

THE KING AND THE KINGDOM: ROYALISM AND THE CONCEPT OF ORDER IN TIERRA FIRME DURING THE AGE OF REVOLUTIONS

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ABSTRACT

This article explores how the royalists in Tierra Firme—present-day Colombia, Venezuela, Ecuador, and Panama—used the concept of order to reconstruct the legitimacy of the Spanish monarchy during the absolutist restoration of Fernando VII (1814–1820). It illuminates how royalists understood the foundations of the monarchical order, conceptualized the crisis of the Spanish monarchy, and envisioned the roles of the king and the vassals in a postrevolutionary society. Through a close reading of the language of order employed in newspapers, political treatises, sermons, pamphlets, and petitions, the article shows how royalists responded to the radical reordering of the conceptual structures of the political world caused by the revolution in Tierra Firme. It reveals how royalists established public opinion as a legitimizing force alongside the Crown, thereby asserting the impossibility of returning to the prerevolutionary political-conceptual framework. Moreover, the article reframes the monarchical restoration as a creative political response to an unprecedented crisis of legitimacy in Tierra Firme. It presents this period as a moment of profound re-elaboration of the traditional political culture and a historical experience informed by the intellectual developments of the revolutionaries.

KEYWORDS

Order - Royalism - Age of Revolutions - Tierra Firme - Spanish Empire - Public Opinion

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The restoration of Fernando VII on the Iberian Peninsula in May 1814, followed by the arrival of Pablo Morillo's Expeditionary Army on the shores of Venezuela almost a year later, marked the conclusion of the first revolutionary cycle in Tierra Firme. The primary political objective of Morillo's expedition, according to the instructions from the royal authorities in Madrid, was to "reestablish order among [the king's] vassals in those provinces"³. Throughout the military campaign in Tierra Firme, Morillo invoked his unbreakable commitment to the "just order of things," working strenuously to "put a rebellious Pueblo in order"⁴. Most royalists acclaimed him as the main architect of order during the initial months of the monarchical restoration. A royal official from Cartagena de Indias in 1816 confidently declared that "his presence in the capital of the viceroyalty will finish restoring tranquility, order, and respect for the legitimate authorities"⁵. Morillo was not alone in his devotion to order. From Caracas to Panama, royalists enthusiastically hailed the "return of the stable and happy order" in newspapers, public celebrations, military parades, and churches⁶. They consistently portrayed the monarchical restoration as the "rebirth from among the sufferings to society, order, and the *bienes* of the loving and desired Government of our beloved Fernando"⁷. Invoking order allowed royalists to envision a promising future marked by public prosperity and lasting peace while still grounding their claims in the glorious past of the Spanish empire. As Venezuela's General Captain Salvador de Moxó instructed the king's vassals in 1815: "love order and you will all be happy"⁸. The monarchical order was the order par excellence.

The concept of order was at the heart of the fundamental political problem of the monarchical restoration in Tierra Firme: the reconstruction of the crumbling edifice of monarchical legitimacy in a context marked by

3 Ministerio Universal de Indias, 18 Nov 1814. In: Rodríguez Villa, 1908, p. 437-8. v. 2. My translation for this and all subsequent citations.

4 Morillo, 1816a; 1816b.

5 Montalvo, 1816a.

6 *Gazeta de Santafé*, Bogotá, n. 17, 3 Oct 1816, p. 151.

7 *Santafé, 31 de mayo de 1816*, Santafé de Bogotá: Imprenta de Bruno Espinosa, 1816.

8 *Gaceta de Caracas*, Caracas, n. 42, 25 Oct 1815, p. 335.

the emergence of competing republican projects of society, the erosion of transatlantic loyalties, the fragmentation of political authority, and the unpredictable dynamics of war. Royalists mobilized the concept of order to convey, among other things, the rule of law and justice, the sovereign will of the monarch, the paramount condition for freedom and prosperity, and the embodiment of Spanish traditions, customs, and history on both sides of the Atlantic. During the monarchical restoration, "order" and its more frequent adjectivized version "good order" often signified a political ontology and swiftly became synonymous with the Spanish empire as a natural, moral, and political community. These widespread political uses of the concept encapsulated the multiple layers of experiences and expectations accumulated during the monarchical crisis in the region. Royalists had to face the fact that a revolution had taken place in *Tierra Firme*, radically questioning the foundations of the monarchical order and inaugurating a new understanding of the political world in the region. While defending the monarchical order against the revolutionaries, royalists had to publicly elucidate and justify their ideas about the origins of royal sovereignty, the nature of the political community, and the roles of the king and the vassals in a postrevolutionary society. This article sheds light on some of these aspects by analyzing the royalists' self-understanding of the concept of order and illustrates how the coordinates of the institution of the political changed dramatically during the monarchical crisis, asserting the impossibility of returning to the prerevolutionary political-conceptual framework. The questions posed by the contemporaries in the interrogation of the political order and the sources and spaces of legitimation of royal power during the monarchical restoration were radically different from those of the three centuries of Spanish rule: the reign of public opinion had emerged in *Tierra Firme* during the monarchical crisis eroding the political premises upon which monarchical order was founded.

This article also reframes the monarchical restoration as a creative political response to an unprecedented crisis of legitimacy in *Tierra Firme*. This was a moment of profound re-elaboration of the traditional political culture and a historical experience informed by the intellectual developments of the revolutionaries. Royalists were far from being mere obstinate heralds of political tradition and semantic orthodoxy. Although they often claimed to be the guardians of the "good and true order," fighting

against those “determined friends of disorder, who, changing the meaning of language call us enemies of the new order of things”⁹, royalists actively contributed to the political experimentation and semantic uncertainty of the Age of Revolutions. As demonstrated in this article, the multiple ways in which royalists deployed “order” during the monarchical restoration reveal how the same “traditional” ideas, when placed in a new conceptual horizon, acquired a different dynamic from the one they once had in the colonial period; how, in some cases, alleged traditions were invoked by royalists to legitimize what were, in fact, new political realities and, perhaps more importantly, how there was no broad agreement on what tradition was and what the institutional expression of the “good order” entailed. Royalist political thought cannot be reduced to a coherent and singular doctrine of ideas. In their task of reconstructing monarchical legitimacy, royalists unapologetically drew upon a wide array of intellectual resources and political arguments spanning Spanish neoscholastic thought, Bourbon regalism, neoclassical republicanism, and the liberal ideas of the Enlightenment. Taking this into account, this article underscores how the concept of order was fundamental in the process of reimagining the body politic during the monarchical restoration. Through a close reading of the language employed in newspapers, political treatises, sermons, pamphlets, and petitions, it shows how royalists understood the foundations of the monarchical order, conceptualized the crisis of the Spanish monarchy, and responded to the radical reordering of the conceptual structures of the political world caused by the revolution in Tierra Firme.

Since the publication of the trailblazing works by Germán Carrera Damas, Oswaldo Díaz Díaz, Juan Friede, and Stephen K. Stoa, the study of royalism and the monarchical restoration in Tierra Firme has flourished over the last three decades¹⁰. Questioning deeply entrenched teleological narratives about the inevitability of Spanish American independence, the pre-existence of national identities before the revolution, and the telos of

9 *Gaceta de Caracas*, Caracas, n. 10, 5 April 1815, p. 78.

