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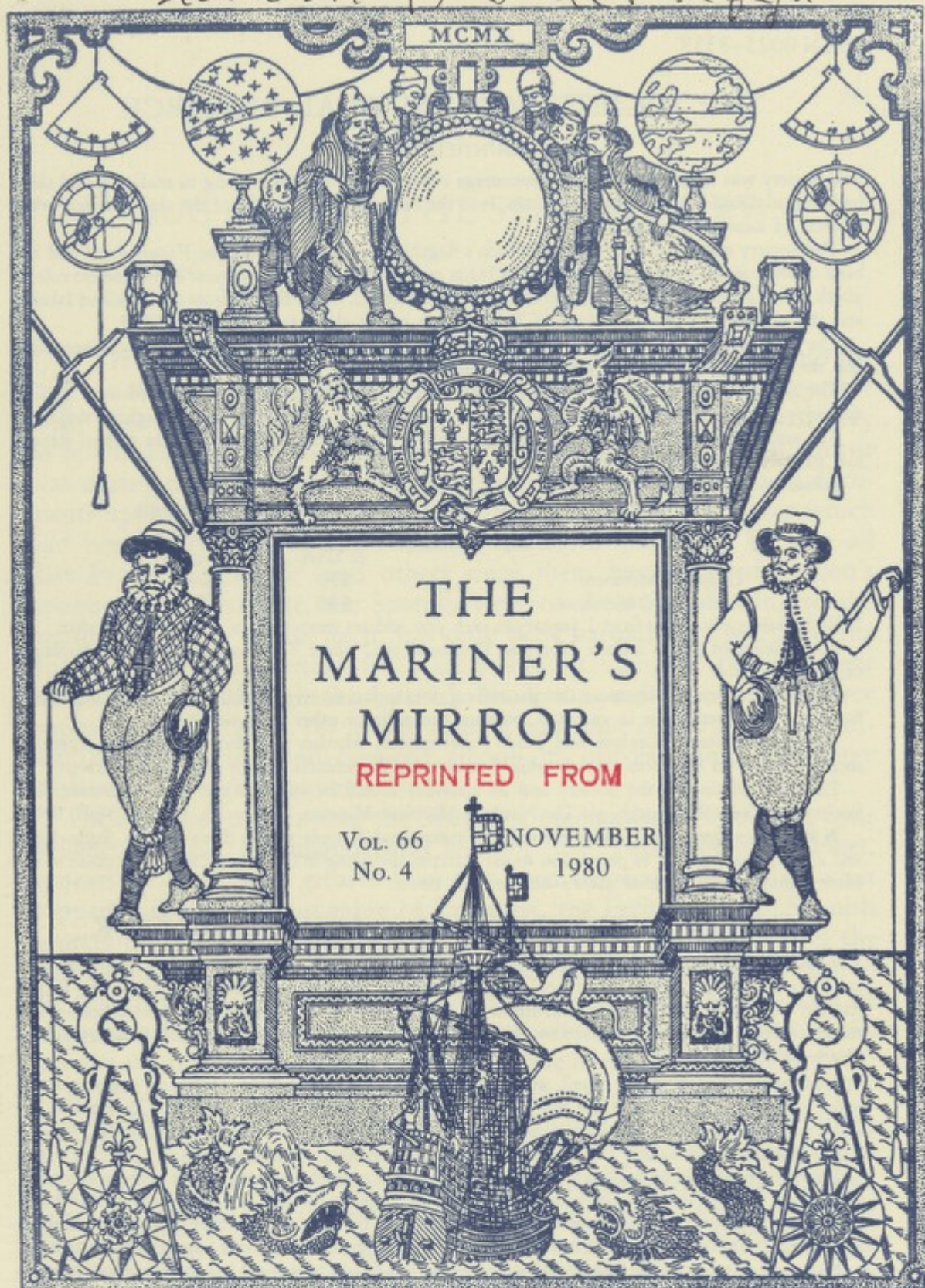
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ZULUETA, J. de. Grafalgar.

W. J. P.



R.T. Gould del.

