

6 Sabino's sin

Racism and the founding of Basque nationalism

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Walker Connor is the consummate comparativist and synthesizer. Above all, he is an intellectual adventurer, always disposed to run the risks inherent in juxtaposing sweeping *longue durée* historical patterns to yesterday's and today's news items. In this way, he is able to discern patterns in the seemingly chaotic and idiosyncratic nation-building process of different periods and places. He has thereby provided us with frameworks within which to situate our particular interests and case studies.

This chapter seeks to employ Walker's eclectic and adventuresome approach in an attempt to understand the controversial racist discourse associated with Basque nationalism, and particularly during its foundational phase in the late nineteenth century. The movement's founder, Sabino de Arana y Goiri (1865–1903),¹ has indeed been customarily accused by his adversaries of being a racist. While, as we shall see, there is more than enough evidence to support the charge, many critics simply used it as a sufficient criterion to invalidate the Basque nationalist project as flawed and, ultimately, pathological.²

Like Connor (1994), I believe that nationalism is more an emotional sentiment, grounded in psychological commitment to ethnic particularism, than a rational economic and political choice (though, to be sure, rationality is at play as well). I would further argue that for most of the past century, with the globe divided up entirely into 'recognized' states and their colonial empires, no new ethnonationalist movement could emerge *ex nihilo*. Rather, the challenge from below (or within) contests the historical cultural and political claims of an existing, i.e. triumphant, state configuration(s) with *alternative* interpretations of the ascendant superordinate nationalist power's versions of ostensibly *shared* history, culture and politics.

In the Basque case, when Arana launched his ethnonationalist movement in the 1890s, the foes were Spanish and French nationalism (although to date more the former than the latter). The cornerstone of Arana's argument was that, although racially superior to their neighbors (particularly Spaniards), the Basques were in grave danger of being denatured politically and exploited economically by the centrist Spanish and French states, as well as diluted demographically (assimilated) within their far larger populations. In the process all that was particularly Basque, and most notably the language, would be lost forever. Arana ultimately sought to carve an independent Basque state, which he called Euzkadi, out of the existing

Spanish and French ones. He coined the expression *zazpiak bat* ('the seven are one'), reference being to France's three traditional Basque territories and Spain's four. It is scarcely surprising that Spanish and French nationalists were (and remain) anxious to dismiss (when not actively opposing) Basque nationalism. The nub (and rub) of the matter was (is) that in most concrete historical cases the creation of someone's state has been at the expense of another's (others') nation – a point that recurs throughout the extensive corpus of Connor's work.

The European racist discourse

In situating Arana within fin-de-siècle Europe the issue was not who was racist, the rarity was the non-racist.³ The scientific and industrial revolutions resulting from Enlightenment thought, combined with four centuries of successful European imperial expansion, had removed doubt from all but the most skeptical European mind that Caucasians were superb racial stock, a view supported totally by nineteenth-century physical anthropological investigation.

At a minimum,⁴ humankind could be divided into three great races: superior Caucasoids, intermediate Mongoloids and inferior Negroids. The most influential synthesis of this viewpoint, as well as its canonical text,⁵ is Count Gobineau's *The Inequality of Human Races* (1967: 205–212), written in 1853.

At the same time, there was an internal European intellectual debate regarding the superiority or inferiority of certain 'races', 'peoples', 'stocks' or 'nationalities' within the Caucasian category. The main venues of European scientific racial discourse were France, England and Germany. Not surprisingly, the notion emerged of a Nordic, Teutonic, Germanic and, ultimately, Aryan racial stock common to this corner of Western Europe, that was clearly superior to that of southern and central Europeans (Biddiss 1979: 28).

Poliakov (1974) surveys five centuries of European racist thought in order to understand the origins of the anti-Semitism that produced the Holocaust. He argues that discovery of the New World, which brought Europeans into contact with previously unknown (to them) peoples, cast the first doubts upon monogenism, i.e. the Adam-as-original-ancestor-of-humankind view of human history. It was the French Enlightenment, and particularly Voltaire, that argued for polygenism as the proper scientific, as opposed to theological, doctrine for the study of obvious human variation (Poliakov 1974: 131–133).

Polygenism admitted two new possibilities (among many others). The first (in anticipation of subsequent primate and human paleontological studies) was that there might be a continuum rather than clear division between bestiality and humanity (with the obvious implications and potential for the ranking of human races in terms of their determined inferiority or superiority).

The second possibility was that all of humanity need no longer be viewed as descended from the Garden of Eden and passed through a Jewish (Old Testament) filter. Drawing heavily upon the studies of Sanskritists that demonstrated linguistic correlation within an Indo-European language family, the Aryan alternative posited an original Aryan homeland somewhere in Central Asia (in or near Tibet),

from which colonists of the great race fanned out and created the Old World's major civilizations (Poliakov 1974: 188–199). For Gobineau, these even included the Chinese and Egyptian, as well as the Greek and Roman (1967: 212). The 'Germanic races' provided both the epicenter and greatest expression of European Aryanism (Poliakov 1974: 198–214). It was the dispersion of Germanic races throughout Western Europe 'which in the fifth century transformed the Western mind' (Gobineau 1967: 212).

