

*Black legend, Hispanoamericanismo and the  
United States of America  
in Miguel Primo de Rivera's Dictatorship  
(1923-1930)*

PÁLMA ADÉL FARKAS



*I. Aims of research*

Miguel Primo de Rivera's short-lived dictatorship (September 1923–January 1930) inadequately researched into by both Spanish and international historiography served as a basis for our scientific investigation. Spain's peculiar situation and condition prior to and during the dictatorial epoch gave us the precise compass that within the sphere of the Iberian country's international relations and foreign affairs pointed, through Latin America, towards the United States of America. The defeat suffered by Spain in the Cuban war of 1898 brought about the definitive loss of her colonial empire, putting an end once and for all to the Iberian country's (putative) great-power status that had already been diminishing for nine long decades and, as a consequence, converted Spain into a mediocre, almost insignificant state of second rate. In the meantime, however, the United States of America rose to be the world's leading power. In the following quarter of a century Spain proved to be unable to get over the aftermath of such a defeat and, following the king's approval, the then political elite resolved upon taking definite steps to find solutions for the country's serious and ever worsening problems as soon as possible. General Miguel Primo de Rivera, authorized to seize power, introduced military dictatorship in the autumn of 1923. The new system not only aimed at giving solutions to the difficulties bothering Spain's internal life but it had to make efforts so as to avoid being completely excluded from the international political scenery of a narrowed latitude. Arranging and adjusting her relations with Latin America on all levels became one of the main pillars of the Spanish foreign policy and was (from Spain's point of view) of dual strategic importance. On the one hand, through her renovated diplomatic, economic, commercial and cultural relations, Spain could quasi keep her prestige by providing the American republics, now without the colonial status, with continuous help. On the other hand, the country's foreign policy also served as a protective shield against the vigorous presence of the United States acting first in the spirit of the Monroe Doctrine and the Manifest Destiny, later

in that of the so-called “big stick policy” and “dollar diplomacy”. While the United States were referring to Pan-American ideas when accounting for their expansion in Latin America, Spain – in the spirit of the common historical roots, and under the code name of hispano-americanismo – elaborated her ideology of foreign policy aiming at her rapprochement toward her former colonies. The term hispano-americanismo is in fact a synonym for hispanismo and ibero-americanismo that was destined to name the Pan-Hispanic union and was used by the Primo de Rivera era, as the regime believed this concept would express Spain’s orientation toward the Spanish-speaking countries best. Latin America, that not only in geographical sense wedged in between the once mighty mother country and the now powerful United States, quickly understood the message behind the North American foreign policy and, as a consequence, the former anti-Hispanic ideology created by the one-time colonies was altered to anti-Yankee thoughts. Later the American republics believed to have found the outlines of their independent identity in their own (defensive) ideology named as continentalismo, free from both North American and Spanish conceptions. This is how the system of connections started with the United States’ “splendid little war” of 1898 fought against Spain and for Latin America became a triangle of relations. Concerning the relations between Spain and the United States, Latin America became a real zone of contact, what is more, one of clashes, and special stress was laid on it during the Primo de Rivera dictatorship. The silhouette of the age-old, so-called “black legend” powerfully prejudicing Spain’s relations with the United States started to shape in the course of the Latin America policy of the United States. In our dissertation we intend to examine the existence of such legend also used in the ideologies’ system of argumentations during the dictatorship.

## II. *Scientific sources*

Our scientific investigation consisted of several phases and, due to the difficult conditions we had to face in its course, we were forced to prolong our studies considerably. Our research work started at Florida State University (FSU) in Tallahassee, USA, where we treated the North American press kept in the campus’ Strozier Library. From among the daily newspapers available, we read several numbers of *The New York Times* – giving primary importance to the first year of Primo de Rivera’s military regime. As far as the local journals are concerned, we had the opportunity to look into *The Literary Digest*, *The Nation*, *The Outlook*, as well as *The New Republic*. Such periodicals were examined in the whole course of the dictatorship. It was important to find press organs of different kinds, that is to give equal importance to a paper focusing on the news as well as journals expressing opinion, too. Having completed our research in the library mentioned above, we continued our scientific work in Spain. First we visited the History Section at the Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation (*Archivo del Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores y Cooperación* – MAE) in Madrid to find sources to our dissertation. Two of the folders labelled as Foreign Affairs, fundamentally important in terms of our topic, were marked as America and United States. The files of the first folder concerning the years 1900–1926 were found in the bundles numbe-

