

The Founding of the Jesuit Order

Chapter 1

Ignatius of Loyola

The founder of the Society of Jesus, the Spanish Basque don Inigo Lopez de Recalde, was born at the castle of Loyola, in the province of Gipuzcoa, in 1491. He was one of the strangest types of monk-soldier ever engendered by the Catholic world; of all the founders of religious orders, he may be the one whose personality has left the strongest mark on the mind and behaviour of his disciples and successors. This may be the reason for that "familiar look" or "trade-mark", a fact which goes as far as physical resemblance. Mr. Folliet disputes this fact (1), but many documents prove the permanence of a "Jesuit" type through the ages. The most amusing of these testimonies is found at the Guimet museum; on the golden background of a 16th century screen, a Japanese artist portrayed, with all the humour of his race, the landing of the Portuguese, and of the sons of Loyola in particular, on the Nipponese islands. The amazement of his lover of nature and bright colours is obvious in the way he depicted those long, black shadows with their mournful faces on which is congealed all the arrogance of the fanatic ruler. The likeness between the work of the oriental artist of the 16th century and our Daumier of 1830 is there for all to see.

Like many other saints, Inigo, who later Romanized his name and became Ignatius---looked far from being the one predestined to enlighten his contemporaries (2). His stormy

youth was filled with mistakes and even "heinous crimes". A police report said he was "treacherous", brutal, vindictive". All his biographers admit that he yielded to none of his boon companions regarding the violence of the instincts, then a common thing. "An unruly and conceited soldier", said one of his confidants---"he led a disorderly life as far as women, gambling and duels were concerned", added his secretary Polanco (3). All this is related to us by one of his spiritual sons, R.P. Rouquette, who tried somewhat to explain and excuse his hot temper which was eventually turned "ad majorem Dei gloriam". (To the greater glory of God).

As is the case for many heroes of the Roman Catholic Church, a violent physical blow was necessary to change his personality. He had been pageboy to the treasurer of Castille until his master's disgrace. Then he became a gentleman in the service of the Viceroy of Navarre; having lived the life of a courtier until then, the young man started the life of a soldier by defending Pampeluna against the French commanded by the Count de Foix. The wound which decided his future life was inflicted during that siege. A leg broken by a bullet, he was taken by the victorious French to his brother Martin Garcia, at the castle of Loyola. Now starts the martyrdom of surgery without anaesthesia, through which he had to go a second time as the work had not been done properly. His leg was broken again and reset. In spite of all this, Ignatius was left with a limp. One can understand that he only needed an experience such as this to cause him a nervous breakdown. The "gift of tears" which was then bestowed on him "in abundance"---- and in which the pious biographers see a favour from on high---is maybe only the result of his highly emotional nature, henceforth to affect him more and more.

His sole entertainment, while lying wounded and in pain, was the reading of the "Life of Christ" and the "Life of the Saints", the only books found in the castle.

As he was practically uneducated and still affected by that terrible shock, the anguish of Christ's passion and the martyrdom of the saints had an indelible impact on him; this obsession led the crippled warrior on to the road of apostolate.

"He put the books to one side and day-dreamed. A clear case of the wakeful dream, this was a continuation into the adult years of the imaginary game of the child....if we let it invade the psychic realm, the result is neurosis and surrender of the will; that which is real takes second place!...." (4)

At first sight, this diagnosis seems hardly to apply to the founder of such an active order, nor to other "great mystics" and creators of religious societies, all of whom had apparently great capacities for organization. But we find that all of them are unable to resist their over-active imagination and, for them, the impossible becomes possible.