By the first half of the nineteenth century the discipline of physical anthropology, based upon the measurement⁶ of human phenotypes for classificatory purposes (e.g. stature, cranial capacity and shape, hair, skin and eye color, etc.), provided the empirical evidence for scientific racism. While this proved to be a fairly straightforward (if erroneous) exercise in distinguishing among Gobineau's 'great races', when applied to Caucasians in their European homeland, and during its nationalist era, the discourse was immediately framed by historians in territorial (nation-state) and 'national character' terms. Thus, Jules Michelet, in the 'Introduction' to his *History of France* (1831) states:

Germany gave her Swabians to Switzerland and to Sweden; her Goths to Spain, her Lombards to Lombardy, her Anglo-Saxons to England, her Franks to France. She gave both a name and renewal to all the peoples of Europe.

(cited in Poliakov 1974: 33)

In discussing Germanic (i.e. Frankish) hegemony in France as well as Germanic successes in central Europe, Poliakov notes:

the Frank, a Germanic man and a free man, may equally be contrasted with the serf (= *servus*) as with the slave (= Slav). Thus the key words in French political history slyly hint at the superiority of the German stock over the Latins and over the Slavs. This was a superiority both of race and of class, because the two notions of upper and lower classes and of superior and inferior races, which are quite distinct today, were not so easy to disentangle when it was a question of contrasting conquering peoples with those they had conquered.

(ibid.: 17)

In effect, there was confounding of ostensible biological and linguistic evidence within a presentist historical framework in order to derive an understanding of the continent's contemporary political divisions, as well as the internal make-up and rank ordering of racial stocks within each of Europe's states. Furthermore, if biology mattered,⁷ then there was the challenge of explaining the rise and fall in the fortunes of ancient, medieval and modern civilizations, states and empires – particularly in light of the fact that no national territory, including Germany, seemed to be populated by a single racial stock. It was in this regard that the tautological circle was closed and the triumphs of Western Europe's ascendant nineteenth-century powers (France, Germany and England) became the *prima facie*

evidence of their Nordic racial superiority,⁸ just as Spain's exhaustion and Italian impotence were the results of a predominantly Latin inferiority.⁹

In sum, nineteenth- and early twentieth-century European racist discourse produced an enormous muddle, an intellectual morass perhaps unprecedented in the history of Western 'science', while demonstrating the near impossibility of applying true objectivity to self-scrutiny in human affairs. The consequences were far from academic or benign, since the discourse was directly responsible for two colossal human tragedies – the eugenics movement and the Holocaust. Regarding the latter, polygenism provided Europeans with an alternative interpretation to that of direct, common descent from and with Jews, thereby opening the door to rampant anti-Semitism (as well as proscription of other inferior races such as Gypsies, Slavs, etc.) in the defense of Aryan racial integrity (Poliakov 1974: 255–325).

Basque racist discourse

Poliakov begins his analysis with Spain,¹⁰ and specifically the early efforts of Archbishop Isidore of Seville (560–634 AD) to reconcile the vanquished, thoroughly Latinized, Iberians with their Visigothic (Germanic) conquerors (1974: 11), while celebrating the recent (589 AD) conversion of the latter's monarchy to Christianity. In his *History of the Goths, Vandals and Suevi* (1970), Isidore argued that, while the Visigoths were descended from Magog, the Iberians were the heirs of Tubal, both sons of Japhet and grandsons of Noah. Iberians and Goths were therefore blood brothers, irrespective of the existing uneven power relationship.

In 711 the Iberian peninsula experienced the first of a long series of invasions that culminated in Muslim control of all but a restricted northern region running along the Cantabrian shoreline from the Kingdom of Asturias in the west to the Catalan counties bordering the Mediterranean in the east (including Bizkaia and Gipuzkoa, as well as parts of Araba and Navarra in the Basque homeland). These Christian forces initiated a centuries-long Reconquest which, in the late fifteenth century (1492), during the reign of Fernando and Isabel, triumphed over the last Muslim stronghold of Granada. According to Poliakov:

After the Christian *Reconquista*, the baptized descendants of Moslems and Jews found themselves branded with dishonour, and laws for maintaining purity of blood divided Spaniards into two castes, the pure-blooded Old Christians and New Christians whose blood was tarnished. The dividing line was not the Germanic or Iberian stock of the remote ancestor but his orthodoxy or heterodoxy. Spanish theologians worked out a doctrine according to which the false beliefs of both the Moors and Jews had soiled their blood, and this stain or '*nota*' had been transmitted by heredity to their furthest descendants, who were set apart in the almost untouchable caste of the New Christians or *conversos*. Thus, in defiance of the dogma proclaiming the regenerative virtue of baptism, an institutional form of racism made its first appearance in European history. The theologians who invented this doctrine did not dispute that both

categories of Christians were descended from the common father, Adam, but they did maintain that the rejection of Christ had corrupted the *conversos* biologically.

(1974: 12–13)¹¹

In sixteenth-century Spain there was a regular obsession with the purity of one's blood. The country was entering its Golden Age of imperial expansion within both Europe and the world, and access to key posts within the civil and ecclesiastical administrations required noble status. While Poliakov is correct in asserting the importance of religious orthodoxy in affirming Old Christian claims, he is wrong in dismissing the racial criterion. In point of fact, the purity-of-blood discourse was framed in terms of Gothic descent which established not only the claimant's Old Christian but also noble status (i.e. descent from Isidore of Seville's conquerors rather than conquered).

