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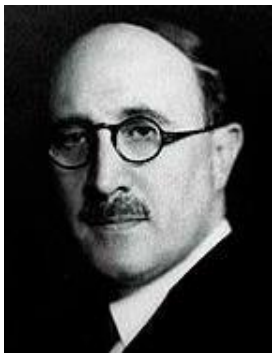

SÁNCHEZ-ALBORNOZ Y MENDUIÑA, Claudio (Madrid, 1893 - Ávila, 1984)

Claudio Sánchez-Albornoz was born in Madrid on 7 April 1893, as his father was sworn in as a deputy to the Courts that same week. However, he was raised in Ávila, where his family had a distinguished political legacy throughout the 19th century. His great-great-grandfather, for instance, had collaborated with Juan Álvarez Mendizábal (1790-1853), a key figure in the Spanish liberal revolution, while his great-uncle, Lucio Sánchez Albornoz, was removed from his position as "regidor" of the city for refusing to swear allegiance to the 1869 Constitution. Throughout his childhood and teenage years, CSA inherited countless stories from his bourgeois family, initially revolutionary and later conservative. He remarked that he could write "the outline" of the history of 19th-century Spain based solely on conversations with his great-grandmother. A testament to the impact of these stories on his development is the first essay he published at just eighteen, titled "Ávila desde 1808 hasta 1814" [Ávila from 1808 to 1814]. This family environment, combined with growing up reading Court session minutes that filled part of the bookshelves in his parents' home, steered him towards a career in law. However, in 1911, he met Eduardo de Hinojosa y Naveros (1852-1919), a researcher specializing in the Germanic foundations of Spanish Law and the medieval history of the Iberian Peninsula, who was greatly influenced by German historiography, and who encouraged him to study History. The *Centro de Estudios Históricos* [Centre for Historical Studies] had just been established as part of the *Institución de Libre Enseñanza* [Institution for Free Education] programme, under the direction of Ramón Menéndez Pidal. This *Centro* and its members would be instrumental in shaping CSA's development.

CSA's academic career progressed at a remarkable pace: he completed his bachelor's degree in 1913 and earned his doctorate in 1914 from the Universidad Central [Central University]. In 1915, he became a member of the *Archiveros, Bibliotecarios y Arqueólogos* [Archivists, Librarians and Archaeologists], served as a professor at the University of Barcelona in 1918, and, starting in 1920, at the Universidad Central. Prior to this, he had also taught at the University of Valladolid. In 1921, at the suggestion of Ramón Menéndez Pidal, he decided to enter a national competition on institutions in the Kingdom of Asturias with a work — unpublished to this day — titled *Historia del Reino de Asturias y de sus Instituciones* [History of the Kingdom of Asturias and its Institutions]. To prepare for his research, he visited numerous archives and compiled files that would serve as the foundation for much of his later work. The Iberian High Middle Ages — the formative

period of the Asturian-Leonese and Castilian kingdoms — became both the starting point and central reference for his research in which he highlighted the enduring influence of these centuries on later periods, not only in the medieval era but also in modern and contemporary times, as well as its importance for understanding the origins and development of Iberian institutions, a theme that underpinned much of his work. Directly connected to these topics, shortly after receiving the competition prize in 1924, CSA was part of the team that founded the *Anuario de Historia del Derecho Español* [Yearbook of the History of Spanish Law]. The publication, divided into four sections — articles on the history of Spanish, Muslim, and Spanish-American law, documents, bibliography, and 'Varia' — was led by Eduardo de Hinojosa's disciples and drew inspiration from French and German models. The first issue featured texts by various foreign experts, including Ernest Mayer and Paulo Merêa, among others. Although CSA was listed as the editorial secretary in the *Anuario* como *secretario de redacción*, he was the driving force behind the magazine from the outset and, from 1928, served as its lead editor.

