to Valdez, October 29, 1789.

Rican producers and consumers nor the Royal Treasury benefited. Although the Royal Factory was not abolished, the Dutch trade effectively ended in 1792. Legal tobacco exports were then redirected to Cádiz; the illegal flow was channeled toward Saint Thomas where several Dutch merchants had settled after the British attack on Saint Eustatius in 1781 (Sonesson, 2000, 32).

Fuentes tried to portray himself as an advocate for the artisan guilds, bakers, poor homeowners, deserters and tobacco growers, among others, who were daily suffering under the tyrannical domination of O'Daly and his dominant party. Soon after his arrival, O'Daly is reputed to have warned Fuentes not to befriend the *jibaros*¹⁸ who, even when well-treated were mistrustful and always complained of being robbed or abused. Fuentes decided to see if there was any truth behind this, and concluded that their gripes were justified.¹⁹ He believed that Uztáriz retaliated against him for siding with the bakers and with the homeowners who refused to foot the bill for fixing their sidewalks. He also acknowledged some of the limitations that hindered the local producers' participation via legal channels, such as the shortage of capital, the absence of trade with Spain, and a corrupt colonial administration. However, like his contemporaneous eighteenth-century observers, notably O'Reilly, Fray Iñigo Abbad y Lasierra and the French naturalist André Pierre Ledru, he still viewed the islanders from a peculiar Eurocentric perspective as typified by his above-cited references to their alleged idleness and loafing behavior.²⁰

Unlike the first two, who supported foreign immigration as a means to exploit the island's agricultural wealth, Fuentes saw only harm in allowing non-Iberians to settle in the Spanish colonies. In due time, he stated, the French and the English will out-

¹⁸ The term *jibaro*, according to the acclaimed ethno-linguist Manuel Álvarez Nazario (1977, 66, note 52) likely derived from the arawak word *cimarrón*. During the last two centuries of Spanish rule, it became associated variously with creoles, peasants, mountain dwellers, maroons, indomitable Indians, wild animals, and rebels—see Arrom (1983, 47-57) and Quintero Rivera (1998, 46-54).

¹⁹ Fuentes to Valdez, October 29, 1789.

²⁰ "Memoria de D. Alexandro O'Reylly Sobre la Isla de Puerto Rico," in Caro Costas (1972, 387-388); Abbad y Lasierra (1970, 154 and 183); Ledru (1957, 113).

number Spaniards in Puerto Rico.²¹ In this sense, Fuentes shared the xenophobic attitudes of certain sectors of eighteenth-century Spanish society (Domínguez Ortiz, 1955, 237-253). He was no doubt familiar with the popular outcry in Spain over the disproportionate participation of foreigners in Charles III's cabinet, which erupted into the Squillace riots of 1766 (Lynch, 1989, 261-268).²² In a letter to Uztáriz, dated December 20, 1789, he warned the governor of the harmful political impact of allowing foreigners to enter Puerto Rico:

Is it possible that with Europe drowned in revolution; with revolution spreading to the contiguous Foreign Islands; learning, as it daily reaches our ears, the ill-fated news that the Governors [of the non-Hispanic Caribbean] are being obliged to distribute various gallows in the public spaces of the capitals to use against the unruly, rebels and seditious element to serve as an exemplary pile to the rest. And with Royal Orders having forbidden repeatedly and absolutely the transit of foreigners from the nearby islands to this colony (even during times of tranquility, calmness and general peace in Europe and the Americas), you have acceded during such critical circumstances, like those threatening that and this hemisphere, to allowing entrance to our Spanish territory from the said islands, which are ablaze in public and secret commotion, of boatloads of Frenchmen and from other Nations, on the pretext of being Comedies and Pantomimes?²³

Some of the festivities that were held in San Juan to commemorate Charles IV's ascension to the Spanish throne provided Fuentes another opportunity to expose the reputed disloyalty of O'Daly and his associates. On September 13, 1789 he complained

²¹ Fuentes to Valdez, December 20, 1789.