red as H 2297, while the documents compiled in the period of 1919–1926 were placed in the dossier numbered as H 2298. In the case of the latter folder, we found three bundles marked as H 2445 (1920/1924), H 2446 (1925/1927), and H 2447 (1928/1929). Furthermore, a dossier from 1924 contained a file labelled as H 2771 treating the military affairs and Marine of the United States. Though these folders seemed promising at first sight, their thorough examination revealed rather un-systematic, deficient files that several times did not even correspond to either the topic or the year indicated.

- Documents written even the eighteenth century were not rare to find in a dossier of the twentieth one. Under the heading Correspondence (Correspondencia) various bundles were found. Regarding the United States, we examined three folders bearing the following titles: Embassies and Legations. USA. Washington (Embajadas y Legaciones. EEUU - Washington);
- Consulates. New York (Consulados. Nueva York), and
- Consulates. Tampa (Consulados. Tampa).

The documents concerning the embassies and legations were marked as H 1421 (1921/1930); H 1487 (1920/1921); H 1488 (1922/1923); H 1489 (1924/1931); and H1491 (1902/1930). Information on the consulates in New York was held in the bundles labelled as H 1988 (1918/1923); and H 1989 (1924/1931), while the data of the consulates of Tampa in Florida, town important also for its Spanish-speaking population, was found in the folder marked as H 2074 (1895/1931). As for the topics and intervals of the files and documents found in these bundles, we had to experience the same disorder as in the case of the folders mentioned before. We also had to see that the documents read almost exclusively Latin America and events unfolding in those republics, but the bounds examined lacked correspondence or documents dealing with the relations between Spain and the United States or the black legend. Following our research in the archives, our work was moved to the National Library of Spain (*Biblioteca Nacional de España*) in Madrid. Not many documents that could have served as primary sources or scientific literature on the Primo de Rivera dictatorship were kept in the library, not to mention the ones concerning the Spanish–North American relations. Juan Carlos Pereira y Castañares, a Spanish historian engaged in detailed scientific research on the two countries' relations, however, must be heightened as his works cover the Primo de Rivera era as well. Castañares also compiled a very useful analysis of great value on the diplomatic relations, legations, and consulates of Spain and Latin America.

On behalf of North American historians, James W. Cortada deserves to be mentioned for giving a thorough analysis on this peculiar bilateral relationship between the US and Spain by paying special attention to the Latin American republics – indicating this way that comprehension of such complex relations is in fact possible only in these nations' triangular dimension. It is beyond dispute that scientific materials and bibliography on the two countries' foreign affairs are rich – it is especially true in the case of the United States thanks to John Bassett Moore, Hans J. Morgenthau, Alexander DeConde, Julius W. Pratt and their historian fellows' work. Difficulty arises when facing the fact that the bilateral relations of the dictatorial political system are still scarcely or very poorly investigated. Be-

side the historians listed above we still have to emphatically mention Sebastián Balfour and Stanley G. Payne who examine Spain's foreign policy, the country's position among the international powers of the time. Latter historian is also the co-author of a recently published book, titled *When Spain fascinated America* which analyses Spain's relations with the United States as well as the effect the Iberian country had on North America – but this time from a cultural point of view. The doctoral dissertations coming to light nowadays – though their number is still rather low – indicate that today's historians both recognize and admit the deficiency: José Antonio Montero Jiménez's thesis, that bears the title *El despliegue de la potencia americana: las relaciones entre España y los Estados Unidos, 1898–1930*, proves to be a worthy evidence of the initiative that aims at filling this historiographical gap. With reference to the black legend, several useful works were found in the National Library of Spain in Madrid. Julián Juderías y Loyot's work, *La Leyenda Negra y la Verdad Histórica. Contribución al estudio del concepto de España en Europa, de las causas de este concepto y de la tolerancia religiosa y política en los países civilizados*, served as the starting point for our research.