In 1526 Bizkaia promulgated its 'New Fuero',¹² proclaiming Bizkaian collective nobility and precluding persons of non-noble (i.e. New Christian) blood from settling therein. The following year Gipuzkoa followed suit (*Nueva recopilación* 1976: 326). When, in 1696, Miguel de Aramburu was commissioned by the provincial government (*Diputación*) of Gipuzkoa to compile Gipuzkoa's foral tradition, he summed up two centuries of Basque historiography in a preamble which states:

There is no specific mention in the sacred scriptures regarding the place in which descendants of the Patriarch Noah founded, for the first time, their settlement and domicile in the initial populating of Spain after the universal flood: however, there is very specific information, grandly founded in tradition [*autoridad común*] that Tubal, fifth son of Japhet, and grandson of the second father of humankind, was the first to come to this region from Armenia with his family and companions after the confusion of tongues in Babylon, and that his first stop and settlement was in the lands situated between the Ebro River and the Cantabrian Ocean. Thus state the ancients and the moderns . . .

After noting Armenian etymologies in Gipuzkoan place names as the first proof of the foregoing, Aramburu states:

the second witness to Tubal's presence is the Basque language itself, legacy of the resulting confusion when God created seventy-two languages at the destruction of the Tower of Babel. Basque was the language of Tubal and his followers, and they were the ones to introduce it into Spain, where it became the original tongue of this kingdom.

The Basque language is the *prima facie* evidence that Basques were the original settlers of Iberia since it was conserved many years, until its inhabitants were, at different times, oppressed by diverse nations, and they forgot their primitive tongue and received those used by their conquerors, as subjects of their violations.

But this never transpired in the Province of Gipuzkoa, and its surrounding [Basque] areas, because in these places foreigners have never triumphed as they have in the other regions of Spain, and the natural language of the primitive settlers has been conserved gloriously, their descendants continuing the possession of their estates, which have come down to them until the present through inheritance, without the arrivals of the Egyptians, Caldeans, Hebrews, Greeks, Carthaginians, Romans, Alans, Svevs, Vandals, Goths and Arabs, who dominated absolutely in almost all of the rest of the kingdom, and who introduced their national languages, erasing that of the Gipuzkoans in their land, defended and maintained always with valor by the true descendants of the Patriarch Tubal, against all the power of the foreigners, who never managed to deprive Gipuzkoans of their most ancient and free heritage; which, in truth may not be denied through any assertion of discourses whether the most scrupulous or incredulous.

(Nueva recopilación 1976: 5–8)

Thus, more than a millennium after Isidore of Seville invoked it regarding Spanish origins, Tubalism was alive and well but in the service of Basque particularism. However, as Monreal notes, it was not particularism for the purpose of confrontation or separatism. Basques were loyal to Spain and willing collaborators in both the Spanish national and imperial projects (1985: 31–32). Indeed, Aramburu's late seventeenth-century dissertation on Basque uniqueness was offered, 'for the greater honor of the Spanish nation, service of its Kings and Lords, and grand estimation of their country' (*Nueva recopilación 1976: 7–8*).

Greenwood argues, erroneously,¹³ that a mid-eighteenth-century text by the Gipuzkoan priest Manuel de Larramendi represents a watershed. He developed extremely virulent ethnic slurs against the Castilians, singling them out as the worst of all Spaniards. Larramendi viewed Spanishness and Basqueness as mutually exclusive and conflicting (1977: 97–98).

Greenwood follows Caro Baroja's lead in branding Larramendi as a 'precursor of the modern racists' (Caro Baroja 1958: 89). I would, however, disagree with the Greenwood/Caro Baroja reading of Larramendi. Tejada and Percopo note that, far from being a 'virulent' or 'vituperative' text, its anti-Castilian 'darts' can be 'counted on the fingers of one hand' (1965: 166). Instead of being anti-Spanish, Larramendi, as a confirmed Tubalist, regarded the Basques to be the original, unsullied Spaniards. His real targets are the frenchified Castilian toadies of the Bourbon rulers in Madrid who were undermining Basque privileges. And while he does launch a few pejorative statements against Castilians in general, he is mainly on the defensive against the Castilian anti-Basque barbs of his day – notably that the language was sheer gibberish¹⁴ and that Basque claims to universal noble status were pretentious. That is, by virtue of the Tubalist we-are-the-original-Spaniards argument, combined with the we-were-never-subsequently-sullied-by-the-blood-of-foreign-invaders one, the claim was for universal noble status of all Basques, including humble peasants and artisans. From at least the time of Cervantes, the rustic Bizkaian 'nobility' was an object of Castilian scorn and satire

(cf. Chapter 8 of Book One in the *Quixote*). Larramendi was reacting directly against the barbs of his contemporary, Don Carlos Osorio, who ridiculed Gipuzkoa's 'noble' shoemakers, 'noble' tailors, 'noble' peasants, 'noble' charcoal burners, etc. Larramendi denounced Don Carlos and his ilk as, 'idle nobles, lazy nobles, useless nobles, uncultured, self-evidently unsuitable, who, just to look at them provokes vomit and indignation' (1985: 147–148). He added:

Even supposing that these *hidalgos* and nobles of Castile are descended directly from the Goths, a supposition that I make gratuitously, I ask: were these Goths from which they come, and which provide their family lines, *hidalgos* and nobles? None of them were villeins or had a manual trade? All were soldiers? Give us a break. Were they not barbarians, thieves who in the name of genteel and Arian [not to be confused with Aryan] conquerors, came from distant lands? And were there not among their thousands many sons of tailors, shoemakers, and other tradesmen of those lands from which they left?