Ioannes a Doetecum inv. circa 1583

THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF THE
SOCIETY FOR NAUTICAL RESEARCH

to whose Hon. Secretary all inquiries should be sent

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TRAFALGAR – THE SPANISH VIEW

by Julian de Zulueta

THE author of these lines must apologize for his intrusion into the naval affairs of the most brilliant period of the sailing age. He found himself in the Trafalgar waters when he had intended only to investigate the health conditions in the navies of that period. But it was during the course of these investigations that information and documents appeared, revealing facts about the campaign of Trafalgar which had been overlooked or had remained unknown until now. Despite all that Fraser¹, Newbolt² and others since them have said of Nelson's opponents at Trafalgar, the Spanish view of the events leading to the battle and of the action itself, has only been partially known. And the Spanish view is important for a clear understanding of the Trafalgar campaign for, although the Spanish Navy was only the second force opposing the British at sea at that time, it had some of the finest men-of-war of that period and counted among its officers some who were professionally highly respected.

The influence of Gravina, the Spanish Commander at Trafalgar, over Villeneuve, the Commander-in-Chief of the Franco-Spanish Fleet, appears to have been greater than has been suspected. Much of what happened during the campaign of Trafalgar, the French and the Spanish sources reveal, was the result of this influence. His ascendancy over the French admiral was due to his professional merits and also, no doubt, to his special position, close both to the Court of Madrid and to that of Napoleon. It thus seems important to hear what Gravina and his officers have to say of events in which they were some of the principal actors.

In his secret report on the state of the English Navy in 1793, Gravina³ emphasizes the superiority in gunnery of the English Navy over those of the other major naval powers. The guns themselves were not better than those of the other navies, but he considered the gun carriages superior and the fitting of firing locks to all guns a very great advantage. In his opinion, guns so mounted and fitted would be more easily handled and more quickly loaded than those of the other navies, a prediction which events were soon to confirm.

Don Federico Gravina, then a Rear-Admiral, or using the Spanish designation of that time, a 'Jefe de Escuadra'⁴, had travelled to England

in the company of another distinguished Spanish officer, Captain Don Joaquin Valdés, to obtain information on the state of the English Navy and its arsenals. This intelligence mission, which started under a cloak of secrecy⁵, ended in a most open and cordial way, Spain and England having become allies in the war against Revolutionary France. The two Spanish officers were entertained by their British comrades in arms and were shown in Portsmouth whatever they wished to see. Lord Hood himself arranged for them to travel back to Spain in the *Juno*, a frigate commanded by one of his nephews³.

It is curious to observe that, although Gravina had such a high opinion of all that concerned guns and gunnery in the English Navy, he had some unfavourable comments to make regarding its ships. He noted that England had not a corps of naval engineers as had Spain. Also that her ships lacked uniformity in construction and were inferior in design to the Spanish ships. The new three-deckers and 74's of Spain were in his opinion stronger and sailed better than their English counterparts³.

His opinion was shared by the principal actors of the Trafalgar drama. Nelson, speaking of the Spanish ships he had seen in 1793, admitted that he 'never saw finer men-of-war'⁶ and later used the captured *San Josef* as his flagship. Collingwood described the three-decker he fought at Trafalgar (the *Santa Ana*) as a 'Spanish perfection'⁷ and we hear Villeneuve praising the Spanish ships that went to Trafalgar as 'so beautiful and so strong'⁸.

Such perfection and beauty were the results of the efforts of the Spanish Bourbon Kings to strengthen their navy, essential if Spain were to maintain her position in America and in the South Seas. English shipwrights and ships built on the English model were tried first, to be replaced during the second half of the eighteenth century by French designers and French style naval architecture. The best known of these designers is F. Gautier, who was made a general officer in the Spanish naval service. His influence was great and among his disciples were some of the best naval architects of that period. Outstanding among them is Romero y Landa who designed that 'Spanish perfection', the *Santa Ana*, as well as the *Principe de Asturias*, Gravina's flagship, built in Havana with the timbers of the Tropics, the finest ship of the Spanish navy and probably the best ship at Trafalgar.

