

# SOVIET INTEREST IN THE WORKS OF GALDÓS (1940-80)\*

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The advent of World War II caused the disruption of Russian interest in the translation of and commentary upon the works of Galdós. As we noted in our study «El interés soviético por los *Episodios* y novelas de Galdós (1935-40)» (*Actas del primer congreso internacional de estudios galdosianos* [Las Palmas: Cabildo Insular de Gran Canaria, 1977], pp. 144-51), the translation and publication in 1940 of *Juan Martín, el empecinado* (*Khuan Martin, el empesinado*), with its emphasis on guerrilla warfare in the Iberian Peninsula against a foreign invader, closed a period of intense Soviet interest which paralleled closely the events of the Spanish Civil War.<sup>1</sup>

Only in the 1950s did interest in Galdós' works manifest itself again, and then very slowly. The favorites of the Spanish Civil War period began reappearing, first of all in Spanish editions for Soviet foreign language students: *Cádiz* in 1951, *Doña Perfecta* in 1952 and 1964,<sup>2</sup> and *Zaragoza* in 1953. Typically these editions contained a prologue in Russian, but the entire Galdosian text, as well as the critical notes (so helpful to foreign-language students) were in Spanish.<sup>3</sup>

The first Galdosian novel to appear in translation after World War II was that perennial Russian favorite, *Doña Perfecta* (*Donya Perfekta*), in 1956, followed by a handsome volume containing the four *Torquemada* novels (*Povyesti. Torkvemada* [sic] *na kostre. Torkvemada na kreste. Torkvemada v chistilische. Torkvemada i svyatoi Pyotr*) in 1958.<sup>4</sup> Interest lagged in the 1960s, with only an illustrated edition of *Trafalgar* (*Trafalgar*) appearing in 1961. However, the 1970s saw a complete reissue of the remaining nine *Episodios Nacionales* of the First Series: *La corte de Carlos IV* (*Dvor Karla IV*) and *Zaragoza* (*Saragosa*) in 1970; *El 19 de marzo y el dos de mayo* (*19 marta i 2 maya*), *Bailén* (*Bailen*), and *Napoleón en Chamartín* (*Napoleon v Chamartinye*) in 1972; *Gerona* (*Kherona*) and *Cádiz* (*Kadis*) in 1973; *Juan Martín, el empecinado* (*Khuan Martin, el empesinado*), and *La batalla de los Arapiles* (*Srazhenye pri Arapilyakh*) in 1975. In addition, and most importantly, Galdós's *El amigo Manso* (*Mily Manso*) made its debut in Russian in 1971.<sup>5</sup>

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\* Every effort has been made, both in the U.S. and U.S.S.R. to secure and include items appearing during the calendar year 1980. (Any notices concerning Galdós which might appear in *Ezhgodnik. Knigi SSSR* or *Lityeratura i iskusstvo narodov sssr i zarubyeznykh stran. Bibliografichesky byulletyen* after 1980 are not included in this study.) It is a pleasure to thank Boris Kandel, *Publichnaya Biblioteka imeni Saltykova-Shchedrina*, Leningrad, for repeated help with this study. I am also indebted to my former Russian teacher, Sam F. Anderson (University of Kansas) for suggestions regarding transliterations. We have made the latter in accord with the standard used by *The Current Digest of the Soviet Press*.

Considering the long Russian interest in *Doña Perfecta* and the *Episodios*, only the publication of the *Torquemada* series and *El amigo Manso* in the above list attracts one's attention as being surprisingly new. What is there, we may ask, about these two novels that would interest the Soviet government and the Soviet reader?