10 Carrera Damas, 1964, 1971; Díaz Díaz, 1965; Friede, 1969, 1972; Stoa, 1974. For other influential pioneering studies on royalism in the Spanish empire see: Hamnett, 1978; Anna, 1986; Costeloe, 2010 [1986].

the irremediable collapse of the Spanish empire, scholars have recovered royalists as fully-fledged political actors, enriching the study of the monarchical restoration well beyond the once fashionable idea of the *régimen del terror*. Drawing mainly on the tools of political, social, and military history and the history of ideas, these studies have analyzed the institutional, economic, and military challenges faced during the monarchical restoration, the widespread support for the monarchy in connection to local and regional dynamics across Tierra Firme, and the complexity of royalist politics in terms of ideological confrontation, political alliances, and bureaucratic competition. However, despite these enduring historiographical contributions, most of these pioneering works tended to understand royalist political thought as stable, homogeneous, and deeply rooted in the defense of tradition and in complete opposition to the conceptual universe of the revolution. Some of the premises of these studies remained invested in reading the period through rigid historiographical binomials, such as royalism/republicanism, tradition/modernity, conservatism/liberalism, and old/new—as if these antinomies were perfectly consistent and logically equivalent in their terms¹¹.

In the last decade, new historiographies have posed new questions and added theoretical breadth and methodological sophistication to the field. Scholars have stressed the social diversity of royalism while broadening the range of historical actors studied as royalists: women, Indigenous communities, and people of African descent. These recent works have re-examined royalism in Tierra Firme mainly by focusing on the interplay between popular royalism and high politics; the transnational and transatlantic dimensions of the monarchical restoration; royalist discourses on law, temporality, and history; and the centrality of print culture and the symbolic world. Taken together, these works have significantly improved our understanding of the central role played by royalists during the crisis of the Spanish monarchy in the region and demonstrated how royalism and revolution were not neatly defined and self-contained ideological uni-

11 Pino Iturrieta, 1998; Earle, 2000; Straka, 2007 [2000]; Gutiérrez Ramos, 2003; Quintero Saravia, 2005; Lovera Reyes, 2007; Cuño, 2008.

verses during the Age of Revolutions¹². As Marcela Echeverri has recently argued, royalism was a powerful vehicle for transformation: “a view of the Age of Revolutions from the perspective of royalists shows the vitality of empire and monarchy not only in the interests of elites or the Crown and his advisers. All across class lines people in the Spanish world actively engaged the revolutionary process”¹³.

Building upon these rich historiographies, this article approaches royalism and the monarchical restoration in Tierra Firme primarily from the perspective of intellectual and conceptual history. As intellectual and conceptual historians have pointed out, the complexity and contingency of intellectual developments can only become the center of analysis by recovering historical actors’ self-understanding within the conceptual possibilities and limits of their historical moment¹⁴. I am interested in understanding how royalists conceptualized and discussed order in Tierra Firme and how the concept became an object of dispute and a site of social and political conflict. The concept offers an excellent vantage point for understanding the profound changes in terms of the expression of ideological conflict, public debate, and political legitimacy during the Age of Revolutions. Rather than classifying royalists’ ideas of order along the political continuum ranging from “tradition” to “modernity,” this article engages with royalist writings in its historical dynamism, internal ambiguity, and contextual dependence. More broadly, by placing royalists’ ideas at the center of analysis, this article seeks to contribute to the most recent wave of studies engaging with the intellectual and conceptual history of

12 Chaparro-Silva, 2012, 2014, 2018; Lux, 2014; Echeverri, 2016; Gutiérrez Ardila, 2016. A pioneering study engaging with popular royalism in the Caribbean is Saether, 2003. See also the dossier on popular royalism during the Age of Revolutions edited by Hendrik Kraay in *Varia Historia*, Belo Horizonte, v. 35, n. 67, 2019. For a historiographical overview on popular royalism in the Atlantic world see the introduction to the former dossier by Echeverri, 2019. For recent studies about royalism in the Spanish empire: Escrig Rosa, 2021.

13 Echeverri, 2023, p 303.

14 My theoretical and methodological approach is primarily informed by the following works of intellectual and conceptual history: Koselleck, 2004; Rosanvallon, 2006; Palti, 2007, 2017; Pocock, 2009; Fernández Sebastián, 2011.

the Spanish Atlantic during the Age of Revolutions, in which royalists and royalism remain conspicuously and systematically overlooked¹⁵.

This article focuses on the monarchical restoration in Tierra Firme during the absolutist period, roughly from 1814 to 1820. The dynamics of royalism during the first republics and the *Trienio Liberal* are not part of the analysis. When referring to Tierra Firme, I mean the political whole that encompasses the territories of present-day Colombia, Venezuela, Ecuador, and Panama. Analyzing Tierra Firme before the creation of national spaces in the post-independence period means to be truer to the complexities of the archival records and the lived experience of the historical actors. The instructions given to Morillo mainly described his enterprise as to “restore order in Costa Firme to the Darién”¹⁶. Bound within this geographical framework were vigorous circuits of commerce, communication, bureaucracies, and armies that shaped the projects of political unity formulated successively from the last decades of Spanish rule to the birth of the Republic of Colombia in 1819. Finally, when I refer to the royalists, I understand, in a very broad sense, the group of men and women who, during this period, pursuing varied and even conflicting political agendas, considered both the monarchical rule and the union of the Spanish monarchy as the best way to organize the political community in Tierra Firme.

I. The “Orderly Order” of the Spanish Monarchy

The concept of order had a long and rich history in Tierra Firme before the monarchical restoration. It was at the center of the question of how to create, justify, and exercise legitimate power in the region throughout the three centuries of Spanish rule and the subsequent monarchical crisis¹⁷. Spanish dictionaries of the time defined “order” as the “arrangement

15 On recent historiographical perspectives on intellectual and conceptual history in the region during the Age of Revolutions see: Ortega, Acevedo, Casanova Castañeda, 2021. For a comprehensive historiographical review about the dissolution of the Spanish empire: Paquette, 2009.

16 Ministerio Universal de Indias, Op. Cit., p. 437-438.

17 On the notion of order and its complex relations with the ideas of law and justice in the Spanish empire: Halperin Donghi, 1961; Maravall, 1997; Tau Anzoátegui, 1999; Bellingeri, 2000; Portillo, 2000;

of things that are placed according to the sequence and the place that correspond to each one." It also meant "harmony and good disposition of things in relation to each other" and "sequence or succession of things"¹⁸. The noun also gave rise to the usage of the adjectives "ordered/orderly" and the verb "to order," which, among other things, meant "to put in order something physically or morally"¹⁹. Order, in essence, denoted the proper disposition of people and things in the world, implying a regular state of affairs, a combination of similar and dissimilar things, and the existence of ordering principles. These common semantic features were not frequently spelled out by the contemporaries and mostly remained assumed and unchanged for most of the nineteenth century. During the monarchical restoration, the omnipresence and increasing adjectivization of order reveals how historical actors actively re-elaborated this common sense around the concept. Order was "old," "new," "good," "happy," "natural," and "moral." The invocation of order galvanized royalists to act—whether to restore, preserve, respect, defend order, or destroy its enemies. Royalists often scrutinized the state and degrees of order to establish how "orderly" order was. As Colonel Donato Ruiz de Santacruz declared upon victoriously entering Honda in 1816, "order has been reestablished, and I have done everything in my power, as much as circumstances allow, so that everything is in the best order and disposition"²⁰. Finally, royalists employed a wide array of metaphors likening the monarchical order to the human body, the familial realm, and the natural world. The metaphorical usage of the latter became commonplace in the printed materials of the period to explain the return of the king's government and how Tierra Firme "comes back to her duties and to order, like rivers to their course after having overflowed"²¹.

Straka, Op. Cit; Garriga, 2004; Leal Curiel, 2010; Calderón, Thibaud, 2011; Fernández Sebastián, Leal Curiel 2017; Palti, 2017.

18 Real Academia Española, 1803, p. 602.

19 Ibidem.

20 Montalvo, 1816b.

21 *Gazeta de Santafé*, Bogotá, n. 1, 13 June 1816, p. 4.

