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The black letter, political expression of Gabriel Garcia Moreno's conservativeness

La letra negra, expresión política del conservadurismo de Gabriel Garcia Moreno

A carta negra, expressão política do conservadorismo de Gabriel Garcia Moreno

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ABSTRACT

This essay deals with one of the most controversial characters in Ecuadorian history, President Gabriel García Moreno, an Ecuadorian politics figure of the second half of the nineteenth century. Because of his actions during his presidential term, popular perception was divided, with some considering him an angel while others considering him a demon; in his second presidential term he convoked a National Convention to draft a new Magna Carta. The Constitution of 1869 was called the Black Charter by its contemporaries, by violating rights such as freedom of worship, freedom of expression; it was exclusionary because it did not allow the political participation of the vast majority of the population; education is based eminently on Catholic dogmas, despite all this, it was approved by referendum on July 18, 1869, by 96.36% of voters.

Palabras clave: President, Constitution, Black Letter, Religion, Church.

RESUMEN

El presente ensayo, trata sobre uno de los personajes más controversiales de la historia del Ecuador, el Presidente Gabriel García Moreno figura de la política ecuatoriana en la segunda mitad del siglo XIX, por sus acciones cuando fue presidente de la república considerado para un sector de la población un ángel, mientras para otro un demonio; en su segundo periodo presidencial convocó a una Convención Nacional para que redacte una nueva Carta Magna, la Constitución de 1869 fue denominada Carta Negra por sus contemporáneos, al violentar derechos como la libertad de culto, libertad de expresión; es excluyente porque no permite la participación política de la gran mayoría de la población; la educación se basa eminentemente en los dogmas católicos, pese a todo esto, fue aprobada mediante referéndum el 18 de julio de 1869, por el 96.36% de los votantes.

Keywords: Presidente, Constitución, Carta Negra, Religión, Iglesia.

RESUMO

Este ensaio trata de uma das personagens mais controversas da história do Equador, o Presidente Gabriel García Moreno, uma figura política equatoriana da segunda metade do século XIX. Devido às suas ações durante o seu mandato presidencial, a percepção popular foi dividida, com alguns considerando-o um anjo enquanto outros considerando-o um demônio; no seu segundo mandato presidencial, convocou uma Convenção Nacional para redigir uma nova Carta Magna. A Constituição de 1869 foi chamada de Carta Negra pelos seus contemporâneos, violando direitos como a liberdade de culto, liberdade de expressão; foi excludente porque não permitia a participação política da grande maioria da população; a educação baseia-se eminentemente em dogmas católicos, apesar de tudo isto, foi aprovada por referendo a 18 de Julho de 1869, por 96,36% dos eleitores.

Palavras-chave: Presidente, Constituição, Carta Negra, Religião, Igreja.

Introduction

To analyze the historical facts, it is necessary to consider and appeal to a large number of sources of information, which must be verified, at the risk of contradiction between them; however, it is the historian who put into practice his skills to classify the sources according to their nature, either primary like the exact copy of the Constitution of 1869, which facilitates the study of each of the articles affecting the population of that time; or secondary like the source of the Ecuadorian historian Enrique Ayala Mora who allowed to analyze the economic, social, political, and religious context of the stage under study.

In all kinds of research there are obstacles, the greatest limitation that was taken when studying this Ecuadorian historical figure, is that being a historical event of the nineteenth century, we could not count on people who were present at that occasion in order to make use of their testimony, being an impediment of having a direct information of the thoughts and reasons that motivated the Constitution of 1869, in a denigrating way called the "Black Charter", there is only reference to what was written about this.

In a period of crisis for the Ecuadorian State, the character of Gabriel García Moreno appeared to occupy the political power of Ecuador, between 1860 and 1875, being the highest representative of the conservatism of the Highland in the country. He was a person who had a strong character and a bad temper, his pride did not allow him to go back on his decisions, he never forgave the betrayal of a friend; in a letter he wrote to Benigno Malo, with whom he had had a conflict due to political differences in 1869, he began by saying "I remember the insulting letter I received from you in 1862" (Herderon, 2010), in that message you can see his pride and resentment.

President Gabriel García Moreno, who intended to perpetuate himself in power with an unexpected tyrant attitude, had influence

in the Ecuadorian State for about 15 years; this period is important for the Ecuadorian history because it deals with the projects carried out by an intelligent, visionary, impulsive, tyrannical and calculating president who influenced the republican life of the nation, a man defeated a few times and triumphant in others; but his merit was to reaffirm national unity thanks to his ideals.