Here is what the same author says on this subject: "I want to point out the obvious outcome of the practice of mysticism by someone possessing a brilliant intelligence. The weak mind indulging in mysticism is on dangerous ground, but the intelligent mystic presents a far greater danger, as his intellect works in a wider and deeper way....When the myth takes over from the reality in an active intelligence, it becomes mere fanaticism; an infection of the will which suffers from partial enlargement or distortion". (5)

Ignatius of Loyola was a first-class example of that "active mysticism" and "distortion of the will". Nevertheless, the transformation of the gentleman-warrior into the "general" of the most militant order in the Roman Church was very slow; there were many faltering steps before he found his true vocation. It is not our intention to follow him through all those different stages. Let us recall the main points: in the spring of 1522, he left the ancestral castle, with his mind made up to become a saint similar to those whose

edifying exploits he had been reading about in that big "gothic" volume. Besides, did not the Madonna herself appear to him one night, holding in her arms the child Jesus? After a thorough confession at the monastery of Monsterrat, **he was planning to go to Jerusalem.** The plague was rife in Barcelona and, as all maritime traffic had stopped, he had to stay at Manresa for nearly a year. There, he spent his time in prayers, orisons, long fasts, flagellating himself, practicing all the forms of maceration, and never failing to appear before the "tribunal for penance", whole days; such a thorough confession would have been sufficient to a less scrupulous sinner. All this depicts quite clearly the mental and nervous state of the man. At last delivered from that obsession of sin by deciding it was only a trick of Satan, he devoted himself entirely to the varied and plentiful visions which were haunting his fervish mind.

"It is because of a vision", says H. Boehmer, "that he started eating meat again; it is a whole series of visions that revealed to him the mysteries of the Catholic dogma and helped him to truly live it: in that way, he mediates upon the Trinity under the shape of a musical instrument with three cords; mystery of the creation of the world through "something" hazy and the light coming out of a ray of sunshine' the miraculous descent of Christ into the Eucharist as flashes of light entering the consecrated water, when the priest held it up while praying; the human nature of Christ and the holy Virgin under the form of a dazzling white body; and finally Satan as a serpentine and shimmering shape similar to multitude of sparkling and mysterious eyes (6)." Is not this the start of the well-known jesuitic imagemaking?

Mr. Boehmer adds that the deep meaning of the dogma was revealed to him, as a special favour from on-high, through transcendental intuitions. "Many mysteries of Faith and science became suddenly clear to him and later, he pretended to have learned more in those short moments

than during the whole of his studies; however, he was never able to explain what these mysteries were which suddenly became clear to him. **There was only a hazy recollection left, a feeling of something miraculous as if, at that moment, he had become "another man with another intelligence".** (7)

All this may be the result of a nervous disorder and can be identified with what happens to smokers of opium and eaters of hashish: that enlargement or extension of the ego, that illusion of soaring up beyond what is real, a flashing sensation leaving only a dazed recollection.

Blissful visions and illuminations were constant companions of this mystic throughout his life.

"He never doubted the reality of these revelations. He chased Satan with a stick as he would have done a mad dog; he talked to the Holy Spirit as one does to another person actually; he asked for the approval of God, the Trinity and the Madonna on all his projects and would burst into tears of joy when they appeared to him. On those occasions, he had a foretaste of celestial bliss; the heavens were open to him, and the Godhead was visible and perceptible to him.(8)

Is not this the perfect case of an hallucinated person? It will be this same perceptible and visible Godhead that the spiritual sons of Loyola will constantly offer to the world---not only for political reasons, leaning on and flattering the deep-rooted inclination in the heart of man for idolatry---but also by conviction, having been well and truly indoctrinated. From the start, medieval mysticism has prevailed in the Society of Jesus; it is still the great animator, in spite of its readily assumed wordly, intellectual and learned aspects. Its basic axiom is: "All things to all men". The arts, literature, science and even philosophy have been mere means or nets to catch souls, like the easy indulgencies granted by its

casuists and for which laxity they were so often reproved. To this Order, there is not a realm where human weakness cannot be worked upon, to incite the spirit and will to surrender and go back to a more childish and restful devotion. So they work for the bringing about of the "kingdom of God" according to their own ideal: a great flock under the Holy Father's crozier. That learned men could have such an anachronistic ideal seems very strange, yet it is undeniably so and the confirmation of an oft-disregarded fact: the pre-eminence of the emotions in the life of the spirit. Besides, Kant said that every philosophy is but the expression of the philosopher's temperament or character.