Following the uses established during the colonial past, royalists frequently invoked the “good order” to refer to the Spanish empire as a rationally ordered and perfect political community of pueblos, cities, kingdoms, and corporate bodies united by religious, historical, legal, and blood bonds. This notion permeated social, political, and legal institutions and was based on a complex theological-political knot centered around the Catholic religion and the Spanish Crown. Since the political order of society derived from the divine order of creation, many royalists envisioned the return of the monarchy primarily as the reestablishment of God’s order in Tierra Firme. The monarchical order was placed in a situation of transcendence with regard to society: it was permanent, eternal, and harmonious by definition.²² Sanctioned by the Bible, the doctrinal books of the Catholic Church, and the fundamental laws of the kingdom, royalists conceived this unitary order as emanating from the absolute unity of God. This order encompassed everything that existed, assigning each thing in the world a specific position and purpose. The royal government in Tierra Firme existed to maintain the correct disposition of peoples and things, preserve the regular order of nature, and direct the actions of all members of the body politic toward Christian salvation, moral fulfillment, and the common good. According to the priest Antonio de León, God “had appointed the Monarchical Government to all the Pueblos on earth as the only one that derives from divine authority, and the only one that is more similar to the very being of God, Unique and Supreme King, and Lord of all created things, and like him, the only one that can make the pueblos humanly happy while maintaining the rights of justice, tranquility, and good order”²³.

The Spanish monarchy embodied a God-given order of subordination and hierarchy, emphasizing relations of authority, obedience, and inequality. As royalist newspapers loudly proclaimed: “subordination produces order”²⁴. A government incapable of maintaining the subordination and hierarchy of the natural order lacked legitimacy and engendered cha-

22 On the play of transcendence and immanence in the political world, see Palti, *Op. Cit.*, 2017.

23 León, 1816, p. 4.

24 *Gaceta de Caracas*, Caracas, n. 152, 1 Oct 1817, p. 1183.

os. In turn, submitting to this divine order was the main obligation of the king's vassals. For royalists, subordination and hierarchy derived from the natural order, were prior to society itself, and made possible communal life and the functioning of the monarchical state. As Venezuela's General Captain Juan Manuel de Cajigal asserted in his *Proclama* issued in Caracas in 1815: the "State would be destroyed if there were no subjects and superiors, distinctions in merit and virtue, class differences, and establishment of hierarchies"²⁵. The Spanish monarchy was seen as a heterogeneous and wisely unequal political community, structured by social differences, legal conditions, and racial stratifications. The essence of good order consisted of managing these contradictory circumstances through a commutative conception of justice, granting each of the king's vassals that which corresponded to them according to their place in society. While inequality formed the foundation of the social order, the king's vassals were considered equal only before God and the royal justice. According to José Domingo Díaz, editor of the *Gaceta de Caracas*: "the noble and the plebian, the poor and the rich, the wise and the ignorant, the white, the *pardo*, the Indian, and the Black have, according to their virtues and vices, the same consideration under the laws. This equality is the cornerstone of public tranquility"²⁶. For royalists, this conception of justice not only structured the monarchical order, but also facilitated the complete realization of human freedom and social harmony, since "laws are the strongest foundation of freedom" and the "true freedom of man in society consists of being governed and protected by just and well-administered laws"²⁷.

The notion of a historically instituted Christian political community remained central to the grammar of order during the monarchical restoration. After emphasizing his commitment to "watch over the security of the political order," Morillo marvelled in 1816 at how "prodigiously the system of a wise Government by constitution and exemplary in the proper administration of justice" had been reinstated in Tierra Firme²⁸. Not

25 Cajigal, 1815, p. 101-102.

26 *Gaceta de Caracas*, Caracas, n. 12, 19 April 1815, p.106.

27 *Gaceta de Caracas*, Caracas, n. 9, 29 March 1815, p.73-4; Cajigal, Op. Cit., p. 101.

28 Morillo, 1816c.

surprisingly, royalists portrayed the monarchical restoration as the reign of the “good of justice and government, the return of our old judges and laws, which in three centuries preserved for us the rights of reason and the social order”²⁹. Countering the revolutionary slogan of the “three centuries of despotism,” the royalists championed the banner of “three hundred years of peace and prosperity” to assert the historical and very concrete character of “good order” in Tierra Firme. References to the revolutionary era as “five years of slavery” and “seven years of frenzy and disorder” aimed to underscore the ephemeral nature of the republics against the extraordinary continuity of the Spanish empire over time³⁰. This long history in and of itself proved the divinely ordained and essentially good nature of the monarchical order. This allowed royalists to present the Spanish monarchy as a cohesive, stable, and orderly political community, while shrouding their arguments with the authority of history. As the Bishop of Popayán, Salvador Jiménez de Enciso, wrote in his famous *Pastoral* in 1818: “facts, history, and nature are for us”³¹. While the revolutionaries advocated for the erasure of the Spanish past, the royalists emphasized the Spanish conquest as the historical origin of the “good order” in the region and as the cradle of Spanish American identity. The vassals of Tierra Firme had no history other than the glorious Spanish past: their foundational myths comprised the figures of the Catholic Monarchs, the voyages of Columbus, the deeds of the conquistadores, the evangelization of Indigenous peoples by the Catholic Church, and the founding of the first cities and towns. The history of the three centuries of Spanish rule made plain the advancement of arts, science, and industry and the reign of economic prosperity and public peace. This history epitomized the concept of “one body, one Nation, and one cause” and often highlighted how the vassals of Tierra Firme had received from the Spanish monarchy “all the social *bienes* together: Religion, Laws, Society, good order, Peace, and everything that rational and political Pueblos yearn for”³².

29 Valenzuela y Moya, 1817, p. 6.

30 Montalvo, 1816b; Gruesso, 1817, p. 5.

31 Jiménez de Enciso, 1820, p. 47.

32 León, Op. Cit., p. 7.

Celebrating the monarchical restoration, royalist newspapers then proclaimed the “return of the stable and happy order that had disappeared in the disastrous past era”³³. The “good order” needed to be restored, since the revolutionaries disrupted it by proclaiming the sovereignty of the people in Tierra Firme. The revolution destroyed the foundations of the monarchical order and established an evident discontinuity between the natural order and the political order. As Carlos Lagomarsino wrote from Quito in 1817, revolutionary ideas were essentially “opposed to good order, to the subsistence and conservation of men, who are obligated to live in society linked to each other for their common benefit”³⁴. The revolution entailed the erosion of political authority, the dissolution of hierarchy and subordination, and the utter confusion of moral values. The revolution, seen as the ultimate effort to “upend the entire order and harmony of the Monarchy,” conveyed the radical denial of political existence: disorder³⁵. A word against the revolution was always a word in favor of the monarchical order. In this vein, Juan Manuel García del Castillo, the editor of the *Gazeta de Santafé*, promised its readers a “historical summary of the past convulsions explaining the principles on which the revolution was formed,” while exposing the plans of Fernando VII to “restore it to its older tranquility and to promote all the means that make their beloved vassals happy”³⁶. The newspaper frequently published public retractions of rebellious vassals who repented for their participation “in the chaos of disorders and evils called revolution,” abjuring the “legitimacy of the principles through which they vulcanized the Pueblos, perverted order, and caused the lamentable derangement of society”³⁷. The royalist grammar of order had to account for how revolutionary projects always entailed the “inversion of order” and were “political systems, completely contrary to the common good,

33 *Gazeta de Santafé*, Bogotá, n. 17, 3 Oct 1816, p. 151.

34 Lagomarsino, 1817, p. 6.

35 Torres y Peña, 1960, p. 171.

36 *Gazeta de Santafé*, Bogotá, n. 1, 13 June 1816, p. 4-5.

37 *Gazeta de Santafé*, Bogotá, n. 8, 1 Aug 1816, p. 442-5.

the venerable antiquity, the opinion of the true sages, and the testimonies of history”³⁸.