(1985: 166)

Larramendi saves his greatest spite for his fellow Gipuzkoans who were accepting the notion of Castilian superiority – and particularly women who displayed the immodest dress styles dictated by Madrid fashion and his fellow priests who insisted upon preaching in the more prestigious Castilian language to monoglot rural Basque congregations (1985: 223, 304–305).

Finally, rather than implacably anti-Spanish, Larramendi concludes:

I see that you will always call Gipuzkoa a corner of Spain, and you do well; but you will be obliged to call it a precious, rational, cultivated corner; a tidy and clean corner like silver and gold; a corner of a noble, honorable and generous people, which has earned a thousand laurels through its deeds and service to the Crown, for the honor and the triumphs of Spain.

(1985: 322)

Creating a Basque race

Throughout this chapter we have relied heavily upon Poliakov to lead us through the maze of European racist discourse. However, in the second paragraph of his first chapter, he introduces a (from our viewpoint) key caveat: 'we will not . . . tarry to expound the exceptional case of Basque language and culture' (1974: 11). Poliakov clearly recognized that such digression accesses a whole other set of issues, a discourse within the discourse, as it were, that would further complicate his already exceedingly complex and daunting mission.

The 'exceptional' Basque case regards the early recognition within the scientific challenge to theological interpretations of human origins that the Basques could not be accommodated within the emerging view that historical Europe was the legacy of prehistorical invasions of the continent from the east by related speakers of the Indo-European family of languages.¹⁵ As we have seen, during the first half

of the nineteenth century, thanks to the Sanskritists, language reigned supreme as the evidence that defined the parameters of the scientific racist research agenda and discourse. In 1821 German philologist Wilhelm von Humboldt published his treatise on the uniqueness of Basque and its 'Ancient Iberian' (rather than Indo-European) credentials (1821).¹⁶

If the Basques were not Indo-Europeans, who were they?¹⁷ Could they perhaps be the living remnants of a proto-European population that antedated, but was then overwhelmed and largely displaced by, the successive waves of Indo-European invaders of the continent? Such questions fired the imaginations of major figures in the emerging discipline of physical anthropology. By mid-century, Anders Retzius, the Swedish anatomist who systematized craniometry, and Paul Broca, the founding father of French anthropology,¹⁸ were debating Basque anthropometry. Broca published an article entitled 'Sur les caractères du crâne des Basques' ('On the Characteristics of Basque Skulls') and six years later he stated:

You know that the Basques are the only people in Western Europe that still speak a language unrelated to the Indo-European stock. It is therefore natural that they are considered to be the last and pure representatives of the so-called autochthonous races that occupied the soil of this part of Europe before the era of the Asiatic invasions. This conclusion is without a doubt far from being rigorous, because it may easily be shown that the Basques, through mixture with the Indo-Europeans, have lost all or part of the primitive characteristics of their race, but without abandoning for that reason their primitive language. It is nevertheless probable that, if their language is the only one to have survived, while those of the prehistoric peoples around them were extinguished, leaving barely a few geographic names here and there as testimony to their ancient existence, it is because this small mountainous region that the Basques still occupy today was never completely subjugated by the invaders, and that they yet conserve if not political sovereignty at least a numerical preponderance. It is therefore permissible to believe that their physical features have been less modified by their cross-breeding than that of other peoples of Western Europe.

(1868: 1–2)

There was the notion, then, that Basques, if not a 'pure' proto-European race, were at the least the continent's 'purest' contemporary representatives of it. Investigations of the implications of such a viewpoint continue to the present day, but are beyond the scope of the present study.¹⁹ For our purposes, suffice it to say that by Sabino's time European scientific racism largely accepted the conclusion that there was a 'Basque race', a creation more of the intellectual circles of Paris and Stockholm than Basque (or Spanish) ones (Sánchez-Prieto 1993: 388–393).

Sabino's political agenda and racist views

Arana's Basque ethnonationalism was directed primarily against Spain for reasons other than simply his putative Spanish citizenship. By this time there were clear

differences in the dynamics of the respective playing fields afforded by the Spanish and French Basque Countries, as well as the vulnerability of Spain and France to an internal ethnonationalist challenge. These included:

- 1 A geographic and demographic preponderance of the Spanish Basque Country (over its French Basque counterpart) which contained approximately six-sevenths of the Basque homeland and, in Arana's day, about nine-elevenths of its total population.
- 2 Marked economic disparity manifested particularly in the industrial development of Bizkaia and parts of Gipuzkoa, versus the bucolic economy of the French Basque area, dominated by fishing and peasant agriculture. Spanish Basque industry and attendant urbanization attracted workers from throughout Spain, a process which threatened to make Spanish Basques a minority in their home area while marginalizing their culture and language into rural enclaves.
- 3 Diametrically opposed nineteenth-century national histories. Despite the defeat of Napoleon and the humiliation of the Franco-Prussian War, for the French it was a period of national triumph in which France ascended as a major player on the European scene and as an imperial power on the global one (Doyle 1986: 306–318). For Spain the century opened with (brief) loss of national sovereignty (to the French) and the dissolution of much of its New World colonial empire through the American independence movements. From the 1830s through the mid-1870s Spain experienced civil strifes known collectively as the Carlist Wars. By the 1890s there were serious independence movements in Spain's few remaining colonies.
- 4 Significantly differing paradigms in their respective nation-building histories. Until brought into the orbit of French Bourbonism in the eighteenth century, the Spain of Fernando and Isabel experienced nearly two subsequent centuries of Hapsburg rule imbued with respect for regional cultural and linguistic differences (*las Españas*). Within this framework there was a Basque foral tradition whereby the Spanish monarchs respected Basque particularisms – including exemption from military conscription, freedom from direct taxation and sovereignty regarding trade and tariffs. It was only during the late nineteenth century (1876), indeed during Arana's childhood, that the Basque *fueros* were all but abolished by Madrid, unilaterally and seemingly definitively, in the aftermath of the foralists' defeat in the last Carlist conflict. In France, prior to the Revolution Basques also enjoyed a degree of foral autonomy *vis-à-vis* Paris (though never to the degree of their ethnic counterparts in Hapsburgian Spain). However, any such political particularism was abolished by the triumph of Jacobin centralism. Thenceforth France would be arguably the quintessential centralized state on the planet, as well as among the least sensitive to ethnic differences (let alone ethnonationalist claims) within its borders.

It is also necessary to situate Arana within the social, political and intellectual climate of his times. He was born into a devoutly religious, upper-middle-class Carlist

family in the city of Bilbao. He therefore experienced the bitterness of the Carlists' débâcle in the intimacy of his home, including his family's period of political exile in France. He attended university in Barcelona at a time that a Catalan ethnonationalist movement was in its formative stages.²⁰ When Arana declared first a Bizkaian (Arana Goiri 1932) and then Basque right to independence, his rallying political slogan was *Jaungoikoa eta Lagizarra* – or 'God and Tradition'. The former was iteration of Carlist Catholic confessionalism in the face of secularism emanating both from a laical-liberal Madrid and the socialist politics of Bizkaia's rapidly growing industrial work force. The latter revindicated a centuries-long foral tradition that had become the faintest of echoes of its former self.

In short, in Arana's view, a new ethnonationalist political movement was required to fill the void caused by the prostration and incapacity of Carlism to serve as an effective counterweight to Spain's unilateral abolition of Basque political autonomy and a 'Spanish invasion' which threatened to minoritize and marginate Basques in their own homeland, while raising a very real spectre of ethnic and class conflict.

The truly 'revolutionary' part of his political agenda was its separatism, a sentiment that Arana promoted primarily through his writings in his own newspaper, the *Bizkaitarra*, begun in 1893. He also created its organizational expression by founding (in 1895) the forerunner of the Basque Nationalist Party in order to contest municipal and provincial elections.

As Watson remarks:

It was an era of profound social and economic change which itself challenged traditionally-held identities, and it seems not inappropriate to speak in terms of an ontological struggle between Basque and Spanish nationalism. However, while the former had to depend on an initial minority following and the use of symbolic constructions in its ideology, the latter had at its disposal the full force of state power.

(1996: 198–199)

In many respects Sabino is a tragic figure. For most of his contemporaries his campaign must have seemed downright comical. Initially, his newspaper had miniscule circulation and his party but a tiny following. Arana himself was fined, censored and imprisoned on several occasions.²¹ He died prematurely of Addison's disease aged 38, providing the by then growing Basque nationalist movement with its first martyr.

Arana was not an intellectual in the scholarly sense (Conversi 1997: 59). Rather than an original thinker, he was more a polemicist, synthesizer and purveyor of ideas – he seldom, if ever, cited authority for his arguments, so we can only infer his 'sources'. There are, however, ways in which Sabino was a true visionary. In articulating his radical Basque nationalism (i.e. independentism), he underscored the Basques' shameful dilemma in being colonized by Spain, and thereby anticipated the subsequent internal colonialism arguments of Lenin, Gramsci, Preobrazhensky, Bukharin, and Hechter (as applied to regions within European

states) (Hechter 1999: xiii–xiv). He empathized with the colonized peoples of the world, and would most certainly have sympathized with the views of Frantz Fanon (1963). In questioning the South African situation of his day, Arana denounced the aggression of the English against the Boers, as well as that of the Boers against the Kaffirs. He cited the evidence that whites in South Africa organized sporting campaigns of extermination against the blacks and concluded,

Such is the unending history of humanity. It is how the Greeks comported themselves in Asia, the Romans in three parts of the [known] world, the followers of Mohammed everywhere, the Spaniards in the New World, the Anglo-Saxons in North America, and it is how all the powers are proceeding today in China.

(*Partido Nacionalista Vasco* 1995: 206)

Unlike Larramendi, who fulminated against the superior airs of a Spain that, in the mid-eighteenth century, remained one of Europe's respectable national and imperial powers,²² Arana's foil was an all but prostrate country whose imperial colonial legacy was in its death throes. Indeed, for him it was the Basques' shameful stain to be dominated by the central authority of such a pathetic state and colonized by what (as we have seen) the wider European racialist discourse regarded to be inferior 'Latin' racial stock.

Arana delighted in Spain's tribulations, showing sympathy for the Moroccans in Spain's North African conflict of his day and delighting in its humiliating defeat in the Spanish-American War (1898). Indeed, one of his imprisonments resulted in 1902, when his telegram congratulating President Roosevelt for having freed Cuba from slavery (i.e. Spanish colonial domination) was intercepted by Spanish authorities (Conversi 1997: 68).