A word should perhaps be said here about the *Santisima Trinidad*, that colossus of the age of fighting sail, the biggest ship afloat in the days of Trafalgar. Spanish ships, as James⁹ pointed out, were bigger and of deeper draught – (Nelson could not use the *San Josef* in the shallow waters of the Baltic) – than the English ships of that period. The biggest

of all was the *Santisima Trinidad*, her name often spelled in English publications with an archaic double s to convey, no doubt, an impression of grandeur befitting the biggest ship of the period. Also built in Havana from the fine timbers of the New World, originally as a three-decker, she suffered several modifications, the most important one being the fitting of an additional upper deck, making her the only four-decker ever built. Nearly captured at the battle of Cape Saint Vincent, she was finally taken at Trafalgar but had to be scuttled during the storm after the battle, thus depriving the victors of their most coveted prize.

Despite her four decks, her resounding name and the aura of grandeur that surrounded her, the *Santisima Trinidad* was not as good a ship as her captors imagined. Col. R. Berenguer, who located the plans of the ship in Washington and to whose courtesy the author of this article owes the drawing reproduced in Fig. 1, has information to show that the big ship, despite all changes and improvements, always sailed and worked heavily. So much so, that Admiral Mazarredo, one of the most experienced sailors in the days before Trafalgar, recommended her use for the defence of Cadiz harbour rather than taking her to sea.¹⁰ His advice was not followed, presumably for reasons of prestige, and the great ship that at Cape Saint Vincent had flown the flag of the unfortunate Admiral Cordoba went to Trafalgar flying that of the brave Hidalgo de Cisneros.

If the Spanish ships had been so much admired, the same cannot be said of the crews that manned them. Nelson, after a visit to Cadiz in 1793, spoke of 'very fine ships, but shockingly manned'⁶ and his despairing comments on the Spanish seamen appear often in his correspondence. James passed a harsh judgement on the Spanish crews at Cape Saint Vincent, calling them worthless, 'composed of pressed landmen and soldiers of the new levies, with about 60 or at the most 80 seamen to each ship'.⁹ It is surprising how accurate this last statement seems after consulting the Spanish sources which James, in all probability, did not consult. He almost certainly obtained his information from British officers participating in the action. But the figures he quotes are almost the same as those given by Admiral Mazarredo, who a few years before the battle had found that in his own ship there were no more than 60 true seamen with practice in the manning of large ships.¹¹

As Commander of the Spanish Fleet before Cape Saint Vincent, Mazarredo felt it necessary to warn Godoy, the all powerful Prime Minister of the day, that the Spanish Navy was 'a force much weaker than it appears, a shadow that will vanish in the first engagement'.¹² Such Byscain frankness did not please Godoy. He not only dismissed Mazarredo but banished him as well. After the débâcle of Cape Saint Vincent, that