The end of the revolution signaled that the “time of order was completely restored” in Tierra Firme³⁹. However, depending on the strategic needs of the political discourse, the monarchical restoration could be portrayed as a simple return to the past or as the joyous commencement of a new era. Some period documents presented the return of the king’s government as the natural culmination of the revolution when finally “things returned to the state and order they had before”⁴⁰. Without this idea of a return to the past, any restoration or reconquest project would have been completely unthinkable. In other cases, the royalists imagined this moment as the inauguration of a new historical experience, a new zero point in history. The *Gaceta de Caracas* christened the monarchical restoration as the “moment of the creation of Venezuela,” declaring the birth of a new future endorsed by the monarch’s will: “His Majesty wants all the events of seven years of going astray to precipitate into chaos, and to begin a new era, as if the former had never existed”⁴¹. Both ideas coexisted without contradiction, condensed in the widely popular image of the monarchical restoration as a “new golden age.” The arrival of this “new golden century for the entire Spanish Monarchy” allowed royalists not only to proudly endorse the three centuries of Spanish rule in the Americas but also to project this “good order” into an extraordinary future⁴². “With the reign of the best of Monarchs, a new golden century begins for his pueblos... order, tranquility, and abundance, and all the *bienes* of the Holy Peace must come after the delirium of the past,” wrote the Governor of Popayán Pedro Domínguez in 1818⁴³. This new golden age, accelerated by the actions of the royal government and the king’s vassals, was frequently contrasted with the revolutionary non-future, with the “bygone era of the so-called

38 Sacristán, 1816, p. 2. *Gazeta de Santafé*, Bogotá, n. 21, 31 Oct 1816, p. 219.

39 *Gaceta de Caracas*, Caracas, n. 53, 7 Jan 1816, p. 421.

40 *Gaceta del Gobierno de Cartagena de Indias*, Cartagena de Indias, n. 10, 5 Oct 1816, p. 77.

41 *Gaceta de Caracas*, Caracas, n. 230, 20 Jan 1819, p. 1763; n.151, 24 Sep 1817, p. 1175.

42 *Gazeta de Santafé*, Bogotá, [s. n.], 25 June 1818, p.10.

43 Domínguez, 1818.

Republican Government, when the *vulgo* were flattered and deceived with the happiness of the fifth generation of our grandchildren and we saw nothing that was put into action to achieve it"⁴⁴. The concept of order was highly invested with expectations of the future during the monarchical restoration.

While there was a broad consensus about the foundations of the monarchical order, less agreement existed among royalists regarding the "old order" to be restored. This can be seen in the heated disputes between the different royal authorities in Tierra Firme—between Morillo and Viceroy Montalvo, Viceroy Juan de Sámano and the Real Audiencia de Santafé, and most Venezuela's General Captains and Morillo, among others. These disputes often referred to the normative ideals and the institutional expression of the "old order," claiming an essential historical continuity with the past to justify current political decisions. Discussions about the "old order" spiraled into debates about the best ways to carry out the monarchical restoration and the proper institutional arrangements to reconstruct the legitimacy of the royal government. For instance, Morillo asserted that upon arriving in Bogotá, in May 1816, "day and night were dedicated to the restoration of what was lost" and the "civil and political order returned to its former state." Morillo also decried how Viceroy Montalvo had destroyed the architecture of the "old order" he had previously reestablished, making the viceregal government seem more a continuation of the revolutionary order⁴⁵. In turn, Montalvo condemned how Morillo had usurped his powers and those of the Real Audiencia to establish an unprecedented political order in Tierra Firme—particularly regarding new institutions of revenue and justice such as *consejos de guerra*, *tribunales de purificación*, and *juntas de secuestros*. Montalvo described Morillo's systematic abuses against the king's vassals and claimed that "this Kingdom is not ready for new projects," since "proposing to restore and reform at the same time is not useful at all." Similarly to Morillo, Montalvo also stated his objective

44 *Gazeta de Santafé*, Bogotá, n. 17, 3 Oct 1816, p. 151.

45 Morillo, 1821, p. 24-25; Morillo, 22 Dec 1817; 22 Oct 1818. In: Rodríguez Villa. Op. Cit., p. 469-474; 614-9. v. 3.

was to “restore all branches of administration and government to the state they had before the revolution”⁴⁶.

The concept of order was also the main prism through which the royalists discussed the policies of reconciliation and punishment for the revolutionaries and the objectives and consequences of the highly contentious issue of monarchical terror in Tierra Firme. Some royalists viewed terror as a supreme act of justice and the maximum expression of royal sovereignty: the right of life and death over the king’s vassals. They saw the capital punishment of the leaders of the revolution as the necessary condition for restoring order and achieving the complete identification between royal power and the vassals of Tierra Firme. As Díaz wrote in the *Gaceta de Caracas*, the *cabecillas* of the revolution “must be exterminated as enemies of the social order and peace of these pueblos”⁴⁷. From this perspective, monarchical terror can be understood as the natural consequence of the exacerbation of the idea of “good order” and the radicalization of the division between good and bad vassals. For Morillo, only death remained for the “wayward and evil vassals [...] a few bandits unwilling to conform to the just order of things”⁴⁸. Morillo frequently emphasized both the need to reaffirm the power of the king through public punishment and the preventive nature of terror to ensure political conformity around the Spanish monarchy. According to him, the “spilled innocent blood of so many people, sacrificed by the revolutionaries to their ambition and passions, cried out for revenge. Their atrocious crimes demanded justice, and the law duly condemned them”⁴⁹. The death of the main revolutionaries was often presented as a necessary and therapeutic measure to definitively reestablish the “right disposition of things” in Tierra Firme. As the priest Valenzuela y Moya preached in Neiva in 1816, the “great piety of the King is fulfilled by removing, in the simplest and most ordinary manner, the main gangrenous members from the Civil Body, all for the good and

46 Montalvo, 1818. In: Colmenares, 1989, p. 288-289. v. 3.

47 *Gaceta de Caracas*, Caracas, n. 1, 1 Feb 1815, p. 4.

48 Morillo, 1816a.

49 Morillo, 1821 Op. Cit., p. 20-1.

health of the body itself..because lacking a Prototype and the incentive to commit a crime, virtue will eventually take its place"⁵⁰.

Other royal officials promptly condemned monarchical terror as a repressive policy of reconciliation and emphasized its counterproductive effects in terms of eroding monarchical legitimacy in Tierra Firme. Viceroy Montalvo systematically denounced before the royal authorities in Madrid the "lack of political finesse in which General Morillo carried out the pacification," multiplying the "grievances and complaints of the pueblos, which were growing in animosity and silenced by terror." Montalvo often contrasted Morillo's repressive acts with his own measures to pursue the "security, conservation, and well-being of the inhabitants of the pacified territory and to contain the disastrous effects of the germ of disorder"⁵¹. In similar terms, the Real Audiencia de Santafé condemned "Morillo's *mano terrible*" and reported to the king how Sámano was recreating the harrowing "scenes of blood and terror with which General Morillo banished peace from this desolate Kingdom for, at the very least, the present generation." The Audiencia vividly described how Sámano driven "by the terrorism that consumes him and lacking the art of winning over the human heart, exhibits only rigor and severity, breeding despair, instead of love and confidence in the government." The *oidores* also lamented how Morillo's rule had "shrouded this Kingdom in sorrow, leaving very deep wounds in the hearts of its inhabitants that are difficult to heal, and consequently, making the enterprise of pacification more difficult and arduous." For the Audiencia, monarchical terror presaged the ultimate disaster: the disappearance of the monarchical order from Tierra Firme⁵².