Regarding Sabino's racialism, Conversi (perhaps too charitably) concludes,

It is not certain how justly Arana can be accused of being a racist, as he is by many of his opponents. Indeed he never espoused a biological theory of racial superiority, nor did he believe in a universal hierarchy of races.

(1997: 68)

Fair enough. However, he did coin the pejorative terms *Maketania* (derived from *La Mancha*) for non-Basque (particularly Castilian) Spain and *Maketo* for its inhabitants. In this regard, Arana was a Tubalist without Tubal,²³ as it were, stating his belief that the Basques were the pure remnants of the ancient Iberian original inhabitants of the peninsula, whereas the *Maketos* were an inferior mish-mash of racial stocks, the precipitate of non-Basque Spain's history of periodic invasions (Arana Goiri 1978: 52). He was particularly incensed by the *maketismo* or *españolismo* prevalent even in the Basque circles of his day. While he subscribed to the prevalent nineteenth-century view that the language was the most important diacritical feature of Basque uniqueness, he underscored his anti-assimilationist mind set by noting that should Spaniards learn Basque then Basques should simply abandon

the language and learn Russian or Norwegian instead (Arana Goiri 1978: 188)! He was given to constant reminders of such thinking, for example:

Many who are Basques do not know Basque.
This is bad.
There are several *Maketos* who know it.
This is worse.

(Arana Goiri 1995: 258)

Sabino's racist treatises, while perhaps not constituting a clear biological theory of race, are myriad. In one article entitled 'The Law of Race' he revisited the notion of Basque universal nobility and the sixteenth-century restrictions in the *fuero* prohibiting non-Basques from residing in Bizkaia. Rejecting Poliakov's subsequent view that the purity of blood issue regarded orthodoxy alone, Arana contends that Bizkaia was protecting its racial purity against the possible invasion of Muslims and Jews who were being expelled from Spain at that time. He notes:

while the words *Moors* and *Jews* that appear in [sixteenth-century] Spanish legislation should always be understood as expressions of religious profession, their presence in Bizkaian laws, to the contrary, may well flow from the racial spirit, and not a religious one.

(Arana Goiri 1978: 200)

In his article 'What are we?' (*Que Somos?*) Sabino trots out a laundry list of invidious comparisons between Basques and *Maketos*: a sample includes:

The physiognomy of the Bizkaian is intelligent and noble; that of the Spaniard inexpressive and gloomy. The Bizkaian walks upright and manly; the Spaniard . . . has a feminine air (example, the bullfighter).

The Bizkaian is energetic and agile; the Spaniard lax and dull. The Bizkaian is intelligent and skillful in any type of task; the Spaniard lacks intelligence and ability for even the simplest of jobs. The Bizkaian is hardworking (witness his slopes cultivated to the hilltops); the Spaniard is lazy and slothful (witness his immense plains absolutely devoid of vegetation). The Bizkaian's character degenerates through contact with the outsider; the Spaniard needs from time to time a foreign invasion to civilize him

(*ibid.*: 56)

And so forth.

Arana also anticipated the problem faced recently by the Baltic States in the aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union, namely that of dealing with a large 'foreign' (i.e. Russian) population in their midst. In an article entitled 'Purity of race'. Sabino proposed that in an independent Bizkaia foreigners in general would be allowed to reside only under consular privilege and would be precluded from naturalization. Regarding Spaniards in particular, given the gravity of the extant

state of affairs, the Bizkaian parliament should consider expulsion during the first years of independence with the possibility of their controlled re-entry at some future time. Full citizenship in Bizkaia would be reserved for full-blooded Bizkaians, with recognition that the status of 'mestizo' families (i.e. those resulting from Basque/non-Basque unions) would have to be worked out juridically by Parliament (ibid.: 193).

Discussion

By now it should be evident that there was nothing inherently 'sinful' about being a racist in *fin-de-siècle* Europe. What, then, was Sabino's sin in coopting for his Basque ethnonationalist purposes both a European racist discourse that viewed Latins to be inferior and another which regarded Basques to be not just the oldest Iberians but also the proto-Europeans? The key lies in understanding the internal state dimension of an implicit superior-core versus inferior-periphery distinction that permeates the European racist discourse that we have considered.

In Gobineau's general or planetary purview the core is the great white race (with its civilizing capacity and mission) while the peripherals are the yellow and black ones.²⁴ In the internal Caucasian debate the Nordic/Teutonic/Aryan superior core of northwestern Europe is contrasted to weaker/inferior Latins to the south and Slavs to the east. However, we may posit that the superior core was perceived as *entirely* surrounded by an inferior periphery – since, for at least some observers, to the north the Finns (as speakers of a Finno-Ugric, i.e. non-Indo-European tongue) were clearly inferior and the Laplanders [Saami] were possibly sub-human (as reindeer herders and hence Europe's closest equivalent to a truly primitive culture?) (Poliakov 1974: 261–267).

To the west there were the Celts, regarding whom British racist discourse is particularly revealing. Indeed, the brutal treatment accorded to the highland Scots and the Irish was justified in part by their near sub-human status. According to some, Irish poverty and fecundity were the inevitable result of a barbarous nature and papist mentality (Curtis 1968; Lebow 1976). Irish were depicted as 'black' in their skin pigmentation, a means of relegating them to the world's inferior colored stocks (Curtis 1968: 72–73, 119). Some even discerned simian-like traits in the Irish (Curtis 1971).