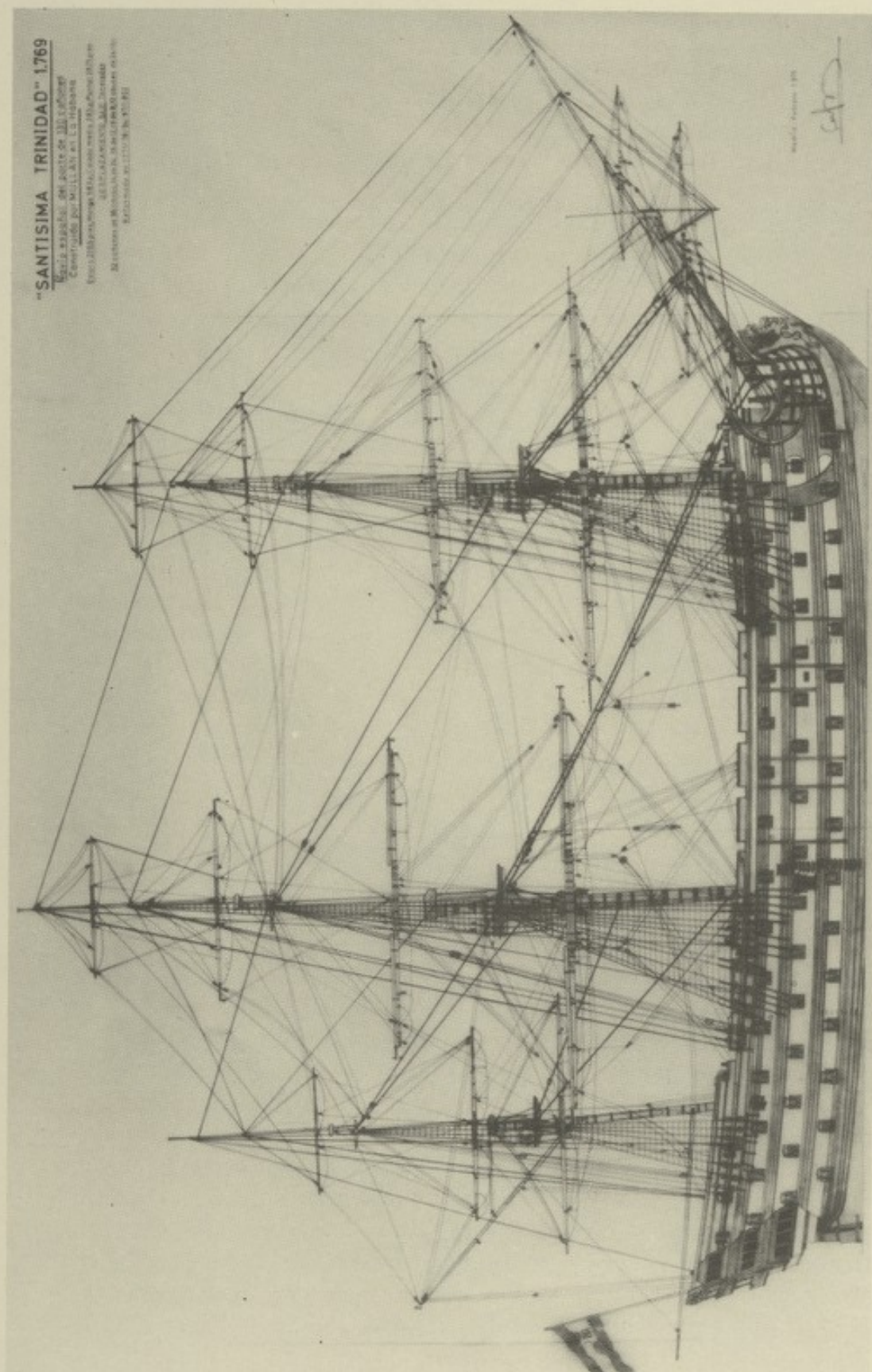


Fig. 1. The *Santísima Trinidad* before the construction of her 4th deck, redrafted from the original plans. Courtesy of Col. R. Berenguer and Museo Naval, Madrid.

he had so clearly foreseen, Mazarredo was recalled to the command of the Spanish Fleet and with Gravina as his second, strengthened the defences of Cadiz against the attacks of the squadron under Nelson, but did not come out of harbour, considering his forces no match for Lord Saint Vincent's victorious fleet.

Spain had found it increasingly difficult to man her large fleet. At the beginning of the Revolutionary Wars she had 76 ships-of-the-line of which 56 were in good condition.⁹ At the time of the declaration of war with England in 1796, the Spanish Navy counted 146 ships, including 47 of the line and 52 frigates¹³ but their complements were made up largely of soldiers and pressed landmen. Spain simply had not sufficient sailors to man such a large fleet.