These disputes surrounding the true nature of the "old order," the best ways to deal with the legacies of the revolution, and the repercussions of monarchical terror transcend mere political rivalries, ideological differences, or defenses of personal prerogatives. On a deeper level, these controversies also responded to the growing sense of instability and

50 Valenzuela y Moya, Op. Cit, p. 7, 26.

51 Montalvo, 1817.

52 Real Audiencia de Santafé, 1817.

turbulence of the historical time triggered by the crisis of the Spanish monarchy. Royalists frequently conveyed "how anguished, confused, and disorderly this moment was"⁵³. The invocation of the concept of order seemed to proffer some semblance of stability amid the pervasive sense of crisis expressed in the documents of the period. Some sought to contain this extraordinary uncertainty by fiercely asserting the definitive reinstatement of the "immutable order of society established by God," the "immutable order of truth and justice"⁵⁴. Conversely, others accepted the consequences of these changes and saw monarchical politics as the judicious governance of temporal uncertainty. As Santiago Jonama wrote in 1818, polemizing with the Abbé de Pradt and defending the good order of the Spanish monarchy in Tierra Firme: "in political matters, absolutes of right or wrong do not exist. It is necessary to examine things through the times and circumstances... each century and each situation demand different laws and institutions; and it is impossible to imagine a political institution suitable to all circumstances"⁵⁵. The problem of what was the order to be restored and the proper means to do it became increasingly framed in terms of what order *should* be restored. This shift underscores how the monarchical order could no longer be taken for granted during the monarchical restoration. It signifies the temporalization of monarchical politics and the open recognition that the cosmically ordained monarchical order was essentially human and had to be realized through human means. As Archbishop Coll y Prat pointed out in his *Memoriales* to the king, the "majesty of all things human is lost when it does not conform to time" including that of the State, whose "destruction or conservation depends on time"⁵⁶. This recognition held crucial implications for reshaping

53 *Gazeta de Santafé*, Bogotá, n. 17, 3 Oct 1816, p. 153. For further elaboration of this argument see Chaparro-Silva, 2018, p. 205-231.

54 Torres y Peña, 1817, p. 29, 13-14.

55 Jonama, 1829, p. 53-56.

56 Coll y Prat, 1960, p. 111-112.

the relationship between the king and the kingdom, paving the way for the definitive rise of a new sovereign: public opinion.

II. The King, the Kingdom, and the New Sovereign

The sustained invocation of “good order” during the monarchical restoration formed the core of the royalists’ efforts to reconstruct royal legitimacy in Tierra Firme. This notion offered a shared framework to reassert the political geometry of the Spanish monarchy and conceptualize the king’s relationship with his kingdom. Period documents chronicled an extraordinary and semantically rich abundance of representations of the monarch and his power. The king provided a principle of unity and continuity to a heterogeneous and fragmented society in geographical, social, and racial terms. Often envisioned as the ordering principle of society, Fernando VII was frequently epitomized as “a Catholic King, a Father of his Pueblo, a pillar of Religion, a Source of Justice, a guardian genius of virtue and good order, an enduring fount of public welfare: a Fernando VII”⁵⁷. Deeply ingrained images of the king as the “common father of *todas las Españas*” and the supreme dispenser of justice consistently resurfaced during these years⁵⁸. Royalist newspapers also emphasized the idea of the king as the ultimate embodiment of virtue, delving into the king’s extraordinary virtuosity, shaped by the vicissitudes of his life and the recent history of the monarchical crisis. These images echoed the radical revolutionary critique of royal privileges and were modeled on the elevation of virtue as the hallmark of the new republics founded in Tierra Firme. For instance, the *Gaceta de Caracas* portrayed Fernando VII as a virtuous king who “had renounced everything that was not absolutely necessary to his august dignity,” an “enemy of disorder and vain ostentation,” and a “friend of order, beneficence, and frugality”⁵⁹. In turn, the *Gazeta de Santafé* highlighted how “Fernando, as a Star of first magnitude, radiates benevolent influences across the expansive realms of his Monarchy, knowing that what

57 Valenzuela y Moya, Op. Cit., p. 7.

58 Rodríguez Carrillo, 1819, p. 1.

59 *Gaceta de Caracas*, Caracas, n. 15, 10 May 1815, p. 125-126.

makes Kings is not merely pomp and majesty but great and supreme virtue⁶⁰. During monarchical celebrations, the omnipresence of the king's image—in portraits, emblems, busts, coins, and medals—often adorned with “various symbols and hieroglyphics alluding to power, justice, and other attributes of Sovereignty;” presented the monarch as the center of the political order and facilitated the reaffirmation of the bond of loyalty between the king and his kingdom⁶¹. These royal images were deemed by observers as “an unequivocal emblem of the joy and pleasure with which the inhabitants [of Tierra Firme] are restored to their old freedom”⁶².

This broad array of representations of the monarch was frequently intertwined with the principle of the divine right of kings, which appeared in the writings of the period as an incontrovertible truth. Any prospect of vassals rebelling against the king was vehemently condemned, seen as an irrational affront to divine power and communal life—even in cases of blatant tyranny. As the priest José Antonio Torres y Peña asserted, “all legitimate power comes from God, and whoever resists power, resists the order that God has established. This precious order is the pillar of [the vassals'] loyalty”⁶³. However, this broad consensus about the divine foundation of royal authority did not yield an unequivocal interpretation regarding the monarch's position within the political order. Some royalists placed the king's sovereignty in a situation of complete transcendence with regard to the political community. Sovereignty was granted directly to the king by God. It was not the result of any “social pact” nor was it conferred by the people. This royal potency was different from any other sphere of power by its nature, origins, and purposes. From this perspective, royal sovereignty was presented as absolute and unlimited within the realms of the body politic. As the Bishop Jiménez asserted in 1818: “kings are anointed by the Lord and are universal fathers of the pueblos.” They are the “supreme

60 *Gazeta de Santafé*, Bogotá, [s. n.], 25 June 1818, p.10-11.

61 *Gaceta de Caracas*, Caracas, n. 152, 1 Oct 1817, p. 1187-1188.

62 *Boletín del Ejército Expedicionario*, Bogotá, n. 28, 31 May 1816, p. 1.

63 Torres y Peña, Op. Cit., 1960. p. 173-174.

powers on earth," the "gods and sons of the Almighty," the "vicars of the divine and eternal majesty, and visible images of His wisdom and power"⁶⁴.

These absolutist conceptions of monarchical power often coexisted with more traditional ideas concerning the historical constitution of the monarchy during this era. For other royalists, while the monarch's power to promulgate and abrogate laws was anchored in the divine right of kings, the exercise of royal sovereignty was imagined as circumscribed primarily by natural law and the fundamental laws of the kingdom, especially in the administration of justice. The traditional constitution of the body politic established the constitutive attributes and limits of the monarch's power, bestowing rights and obligations upon the king and his vassals. Unsurprisingly, when Fernando VII declared his return to the throne and annulled the Cádiz Constitution in Valencia in May 1814, he defined the "rights and prerogatives of my sovereignty, [as] established by the constitution and the laws under which the Nation has lived for a long time" and pledged to "preserve the honor of the royal dignity and its rights (for rights it has) and those which belong to the people, which are equally inviolable"⁶⁵. Despite the continuous increase in his royalties and privileges, for certain royalists, the king shared the same human condition as his vassals, needed the corporate bodies to rule successfully, and wielded his power primarily to dispense justice to the political community. For example, Lagomarsino's *Proclama* from Quito described the king as "just a man destined to act in justice," whose titles to rule over Tierra Firme were rooted in the natural order, the dynastic principle, and the historical continuity of the monarchy, bestowed "from generation to generation, ascendingly, and by constitution of our ancestors"⁶⁶.

Given these overlapping layers of meaning, the increasing absolutization of the monarch's sovereignty in the political writings of the period can be interpreted not as an actual reality where royal power was absolute and unlimited, but as a political endeavor to reaffirm the sovereignty of the

64 Jiménez de Enciso, Op. Cit., p. 41.

65 *Gaceta de Madrid*, Madrid, n. 70, 12 May 1814, p. 519-20.