Apart from individual methods, the Jesuitic "temperament" seems more or less uniform amongst them. "A mixture of piety and diplomacy, asceticism and worldly wisdom, mysticism and cold calculation; as was Loyola's character, so is the trade-mark of this Order". (9)

In the first place, every Jesuit chose this particular Order because of his natural dispositions; but he really becomes a "son" of Loyola after rigorous tests and systematic training lasting no less than fourteen years.

In that way, the paradox of this Order has continued for four hundred years: an Order which endeavours to be "intellectual" but, simultaneously, has always been, within the Roman Church and society, the champion of the strictest disposition.

Chapter 2

The Spiritual Exercises

When the time came at last for Ignatius to leave Monresa, he couldn't foresee his destiny, but the anxiety concerning his own salvation was not his main concern anymore; it is as a missionary, and not as a mere pilgrim that he left for the Holy Land in March 1523. He arrived in Jerusalem on the 1st of September, after many adventures, only to leave again soon after, on the orders of Franciscan's provincial who was not desirous to see the precarious peace between Christians and Turks endangered by an untimely proselytism.

The disappointed missionary passed through Venice, Genoa, and Barcelona on his way to the University of Alcala where he started theological studies; it is there also that his "cure of souls" amongst voluntary listeners began.

"In these conventicles, the most common manifestations of piety amongst the fair sex were fainting fits; by that, we realise how hard he applied his religious methods, and how such a fervent propaganda would soon arouse the curiosity and then the suspicion of the inquisitors.... "In April 1527, the Inquisition put Ignatius in prison to try him on the grounds of heresy. The inquiry examined those peculiar incidents amongst his power his chastity conferred on him, and his bizarre theories on the difference between mortal and venial sins; these theories had striking affinities with those of Jesuit casuists of the subsequent epoch.(10)

Released but forbidden to hold meetings, Ignatius left for Salamanque and soon started the same activities. Similar suspicions amongst the inquisitors led to imprisonment again. Release was only on condition of desisting from such conduct. Thus it was, he journeyed to Paris to continue his studies at the college of Montaigu. His

efforts to indoctrinate his fellow students according to his peculiar methods brought him into trouble again with Inquisition. Becoming more prudent, he met with just six of his college friends, two of which will become highly esteemed recruits; Salmeron and Lainez.

What did he have in himself that so powerfully attracted young people to an old student? It was his ideal and a little charms he carried on himself; a small book, in fact a very minute book which is, in spite of its smallness, amongst those which have influenced the fate of humanity. This volume has been printed so many times that the number of copies is unknown; it was also the object of more than 400 commentaries. It is the textbook of the Jesuits and at the same time the resume of the long inner development of their master: the "Spiritual Exercises". (11)

Mr. Boehmer says later:

"Ignatius understood more clearly than any other leader of men who preceded him that the best way to raise a man to a certain ideal is to become master of his imagination. We "imbue into him spiritual forces which he would find very difficult to eliminate later", forces more lasting than all the best principles and doctrines; these forces can come up again to the surface, sometimes after years of not even mentioning them, and become so imperative that the will finds itself unable to oppose any obstacle, and has to follow their irresistible impulse". (12)

Thus all the "truths" of the Catholic dogma will have to be, not only meditated, but lived and felt by the one who devotes himself to these "Exercises", with the help of a "director". In other words, he will have to see and relive the mystery with the greatest possible intensity. The candidate's sensitiveness becomes impregnated with these forces whose persistence in his memory, and even more so in his subconscious, will be as strong as the effort he made to

evoke and assimilate them. Beside sight, the other senses such as hearing, smell, taste and touch will play their part. In short, it is mere controlled auto-suggestion. The angel's rebellion, Adam and Eve driven out of Paradise, God's tribunal, the evangelical scenes and phases of the Passion are, as one would say, relived in front of the candidate. Sweet arranged rythme. No need to say that Hell has the prominent part in that thrown, the awful concert of screams, the atrocious stench of sulphur and burning flesh. Yet Christ is always there to sustain the visionary who doesn't know how to thank him for not having thrown him already into hell to pay for his past sins.