During this period, Spanish historiography was experiencing a Europeanist reorientation, largely influenced by the regenerationism movement that emerged after 1898. Following the end of the Cuban War of Independence, Spain entered a period of introspection marked by undertones of disaster and decline. Intellectuals from the *Centro de Estudios Históricos* took it upon themselves to help restore the country's morale. To promote this recovery, they sought the "intra-history of the nation"; that is, the unique elements that distinguished it from other nations, lay at the roots of its formation, and defined its identity. By locating and analysing documents preserved in archives and libraries, as well as preserved texts and orally transmitted novels, they defined the origins and early stages of an original and distinct culture that had developed and evolved alongside other European cultures. They employed the scientific methodologies established by the international community to highlight what made the Spanish nation distinct from others and to valorise it. As a result, following models developed in other countries during the 1800s to construct Western national histories, they delved into the history of institutions and the evolution of law in the centuries following the disintegration of the Roman Empire. They identified this period, marked by Europe's geopolitical fragmentation, as the phase in which the origins of contemporary nations could be traced. From the outset, CSA's work was shaped by this approach, studying medieval historical and juridical themes through German and French methodologies. However, he grounded his research in documents and data that highlighted the distinctiveness of Spanish history, aiming to identify what made it unique.

In 1926, CSA joined the *Real Academia de la Historia* with a lecture titled "Estampas de la vida en León durante el siglo X". Between 1927 and 1928, he lived in Vienna and participated in a seminar led by Professor Alfons Dopsch (1868-1953) at the Austrian Institute for Historical Research (*Institut für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung*), which had a profound influence on his historiographical views. In addition to focusing on the history of institutions, Dopsch rejected strict periodisation and instead advocated for understanding history as a series of gradual changes and progressive developments. These ideas permeated CSA's work, along with a teleological view of history — as *magistra vitae* [life's teacher] that

explains the present — and of life itself, topics that remained present throughout his career. At the same time, a strict methodological rigour characterised his entire career, prompting him to question all theories — both his own and those of others — through constant reading and re-reading of sources, thorough analysis of documents, and a robust critical mindset. A substantial part of his work is dedicated to the detailed review and reasoned critique of the theoretical proposals of other historians, both past and contemporary. His entire body of work was founded on his own ideas, which he frequently tested, seeking to establish an explanatory framework for the history of Spain in which medieval institutions had a central place.

Upon his return to Spain in 1928, after visiting several European countries, CSA began leading a seminar on the history of Spanish medieval institutions, attended by many of his students. In 1932, this seminar led to the founding of the *Instituto de Estudios Medievales* [Institute of Medieval Studies]. The institute's primary mission was to publish the *Monumenta Hispaniae Historica*, a documentary collection similar to those already available in Germany, France, and Portugal at the time. These sources would be the pillars for the construction of a historical-legal discourse parallel to and in line with the discourse that the specialists in the history of literature had constructed at the *Centro de Estudios Históricos*: a history of Spain with "the people" as the protagonists and Castile as the centre of gravity. The emphasis on the people's role in constructing national identity both legitimised and eternalised that identity, while the focus on Castile underscored these researchers' opposition to the notion of an "invertebrate" Spain. Thus, a new historiography was emerging — liberal and conservative in political perspective, highly attentive to municipal history and the study of cities —, where "the people" had lived. This approach aligned with the historiographical discourses of other European countries and moved away from the Romantic narrative, which had portrayed a national history heavily marked by religious elements.

In CSA's studies, attention to institutions extended beyond just legal matters. In his work, topics such as trade, land ownership, and medieval lordships were examined through the lens of "social institutions". The focus was always on the institution itself — for instance, in the case of Castilian *behetrías* or the *encomendación* – and its formal characteristics defined its nature. Through an empirical analysis based on contemporary documents, he assessed the evolution of social forms as a result of the passage of time and adaptation to changing circumstances, and emphasised the enduring aspects, focusing on the structures that were maintained over the centuries. Institutions such as the *behetrías* — communities that could choose their own lord — and court meetings originated in high-medieval societies, and then evolved over time while preserving their core formal characteristics. This theory has had a significant impact on later research and, although it has been somewhat nuanced, has also been supported by more recent studies. In fact, several of these ideas provided the foundation for some of the political measures that defined the Second Republic, including the land reform bill.