²² The transatlantic impact, if any, of xenophobic activity in Spain is not clear. It is worth noting, however, that settlers in Spanish Trinidad expressed misgivings about the influx of foreign immigrants following the enactment of the 1783 *Cédula de Población*. Some regarded the foreign newcomers with suspicion and mistrust, believing that many of them had exaggerated their wealth and numbers of slaves, or had fled the French colonies to elude creditors, masters and the law. Others were uneasy about the real possibility of losing their lands to the new colonists. See Newson (1979, 192).

²³ Fuentes to Valdez, December 20, 1789.

to Valdez that Mr. Le Branch (a Frenchman) and O'Daly had put up several displays which suggested their allegiance to France and England rather than to Spain. One of their illuminations depicted a woman, dressed in heroic attire and a crown of laurels, holding a large pole whose tip ended with three sharp daggers. To its left was a picture of a serpent coiled around the stump of a tree in a menacing posture. According to Fuentes, people in the city speculated as to its significance: perhaps it was a symbol of liberty; some thought it represented France getting rid of the Bourbons; still others saw it as the emblem of independence used in the American Revolution. Behind the woman was a scene of the ocean and a ship sailing off, without a distinguishing flag. At her feet lay a white beast with the head of a lion and the body of a sheep holding a globe of the world on its right paw. Some surmised that it was meant to suggest that Spain was a lion only in name. Others interpreted it as the sign of an impending rebellion in which Spain would rule over one world just as it did before the "discovery" of the Americas.

There was no doubt in Fuentes' mind that the entire exhibition symbolized the declining authority of Spain in Puerto Rico under a weak governor and the growing, pernicious influence of foreigners. He pointed out that the Commander of the island's militias, Mr. D'Labusier, was a Frenchman, and that the bulk of the *Regimiento de Nápoles* was comprised of French, Italians and other non-Spaniards. According to Fuentes, the controversial display was stoned, and rumors circulated that if more appropriate acclamations were not placed, the houses of Le Branch and O'Daly would be burned down.²⁴ When suspicious fires broke out in San Juan and San Germán in December 1789 and January 1790, damaging the warehouse of the Real Factoría, Fuentes attributed them to an effort by O'Daly to fake bankruptcy. He also reported a rumor that the fires had been started by roves of deserters hiding from D'Labusier, who had recently conducted a sweep across the island to replenish the militias. Following the fires, Uztáriz sent out spies to learn the identity of the guilty parties, focusing especially on the jíbaros and free blacks.²⁵

²⁴ Fuentes to Valdez, October 29, 1789.

²⁵ Fuentes to Valdez, January 6, 1790.

Despite the seriousness of the allegations, the Crown was slow to act. The prevailing official position was that voiced by Manuel González Guiral, who served as President of the Casa de Contratación in Cádiz. When asked by Valdez to report on Fuentes and the circumstances surrounding his embarkation to Puerto Rico, González Guiral stated that Fuentes misrepresented himself to obtain the immigration permit. He also learned that Fuentes had a "highly mischievous and quarrelsome nature, likely to concoct plots and to spread false rumors and capable of upsetting any community, and to put into disfavor the reputation of persons of integrity and probity." He therefore recommended that Fuentes be immediately removed from Puerto Rico. Although the order was in line with standard procedures in place, González Guiral was also trying to save face after failing to properly verify Fuentes' paperwork before authorizing his departure.²⁶

O'Daly and Uztáriz also had ample motives to speed up the removal of Fuentes. Despite the Spanish Crown's efforts to increase the exportation of cash crops from Puerto Rico, the island's economy was still dominated by cattle ranching and subsistence farming. Contraband in draft animals and provisions with the West Indian sugar islands was widespread, and much of it was being directed from San Juan by government officials, ecclesiastical figures, military officers and the public in general (Picó, 1986, 95; Giusti Cordero, 1993, 18-19; Feliciano Ramos, 1984, 94-97). In fact, in 1791 Uztáriz secretly informed the Conde de Lerena that illegal trade was completely necessary and thus inextinguishable (Bermejo García, 1970, 33). On April 18, 1790, almost a year after Fuentes' first representation, the Council of the Indies began an investigation of his claims concerning Uztáriz.

Uztáriz understood all too well the danger posed by the continuing presence of Fuentes in Puerto Rico. On September 15, 1789, he told Fuentes that he would not stand in his way if he left the island clandestinely. Fuentes refused the offer, fearing that by leaving the island under a cloud a suspicion and without a passport he would be branded a fugitive from justice.²⁷ Two

²⁶ Fuentes to González Guiral to Valdez, October 16, 1789.