One obvious clue is seen in the three sketches preceding the *Torquemada* series. In the first (opposite the title page) a number of Spanish-appearing people (including a high-society lady, a priest, a nun, and a bourgeois) are exalting a banner raised on high showings the fat belly (and legs) of a rich capitalist. In the second sketch (on an introductory page), one sees a man in Russian-type (definitely not Spanish) peasant garb bowing to a fat gentleman in Western-style clothing, and the third sketch (immediately below) shows the fat gentleman being roasted at the stake in Hell. Capitalistic greed (personified by *Torquemada*), one might infer from the sketches, has had its day (both in Spain and Russia) of exploiting the less fortunate, but ultimately it can be overthrown (as occurred in Russia) and punished. And it is important to remember that probably no other Galdosian work portrays the growth of capitalism in nineteenth-century Spain (an important and often repeated concern of Soviet commentators throughout the years in their introductions to Galdós's novels) as does the *Torquemada* series. Thus the *Torquemada* quaternion is a very understandable choice for translation into Russian.

And what about *El amigo Manso*? Here one is inclined to think of more specific historical events. By the time *El amigo Manso* has appeared (1971), the Bay of Pigs invasion and the Kennedy-Khrushchev confrontation concerning Soviet missiles in Cuba had become history. Cuba was now definitely in the Socialist camp and military ally of the Soviet Union. Many Cuban leaders had visited the Soviet Union and many Cubans (later including Fidel Castro's son) were studying there. Cuban cultural organizations toured the country and Soviet radio, television, theatrical productions, newspapers, and magazines had a great deal to communicate to Soviet citizens about Cuba and its people. Thus a novel showing colorful Cuban types and, more importantly, the corruption in Spanish political life and society which had led to the betrayal of vital interests of Cuba in the period just prior to the Spanish-American War was certainly *au courant*.

Because the introductions to the *Torquemada* novels (1958) and *El amigo Manso* (1971) reflect progressive stages of liberalization during the Khrushchev-Brezhnev era (a time of general cultural thaw after the rigidity of the Stalin period), we shall focus our attention on *El amigo Manso* in order to show how far criticism concerning Galdós by Russian commentators has evolved since the 1930s. However, first a few necessary words concerning Z. Plavskin's introduction to the *Torquemada* series.

Soviet commentators in the 1930s stressed how Galdós exposed feudal and religious intransigence (*Doña Perfecta*) and, more importantly, how he reflected the struggle of the Spanish masses against foreign invaders (*Zaragoza* and *Cádiz*), thus serving as an inspiration in the furious combat against the German and Italian supporters of Franco. Now, in 1958, however, the principal political thrust of Plavskin's commentary is that Galdós is, from 1881 onward, a critic of the bourgeoisie. This emphasis is most important, for according to

the Soviet view of Spanish history, the bourgeoisie became frightened by the emergence of the proletariat and consequently betrayed the working class by making common cause with reactionary elements, thus destroying the First Spanish Republic (1873-74) and restoring the Bourbon monarchy. Using another Communist idea for history and literature, Plavskin notes that Galdós' novels after 1880 do show the influence of Zolaesque naturalism. He says, however, that this should be understood as having been caused more by the pernicious influence of capitalism than by Zola's and Galdós' interest in depicting pathological deviations from the norm, showing the influence of heredity, or presenting the «biological struggle which explains the evolution of society» (p. 10).

Plavskin's introduction to the *Torquemada* series also has some completely nonpolitical insights into Galdós' artistry. However, more interesting in this respect is the twelve-page introduction by N. Snetkova to the 1971 translation of *El amigo Manso*. This is as sophisticated, wide-ranging, and up-to-date an introduction as one is likely to find anywhere for a translated edition of a Galdosian novel. Only an occasional turn of phrase or specific interpretation of an historical event leads one to perceive that the commentator is Marxist-oriented.