Here is what Edgar Quinet wrote:

"Not only visions are prearranged, but also sighs, inhalings, breathing are noted down; the pauses and intervals of silence are written down like on a music sheet. In case you do not believe me, I will quote: "The third way of praying, by measuring the words and periods of silence". This particular manner of praying consists of leaving out some words between every breath; and a little further: "Make sure to keep equal gaps between every breath and choking sob and word". (Et paria anhelituum ac vocum interstitia observet), which means that the man, being inspired or not, becomes just a machine which must sigh, sob, groan, cry, shout or catch one's breath at the exact moment and in the order which experience shows to be the most profitable". (12a)

It is understandable that after four weeks devoted to these intensive Exercises, with a director as his only companion, the candidate would be ripe for the subsequent training and breaking.

This is what Quinet has to say when referring to the creator of such and hallucinatory method:

"Do you know what distinguishes him from all the ascetics of the past. The fact that he could observe and

analyse himself logically and coldly in that state of rapture, while for all the others even the idea of reflection was impossible.

Imposing on his disciples actions which, to him, were spontaneous, he needed just thirty days to break, with this method, the will and reasoning in the manner in which a rider breaks his horse. He only needed thirty days "triginta dies", to subdue a soul. Note that Jesuitism expanded together with modern inquisition: while the inquisition dislocated the body, the spiritual Exercises broke up the thoughts under "Loyola's machine". (12b)

In any case, one could not examine his "spiritual" life too deeply, even without the honour of being a Jesuit; Loyola's methods are to be recommended to the faithful and ecclesiastics in particular, as we are reminded by commentators such as R.P. Pinard de la Boullaye, author of "Mental prayer for all", inspired by saint Ignatius, this very valuable aid for the soul would, we think, be more explicit if the title read "alienation" instead of "prayer".

Chapter 3

The founding of the Company

"The Society of Jesus" was constituted on Assumption Day in 1534, in the chapel of Notre Dame de Montmartre.

Ignatius was then forty-four years old. After communion, the animator and his companions vowed to go to the Holy Land, as soon as their studies were finished, to convert the infidels. But the following year found them in Rome where the pope, who was then organizing a crusade against the Turks with the German Emperor and the Republic of Venice, showed them how impossible their

project was because of it. So Ignatius and his companions dedicated themselves to missionary work in christian lands; in Venice, his apostolate roused again the suspicion of the Inquisition. The Constitution of the Company of Jesus was at last drafted and approved in Rome, by Paul III, in 1540, and the Jesuits put themselves at the disposition of the pope, promising him unconditional obedience. Teaching, confession, preaching and charitable work were the field of action for this new Order, but foreign missions were not excluded as, in 1541, Francis Xavier and two companions left Lisbon to go and evangelize the Far East. In 1546, the political side of their career was launched, when the pope chose Lainez and Salmeron to represent him at the Council of Trent in the capacity of "pontifical theologians".

Mr. Boehmer writes:

"Then, the Order was employed by the pope only on a temporary basis. But it performed its functions with so much promptitude and zeal that, already under Paul III, it had implanted itself very firmly into all chosen kinds of activities and won the confidence of the Curia for all time." (12d)

This confidence was fully justified; the Jesuits, and Lainez in particular, together with their devoted friend Cardinal Morone, became the cunning and untiring champions of pontifical authority and intangibility of the dogma, during the three sessions of that Council ending in 1562. By their clever manuevers and dialectics, they succeeded in defeating the opposition and all "heretic" claims including marriage of priests, communion with the two elements, use of the vernacular in services and, especially, reform of papacy. Only the reform of convents was retained on the agenda. Lainez himself, by a forceful counter-attack, upheld pontifical infallibility which was promulgated three centuries later by the Vatican Council. (13) The Holy See emerged strengthened from the crisis where it nearly floundered, thanks to the steadfast actions of the Jesuits.