66 Lagomarsino, Op. Cit., p. 5.

Spanish crown over Tierra Firme. Royalists elevated the king's sovereignty beyond the realm of worldly politics to counteract the process of desacralization of royal power undertaken by the revolutionaries. Royal sovereignty could not appear as subordinate to the absolute sovereignty of the people proclaimed during the monarchical crisis. Royal officials in Tierra Firme also had to bolster their own diminished authority by declaring themselves as the "main holders of royal rights and majesty and in whom the sovereign representation fully resides"⁶⁷. Royalists frequently asserted the impossibility of the return of sovereignty from the king to the people during the *vacatio regis*. As the Bishop Jiménez stated, royal sovereignty did not "come from the people, but from the ordering and disposition of God himself," and thus the "transference of sovereignty was never verified, since it does not depend on the people or any governments"⁶⁸. The kingdom, now transformed into the people by the revolutionaries, was not the inalienable and indivisible depository of sovereignty or the new source of political legitimacy. The king was the only conceivable legitimate subject of sovereignty. The sovereignty of the people was a theoretical and practical impossibility, a "sovereignty of words," and the revolutionaries were only "kings without kingdoms," as Díaz proclaimed in the *Gaceta de Caracas* in 1819⁶⁹.

The good order of the Spanish monarchy extended beyond the king. It also encompassed his kingdom and all his vassals, "without excluding from the number of vassals those *extraviados* from those vast regions of America," as stated in the instructions given to Morillo⁷⁰. During the monarchical restoration, the omnipresent term *vasallo* coexisted with the words *súbdito* and *vecino* and, in some cases, with the more traditional meanings of the term *ciudadano*—although the latter was much less popular due to its widespread use by the revolutionaries. The vassals of Tierra Firme were defined by the obligation of loyalty to the Spanish king, due respect for the laws of the kingdom, and obedience to the precepts of the

67 Montalvo, 1816c.

68 Jiménez de Enciso, Op. Cit., p. 57-66.

69 *Gaceta de Caracas*, Caracas, n. 257, 14 July 1819, p. 1988; n. 253, 23 May 1819, p. 1951.

70 Ministerio Universal de Indias, Op. Cit., p. 437-438.

Catholic Church. The relationship between Fernando VII and his vassals was envisioned as an indissoluble bond of personal nature, formally legalized by the *juramento* to the king and incarnated in symbolism, ritual, and precedence—in sharp contrast to the more abstract nature of the relationship between the sovereignty of the people and the new republican citizens. In a monarchical ceremony held in Caracas in 1817, the vassals who attended swore “to be faithful to the King and shed to the last drop [of blood], if necessary, in defense of the Crown and the Royal Rights, and to live in subordination to the Laws and obey the authorities appointed by the Sovereign”⁷¹. As a highly valuable resource in a context of growing political volatility and military uncertainty, loyalty to the monarch was perceived as the bedrock of the Spanish monarchy and the primary foundation of good order. According to priest José María Gruesso from Popayán: “loyalty is the whole of the social system: it is the base that supports the immense edifice of the Monarchy, and the one that prolongs its existence over time, and preserves its grandeur... Through loyalty, order is sustained, misfortunes are averted, discord is eradicated, blood is spared, property is respected, and individual security is enjoyed. Through loyalty, men are happy”⁷².

Royalist newspapers played a pivotal role in shaping these prevalent notions of loyalty, articulating the normative ideal of the relationship between the king and his kingdom. Ideas about the role of royal justice, the meanings of good order, and the portrayal of the good vassal as the perfect embodiment of Spanishness permeated these publications. Accounts detailing persecutions, imprisonments, and experiences of exile endured by royalists in support of the king’s cause were juxtaposed in print with extensive lists of accolades bestowed upon some of the most loyal vassals. Countering a primary contention by the revolutionaries, these lists aimed to demonstrate how the “Sovereign distributes the awards, without distinguishing between *peninsular* and *ultramarino* among his beloved Vassals and considering only their virtue and true merit”⁷³. The *Gazeta de Santafé*

71 Cabildo de Caracas, 1817.

72 Gruesso, Op. Cit, p. 12-13.

73 *Gazeta de Santafé*, Bogotá, n. 21, 31 Oct 1816, p. 219.

highlighted the *gracias* granted to Antonio Núñez, Cacique de Mamato-co, emphasizing his “merit, loyalty, and services.” Núñez received the rank and salary of captain in the royal army, a gold medal featuring the monarch’s bust, and the Orden de Isabel la Católica⁷⁴. Reporting on the merits of María del Carmen Zamorán, a *vecina* from Puerto Cabello, the *Gaceta de Caracas* underscored her “patriotic services in honor of the just cause” and her “manly efforts shown in defense of the King’s rights.” The monarch conferred official positions to her three children and awarded Zamorán a medal reserved exclusively for women, the “award for the loyalty of the *americanas*”⁷⁵. Likewise, the *Gaceta del Gobierno de Cartagena de Indias* frequently published lists of the royal employments granted to the vassals of Tierra Firme as “a reward for having suffered among the rebels due to their love for the king and in consideration of their merits and aptitude”⁷⁶. By actively endorsing the ideal of merit as the driving force of the Spanish monarchy and downplaying the centrality of blood privileges, the royal government was steadfast in its commitment to demonstrate that the “vassals of the King, the individuals of the nation, regardless of their birthplace, are worthy of the consideration of the Monarch based on their virtues and talents”⁷⁷.

The royal government consistently reminded the vassals of Tierra Firme of their obligations to submit to authority and obey “not only because of the fear of punishment, but because of a principle of conscience”⁷⁸. However, royal officials did not conceive the king’s vassals simply as subjects constituted by obligations. The idea of “active cooperation,” as termed by royalist newspapers, became the conceptual horizon within which vassals’ political actions unfolded during the monarchical restoration⁷⁹. In this vein, the Bishop of Maracaibo, Rafael Lasso de la Vega, preached to his diocesans in Venezuela in 1819: “loyalty and recognition to our King is

74 Ibidem.

75 *Gaceta de Caracas*, Caracas, n. 266, 1 Sep 1819, p. 2053-2054.

76 *Gaceta del Gobierno de Cartagena de Indias*, Cartagena de Indias, n. 6, 14 Sep 1816, p. 48.

77 Rodríguez Carrillo, Op. Cit., p. 10-11.

78 Talavera, 1817, p. 3.

79 *Gazeta de Santafé*, Bogotá, n. 17, 3 Oct 1816, p. 151.

needed. Not silent, but active and intense, and in repeated expressions of obedience, submission, and effective in its actions⁸⁰. By taking arms, delivering sermons, employing their political talents, and applying their scientific knowledge, the vassals of Tierra Firme also became the architects and guardians of "good order." The Governor of Quito, Juan Ramírez de Orozco, explicitly stated in his 1817 *Proclama*: "Every inhabitant of Quito will cooperate with me toward the same common goal, which will always be nothing other than preserving order"⁸¹. This idea of "active cooperation" in a postrevolutionary context marked by an ever-expanding print culture and competing political projects contributed significantly to eroding the royal monopoly on the arts of government and paved the way for the enthroning of public opinion in royalist discourse. The preservation of good order traditionally demanded both the king's just administration of justice and the vassals' complete obedience. After the revolution, it also entailed something entirely new: the elaboration of public opinion by the royal authorities and the king's vassals—a principle of political legitimacy absent during the colonial period in Tierra Firme and which only emerged during the monarchical crisis⁸².

Public opinion was a capacious concept encompassing disparate political meanings during these years: the supreme tribunal of reality, the expression of the will of the pueblos, the unanimous manifestation of the political truth, and the aggregate of collective sentiments and aspirations⁸³. For royalists, restoring the monarchical order in Tierra Firme relied on public opinion as the "moral force of the states, as their existence is very precarious without it"⁸⁴. As supreme oracle of politics and guiding force in matters of government, public opinion was key to ruling legitimately. According to Viceroy Montalvo in his *Relación de mando*, the "scale

80 *Gaceta de Caracas*, Caracas, n. 249, 26 May 1819, p. 1916.