In her very first paragraph, Snetkova compares Galdós to Dickens, Balzac, and Zola. Thus one sees that Soviet commentary has evolved a long way since the Stalin era when it was customary to spend the first one-third of the study quoting the «brilliant» articles which Karl Marx has written about Spanish history.<sup>6</sup> In fact, it is no longer necessary to have any citations at all referring to the works of Marx, Engels, or Lenin.<sup>7</sup>

Moreover, in 1971, it is now no longer necessary to establish for the reader the leftist credentials of Don Benito.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, throughout the introduction the emphasis is literary and not political. One has the feeling that Snetkova's main aim is to provide the kind of information which will make the reading of *El amigo Manso* a more meaningful and pleasurable experience. This same idea seems to be reflected in the attractive, multicolored art work on the cover and on the introductory pages which presents fashionably dressed ladies and gentlemen of nineteenth-century Spanish high society. On the title page itself one sees a top hat and gloves —an emphatic evolution from the sinister, conspiratorial, black-and-white illustrations accompanying the 1935, Stalin-era edition of *Doña Perfecta*.

Snetkova sketches for the reader of *El amigo Manso* the salient points of Galdós' life up to the writing of the novel (1882). She does provide the necessary background of historical events but does so with a light, nonpolitical touch (in contrast with most previous Soviet commentators). Snetkova mentions Galdós' naturalism and, unlike Plavskin in 1958, does not find its cause in capitalism. Humor and irony, she says, are the pleasant ingredients which soften Galdós' naturalism and give his works an affinity with the *Quijote* and the picaresque novels (p. 9).

Unlike some Soviet commentators of the 1930s, who were so busy with ideological and historical considerations that they never got around to discussing the novel itself,<sup>9</sup> Snetkova outlines the plot of *El amigo Manso* and speaks at length about the principal characters. She mentions a few techniques

of craftsmanship in passing and the closest she comes to finding fault with Galdós is a statement that the interrelationship between the characters is «not very complicated and not very original» (p. 9).

Concerning Cuba, Snetkova notes that in the decade preceding the disaster of 1898, Galdós is already showing an example of the intolerable position of the island's vital interests vis-à-vis *la madre patria*. The Convention of Zanjón (ending the Cuban revolt of 1868-78) provided that, in return for remaining a colony, Cuba could send representatives to the Spanish Cortes. «Thus one sees demonstrated that the Cubans had poured out their blood for ten consecutive years so that people of José María [Mansó]'s type represented their interests in the parliament» (p. 12). José María had, of course, left Spain poverty-stricken and had returned from Cuba a rich man. His performance in the Restoration Spanish parliament, Snetkova points out, cannot even be considered a comedy — «it is a farce» (p. 12).

Snetkova finishes her introduction to *El amigo Mansó* by pointing out that Galdós continued to be a politically and socially committed writer, trying to help his country, even after the 1898 disaster. His main place in literary history, Snetkova concludes, is that of a precursor to the Generation of '98.

Further evidence that Spanish literature for its own sake (and not primarily for ideological purposes) has indeed been made available to Soviet readers since the end of the Stalin era may be seen in the fact that the works of Galdós' contemporaries have also been translated into Russian and other languages of the Soviet Union. (Juan Valera's *Juanita la larga* appeared in Russian in 1961, as did Blasco Ibáñez's *El sol de los muertos* in 1965, and his *Sangre y arena* in 1967. Leopoldo Alas's *Adiós, cordera* was published in Russian in 1956 and his *Rivales* appeared in the Azerbaijani language in 1967, as did Palacio Valdés's *Los puritanos*. Blasco's *Sangre y arena* came out in Latvian in 1966, and then his *La barraca* appeared in Ukrainian in 1967. During this same year, Valera's *Pepita Jiménez* saw the light of day in Armenian and then appeared in Lithuanian in 1970.<sup>10</sup> Most recently, in 1976, Alarcón's *El sombrero de tres picos*, Valera's *Pepita Jiménez*, and Blasco's *Sangre y arena* have appeared in one volume with Galdós's *Doña Perfecta*, with a sixteen-page introduction by Z. Plavskin entitled «Spanish Realistic Prose of the Nineteenth-Century» (*Ispanskaya realistichestkaya proza XIX veka*).<sup>11</sup>