Apart from studying and analyzing the nature of the anti-Spanish propaganda, as well as its international aspects, in his book called *Tree of hate: propaganda and prejudices affecting United States relations with the Hispanic world*, Philip Wayne Powell pays special attention to the utilization of the phenomenon by Latin America and, later, by the United States. As a result of our research work completed in this field, the growing number of such publications can be stated, which indisputably shows that the topic is still being widely discussed. Beyond all this, the interesting thing about the subject is that – apart from the anti-Spanish propaganda – it is the black legend shaping against the United States and in some points showing analogy with the Spanish one, that has recently started to arouse historians' interest. In this respect it is our must to mention Luis Español Bouché's book with the title *Leyendas Negras. Vida y obra de Julián Juderías*, in which work of his the author dedicates a separate chapter to this propaganda taking shape against North America. Joseph Pérez also draws his readers' attention to the issue in his work *La leyenda negra*. It was the Spanish press of the 1920s that meant the next source to our dissertation. Great number of articles were read in the Spanish National Library. At the beginning of our investigations digital access to such articles did not exist, many newspapers and journals were available in paper or – mostly – in microform, which delayed our work considerably. Nevertheless, it has to be acknowledged as a merit of the library, that the various press organs of different times were – and still are – very carefully and orderly preserved. As far as Spanish press is concerned, our dissertation is mostly based on the numbers of a newspaper called ABC Madrid published between 1923 and 1930 dealing with the United States, Latin America and the (anti-Spanish) black legend. Besides, we also tried to choose daily papers with different political views so as to get as broad and accurate a picture as possible. Therefore we read and analyzed a great number of articles published in *El Imparcial* (1923–1924), as well as those of *Razón y Fé* (1923–1926).

The articles concerning our topic brought to light on the pages of the Catalan capital's newspaper called *La Vanguardia* (1923–1930), along with the ones published in *La Exposición. Revista Ilustrada de Sevilla* (1911–1914; 1921–1922), the

official journal of Seville's *Ibero-American Exposition* (1929), *El Noticiero Sevillano* (1922), and *El Liberal* (1923 és 1925). To present the black legend's historical background, we also used the numbers of the Madrid paper called *La Ilustración Española y Americana* published on 22 June 1913, and those that appeared between 8 January and 8 February in 1914. Among the periodicals listed above, two newspapers, ABC Madrid, and Barcelona's *La Vanguardia* have since then made their archives available on the Internet as well (*Hemeroteca Digital*). Though only in limited numbers, occasionally disorderly and through difficult access, Seville's papers named above were also available through the University of Seville's website, providing our research work with incredible help. From the library in Madrid, the next scientific tour of ours led to the General Archives of Administration (*Archivo General de Administración - AGA*) in Alcalá de Henares where we met extremely well organized and orderly folders that contained truly interesting and useful research materials. Within the section of Foreign Affairs (*Asuntos Exteriores - (10) 26.1.*), a whole series of valuable documentation, records and letters labelled as *Varios. Prensa y Propaganda Sobre España - 1928-1929* (Press and Propaganda about Spain - 1928-1929) marked as *Caja/Legajo: 54/8290* (Box/Dossier: 54/8290) came to light. The next dossier used for our thesis was the one that bore the title *Relaciones Culturales. Exposición de Sevilla - 1929* (Cultural Relations. Exposition of Seville - 1929) and it contained really useful documents. Two files were found in this bundle; one marked as *Caja/Legajo: 54/8290*, and another one as *Caja/Legajo: 54/8291*. Documents on the anti-Spanish black legend, as well as some of the press materials dealing with it, were kept in a separate folder under the title *Propaganda Antiespañola en la Prensa Norteamericana - 1929-1930* (Anti-Spanish Propaganda in the North American Press), numbered as *Caja / Legajo: 54 / 8296*. In this very Archives of Alcalá de Henares did we encounter a very interesting and informative correspondence exchanged among Spain's ambassador to the United States (1926-1931), Alejandro Padilla y Bell, John Oliver la Gorce, Antarctica explorer, and *The National Geographic Magazine's* vice-president and co-editor, and Gilbert Hovey Grosvenor, *The National Geographic Society's* president concerning the articles to be published in the March 1929 edition of the magazine in honour of Seville's Exposition in 1929. Since it was not attached to the letters, new research work was awaiting us. Fortunately, *The National Geographic Magazine* have since the digitalized their old issues, we were able to obtain the journal's edition in question. Several parts of the articles written about Spain are quoted in one of the most important chapter of our thesis. The next station of our research work - started in Florida, USA, and then continued in Spain - was in Hungary. The scientific investigations took place in the Library of the Hungarian Parliament, the Ervin Szabó Library in Budapest, and in the Central Library of the University in Szeged. The Library of the Hungarian Parliament has the annuals issued by the United States Department of State that contain congress messages, bills, intergovernmental agreements and contracts, etc., some of which we used in our dissertation as primary sources. The Internet also has countless primary sources, analysis of the time, journals, etc in store. Any investigator will find the website [www.archive.org](http://www.archive.org) a real treasure-chest: nearly all writings, be it belles-lettres or literature specialized in history, memoirs, analysis, official guides to expositions, etc. ex-