81 Ramírez de Orozco, 1817.

82 For a previous elaboration of this argument see: Chaparro-Silva, 2012.

83 About the concept of public opinion in Tierra Firme during the Age of Revolutions, Ortega Martínez, Chaparro-Silva, 2012; Fernández Sebastián, Goldman, 2015.

84 *Gaceta de Caracas*, Caracas, n. 7, 15 March 1815, p. 51.

[*balanza*] of public opinion was the one that decided about power⁸⁵. Engaging in heated debates with the revolutionary press and consistently vying for public support, royalist newspapers often sought to persuade the king's vassals, explain the government's decisions, and "justify its successive measures before universal opinion"⁸⁶. The royal government not only needed to shape public opinion among the vassals, but also to claim their unconditional support. Royal officials often vindicated the backing of public opinion for the king's cause and recast it in terms of "popular opinion," "general opinion," "public spirit," "*opinión de los pueblos*," and "general will." For instance, Díaz published his famous *Manifiesto de las provincias de Venezuela* in 1819 to expose the "public and secret evidence about the opinion of Venezuela" and demonstrate how the "general will of Venezuela" had been unanimously expressed in favor of the Spanish monarchy and against the revolutionaries⁸⁷.

The state of public opinion was an important object of government and concern for the royal authorities. Invoking the imperative of preserving or restoring order inevitably entailed discussing the multiple ways to sustain (*sostener*), shape (*fijar*), or gauge public opinion. As the *Gazeta de Santafé* announced, royalist newspapers were tasked with "encouraging loyal vassals to provide useful projects and ideas for the benefit of the Kingdom and to write speeches appropriate for establishing good order." Morillo envisioned the publication's primary mission as "rectifying the ideas of the public by spreading the good opinion and public trust that the legitimate authorities must enjoy"⁸⁸. Documents of the period frequently interwove order and public opinion, highlighting their relationship of mutual dependency. Reporting on the "pacification" of Venezuela in 1816, Morillo depicted how "order and public opinion had been reestablished to the most considerable extent"⁸⁹. In turn, Archbishop Coll y Prat wrote to the king two years later, outlining his efforts to "maintain order

85 Montalvo, 1818, Op. Cit., p. 220.

86 *Gaceta de Caracas*, Caracas, n. 278, 17 Sep 1819, p. 2144.

87 Díaz, 1819, p. 5,14.

88 *Gazeta de Santafé*, Bogotá, n. 1, 13 June 1816, p. 4-5.

89 Morillo, 17 Sep 1816. In: Rodríguez Villa. Op. Cit., p. 215. v. 3.

by all means, sustain the opinion for the Government, and strengthen the moral force"⁹⁰. Offering an exhaustive portrait of the virtues of Fernando VII, the *Gaceta de Caracas* highlighted his devotion to sift through the mandates of public opinion beyond official circles: "His Majesty yearns to know public opinion, and in order to do it by himself, and without deceit and intrigue distorting reality, many nights he frequents cafés, *fondas*, and other public places disguised as an ordinary person in the company of his august brother. There, he observes everything; he listens to everything; and he gains the knowledge he requires"⁹¹.

Royalists imagined public opinion as an imperious and unifying force capable of producing a complete identification between the king and his kingdom. This normative ideal of unanimity mirrored the unitary conception of the monarchical order and the consideration of the unity of the body politic as a supreme value. Public opinion rapidly emerged as the main space for the production and expression of the monarchical order. Consequently, most of the royal government's actions were expressed, both privately and publicly, in relation to public opinion and their impact on the reconstruction of the monarchical order. Pascual Enrile wrote to Madrid in 1817 justifying the capital punishment of the revolutionaries resorting to public opinion: "nearly ninety people have been punished after exhausting all the avenues for leniency [...] It was published in the *Gaceta* and [people] applauded [it]"⁹². Morillo requested the presence of Catholic priests in Tierra Firme because "these subjects shape the opinion of the pueblos, inspire trust in the inhabitants, know how to make them love the Government of the King, and unite the will of everyone"⁹³. The royal armies were to win over the vassals' hearts with their good behavior and avoid "disputes or harmful conversations about the good opinion that must generally prevail in favor of the nation's cause"⁹⁴. Monarchical celebrations were to re-educate the king's vassals in the "good order," since

90 Coll y Prat, Op. Cit., p. 247.

91 *Gaceta de Caracas*, Caracas, n. 15, 10 May 1815, p. 126.

92 Enrile, 26 June 1817. In Rodríguez Villa. Op. Cit., p. 317. v. 3.

93 Morillo, 22 Dec 1817. In Rodríguez Villa. Op. Cit., p. 482. v. 3.

94 Morillo, 1821, p. 35.

“far from being a vain ceremony, they are, on the contrary, necessary lessons for the pueblos, [and] testimonies of the love and respect due to the Monarch”⁹⁵. Printed materials were also to reaffirm the “opinion that we should all have of the paternal goodness that characterizes our Monarch and his honorable Ministers”⁹⁶.

Indeed, the royalists regarded the press as “one of the most effective and purposeful vehicles to carry out such beneficial and extensive ideas,” namely, “to cement the trust that the peoples recently freed from despotism should have in the [government]” and “to pacify the Americas and restore peace and prosperity”⁹⁷. Royal authorities maintained at least six printing presses in different cities: Caracas, Bogotá, Cartagena, Popayán, Medellín, and the “*Imprenta Expedicionaria*” brought by Morillo and widely used during his military campaigns in Tierra Firme. Besides publishing *bandos*, *proclamas*, broadsides, sermons, and pamphlets, royalists printed three major newspapers and at least two military periodicals: the *Gaceta de Caracas* (1815–1821), the *Gazeta de Santafé* (1816–1819), the *Gaceta del Gobierno de Cartagena de Indias* (1816–1817), the *Boletín del Ejército Expedicionario* (1815–1816), and the *Boletín del Ejército Pacificador* (1819)⁹⁸. These publications not only circulated widely in Tierra Firme, but also in other American viceroyalties, the Caribbean islands, and the Iberian Peninsula. They engaged in conversation with other royalist publications within the Spanish empire and the British monarchy, and debated with some of their most vigorous opponents, such as the *Correo del Orinoco*. Royal authorities often attached printed materials to their official communications, while the *Gaceta de Madrid* reprinted excerpts from these publications to report on the progress of the restoration in Tierra Firme⁹⁹. The legitimacy of the

95 *Gazeta de Santafé*, Bogotá, n. 19, 17 Oct. 1816, p. 203-204.

96 *Gazeta de Santafé*, Bogotá, [s. n.], 25 June 1818, p.10.

97 *Prospecto de un periódico que se va á publicar en esta ciudad titulado: Gaceta Real de Cartagena de Indias*. Cartagena de Indias: Imprenta del Gobierno, 1816.

98 On royalist print culture during the monarchical restoration, Grases, 1960; Pérez Vila, 1960; Pino Iturrieta, *Op Cit.*; Straka, 2012; Chaparro-Silva, 2012, 2014.

99 On correspondence and printed materials see as an example Morillo’s communications with royal authorities in Rodríguez Villa, *Op. Cit.*, p 13, 32, 124-126, 197-198, 239-241, 663, 683. v. 3. On the

monarchical government in Tierra Firme was deeply intertwined with print culture. As Morillo affirmed to the king's vassals in 1816: "[the revolutionaries] repeated that the King's laws were tyrannical, that he prohibited trade, industry, and agriculture. I trust you all are already convinced that it is quite the opposite, as you have seen it at greater length in the official *gacetas*"¹⁰⁰. Still in 1825, from his exile in Madrid, García del Castillo, former editor of the *Gazeta de Santafé*, wrote to the monarchical authorities insisting on the importance of restoring Spanish rule in Tierra Firme in the name of public opinion. A printing press was "absolutely necessary" for this enterprise, since the "opportune use that can be made of the press paves the way for opinion and for victory. Simón Bolívar has demonstrated its use with great results and numerous examples of this can be presented to the public"¹⁰¹.