The terms chosen by Paul III to describe this new Order in his Bull of Authorization were then amply justified: "Regimen Ecclesiae militans".

The fighting spirit developed more and more as time went on as, beside foreign missions, the activities of Loyola's sons started to concentrate on the souls of men, especially amongst ruling classes. Politics are their main field of action, as all the efforts of these "directors" concentrate on one aim: the submission of the world to the papacy, and to attain this the "heads" must be conquered first. And to realize this ideal? Two very important weapons: to be the confessors of the mighty and those in high places and the education of their children. In that way, the present will be safe while the future is prepared.

The Holy See soon realized the strength this new Order would bring. At first, the number of its members had been limited to sixty, but this restriction was promptly lifted. When Ignatius died, in 1556, his sons were working amongst pagans in India, China, Japan, the New World, but also and especially in Europe: France, Southern and Western Germany, where they fought against the "heresy", in Spain, Portugal, Italy and even England, getting in by way of Ireland. Their history, full of vicissitudes, will be of a "Roman" network they will constantly try to spread over the world, whose links will be forever torn and mended.

Chapter 4

The Spirit of the Order

"Let us not forget, writes the Jesuit Rouquette, that, historically, "ultramontanism" has been the practical affirmation of "universalism".....This necessary universalism

would be an empty word if it did not result in a practical cohesion or obedience of Christianity: this is why Ignatius wanted his team to be at the disposition of the pope.... and be the champion of catholic unity, unity which can be assured only through an effective submission to "Christ's vicar". (13a)

The Jesuits wanted to impose this monarchical absolution on the Roman Church and they maintained it in civil society as they had to look upon the sovereigns as temporal representatives of the Holy Father, true head of Christianity; as long as those monarchs were entirely docile to their common lord, the Jesuits were their most faithful supporters. On the other hand, if these princes rebelled, they found in the Jesuits their worst enemies.

In Europe, wherever Rome's interests required the people to rise against their king, or if these temporal princes had taken decisions embarrassing for the Church, **the Curia knew she would not find more able, cunning, or daring outside the Society of Jesus when it came to intrigue, propaganda or even open rebellion".**(14)

We have seen. through the spirit of the "Exercises", how the founder of this Company was behind his time in his simplistic mysticism, ecclesiastic discipline and, generally speaking, his conception of subordination. The "Constitutions" and "Exercises", fundamentals to this system, leave us without any doubts on that subject. No matter what his disciples may say----especially today as modern ideas on this subject are totally different----- obedience has a very special place, in fact incontestably the first, in the summary of the Order's rules. Mr. Folliet may pretend to see in it nothing more than "religious obedience", necessary to any congregation; R.P. Rouquette writes boldly: "Far from being a diminution of man, this intelligent and willing obedience is the height of freedom.... a liberation from oneself's bondage..."; one only has to read those texts to perceive the

extreme, if not monstrous character of this submission of soul and spirit imposed to the Jesuits, making them always docile instruments in their superior's hands, and even more from their very beginning the natural enemies of any kind of liberty.

The famous "perinde ac cadaver" (as a corpse in the undertaker's hands), can be found in all "spiritual literature", according to Mr. Folliet, and even in the East, in the Haschichins' Constitution; the Jesuits are to be in the hands of their superiors "as a staff obeying every impulse; as a ball of wax which can be shaped and stretched in any direction; as a small crucifix being lifted and moved at will"; these pleasant formulas are none the less very enlightening. Remarks and explanations from the creator of the Order leave us without any doubt as to their true meaning. Besides amongst the Jesuits, not only the will, but also reasoning and even moral scruple, must be sacrificed to the primordial virtue of obedience which is, according to Borgia, "the strongest rampart of Society".