It is in this last example that we discern the power of core–periphery racist discourse as a feature of the self-definition of the individual state in late nineteenth-century Europe. The quintessential demonstration of each state's national culture was reflected in its capital city (Paris, London, Madrid, Moscow, etc.), i.e. the nerve center of the core. All else being equal, national pride demanded that the capital serve as the showplace of national accomplishment for the citizenry and foreigners alike. In the Spanish case, Sabino Arana was committing the unpardonable in asserting the racial superiority of the periphery *vis-à-vis* the core as justification for their total political estrangement, i.e. Basque independence. In this regard Arana's sin was indeed (a European) original!

Notes

- 1 Conversi notes that, unlike most nationalisms, that of the Basques was essentially shaped by one person. To wit, 'Arana single-handedly formulated its first political programme, coined its name, defined its geographical extent, founded its first political organisation, wrote its anthem and designed its flag' (1997: 53).
- 2 For example Aranzadi *et al.* (1994) and Aranzadi (2000: 60–62).
- 3 From our post-Holocaust, post-eugenics perspective it is particularly difficult to appreciate the intellectual climate of the times. In the words of one critic, reviewing Carlton Coon's controversial work *The Origin of Races* (published in 1962), 'It requires a degree of courage to write a book on Races of Man in this era of the New Prudery, when *race* has replaced *sex* as the great dirty word' (quoted in Shipman 1994: 215).
In the introduction to his seminal work, *The Aryan Myth*, Léon Poliakov notes,

There can be no doubt that if, at the beginning of this century, the West still entertained the flattering notion of its superior civilization, often thought of as an Aryan birthright, the Hitlerite catastrophe banished such ideas from political and public life so effectively that now a fresh confusion has arisen, between science and ethics. Anti-racism has been promoted to the rank of a dogmatic orthodoxy which the present state of anthropological knowledge is unable to corroborate, but which will brook no criticism, and which is an impediment to sober thinking. This has produced a self-censorship, to a great extent retroactive, by authors of all kinds, but particularly historians who, often without knowing it, try to reinterpret the history of modern thought under this influence. *It begins to look as if, through shame or fear of being racist, the West will not admit to having been so at any time, and therefore assigns to minor characters only (like Gobineau, H.S. Chamberlain, etc.) the role of scapegoats.*

(1974: 5, his emphasis)

- 4 There were, of course, a plethora of classificatory systems positing considerable variety of sub-types within what Gobineau labeled 'the three great races' (1967: 205).
- 5 Biddiss regards Gobineau as the 'father of racist ideology' (1970).
- 6 Or 'mismeasurement' as the case may be (cf. Gould 1981).
- 7 Robert Knox summed up Disraeli's views as follows: 'race in human affairs is everything, is simply the fact, the most remarkable, the most comprehensive, which philosophy has ever announced. Race is everything: literature, science, art – in a word, civilization depends on it' (1862: 1).
- 8 Near the end of his life Gobineau experienced the bitterness of his country's defeat in the Franco-Prussian War (1870–71), which he translated into a kind of French self-loathing, prompting some of his co-national critics to brand him a germanophile (Biddiss 1970: 222).
- 9 It should be noted that not all scholars (and particularly those of denigrated peoples and states) accepted their racial 'fate' within the Aryanist framework. To be sure, modern Greeks and Italians were wont to emphasize their own superiority *vis-à-vis* other Europeans due to their (ancient) civilizational credentials and continuity of 'Hellenic' and 'Latin' racial stocks (Poliakov 1974: 68–69; Just 1989: 75–76).
- 10 Poliakov's work is essentially a history of European racism leading to the Holocaust. In his analysis, sixteenth-century Spanish anti-Semitism eventually culminates in the twentieth-century atrocity. Another major historian of the racist thought producing the Holocaust, George Mosse, concurs in discerning the baseline of European racism in Spain's sixteenth-century treatment of its Jews, but sees less subsequent historical continuity. Thus,

Certainly in sixteenth-century Spain racism existed in its modern sense, for there the concept of 'purity of blood' was the justification for discrimination against anyone of Jewish descent. It could be argued that the Spanish *conversos* were the first

victims of racial persecution in Europe. Yet the Spanish policy toward 'Jewish Christians' faded with time and did not constitute a viable precedent for the rest of Europe.

(1978: xxix)

- 11 The issue of the Jewish *conversos* (their Muslim equivalents were known as *Moriscos*) was longer standing. As early as the eleventh century significant numbers of Jews were fleeing Muslim for Christian Spain in search of opportunity, as well as in the aftermath of persecution in the former. By the thirteenth century most Iberian Jews lived on Christian territory, where they were tolerated and privileged (Payne 1973: 78). At the same time, the successes of the Reconquest brought many Muslims under Christian rule. Over time there developed Christian discomfort with the infidels in their midst, who were first encouraged and then forced to convert to Catholicism.

In 1391 Castile experienced a major pogrom and the fifteenth century was punctuated with reprisals against the *conversos*, who were deemed to be too powerful and probably Crypto-Jews at heart. In 1478 the papacy approved Spain's request to establish its own inquisition under state control to combat the *conversos*' heresy.