The commerce of Spain under the able ministers of Charles III had seen a notable increase, particularly after the so-called Free Trade Decree of 1778. The liberalization and simplification of commercial practices brought about by the decree resulted in a fourfold increase of trade between Spain and her overseas territories during the period 1778–1788.¹⁴ But the trade of the Indies was still confined to the Spanish flag so that the commercial growth directly benefited the Spanish merchant navy. Despite this mercantile expansion, Spain had not sufficient sailors to man her men-of-war. In 1787 a review of the registered sailors (*marineros de matricula*) showed that they numbered 53,147 but Spain needed 89,350 to man her fleet. The situation was in fact worse than these figures seem to indicate. As Mazarredo pointed out, at that time the number of Spanish sailors used to the high seas was only 5,800. The rest of the registered men were only fishermen or coastal craft sailors.¹¹

After the death of Charles III in 1788, to the lack of men was added an almost perennial lack of money, rendering the fitting and arming of ships and the training of officers and men increasingly difficult. This was the 'shockingly manned' navy that Nelson found in Cadiz in 1793. To Mahan¹⁵ the penury of men and money in the navy of the nation of so many resources was a clear proof of decadence and as a man who had heard the call of 'American destiny' he had no patience with decadence.

That there was decay in the Spain of Charles IV there is no question, but that does not explain all that happened between 1793 and 1805, the year of Trafalgar, when Spain ceased to be a major naval power. It is true that her navy, like the other services, had suffered when the reins of government had been left in the hands of Godoy, the royal favourite. But this together with the almost complete destruction of the officers' corps in the French Navy during the Revolution, do not fully explain the

events which led to the complete supremacy of England at sea. Her success has to be explained not so much by the faults of her adversaries as by her own ability to build a matchless navy under the challenge of the French Revolution and Empire. And her superiority was a matter not only of quality but also of numbers. Her ships were not only better officered and manned but were more numerous than those in the service of France and Spain. As Mazarredo had pointed out to Napoleon in 1800, to the annoyance of the then First Consul, the combined fleets of France and Spain amounted to no more than one third of the English Navy.¹⁶

The English superiority in gunnery and seamanship, so noticeable during the Revolution and Napoleonic Wars, was the corollary of England's ability to keep her fleets at sea for indefinite periods of time. This novel practice – in the limited wars of earlier days fleets returned to harbour in winter time – was based to a large extent on the regular use of lemon juice, a most effective antidote of the dreaded scurvy that had plagued the navies of all nations until then. Although Lind¹⁷ had experimentally shown the extraordinary effect of lemons and oranges against scurvy as early as 1753, it took nearly half a century before the regular issue of lemon juice became a general practice in the English Navy.¹⁸

The French and Spanish naval doctors were aware of Lind's work¹⁹ but they do not seem to have realized the importance that the regular issue of lemon juice had in naval warfare. The Spanish commanders seem to have ignored this too and in general did not pay enough attention to health matters without realizing, as Nelson did, that 'the great thing in all military service is health'.⁶

The addition of lemon juice to the grog, the mixture of rum and water so popular among English sailors, was far from being a military secret. Many were the the Spanish officers and Spanish doctors who having been made prisoners in a naval engagement and having been taken on board an English man-of-war, must have witnessed the daily issue of grog with lemon juice. Yet, none of them seem to have realized that the lemon juice was one of the main ingredients in the English recipe for success in naval warfare.

* * *

France's declaration of war in 1793 had placed Spain on the side of England and the great powers of continental Europe, bent on punishing a defiant, revolutionary government. Despite the good company she was in, Spain soon found herself in serious difficulties. The Spanish armies, which had at first invaded France, had to recross the borders under the

attack of improvised but highly effective armies. By 1794 Spain had made peace with France and would have liked to remain out of the war but the turmoil of the Revolution would not allow her enfeebled government to keep out of the struggle. Under pressure from France, Spain in 1796 signed the treaty of San Ildefonso, which had been designed as a renewal of the family pact between the Bourbon Kings but which in fact brought together a Bourbon and those responsible for the killing of another. Under such unpropitious auspices, Spain was drawn into a war which proved disastrous to her and from which she could not escape until the treaty of Amiens brought peace to all Europe.