CSA began his political activities during the dictatorship of Miguel Primo de Rivera (1923-1930), driven by a sense of "civil duty", however, he always insisted that this was a "tortuous path" that ultimately diverted him from his research. He joined Manuel Azaña's *Acción Republicana* and, following the proclamation of the

Second Republic on 14 April 1931, held several political positions, while also serving as rector of the Universidad Central. His roles included member of parliament for Ávila, president of the *Comisión de Instrucción Pública* [Commission on Public Education], Minister of State, Minister of Foreign Affairs, ambassador to Portugal, and vice-president of the Cortes. However, he always insisted that he did not consider himself a politician, and that his only aim had been to "set Spain's destiny on track". He described himself as "Spanish, democratic, liberal, Catholic, and republican" and shared Azaña's centre-left views because he was opposed both to the intolerance of the more traditional sectors and to the intransigence of the more radicalised factions. In his speech during the debate on the approval of the 1931 Constitution, he praised socialist policies and the "justice of their demands", as well as the "autonomous tendency", believing that "Spain has always been both one and multiple". His main political project was the aforementioned agrarian reform law, which sought to restore land ownership to peasants through expropriation. He aimed to fight abuses and refused to soften the norm with palliative measures, such as compensation. For him, the suspension of the reform in 1933 marked the end of the Republic.

On 15 May 1936, CSA arrived in Lisbon on a train from Madrid, aiming to improve relations between the Spanish Republic and the Salazar regime. At the station, he was greeted by young students and democratic supporters, as well as a group of fascists, and thousands of police officers. In a speech to the Radio Clube Português, he advocated for the republican vision of creating "a better Spain", "in peace and guided by new moral and human laws". He explained that, in order to follow a "path that would shape Spain", independent of foreign regimes, whether from the right or the left, intellectuals like himself had "thrown themselves into the sea of political passions". Minutes after his speech – which would later be published in full in the newspaper *O Século*– the National Broadcaster aired the speech by King João I from the time of the Battle of Aljubarrota. In the following weeks, references to Aljubarrota were repeated almost constantly, to the point where the new ambassador remarked that "the battle that Castile lost seven centuries ago could be believed to have been won by the current dictatorship just the day before yesterday". Episodes like this, along with the portrayal of the Spanish political situation in the Portuguese press – which CSA believed was exaggerated – highlighted the growing tension between the Salazar regime and the Republican government.

In his speech introducing himself as ambassador, CSA sought to emphasise his deep attachment to the country. "I have loved Portugal," he said, "since the distant years of my youth; I feel admiration for its heroic deeds, its glorious literature, and its splendid art; Portuguese blood runs through the veins of my children." In other speeches, he spoke of the cultural unity between the two nations, the shared sense of Hispanicity, and the importance of academic and scientific collaboration. He visited various institutions, received a warm welcome at the *Academia das Ciências* [Academy of Sciences], and laid a wreath at the tomb of Alexandre Herculano in the Jerónimos Monastery. CSA held Herculano in great esteem, recognising in him the virtues of "intelligence, erudition, and a wonderful pen". The visit was also attended by several researchers from the *Instituto de Estudios Medievales*, who were at the time studying the documentation preserved in the Torre do Tombo archive.

The warm reception CSA received in intellectual circles stood in stark contrast to the coldness of the government, which, while maintaining formalities, sent out aggressive messages against Spain, either directly or indirectly. This set the context for the ambassador's interview with Oliveira Salazar on 13 June. The President of the Council, described as having a "good stature" with a "pale, Semitic face" and "clear, not too large eyes that smile effortlessly and often, almost as if to delve deeper into the intimate thoughts of his interlocutor — or perhaps due to some visual defect not corrected" — began the conversation by setting two conditions for the presence of the Spanish government's representative in Portugal: to respect Portuguese independence and not to interfere in the "internal affairs" of Portugal. Salazar softened the tone of the conversation after hearing CSA's reassuring words. Although he continued to insist on silencing certain sectors of Spanish politics and the press that were spreading a negative image of the Portuguese regime, he soon introduced himself as a weary Economics professor, weakened by insomnia, who had taken up his political role for being a "good administrator of the people". However, the impression Salazar made on CSA was not a positive one. He would later write that he encountered a solitary and austere figure, someone who believed in a man without needs or desires, obsessed with saving, and seemingly very distant from the image of an "all-powerful ruler". From CSA's perspective, Salazar lacked any "renovating genius". The intellectual impression was perhaps the most negative. CSA would later claim to have only heard sentences without much significance from the *estudioso no con exceso talentudo* [scholar not overly talented].