Contrary to Soviet practice during the 1935-40 period, none of the translations of Galdós' works appearing since World War II have been reviewed in the Soviet Union. This is probably explained by the fact that the novels and *Episodios* being translated no longer parallel important political and military events concerning which the Soviet government wishes to comment. Moreover, the more up-to-date novels of Juan Goytisolo, criticizing social conditions in Franco's post-Civil War Spain, captured the attention of translators, government publishing houses, and reviewers.<sup>12</sup>

Nevertheless, since World War II, at least four scholarly articles concerning Galdós have been published: V. V. Chistyakova, «The Anticlerical Dramas of Galdós» (*Antiklerikalnye dramy Galdosa*), in 1958; E. M. Chernushenko, «Peculiarities of Portraiture and Speech Characteristics in the Early Creativity of Galdós. First Series of the *Episodios Nacionales*» (*Osobyennosti portretnoi i rechevoi kharakteristiki v rannem tvorchestve Galdosa. Pervaya*

*seria natsionalnykh epizodov*), in 1959; V. V. Chistyakova, «The Historical Dramas of Galdós» (*Istoricheskiye dramy Galdosa*), in 1960; and L. N. Stepanova, «The Language of Galdós and the Norm of Spanish Literary Language» (*Yazyk Galdosa i norma ispanskovo lityeraturnovo yazyka*), in 1971.<sup>13</sup>

Don Benito's picture appears in the *Kratkaya Lityeraturnaya Entsiklopyedia* (*Short Literary Encyclopedia*)<sup>14</sup> as well as in the *Bolschaya Sovyetskaya Entsiklopyedia* (*Great Soviet Encyclopedia*).<sup>15</sup> The former designates Galdós (a left-wing monarchist in his youth, then a republican, and finally a socialist) as the «most outstanding representative of critical realism in Spain,» while the latter gives prominence to his *Doña Perfecta* (first Russian translation, 1882) with its «criticism of reactionary landowners, clergy, medieval mores, and Catholic fanaticism.» More surprising is its designation of *Marianela* (Russian translation, 1888) as «the first work of Spanish literature to portray the life of the workers.» Both encyclopedias claim the influence of Tolstoy and other (unnamed) Russian authors on the creativity of Galdós.<sup>16</sup>

It is also significant to note that Galdós' works have begun to be translated into important minority languages of the Soviet Union. Latvian readers have been able to enjoy *Cádiz* in their own language since 1961, while *Doña Perfecta* appeared in Lithuanian in 1957, and then also in the Georgian and Ukrainian languages (in the same volume with *Zaragoza*) in 1971 and 1978, respectively. Most encouraging is the fact that *La desheredada* (not seen in Russian since Czarist times) was translated directly from a Spanish edition (1967) into Estonian in 1979.<sup>17</sup>

It is to be hoped that this trend will continue, and along with it, the tendency of other Socialist countries of Eastern Europe to bring out their own editions of Galdós' *Episodios* and *novelas contemporáneas* (translating often from the Russian-language version) after the work has been chosen and published by the Soviet government.<sup>18</sup>

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#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Before the outbreak of the Civil War, when the progressive-conservative struggle was still being fought in the political arena, the Soviets translated and published *Doña Perfecta* (1935) and *La Fontana de Oro* (1936). During the war itself, when Madrid came under siege, the Russians brought out *Zaragoza* (1938), an *Episodio* about that city's heroic defense against the troops of Napoleon. When the Republican government moved to Valencia, the Russians translated *Cádiz* (1938), an *Episodio* taking place in another port city, and one where the Spaniards were able to hold on to a bit of national territory (under the protective guns of British warships) until they could go over to the offensive and liberate the peninsula. *Juan Martín, el empecinado* (1940) had the message that, even though the official government had fallen, guerrilla warfare would enable the struggle to continue. The Spanish had done this successfully in Napoleon's time, tying down large numbers of French troops, which, in turn, helped relieve pressure on the Russian front. After the fall of the Republican government in 1939, there was anti-Franco guerrilla activity, particularly in the northern mountains.