The crisis of the Spanish monarchy enthroned public opinion as an unquestionable source of political legitimacy. After the conclusion of the first revolutionary cycle in Tierra Firme, royalists could not ignore the remarkable ascent of public opinion. This open recognition weakened the power of the monarch as the living expression of the unity of the body politic. Royalists propped up the public as a legitimizing force alongside the Crown, intensifying the politicization of the public spaces in Tierra Firme and irreversibly undermining the traditional foundations of the king's rule. The monarchical order was thus traversed by a radical ambiguity: the king's government, still asserting itself as a mandate of divine origin, had to justify its legitimacy, akin to the Spanish American republics born out of the revolution, by resorting to public opinion. Tellingly, several defining acts of the period were justified primarily in terms of the dictates of public opinion. When communicating the restoration of the king and the abrogation of the Cádiz Constitution by Fernando VII in 1814, the Minister of Ultramar, the Mexican Miguel de Lardizábal, affirmed to the vassals in Tier-

excerpts of newspapers from Tierra Firme printed in Madrid see, *Gaceta de Madrid*, Madrid, n. 10, 23 Jan 1817, p. 93-100; n. 64, 29 May 1817, p. 548-551; n. 76, 28 June 1817, p. 665-672; n. 4, 8 Jan 1818, p. 31; n. 30, 10 March 1818, p. 252-3; n.57, 12 May 1818, p. 472; n.148, 2 Dec 1819, p. 1236-9.

100 Morillo, 1816b.

101 García del Castillo y Tejada, 1825.

ra Firme: “in not admitting the constitution, His Majesty has conformed to the general opinion that he has known for himself on the long journey before his arrival in the Capital”¹⁰². Similarly, in November 1820, the *Tratados de Trujillo*, signed by the governments of Colombia and Spain to regularize the war, stated that “this war originates from the difference of opinions”¹⁰³. The realm of politics during the monarchical restoration unfolded between these two competing and contradictory legitimacies: the monarch and public opinion. The unsolvable tension “to satisfy our Sovereign and the public,” as the *Gazeta de Santafé* concisely put it, defined royalist political ideas and actions during the Age of Revolutions¹⁰⁴. The kingdom needed less of the king and ever more of public opinion to imagine itself as a political community and guarantee the empire of order in Tierra Firme.

III. Final Reflections

The concept of order allowed royalists to navigate the intricate political problems rooted in the crisis of the Spanish monarchy in Tierra Firme. Questions regarding the origin of royal sovereignty, the contours of the political community, and the objectives of communal life were all entwined in the concept of order. Examining the political uses of the concept offers invaluable insights into the recomposition of discourses and political practices during the Age of Revolutions. The collapse of the Spanish monarchy and the revolutionary process can no longer be read as the struggle between two radically opposed worldviews embodied in the principles of tradition and modernity, conservatism and liberalism, the old and the new, and represented respectively by counterrevolutionaries and revolutionaries, royalists and republicans—as if all these terms were easily interchangeable. A historically informed exploration of the conceptual trajectories of order also sheds light on the interplay between historical continuities and discontinuities in the gradual transition from a “kingdom of vassals”

102 *Gaceta de Caracas*, Caracas, n. 2, 21 Aug 1814, p. 10.

103 *Gaceta de Caracas*, Caracas, n. 19, 6 Dec 1820, p. 97.

104 *Gazeta de Santafé*, Bogotá, n. 29, 26 Dec 1816, p. 292.

to a “republic of citizens” in Tierra Firme. This process now appears more as a contingent, nonlinear, and multilayered process and less as a clear-cut transition from a self-contained political universe to another completely different.

The crisis of the Spanish monarchy brought forth the radical irruption of temporality in the political discourse. The monarchical restoration marked a historical moment in which the foundations of the monarchical order collapsed and underwent a profound reorganization. The explicit manifestation of these principles by the royalists implied the open recognition of both the immanence of the political order and the conventional character of the royal government. Henceforth, the will of the members of the political community became the cornerstone of any possible order in Tierra Firme. Royal officials briefly reinstated the authority of the king’s government but could not prevent the definitive unraveling of the monarchical order. The new era of the sovereignty of the people had begun in Tierra Firme. According to the revolutionaries, the triumph of the revolution involved the re-creation of society under completely unprecedented principles, “because believing that a new order of things can be established with the same elements that oppose it is a chimera”¹⁰⁵. The revolution meant nothing more and nothing less than the birth of a “new order of things.” As Bolívar wrote to Fernando VII in 1821, perhaps realizing the beautiful alchemy of contradictory elements, through the definitive independence from Spain and the destruction of the monarchy in Tierra Firme, “Colombia will enter the natural order of the political world”¹⁰⁶.

As the revolutionaries focused on constructing this new order, the royalists rapidly sought explanations to make sense of the end of the monarchical order in Tierra Firme. Political miscalculations and lack of cooperation by royal authorities, excessive violence against *criollos* and the *pueblos*, internal disputes between different royalist factions over how to carry out the restoration, and the revolutionary creation of a *patria americana* in opposition to Spain during the wars emerged as frequently mentioned

105 *El Patriota*, Bogotá, n. 30, 1 June 1823, p. 231.

106 Bolívar, 24 Jan 1821. In: Bolívar, 2009, p. 181.

reasons. However, most royalists explained the decline of the monarchical order primarily by attributing it to the rise of public opinion in favor of the republic. A month after the Battle of Boyacá, Morillo wrote to the Spanish Minister of War explaining how the fate of Tierra Firme was sealed because the supreme power of public opinion now favored the revolutionaries: "Bolívar in a single day destroys the result of five years of military campaign, and in a single battle reconquers what the King's troops won in many battles, due to the disposition, feelings, and general opinion of the population"¹⁰⁷. A month later, Gabriel de Torres, Governor of Cartagena de Indias, wrote to the royal authorities in Madrid in a similar vein: the "pueblos have demonstrated the numerous drawbacks of neglecting to establish public opinion within them, which is their moral strength"¹⁰⁸. Archbishop Coll y Prat also wrote to the king pointing out the problem of the lack of "public spirit" in Tierra Firme. He advised the use of the same means that the revolutionaries had employed to undermine the king's cause, but now to reestablish the moral unity of the Spanish monarchy, waging the definitive battle for political legitimacy in the realm of public opinion: "Why could not your legitimate government use newspapers and good institutions to keep the provinces useful and dependent, which are the same means that the intrusive government used to separate them [from the king] and bring about their ruin?," he asked¹⁰⁹.

Coll y Prat's question was at the heart of the fundamental shift produced in the conceptual structures of the public discourses propelled by the revolution in Tierra Firme: the impossibility of returning to the political-conceptual situation prior to the crisis of the Spanish monarchy. It also shows how the problem of the origin and ends of royal sovereignty and the place of the vassals in the monarchical order were progressively eclipsed during the Age of Revolutions by questions about the conditions of possibility of the political community and the legitimacy of the royal government—or any government—to rule over Tierra Firme. Ultimately, it reveals the definitive rise of the new understandings of power and society

107 Morillo, 12 Sep 1819. In: Rodríguez Villa. Op. Cit., p. 50. v. 4.

108 Torres y Velasco 1819.

109 Coll y Prat, Op. Cit., p. 153.

produced by the revolutions. The Spanish king became one of the “kings without kingdoms,” as Díaz had sarcastically described the revolutionaries in the *Gaceta de Caracas*. The kingdom, now invested with the title of “public,” became more sovereign than the king had ever been in Tierra Firme.

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