In July of that year, a military coup against the government led by Manuel Azaña sparked the Spanish Civil War. The insurgents, who enjoyed open sympathy from the Portuguese authorities and the more conservative sectors of the country, informed CSA of his dismissal as ambassador. He stayed in Lisbon, offering refuge to those fleeing the occupied areas by welcoming them into the embassy and recording their testimonies. The Salazar regime forbade any expression of support for the Spanish Republican government and isolated the embassy, which no longer received official communications or the funds sent from Spain to cover its staff's salaries and daily expenses. Through clandestine informants, CSA became aware that money was being transferred from Portugal to the Spanish insurgents, and that submarines and boats loaded with weapons — many of them German and Italian — were passing through Portuguese ports headed to unknown destinations. Two police officers working for the embassy disappeared one night and were later traced to Spain, they had been kidnapped and forced to join the ranks of the so-called "bando nacional" [Nationalist faction]. The ambassador's protests went unheard, and the constant threats eventually forced several Spanish diplomats, including the consul, to leave Portugal and flee to France. Spanish fascists and monarchists frequently attacked resident republicans, with the backing of the Portuguese police, and those who managed to escape across the border in search of asylum were often sent back, where they were executed. Under these circumstances, most of the embassy staff resigned.

Salazar feared that the system of government established in Spain since 1931 might spread to Portugal, and he also felt an ideological affinity with the Spanish rebels and the regimes in Germany and Italy. However, in the weeks following the speech, he did not sever relations with the Spanish Republic. CSA, for

his part, believed that the Portuguese government was waiting for the Spaniards to take the initiative. He felt that his departure from Lisbon, pressured by the constant threats from the Falangists against him and his children, would provide the pretext for the Portuguese authorities to align with one of the factions. For this reason, he resisted staying in Lisbon until the end of October, when the Salazar regime began to openly support the uprisings. Exiled in Bordeaux, where he held a university professorship partly funded by the Rockefeller Foundation, he managed to return to Spain and recover his files. However, after speaking with the leaders of the Republican faction, he became convinced that the war was lost. In 1939, after his house in Madrid was ransacked, he asked his parents to disinherit him so that the new government could not seize anything else. At that time, with the outbreak of the Second World War and the fear that Bordeaux might be bombed, he was forced to bury his documents in the garden of his house to protect them. When the city was occupied by the Germans, he was forced to flee once again with his documents, but this time without his family. He travelled by boat from Marseille to Algiers, then by train to Casablanca, and finally returned to Lisbon by sailboat. He left Portugal for Rio de Janeiro and, after spending some time at the Universidad de Cuyo [University of Cuyo] in Mendoza (Argentina), he settled in Buenos Aires in 1942.

CSA would only return to Spain after the death of Francisco Franco and the end of the dictatorship. He refused the invitations that had been sent to him in previous decades, believing that returning would mean capitulating. He also respected his commitment not to offer opinions or judgments that could interfere in Argentine politics, particularly during the early years of Perón's government. Even so, from 1946 he served as president of the *Asociación de intelectuales demócratas españoles* [Association of Spanish Democratic Intellectuals] and, between 1962 and 1971, as president of the government of the Spanish Republic in exile. Far from his family, with little interest in the present, and always carrying two watches — one set to Spanish time and the other to Argentinian time — he spent forty years thinking about Spain from a distance. Separated by an ocean from the archives and documents, the files he had managed to recover twice and bring with him to America became the main foundation of his work. He formed an important school of disciples, taught at the Universidad de Buenos Aires [University of Buenos Aires], led the *Instituto de Historia de España* [Institute of Spanish History], founded the journal *Cuadernos de Historia de España*, and cultivated a sense of nostalgia while constantly questioning what he called the Spanish mystery —the "historical enigma" that also became the title of his book, written in response to the essay *España en su historia. Cristianos, moros y judíos* [Spain in its history. Christians, Moors and Jews] by Américo Castro, published in 1948.