empt from copyright can be found and read there. Even some more recent publications, originating from the 1950s and 1960s are also available on this website, where not only reading matters, but recorded voice and videofilms are also at the visitors' disposal. The site does not require any type of registration and its usage is totally free of charge as it is operated by a nonprofit organisation.

We certainly used scientific materials related to our research field written in Hungarian concerning the United States, Spain and Latin America, too. Works authored by Tibor Wittman, Ádám Anderle, Iván Harsányi, Gyula Horváth, Péter Hahner, and Tamás Magyarics meant the principal literature that guided us whilst composing our dissertation. Works by Latin America's eminent thinkers and politicians make the topic's bibliography complete and – along with it – our knowledge profound. First and foremost José Martí (*Nuestra América* – 1909; *Cuba, Nuestra América, Los Estados Unidos* – 1973; *Política de Nuestra América* – 1977, etc.), Simón Bolívar's letters, José Vasconcelos (*Hispano-América frente a los nacionalismos agresivos de Europa y Norteamérica ...* – 1934; *Bolivarismo y monroísmo: temas iberoamericanos* – 1935; *La Raza Cósmica: misión de la Raza iberoamericana* – 1966); José Enrique Rodó (*Ariel* – 1929), who called the attention to the aggressive, imperialist foreign policy elaborated by the United States and, therefore, urged continental cooperation among the Latin American nations. As for this part of our research work, the Central Library of the University in Szeged provided us with rich and useful materials.

### III. *Structure of the dissertation*

Our dissertation consists of six major chapters. The introductory chapter is divided into two subsections. First a detailed review on the sources of the thesis was given. Though without a visible separation, the sources listed can actually be divided into two groups: on the one hand, the documents we consulted and, on the other hand, the ones used and quoted in the ultimate version of the dissertation. We consider it important to be noted, because – as we indicated it earlier – to develop the final, so to say, refined form of our thesis, we needed to read a great number of literature, much more than we thought necessary to show or quote in the text. The division detailing the sources of the dissertation is followed by the one that discusses the difficulties we had to encounter during the course of the research work. In Chapter 2 we tried to deal with the black legend in the most detailed way possible. As a result, this chapter became one of the most important parts of our thesis. Following a historiographical list and a brief historical introduction that explains the general characteristics of the phenomenon of the black legend, we did pay special attention to its appearance in the United States and its peculiarities. We also tried to point out at what aims and interests of the North American foreign policy the clichés of the anti-Spanish propaganda were supposed to serve. While the United States made efforts to use the legend directed against the Spaniard as part of the North American foreign policy, Spain, where – so to say – past and traditions served as merits as opposed to the material and utilitarian value system of the industrialized world and, especially that of the United States, visibly and admittedly had a great effect on the North American literature, arts and architecture