At the time of Fernando and Isabel Castile's population of unconverted Jews (150,000) and *Conversos* (150,000) represented about 4 per cent of the population. In 1492, by royal decree, the unconverted were expelled from Spain. Payne estimates that more than 100,000 persons fled the country (1973: 211). Thousands of Muslims also abandoned Spain after their final defeat in Granada, while thousands more converted to Catholicism. Unlike the *conversos*, who constituted a financial élite, the *Moriscos* were, in the main, small holder agriculturalists with a much lower profile than Jews within Spanish society (*ibid.*: 214–215).

- 12 The *fueros* are the legal charters which accord Basques differential treatment in comparison with its other component regions within Spain. Interpretation of their genesis is at the core of historical disagreements between Spanish and Basque nationalists. For the former, the *fueros* were concessions of privilege to the Basques made by Castillian (and subsequently Spanish) monarchs. As concessions they could be (and, in the nineteenth-century, were) rescinded unilaterally by the Spanish government. Basque nationalists contend that the *fueros* are written codification of timeless Basque consuetudinary law, respect for which was a condition of (voluntary) Basque integration into a wider Iberian polity during the Middle Ages. Basque nationalists therefore reject Spain's claim to a right of unilateral action while reserving to the Basques a right of self-determination.
- 13 The Larramendi work, while written in the mid-eighteenth century, was first published in 1882 and could therefore not configure eighteenth-century, or even most of nineteenth-century, Basque/Spanish political discourse.
- 14 Larramendi also wrote the first Basque grammar which he entitled *The Impossible Overcome*, an exercise intended to demonstrate that Basque was, indeed, a true language!
- 15 By the mid-century the primacy of language as a diacritic of race was under severe criticism (Poliakov 1974: 255–261). However, initially it went largely unquestioned.
- 16 To this day, and despite nearly two centuries of efforts by philologists and linguists to discover affinities between Basque and other languages, so far as we know, Basque remains 'unrelated to any other language' (Katzner 1976: 36).
- 17 In commenting upon William G. Boyd's *Genetics and Races of Man: An Introduction to Modern Physical Anthropology* (1950), in which, based on their gene frequencies, Basques are distinguished as one of only six human races, a frustrated modern critic remarks,

the segregation of the Basques on the basis of their divergent blood groups did not seem to be sublimely wise. It was not as if they had green skins and square heads: they looked like ordinary Europeans, though speaking a strange language and having divergent blood group frequencies. The Basques could hardly be considered

a category of living people equivalent to, say, the African, and they were certainly not phenotypically distinctive.

(Marks 1995: 131)

- 18 In 1859 Broca founded the *Société d'Anthropologie de Paris* and was the prime mover of the *Revue d'Anthropologie*.
- 19 Cf. Cavalli-Sforza, *et al.* (1991: 285–286) for statements that are entirely consonant with Broca's viewpoint. We might also note that for physical anthropologists like A.C. Haddon, father of British physical anthropology, the Basques were likely descended from an Upper Paleolithic Cro-Magnon population (MacClancy 1993: 111).
- 20 It is difficult to assess the importance of this. Shortly before Arana's stint in Barcelona Pi i Margall published (1877) his work *The Nationalities* calling for a federal Spain based upon regional cultural distinctions. In 1882 a young Philippine student, José Rizal, arrived in Barcelona, and we know that the future father of Philippine nationalism read Pi i Margall's work (Ortiz Armengol 1997: 14). That same year Sabino arrived in the Catalan capital to commence his studies and Larramendi's work *Corografía de Guipúzcoa* was first published in the city. Clearly, Arana was at least indirectly affected by Catalanism, and particularly the reverence accorded the language. In 1885, while still in Barcelona, he began to study Basque, and in 1888 published in that city the first part of his own Basque grammar (Conversi 1997: 57).
- 21 Possibly discouraged by the incapacity of radical independentism to attract popular support, as well as its demonstrated capacity to incur the wrath of Spanish authorities, by the end of his life Arana was moderating his views to advocate Basque regionalism within a united Spain. There is disagreement among Basque nationalists, as well as scholars, regarding the sincerity of this 'conversion.' For some, it was simply a tactical move on Arana's part to both garner political support and deflect political repression (Conversi 1997: 68–69).
- If Arana's political radicalism seemed nothing short of quixotic when first announced, it obviously struck a certain chord. In 1898 Arana himself was elected to the provincial assembly of Bizkaia. The following year his supporters won five seats on the Bilbao city council. Indeed, shortly after Sabino's death the nationalists emerged as the second political force in Bizkaia. Ultimately, the Basque Nationalist Party would become the strongest single political party in Basque politics, a position that it enjoys at present.
- 22 Ringrose's recent (1996) revisionist work argues that not only was eighteenth-century Spain prosperous but the loss of the colonies in the nineteenth did not impede the country's economic growth to the extent that is commonly assumed.
- 23 Despite his ardent Catholicism, Arana never mentions Tubal and other biblical characters, a point which underscores the extent to which, by the late nineteenth century, scientific polygenism had triumphed over theological monogenism in European racialist discourse.
- 24 In this regard, nineteenth- and early twentieth-century physical anthropological research simply paralleled social anthropology's occidentalist bias – 'the Other', 'Here versus the Out There' – that has come under intense criticism over the last two decades (Lavie and Swedenburg 1996).

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