Development

Gabriel Gregorio Fernando José María García Moreno and Morán de Butrón, born on December 24th 1821, in Guayaquil province, belonging to the Real Audiencia of Quito Spanish colony, was the fruit of the marriage of a Spanish nobleman Gabriel García Gómez and a Guayaquileña aristocrat named Mercedes Moreno; this relationship favored by the situation in Spanish America in the early nineteenth century, where the blood ties of nobility were present in this marriage, which gave to the Gabriel García Moreno family a place of privilege before the Ecuadorian society.

Gabriel García Moreno grew up in a realistic environment, because he had his father of Spanish origin and his mother had relatives who were educated and formed in Spain. For not supporting the idea of American independence, in the period where the Spanish colonies rebelled in search of ending the Spanish yoke; García Moreno's family lost their fortune by being in favor of the Spanish crown, which left them practically in ruin to show against the process of independence of the Real Audience of Quito.

Gabriel García Moreno's father was a Spaniard, of extremely strong and aggressive character, there is no doubt that the son inherited his temperament; in his childhood and adolescence he had a rigid education, based on the Catholic religion, at this stage of history, the church was considered to be the only one that instilled moral values and formed true citizens. When García Moreno was about seven years old, he was able to read and write, thanks to his mother being in

charge of teaching him the first letters, for no longer having the riches and comforts they used to have to pay private teachers. Being a teenager, his father died, which is why, his mother Mercedes had no alternative, she found herself with the need of entrusting her son when he was just 14 years old to Friar Betancourt, a religious Mercedarian of la Merced convent in Quito.

In Guayaquil city there were no institutes or universities for secondary studies, which is why, Friar Betancourt, seeing the great capacity of his student and wanting to promote the young García Moreno, saw the need to send him to the city of Quito to continue his academic training where the only university of Ecuador operated. In September 18th. 1836, Gabriel García Moreno left Guayaquil to the city of Quito, to start with his new studies, after a year of illustrations of Latin; September 1st. 1837, García Moreno entered the "Convictorio de San Fernando", where he studied philosophy, mathematics, history and natural sciences. The President Vicente Rocafuerte secularizes it and christens it as "National High School of the University". In this educational institution, García Moreno became a Latin teacher after receiving a scholarship granted by President Vicente Rocafuerte and thus was able to continue with his secondary studies of philosophy.

Gabriel García Moreno, was convinced that the path that he should follow was the religious one, so in 1838 he imposed on himself the tonsure and the minor orders; despite this, after a while he was more attracted to political life, in 1840 he chose to study law as a university career and in 1844 receives the title of "Doctor". On June 25th, 1845, he traveled to Europe, with the unique objective of complementing his university studies and expanding his knowledge of religion. He spent three years in Paris and then he returned to Ecuador, where he was appointed mayor of Quito, thus entering to the political activity.

At that time of crisis for the Ecuadorian state, the figure of Gabriel García Moreno appeared, as a representative of highland landed conservatism, he had political influence between 1860 and 1875, elected president of Ecuador on two periods 1861-1865 and 1869-1875, ruled authoritarian and despotic. On April 2nd. 1861, he took over and rose as the new constitutional president of Ecuador, seeking to make a total change in the nation, as Galvez (1942) states:

He will seek to "restore the empire of morality, without order is nothing more than truce or weariness and outside of which freedom is deceit and chimera", and for this it will use two means: the vigorous repression of crime and the solidly religious education of the new generations. He will protect Religion, without whose influence moral reform is not possible. He will promote industry, trade and agriculture, until now behind "lack of knowledge and means of communication".

In this way the author points out that Gabriel García Moreno sets out the objective of reforming Ecuador of the mid-19th century, so that from religion the new generations are formed; the background as a nation was bad, because after the independence of the Ecuadorian territories, the people lost their legislative organization. Despite the attempts, the first Ecuadorian presidents failed to unify the population and thus the Ecuadorian nation maintained a constant organizational instability.

One of the first concerns of Gabriel García Moreno, already as president of Ecuador, was to modify the public instruction that until 1861 had taken very little importance in the past presidential administrations, so García declared the abolition of the study freedom in the same year as the beginning of his presidency, a law that was proposed by the former president of Ecuador José María Urbina in his term. In addition, to identify that in or-

der to have a better quality of education in Ecuador, institutions and staff were needed to teach, he brought from Europe the religious with the aim of educating young people and thus building secondary education institutions in the main cities of the Ecuadorian Republic such as Guayaquil, Quito, Riobamba and Cuenca.