alike. In the chapter dedicated to the black legend, we also touched upon the new black legend turning gradually against the United States. The analogy historians believe to have discovered between the centuries old international anti-Spanish propaganda and the one that has been taking shape towards the United States since the twentieth century are also shown in this subdivision. Closing the chapter Jesús Villanueva's recently published book, *Leyenda Negra. Una polémica nacionalista en la España del siglo XX* is mentioned. Besides linking the legend to the Spanish dictatorships of the twentieth century, the author explains that the phenomenon was used especially for internal aims by the Franco dictatorship, accusing the system's critics and enemies of giving rise to Spain's bad fame. Chapter 3 is about the contact or meeting scenes of Spain, the United States and Latin America. A brief review of the Spanish emigration of the time, as well as some of the illustrative points of these nations' interstate, diplomatic and commercial relations maintained with each other are provided in this part. The functional objective of this chapter was to confront the palpable phenomena of the ideological sphere with reality. It proved useful to see the various waves of the Spanish emigration heading to Latin America between 1880 and 1930, as well as the phenomena of the return. It helps to understand the real social medium, basis and characteristics of hispanoamericanismo (Pan-Hispanism), a Spanish ideology offering an alternative to Spanish America versus the United States' Pan-Americanism. Both economic and commercial interests can be seen behind the liberal trend of hispanoamericanismo and, the Catalan capitalist circles – through their associations – will especially become the common interests' advocates. Contrary to this, in its argumentation of cooperation, the conservative hispanoamericanismo will first and foremost emphasize the common language, the common past, the common religion, in short, the cultural community and bonds. Furthermore, reference to the common Race (La Raza) will also appear. The Pan-American programme propagated by the United States means the promise of modernization to the countries in the Spanish American subcontinent. It is actually the argumentation of such sphere of thoughts where the old, stereotyped clichés of the anti-Spanish black legend materialize. At the same time, however, our dissertation calls the reader's attention to the fact that the aims of the two ideological constructions are exactly the same: to strengthen their own (economic and political) influence in Spanish America.

The fifth is the most extensive chapter of our thesis. First it talks about the characteristics of the Spain-image created by the North American press, then it provides an analysis on the image the Spanish press formed about the United States. The chapter is divided into two subsections. The first one tells the history of the North American press from its beginnings till the 1920s. Then an analysis is given on how Spain, General Primo de Rivera's person(ality) and his dictatorship appeared in the press organs chosen and, based on the above, what picture the ordinary people might have had about Spain of the time. We shall simultaneously get the answer to the question, also propounded as a scientific research aim, whether the black legend was really present in the United States' press of the 1920s and, if so, what characteristics, peculiarities and intensity it showed. For the sake of better understanding, we tried to give a historical background for the articles cited and analysed – sometimes in the main text, other times in the footnotes. The sec-

tion about the United States presenting Spain splits into two: the newscaster daily press – as we indicated before – is represented by *The New York Times*; the Spanish events are shown through the news brought to light on its pages. The articles treating Spain and, especially General Primo de Rivera, published in the weekly journals of opinion, however, are shown in a separate subsection so that the difference between the ways of communication in the case of the newscaster daily press and that of the analyzing journals of opinion can be seen. The next subdivision is about the history of Spain's press – similarly to the above – from its beginnings to the 1920s. It is followed by the analysis of the articles concerning the United States and – partly – Spanish America.

The findings of the chapter confirm our research experience indicated in the previous parts of the dissertation, namely: after the loss of the Spanish colonies and among the conditions of the North American expansion, the United States felt less necessity for the elements and utilization of such black legend, though its presence in the North American can be still caught in the act. In the intergovernmental relations, however, the legend will cause much less tensions. On the other hand, as far as the negative opinion about the Spaniard is concerned, the touchiness on behalf of the Spanish press and politics still remains extremely strong.

Chapter 6 speaks about Seville's Ibero-American Exposition opened in 1929, its circumstances, the course of its lengthy planning that took two decades to finalize, as well as the ceremony's two-year-long preparations. The reader is led up to the opening ceremony, and then the balance of the event is drawn up. The exposition plays a very important role both in our dissertation and in the relations of the peculiar triangle formed by Spain, Latin America and the United States as the event was supposed to make all these nations gather together under the very same roof. Representing the once mother country, King Alphonse XIII, General Miguel Primo de Rivera, along with illustrious Spanish diplomats, political and economic élite, shook hands with the representatives on behalf of each and every former colony, now independent states, and, at the same time, with those representing the United States. Some documented diplomatic correspondence as well as the exposition's official press organ shed light on lots of minute details, such as the opportunities discovered in the exposition by the United States, the reactions given by Latin America's nations, and even on Spain's ambitions of foreign affairs with special regard to her rapprochement toward Latin America. It was principally the course of preparation and the related diplomatic actions that had special importance, while the exposition itself was the keystone and closing of this long series of international actions, and those of the Spanish ambitions. A few thoughts of conclusion are given at the end of our dissertation, followed by the bibliographical chapter. It first lists the sources found in the archives. Then the Spanish, and North-American press organs quoted in the thesis are shown – indicating the years of the publications. Historical analysis of the time come next, then published (primary) sources, scientific literature, a list of doctoral dissertations (still mostly in the form of manuscript) used. The author's publications and the sources found on the Internet will close the dissertation.