²⁷ Fuentes to Valdez, September 15, 1789.

months later, Uztáriz ordered Fuentes to leave the island within thirty days.²⁸ On January 27, 1790 Fuentes' wife asked the Spanish Crown to compel Fuentes to return to Spain.²⁹ In April, the Lieutenant of the Regimiento de Nápoles, Mariano Vianconi, informed Fuentes that Uztáriz and O'Daly had hatched a plan to forcibly place him aboard a ship bound for Spain, but desisted to avoid calling attention to themselves.³⁰

Around that time, O'Daly had apparently persuaded the Ministry of Treasury to also order Fuentes' expulsion. Accordingly, on May 19 the Council of the Indies directed Uztáriz to return Fuentes back to Spain with his two children. Uztáriz attempted twice to arrest Fuentes to prevent him from fleeing or otherwise eluding the deportation order. According to Uztáriz, Fuentes first pleaded illness, then resisted by grabbing a knife, forcing the authorities to club him a few times to force him to drop the weapon. He was taken to jail but subsequently released due to his declining health.

On May 11, 1790, however, over ten posters, critical of the Uztáriz administration, appeared on public spaces in the capital. An ensuing investigation based largely on handwriting samples found in the possession of Fuentes allegedly tied the posters to him. One of the posters protested the illegal sale of meat to the foreign islands and Uztáriz's attempt to cheat bakers on the price of bread:

<i>Urta Uztáriz en el día</i>	Uztáriz steals in the day
<i>Diez veces mas que Dabán:</i> ³¹	Ten times more than Dabán:
<i>El urta en la carne y pan</i>	He steals in bread and meat
<i>Y urta por la artillería.</i>	And steals by the artillery.
<i>Ya urtan todos a porfía,</i>	Now all steal in competition,
<i>Porque es arbitrio el robar;</i>	Because it is expedient to steal;
<i>Y pues tocan a pillar</i>	And give the call to sack
<i>Urta tu letor querido,</i>	Steal my dear reader,

²⁸ AGI-SD, legajo 2376, extracts of the case compiled by Council of the Indies, various dates.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ Fuentes to Valdez, April 18, 1790.

³¹ Refers to Juan Dabán y Noguera, who governed Puerto Rico during 1783-1789.

<i>Urta que hasta el apellido</i>	Steal as even the last name
<i>De Urta-riz te enseña a hurtar.</i>	Of Urta-riz ³² teaches you to steal.

Another poster complained of the efforts by Uztáriz to force San Juan residents to repair the sidewalks in front of their homes:

<i>Si con componer las calles</i>	If by repairing the streets
<i>Nos intentas embromar:</i>	You intend to play a joke on us
<i>Déjalas como se estaban</i>	Leave them as they were
<i>No nos vengas a robar.</i>	Don't come to rob us.
<i>Vinistes de España encueros</i>	You came from Spain bare-skinned,
<i>Pereciendo y sin camisa,</i>	Dying and shirt-less,
<i>Y ahora no cesas de enviar</i>	And now you do not stop shipping out
<i>Miles de pesos a prisa.</i>	Thousands of pesos in a hurry.

<i>Aunque acompañado salgas</i>	Though you may go out accompanied
<i>Con toda tu comitiva</i>	By all your retinue
<i>Morirás de un trabucazo</i>	You will die from a blunderbuss shot
<i>Al revolver de una esquina.</i>	At the turn of the corner.

Santini wrote again to the Council of the Indies on November 6, 1790 asking that Fuentes be pardoned. The King acceded to her petition, and two weeks later directed Uztáriz to send Fuentes back to Spain along with the interrogatories concerning the case against him. The long-awaited clemency came too late for Fuentes. On October 8, Uztáriz informed Valdez that Fuentes had taken his life in jail the previous month. The jailer reported seeing him alive at ten in the evening, and finding his life-less body at six o'clock the following morning. Doctors were summoned to the scene, but their efforts to revive Fuentes, he added, proved futile. Their medical report indicated that he had died some three or four hours earlier. All that remained to be done, the Governor concluded unemotionally and in a matter-of-fact tone, was to send his children back to Spain at the first opportunity.