In his text, Castro began with the idea that the historian is a "biographer of peoples" and rejected the notion of a unified Spanish identity before the 8th century. He argued that Jews and Muslims were central to the creation of national culture. CSA, for his part, downplayed the importance of Islam in Iberian identity and denied that there had been a true symbiosis between cultures. In short, the former believed that the defining features of the "vital home" were oriental and Semitic, while the latter emphasised the Latin and Christian essence of the "temperamental context" of the historical people. The most striking aspect of this very

interesting controversy is that it pitted two scholars, both trained at the *Centro de Estudios Históricos* and following parallel paths, against each other. They defended two contrasting views of what Spain had been and what it was, both from exile. As a result of the war, one of the main intellectual debates of the 20th century on Spanish identity took place thousands of kilometres from the Peninsula. Regarding the origin of Portugal, both authors supported the theory of chance — the idea that the territory became independent by "accident" —, this theory would later be contested by Jaime Cortesão in his 1959 essay "Causas da independência de Portugal e da formação portuguesa do Brasil" [Causes of independence from Portugal and the Portuguese formation of Brazil], in 1959.

CSA's vast body of work is characterised by high-quality writing that reveals his skill as an excellent "storyteller". It spans a variety of themes across a relatively broad chronological range, largely because, drawing on his research into the medieval period, he developed interpretative theories that he then applied to later periods. His work is also marked by a constant return to certain lines of research, which evolve over time through recurring revisions, reinforced ideas, and open questions. These lines of research were developed progressively in studies aimed at exploring doubts and establishing reference points on a path built step by step. For this reason, many of the criticisms of CSA's theories, which often target a single statement or work without considering all the texts the author dedicated to the subject, are not always well-founded. Such is the case with the central role that the author assigned to Castile in the construction of Spanish history, a point perceived by many as a defence of political centralism, but which actually highlighted the undeniable influence of this geopolitical region from an ideological, economic, and — above all — fiscal perspective, until the 19th century. Another example is CSA's emphasis on the continuity of the idea of the "reconquest" from the 8th century until the end of the 15th century, a view he himself nuanced by identifying moments of crisis and recognising that the elites were the main driving forces behind the phenomenon. However, the most controversial of CSA's historiographical theories, especially in Portugal, has been his theory of the "depopulation of the Douro valley" and the subsequent "repopulation" in the centuries following the Muslim invasion. The extensive discussion of the "depopulation thesis", not always cited as originally formulated, has generated one of the most interesting bodies of research in 20th-century Iberian historiography.

CSA returned to Spain for just two months in 1976. He found a very different country from the one he had been forced to leave, and although he received many awards and recognitions in the following years, he chose not to settle there again. For those who supported the dictatorship, he was seen as a republican, while for those who opposed it, he appeared as an anachronistic figure, with ideas closer to the right, extremely conservative, and closely linked to the Church. His work had a significant impact on medieval historiography, and some of his Argentine disciples moved to Spain, continuing his academic tradition there. Although a foundation in Ávila helped preserve his legacy, much of his library and nearly all of his students remained in Argentina. It wasn't until 1983, when he was seriously ill and under pressure from his children, that he returned for good. He died in the summer of 1984, at the age of ninety-one, and was buried in the cloister of Ávila Cathedral. His tombstone bears the inscription *ubi autem spiritus domini, ibi libertas* (where the spirit of

the Lord is, there is freedom).

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Covadonga Valdaliso

DICIONÁRIO DE HISTORIADORES PORTUGUESES

DA ACADEMIA REAL DAS CIÊNCIAS AO FINAL DO ESTADO NOVO

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