"Let us be convinced that all is well and right when the superior commands it", wrote Loyola. And again: "Even if God gave you an animal without sense for master, you will not hesitate to obey him, as master and guide, because God ordained it to be so."

And something even better: the Jesuit must see in his superior not a fallible man, but Christ Himself. J. Huber, professor of Catholic theology in Munich and author of one of the most important works on the Jesuits wrote: "Here is a proven fact: the "Constitutions repeat five hundred times that one must see Christ in the person of the General". (15)

The discipline of the Order, assimilated so often to that of the army, is then nothing compared to the reality. "Military obedience is not the equivalent of Jesuitic obedience; the latter is more extensive as it gets hold of the whole man is not satisfied like the other, with an exterior act, but requires

the sacrifice of the will and laying aside one's own judgement". (16)

Ignatius himself wrote in his letter to the Portuguese Jesuits: "We must see black as white, if the Church says so".

Such is this "height of freedom" and "liberation from one's own bondage", praised earlier on by R.P. Rouquette. Indeed, the Jesuit is truly liberated from himself as he is totally subjected to his masters; any doubt or scruple would be imputed to him as sin.

Mr. Boehmer writes:

"In the additions to the "Constitutions", the superiors are advised to command the novices, as God did with Abraham, things apparently criminal, to prove them; but they must proportion these temptations to each one's strength. It is not difficult to imagine what could be the results of such an education". (17)

The Order's life of ups and downs---there is not one country from which it wasn't expelled--- testifies that these dangers were recognized by all governments, even the most Catholics. By introducing men so blindly devoted to their cause to teaching among the higher classes, the Company--champion of universalism, therefore ultra-montanism--was inevitably recognized as a threat to civil authority, as the activity of the Order, by the mere fact of their vocation, turned more and more towards politics.

In a parallel way, what we call the Jesuitic spirit was developing amongst its members. Nevertheless, the founder, inspired mainly by the needs of foreign and home "missions", had not neglected skillfulness. He wrote in his "Sententiae asceticae": "A clever careflessness together with a mediocre purity is better than a greater holiness coupled with a less perfect skillfulness. **A good shepherd of souls must know how to ignore many things and**

pretend not to understand them. Once he is master of the wills, he will be able wisely to lead his students wherever he may choose. **People are entirely absorbed by passing interests, so we must not speak to them too pointedly about their souls:** it would be throwing the hook without the bait".

Even the desired countenance of Loyola's sons was emphatically stated: "They must hold their heads slightly down, without bending it to the left or right; they must not look up, and when they speak to someone, they are not to look them straight in the eyes so as to see them only indirectly..." (18)

Loyola's successors retained this lesson well in their memory, and applied it very extensively in the pursuit of their plans.

Chapter 5

The privileges of the Company

After 1558, Lainez, the subtle tactician of the Council of Trent, was made general of the Congregation with the power to organize the Order as he was inspired. The "Declarations" which he himself composed with Salmeron were added to the "Constitutions" to form a commentary; they accentuated even more the despotism of the general elected for life. An admonitor, procurator and assistants, residing in Rome too, will help him generally to administer the Order divided then into five congregations: Italy, Germany, France, Spain, England and America. These

congregations were themselves divided into Provinces grouping the different establishments of the Order. Only the admonitor (or overseer) and assistants are nominated by the Congregation. The general appoints all other officials, promulgates the ordinances which are not to modify the Constitutions, administers the wealth of the Order according to his own wishes and directs its activities for which he is responsible to the pope only.

To this militia so tightly knit in the hand of its chief and which needs the greatest autonomy to make its actions effective, the pope concedes privileges which may seem exorbitant to other religious Orders.

By their Constitutions, the Jesuits were exempt from the cloistered rule which applied to monastic life in general. In fact, they are monks living "in the world" and, outwardly, nothing distinguishes them from the secular clergy. But, contrary to this and other religious congregations, they are not subjected to the bishop's authority. As early as 1545, a bull of Paul III enabled them to preach, hear confession, dispense the sacraments, and say mass; in short, exercise their ministry without having to refer to the bishop. The solemnisation of marriages is the only thing they are not allowed to perform.