#### IV. *Scientific novelties of the dissertation*

We believe our dissertation offers several new scientific results. First, the choice of the title itself can be considered as novelty. The reason for it lies in the fact that neither Primo de Rivera nor his dictatorship has received due attention among the Spanish or international historians either. Also (as we have both already alluded to it, and revert to it at various points of our dissertation), Spain's relations with the United States are still scarcely investigated – especially in the 1920s. It is also a new feature that we examined the black legend, Pan-Americanism and Pan-Hispanism focusing especially on the Primo de Rivera epoch – as the closing stage of the period that had commenced with the Cuban war in 1898 – in order to demonstrate that both the black legend in general, and its North American version did lose in might during the 1920s. We think this is an important outcome, because Spanish historiography, that keeps paying great attention to the investigation of such legend, considers the legend as a phenomenon somewhat monolithic and unchanged in its intensity. Furthermore, it is a new approach to demonstrate the features of the North American black legend within presenting the black legend in a general historical span. This examination has revealed that the United States adopted and abundantly used the clichés of the legend in the North American anti-Spanish propaganda whilst preparing the acquisition of the last „remnants“ of the Spanish colonies (Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Philippines). Yet, after 1898, the intensity of the black legend invented against the Spaniard started to weaken, and signs of sympathy and those of the interest in the Spanish colonial past can be traced even in the United States. In short, the increase of the general North American interest in the Spanish culture and present can be observed. The tone of the North American press changes continuously and, during the Primo de Rivera dictatorship, the negative stereotypes of the legend will mostly be squeezed out of the official policy and press directly related to Spain.

In the meantime, however – and this is another novelty of great importance – the negative clichés will remain in the Pan-Americanism (re)presenting the general North American political and economic expansion in Latin America, attributing the Latin American backwardness to the Spaniard. Showing the asymmetry clearly palpable in the images Spain and the United States created about one another is another valuable result of our dissertation. The Spanish press and politics of the 1920s seemed to have reacted to the North American criticism in a much more touchy way and (in our opinion) vitality of the anti-Spanish black legend is also considered stronger than in reality it is. Criticism created by the Spanish press and political approach against the United States will adopt the negative views formed about the Northern colossus by Latin American thinkers principally in connection with the United States' expansion in Latin America. All this already indicates another new aspect of our thesis: that is to show hispanismo (hispanoamericanismo) and Pan-Americanism in parallel and to confront them, so as to shed light on the fact that the principal aim of both ideologies is to strengthen their own Spanish American influence. It will unquestionably lead to their rivalry on the level of propaganda, while the elements of rapprochement and co-operation will become stronger in their intergovernmental relations. Naturally, the different strength

and characters of the individual ambitions has also come to light. The United States will draw up and promise the arguments of modernization in its Pan-Americanism to Spanish America, while hispanismo (hispanoamericanismo), on the other hand, will allude to the community of culture and past (perhaps to that of the race, too), and the defensive element is also very strong here. Showing in parallel the images the North American and Spanish press created about one another that clearly visualized the Spanish hypersensitivity is also a new momentum, and has brought us interesting results. The novelty of Seville's Ibero American Exposition is, on the one hand, that its topic has never been dealt with in such international dimensions. On the other hand, it reveals the true tensions lying behind the Spanish governments' ambitions and the financial possibilities to realise named exposition. It shows the Spaniard's Pan-Hispanic ambitions and their intentions of rapprochement toward the United States as well.