<sup>2</sup> For a translation of the extensive introductory study to this novel by K. V. Tsurinov, see Vernon A. Chamberlin, «A Soviet Introduction to *Doña Perfecta* (1964), *Anales Galdosianos*, 10 (1975), 64-81.

<sup>3</sup> For copies of these and other books, or photocopies of their introductions, I am particularly indebted to Tomás Padrón Cordero (Casa-Museo Pérez Galdós, Las Palmas), Valentin S. Kotkin (Secretary-General, Foreign Commission of the Writers Union of the U.S.S.R., Moscow), and Boris Kandel (*Publichnaya Biblioteka imeni Saltykova-Shchedrina*, Leningrad).

- 4 (Moskva: «Khudozh. Lit.», 1958).
- 5 (Moskva: «Khudozh. Lit.», 1971).
- 6 See, for example, F. Kelin's introduction to *Zaragoza (Saragosa)*, (Moskva: Goslitizdat, 1938).
- 7 This is in contrast to K. V. Tsurinov's introduction to *Doña Perfecta (Donya Perfekta)*, for example, in which all fifteen footnotes are to works of Marx, Engels, and Lenin.
- 8 Cf. Vernon A. Chamberlin, «El interés soviético por los *Episodios* y novelas de Galdós (1935-40),» (*Actas del primer congreso internacional de estudios galdosianos* [Las Palmas, Cabildo Insular de Gran Canaria], 1977, pp. 144-51).
- 9 See especially Kelin, Introduction to *Zaragoza*.
- 10 According to *Ezhegodnik. Knigi SSSR* 1956, I, p. 472; 1961, I, p. 527; 1967, I, p. 473; *Literatura i iskusstvo*, 1966, No. 3, p. 116; No. 5, p. 116; 1968, No. 1, p. 122; and *Index Translationum*, 20 (1967), p. 752.
- 11 (Moskva: 1976) *Biblioteka vsemirnoi literatury. Seria 2. Lit. xix veka*, pp. 5-22.
- 12 For details, see *Literatura i iskusstvo*, 1966, No. 1, p. 118; No. 4, p. 132; No. 6, p. 120; 1967, No. 6, p. 111; 1968, No. 2, p. 138; No. 3, p. 110; 1969, No. 4, p. 138; No. 5, p. 122; 1972, No. 5, p. 111.
- 13 Photocopies in my possession, thanks to the generosity of Boris Kandel.
- 14 (Moskva: «Sovetskaya Entsiklopyedia», 1968), 5, p. 667.
- 15 (Moskva: «Sovetskaya Entsiklopyedia», 1975), 19, p. 400.
- 16 Turgenev is not mentioned. For his influence, see Vernon A. Chamberlin and Jack Weiner, «Galdós' *Doña Perfecta* and Turgenev's *Fathers and Sons*: Two Interpretations of the Conflict Between Generations,» *PMLA*, 86 (1971), 19-24.
- 17 According to *Index Translationum* (Paris: UNESCO), 15 (1962), p. 632; 11 (1958), p. 615; 24 (1971), p. 838; *Literatura i iskusstvo*, 1971, No. 4, p. 117; 1962, No. 4, p. 118; *Ezhegodnik. Knigi SSSR*, 1958, No. 1, p. 423; and *Knizhnaya letopis*, 1979, No. 20, p. 90; 26, p. 89.
- 18 For example, *Doña Perfecta*, a continual favorite both in Imperial Russia and the Soviet Union, has appeared since World War II in Serbo-Croatian, Slovakian, German (DDR), Polish, and Rumanian. *Zaragoza*, so popular during the Spanish Civil War, is currently available in Bulgarian, Hungarian, Polish, and Rumanian. *La batalla de los Arapiles, Cádiz*, and *Juan Martín, el empecinado* have been published in Polish and the latter may be read also in Czech. For details, see *Index Translationum*, passim (1952-56).
- A notable exception is the translation of *Misericordia* directly from Spanish into Slovakian with a change of title to honor Galdós' protagonist: *Benina* (Bratislava: Tatran, 1974); (photocopy in my possession).

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