They have the power to give absolution, change vows for others which are easier to fulfil, or even cancel them.

Mr. Gaston Bally writes:

"The general's power concerning absolution and dispensations is even wider. He can lift all punishment inflicted on the members of the Society before or after their entering the Order, absolve all their sins, even the sin of heresy and schism, the falsification of apostolic writings, etc...

"The general absolves, in person or through a delegate, all those who are under his obedience, of the unhappy state arising from excommunication, suspension of interdict,

provided these censures were not inflicted for excesses so enormous that others, beside the papal tribunal, knew about them.

"He also absolves the irregularity issuing, from bigamy, injuries done to others, murder, assassination....as long as these wicked deeds were not publicly known and the cause of a scandal". (19)

Finally, Gregory XIII bestowed on the Company the right to deal in commerce and banking, a right it made use of extensively later on.

These dispensations and unprecedented powers were fully guaranteed to them.

"The popes called even upon princes and kings to defend these privileges; they threatened with the great excommunication "latae sententiae" all those who would try to infringe them. In 1574, a bull of Pius V gave the general the right to restore these privileges to their original scope, against all attempts to alter or curtail them, even if such curtailments were authoritatively documented by papal revocation....

"By granting the Jesuits such exorbitant privileges which run counter to the Church's antiquated constitution, the papacy wanted, not only to supply them with powerful weapons to fight the "Infidels", but especially use them as a bodyguard to defend her own unrestricted power in the Church and against the Church". "To preserve the spiritual and temporal supremacy they usurped during the middle ages, the popes sold the Church to the Order of Jesus and, in consequence, surrendered themselves into their hands....If the papacy was supported by the Jesuits, the whole existence of the Jesuits depended on the spiritual and temporal supremacy of the papacy. In that way, the interests of both parties were intimately bound together".

(20)

But this select cohort needed secret auxiliaries to

dominate civil society: this role fell on those affiliated to the Company called Jesuits. "Many important people were connected in that way with the Society: the emperors Ferdinand II and Ferdinand III, Sigismund III, king of Poland, who had officially belonged to the Company; Cardinal Infant, a duke of Savoy. And these were not the least useful". (21)

It is the same today; the 33,000 official members of the Society operated all over the world to the capacity of her personnel, officers of a truly secret army containing in its ranks' heads of political parties, high ranking officials, generals, magistrates, physicians, faculty professors, etc., all of them striving to bring about, in their own sphere, "l'Opus Dei", God's work, in reality the plans of the papacy.

Section II

The Jesuits in Europe during the 16th and 17th centuries

Chapter 1

Italy, Portugal, Spain

"France", wrote Mr. Boehmer, "is the cradle of society of Jesus, but in Italy it received its programme and constitution. Therefore in Italy first took root and from there it spread abroad". (1)

The author notes the increasing number of colleges and Jesuit academics (128 and 1680); "but", says he, "the history of Italian civilization during the 16th and 17th centuries

shows the results of it most strikingly. If a well learned Italy thus embraced again the faith and ordinances of the Church, received a new zeal for asceticism and missions, composed again pious poems and hymns for the Church, dedicated conscientiously the painters' brushes and sculptors' chisels to exalt the religious ideal, is it not because the cultivated classes were instructed in Jesuits' colleges and confessional?" (2)

Gone were "childish simplicity, joy, vivacity and the simple love of nature..."