Although Uztáriz considered the case closed, the death of Fuentes aroused suspicion in Spain. On April 10, 1791, Santini

³² From the colloquial Spanish verb "*hurtar*," meaning "to steal."

complained to the Spanish Crown about the outrages committed against her husband. She pointed out that his enemies in Puerto Rico feared being exposed on his return to Spain, and retaliated by accusing him of posting the inflammatory fliers. She had also learned that they had killed him. The Council of the Indies noted several inconsistencies in the official account of Fuentes' alleged suicide. The jailer reported finding his body face-up on the floor with a rope tied around his neck, but made no mention of any nail or hook used by Fuentes to hang himself. Had he hung himself, the Council pointed out, his body should have been found suspended. The Council questioned why Fuentes died so quickly, assuming that the rope or other unknown instrument used to take his life snapped off, causing his body to fall to the floor. It also noted that the jail's executioner had destroyed a crucial piece of evidence in the case against Fuentes, that is, the posters. In the end, and perhaps on account of the many discrepancies in the case, the Crown approved Santini's request for a pension for her and the children.³³

There is no question that Fuentes had an abrasive personality and used every tool at his disposal, frequently embellishing the truth or distorting reality, in order to persuade the Crown to take action on his behalf. He may have also viewed himself as culturally superior to the foreigners or even to the native Puerto Ricans. These concerns aside, his journal-like representations fill in important documentary and credibility gaps one typically encounters in the records of colonial officials who had a stake in keeping certain compromising information from reaching metropolitan administrators.³⁴ The theme of foreign immigration is a case in point. For instance, O'Daly resided illegally in Puerto Rico between 1778 (when his two-year license to reside in the island expired) and 1786 (when he received his *carta de tolerancia*). He did so openly and with the apparent connivance of the local authorities, which were legally required to keep foreigners out. The apparent breach of colonial regulations prompts us to ask

³³ AGI-SD, legajo 2376, extracts of the case compiled by Council of the Indies, various dates.

³⁴ See Stoler (1992).

the following questions: how many more foreigners resided in Puerto Rico clandestinely, especially in its remote regions where colonial authority was next to non-existent? How much weight should we assign to the numerous royal decrees and statutes forbidding foreign immigrants from settling in or trading with the Spanish colonies?³⁵

The paper trail left by Fuentes revealed that incoming colonial officials walked a fine line. By turning a sympathetic ear to zealous compatriots such as Fuentes, Uztáriz risked losing potential support from the local power groups, such as that represented by the O'Daly-Sayus camp. As many colonial officials had done before and after, Uztáriz cast his lot with the strong and influential. Like many of his predecessors, he acquiesced to contraband while professing to halt it. Fuentes tried unsuccessfully to warn him not to canonize O'Daly or allow himself to be bought off by foreign gold.³⁶ On September 11, 1789, for example, he wrote to the newly arrived Uztáriz not to lose sight of his official mission: "It is publicly known around here that those who were one way in Spain become others here as soon as they make out the shore battery of the Morro Castle."³⁷

Judging by their slow, almost detached response to the case of Fuentes, top administrators in Spain such as González Guiral proved more adept at protecting their own skin than in dealing with potentially unsavory situations. He blundered in allowing Fuentes to depart for Puerto Rico, and tried to rectify his carelessness by ordering his expulsion. The intervention of Valdez appeared to have been minimal. He avoided dealing with the substantive issues raised by Fuentes by merely trying to determine whether he had left legitimately from Spain. There was no clear indication, at least from the sources consulted, that Fuentes' allegations or death were seriously investigated. The issues brought out by Fuentes raised eyebrows and/or exposed sensi-

³⁵ For a discussion of foreign immigration in eighteenth-century Puerto Rico, see China (forthcoming).

³⁶ AGI-SD, legajo 2376, extracts of the case compiled by Council of the Indies, various dates.

³⁷ Fuentes to Uztáriz, July 31, 1789.

tive flaws of the colonial apparatus. Perhaps for these reasons, his case was conveniently buried in the bureaucratic red tape, disregarded, or shelved.

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