On his administration, President Gabriel García Moreno always emphasized his desire for knowledge and thus reflected his thinking as well as his educational plans for the people of Ecuador. Thus, with the Garciano program, the creation of new educational institutions was promoted, the development and scientific evolution of the country was increasing. For the new educational models brought from Europe helped the advancement of science in 19th-century in Ecuador. As Ayala Mora argues "The garciano program, which had its maximum expression in the Constitution of 1869... On one side, he promoted the modernization and consolidation of the state, stimulated the production and trade, developed science and education" (Ayala, 1999).

On his second administration between 1869 to 1875 Gabriel García Moreno took a somewhat authoritarian role in his term. In this, García Moreno's last government takes the power with a vision of stronger order than the first one where his authority as president takes on even more strength. So he is predisposed to carry out works that on his previous government he could not. In 1869 he called a National Convention and ordered the drafting of the eighth Constitution of the Republic; gathered from May 19 to August 30, led by García Moreno, who sought order above all the reaffirmation of morality, considering that the only way to achieve it is consolidating the union of the State with the Catholic Church, which is reflected when the republic was consecrated to the "Sacred Heart of Jesus" in 1873.

To achieve the ambitions he had as a president, he had to be part of the process of

reforms in the new Constitution, before this, García Moreno manifested in the National Convention: "Two main objects are the ones that I have had in my sights; the first one, to bring our political institutions into harmony with our religious belief; and second one, to invest the public authority with the sufficient force to resist the onslaught of anarchy." (Ayala, 1990)

The political tendencies in this period were conservatism and liberalism, García Moreno was the highest representative of the conservatives; the Constitution of 1869 caused misinterpretations in the opposition despite the social and political arguments with which he justified himself. The reforms had greater focus on society and how to counter the political opposition of liberals. This Constitution of 1869 has been called "Black Charter", examining the articles that compose it, it was found that it was not in a specific group, but on the entire population; most of the rules of the Constitution did not guarantee that the rights of citizens were fulfilled.

The Republic of Ecuador, since its birth, it's a country with different indigenous cultures and nationalities, with a diversity of flora and fauna; García Moreno considered that the only thing that would unite them as a nation would be the practice of a single religion, in this case the Catholic. In order for there to be no different positions, it was necessary to enact new laws for all individuals living in the national territory, that is why the new government put into practice, would be representative, public, elective and responsible.

However, this was not fully accomplished, which is reflected in Section II. Of the citizens, in which the Ecuadorian population had to meet a series of requirements and attitudes in order to be considered Ecuadorian, or else the person lost the rights of citizenship, especially if the person allied with the opposition. This is evident in:

Trabucco, F. (1975)

Article 10.- To be a citizen you require:

1. Be Catholic;
2. Know how to read and write;
3. Be married or over twenty-one years old.

The Black Charter is characterized by being exclusionary by not taking into account the individuals who were in the lowest step of the social pyramid, which in this case were: the indigenous, black people, illiterate, servants, farmers, among others; these people also did not meet another requirement which was to have a monetary value of 300 pesos; proving that there was discrimination.

With regard to the religion, it was one of the most nonconforming aspects for Ecuadorians, they could not have any religion other than the official of the state, which was the Catholic, Apostolic and Roman; it was forbidden to practice in a public or private way another religion, to happen it would bring serious consequences, which involved sanctions for those who disregarded this regulation; Catholic dogmas were taken as a way of educating the society morally and productively, this also served as a political power to defend and preserve it when it was in danger of being criticized or attacked.

With regard to the Supreme Power, the Constitution separates it into three powers: the personified executive in the republic president, the legislative in the chamber of senators and deputies, the judicial in the courts and tribunals of justice; although the direction of the State was in these authorities, the absolute power was focused on the president of the State, in this case in Gabriel García Moreno.

In relation to the presidential period, it was stipulated that it would be six years, with an option to be re-elected; García Moreno justified it by saying that a president at the time of coming to power has objectives, which are framed in projects, which are carried out with adequate planning and in a given period of time; in previous Constitutions was considered four years of mandate, which

did not allow governments to be able to finish with all their purposes, that was the argument given to add two more years to the presidential term. The political imbalance of past years was taken as antecedent, which was generated when a president left the power and another one started, the change provoked economic, political and population instability that did not adapt quickly to the projects of the new president; in contrast to this, longer-term governments would avoid entirely negative consequences for the nation's development.