"The Jesuits' pupils are far too clerical, devout, absorbed to preserve these qualities. They are taken up with ecstatic visions and illuminations; they literally get drunk with the paintings of frightful mortifications and the martyr's atrocious torments; they need the pomp, glittering and theatrical. From the end of the 16th century on, Italian art and literature reproduce faithfully this moral transformation.... The restlessness, the ostentation, the shocking claim which characterize the creations of that period promote a feeling of repulsion instead of sympathy for the beliefs they are supposed to interpret and glorify". (3)

It is the mark *sui generis* of the Company. This love for the distorted, finicky, glittering, theatrical could seem strange amongst mystics formed by the "Spiritual Exercises" if we did not detect in it this essentially jesuitical aim to improve the mind. It is an application of the maxim: "The end justifies the means" applied with perseverance by the Jesuits in the arts, literature as well as politics and morale.

Italy had been hardly touched by the Reformation. Nevertheless, the Waldenses, who had survived since the middle ages in spite of persecution and established themselves in the north and south of the peninsula, joined the Calvinist Church in 1532. On a report from the Jesuit Possevino Emmanuel Philibert of Savoy launched another bloody persecution against his "heretic" subjects in 1561.

The same thing happened in Calabria, at Casal di San Sisto and Guardia Fiscale. "The Jesuits were implicated in these massacres; they were busy converting the victims...."(4)

As for Father Possevino: "...he followed the Catholic army as their chaplain, and recommended the extermination by fire of the heretic pastors as a necessary and holy act".
(5)

The Jesuits were all powerful in Parma, at the court of the Farnese, as well as in Naples during the 16th and 17th centuries. But in Venice, when they had been loaded with favours, they were banished on the 14th of May 1606, "as the most faithful servants and spokesmen of the pope..."

They were nevertheless allowed to return in 1656, but their influence in the Republic was to be from now on but a shadow of the one they had in the past.

Portugal was a choice country for the Order. "Already under John III (1521-1559), it was the most powerful religious community in the kingdom".(6) Its influence grew even more after the revolution of 1640, which put the Braganza on the throne. "Under the first king of the house of Braganza, Father Fernandez was a member of the government and, under the minority of Alphonse VI, the counsellor most heeded by the regent Queen Louise. Father de Ville was successful in overthrowing Alphonse VI in 1667, and Father Emmanuel Fernandez was made a deputy to the "Cortes" in 1667 by the new King Peter II...In spite of the fact that the Fathers were not fulfilling any public duty in the kingdom, they were more powerful in Portugal than in any other country. Not only were they spiritual advisers to all the royal family, but the king and his ministers consulted them in all important circumstances. From one of their own testimonies, we know that not one place in the administration of the State and Church could be obtained without their consent; so much so that the clergy, the high classes and the people contended with each other to win their favours

and approval. Foreign politics were also under their influence. Any sensible man would see that such a state of affairs was unprofitable to the good of the kingdom". (7)

In fact, we can see the results by the decadent state into which this unfortunate land fell. All the energy and perspicacity of the marquess of Pombal, in the middle of the 18th century, were needed to tear Portugal out of the Order's deadly grip.

In Spain, the Order's penetration was slower. The higher clergy and the Dominicans opposed it for a long time. The sovereign themselves, Charles V and Philip II, while accepting their services, distrusted these soldiers of the pope and feared encroachments on their authority. But, with much craftiness, the Order eventually defeated this resistance. "During the 17th century, they are all-powerful in Spain, among the high classes and at Court. Even Father Neidhart, former German cavalry officer, fully governed the kingdom as Counsellor of State, prime minister and Grand Inquisitor...In Spain as in Portugal, the kingdom's ruined coincided with rise of the Order..."(8)

This is what Edgar Quinet had to say about it:

"Wherever a dynasty dies, I can see, rising up and standing behind her, a kind of bad genie, one of those dark figures that are the confessors, gently and paternally luring her towards death...." (9)

Indeed, one cannot impute Spain's decadence to this Order only. "Nevertheless, it is true that the Company of Jesus, together with the Church and other religious orders, hastened her fall; the richer the Order became, the poorer Spain was, so much so that when Charles II died, the State's coffers did not even contain the necessary amount to pay for 10,000 masses usually said for the salvation of a deceased monarch's soul".

(10)