Throughout the Titles, Sections and Articles found in the Black Charter, all power rests in the president, eliminating the vice-president who now had no influence, which generated discontent in the opposition liberals; and García Moreno's longing was to seek positive change for society, contributing productively and efficiently to the country, but his opponents saw it in a negative way, considering that he put his personal interests first and not for all members of the social conglomerate.

In the work, by Carlos Paladines E. "The political thinking of Montalvo: essays and letters of introduction and selection", Juan Montalvo stated:

"García Moreno had had the hellish power of the snake that fascinates, dominates, attracts to certain birds to devour them, which, even though they know instinctively what is going to happen to them, cannot avoid their ruin and approach it, and give themselves and perish."

The decision-making in everything concerning to the State, lies in García Moreno, who made the laws rigid; the citizens who went against the rules were publicly punished in the various places that existed in the country, so that the rest of the population would raise awareness of what could happen if their attitudes opposed to the government's objectives.

The religion was not only present in the political aspects, it was also used to carry out a religious education, which implies, faith in student's teachings, preserving beliefs, to bring as consequences new citizens, to promote and practice the Catholic doctrine, respecting it and protecting it above all things.

There was too much unconformity on the part of the opposing groups and the soldiers, García Moreno had despotism and tyranny attitudes, based entirely on the regulations found in the Constitution; the oppositors saw that the only way to end this kind of atrocities was with the death of the tyrant; so he was killed on August 6th. 1875. With his death, the regime he adopted was not abolished in its entirety, it took several decades for the Garciano regime to disappear completely from the Ecuadorian state.

Despite his controversial personality, there are several exceptions that should be emphasized from the two presidency periods by García Moreno, among them, one which stood out was the he made primary education as mandatory, the foundation of the National Polytechnic School, supported and boosted the art and culture with the creation of conservatories, promoting national unity with the construction of several roads, among the most important are: Ibarra to Quito, and Quito to Cuenca, among many other things. If the subsequent governments had concerned themselves about the poor in the way Garcia Moreno cared about, another it would be today the fate of the Republic today. (Loor, 1995)

Conclusion

Unfortunately for the historian, in the nineteenth century there were no technological resources that would have allowed to record in audio and video the speeches of Gabriel García Moreno, which were said to be masterful, having this, the historian would have a valuable material, without the need to be present at the moment of such event, to witness and obtain primary information of the fact;

despite this, it was not an impediment to the present research work, because a reasoned analysis of the sources were applied it was thought to do generalized studies, interpreting the ideas that are presented, this could result in the missing important data, however, I developed a thorough study analyzing the articles of the Constitution synthesizing the obtained information to have a general idea of the topic.

The historian is the only one who can measure the reliability of the sources, either by the background of who wrote them, for the coherence with which it is related and to the extent of the possibilities that these are related as they really happened, the historical events that transcend in the development of towns, cultures, civilizations and states; Gabriel García Moreno who was the mentor in the Constitution of 1869 called the Black Charter deserved special attention for being the basis of great changes at that stage in the history of Ecuador.

Gabriel García Moreno from his first presidential term faced a disintegrated country with a delay in advancement of education and culture, with his vision and effort he left as a legacy a strengthened educational system, greatly disjointed the regionalism and differences that divided the population of the territories of Ecuador. He improved through education, knowledge, science, religion; with the Constitution of 1869 (Black Charter) he pretended to transform the political state and relations among people of the regions, so that little by little a national identity was generated in the Republic of Ecuador.

Gabriel García Moreno used to act in a hasty manner, which caused him to have several conflicts in his public and personal life; his controversial personality led him to have many enemies, including his political opponents the liberals; his government was based primarily on the Catholic religion, which is reflected in the measures he took with regard to Ecuadorian society; in the Constitution of 1869, called The Black Charter, it was

stipulated that in order to enjoy the rights as an Ecuadorian citizen, the individual must necessarily profess the Catholic religion, which provoked anger and rejection in the population especially the liberals.

García Moreno's life is very controversial and could give way to different appreciations for the same fact that it was strongly linked to religion and being a supporter of conservatism, which is presented as the main challenge for historians when talking about this character, because the decisions in which he took part as president of the republic, should not please everyone, but be acclaimed by some; however, it is possible to tell his history and even his death objectively. There is evidence and testimony written that shows the actions that García Moreno took during his government, his constant rivalry with the liberals, his strong character and personality, the devotion of the Ecuadorian people and the place, date, and characters responsible for the assassination of that president.

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