The renewal of hostilities between France and England again placed Spain in the dilemma of how to remain neutral without giving offence to either of the two belligerents. In the end, Spain yielded to the pressure of Napoleon, who was massing troops on her borders, and tried to buy her neutrality paying a subsidy to France. This was the pretext for England to attack, without declaration of war, four Spanish frigates bringing treasure from America. The Spanish commander, Rear-Admiral Bustamante, a distinguished officer and navigator, when intercepted near Cadiz by a superior English force under Commodore Moore, refused to surrender and prepared to fight. The results of the action are well known: one of the Spanish frigates blew up with great loss of life including that of women and children passengers. The other three were taken and their captors were left in possession of nearly one million sterling in specie. What perhaps is less known is that despite the extreme provocation and great losses, Spain was still reluctant to declare war on England.

From Cadiz harbour, where he had taken refuge, the captain of the French vessel *Aigle* reported to his government that the news of the four Spanish frigates was soon known in Cadiz, where its inhabitants despite their losses (a good part of the money taken was destined to the commerce of Cadiz) tried, to the surprise of the French captain, 'to justify the conduct of the English . . . hoping that this attack will not destroy the harmony between the two nations'.²⁰ This on-the-spot report reflects the mood of what must have been a large sector of Spanish public opinion, unwilling for a renewal of hostilities with England, after having seen the disastrous effect of the last war on the fortunes of Spain.

If the captain of the *Aigle* had been surprised at the attitude of the Cadiz population, Napoleon was annoyed with that of the Spanish Court.²¹ Despite much Napoleonic prodding, the Spanish Government declared war on England only on 12 December 1804, that is, two months after learning of the English attack on the Spanish frigates of the 4 October. Nelson, who did not want to be involved in the attack, was

right when he wrote 'I am clearly of the opinion that Spain has no wish to go to war with England'.⁶ But the dice had been cast, Spain had reluctantly joined France and Napoleon could now count on the Spanish Navy for his grand design to conquer England.

During the next few months he deployed a prodigious activity in his preparations for the invasion of England. From Boulogne and from Paris he bombarded his ministers, generals and admirals with orders and memoranda containing an astonishing amount of detail. His main channel of communication with the Court of Madrid was Admiral Gravina, who had been appointed Ambassador to France a few months previously, but he was also in communication through a secret channel with Godoy – the Prime Minister and Generalissimo.

Gravina, who had accepted the diplomatic post on the condition that in case of war he would be recalled to active service in the navy, had gone to Paris when it seemed likely that Spain would join France in the war against England and that her participation would be mainly in naval operations. The appointment, no doubt, had satisfied Napoleon who knew and esteemed Gravina.²² They had met in 1801 when Gravina was in command of the Spanish fleet that had joined the French at Brest. In their *têtes à têtes*, the two almost certainly spoke to each other in Italian, their mother tongue, for Gravina, it must be remembered, had been born in Palermo and like other members of the Neapolitan nobility had entered the Spanish naval service. The two crowns, it must be also recalled, had been united until 1759.

Despite his aristocratic background he got on well with the young Bonaparte, who must have found it a relief to deal with him instead of with his predecessor, the stubborn and outspoken Mazarredo. His artistocratic origins must have been so evident that in Revolutionary France, when admirals were addressed as 'citoyens', he was respectfully treated as 'Mr de Gravina' or the 'Marquis of Gravina',²³ two things that he was not, although he was descendant on both father and mother's sides from *Grandees* of Spain. The French have often placed his origin still higher, making him an illegitimate son of Charles III,²⁴ a claim for which the author of this article has found no evidence. What is certain is that he was highly esteemed at the Spanish Court and was treated with great consideration at that of Napoleon. These explanations may be necessary for a better understanding of the rôle of Gravina in the negotiations concerning the participation of Spain in the war and in the events that led to Trafalgar.

On 1 December 1804, a few days before Spain declared war on England, Admiral Gravina received a most secret document containing

the instructions of the Spanish Government for the negotiations with France concerning the Spanish participation in the war. A copy of the document exists in the Archives of the Spanish Navy at El Viso del Marqués²⁵ and appears to be the original draft handwritten by Admiral Grandallana, the Minister of Marine. It seems probable that, in view of the importance of the document no other copy was kept in the Government files. The end reads: 'His Majesty, having been acquainted with this minute, has approved it and ordered that it be sent by express messenger to Gravina'. Then follows the date, '22 November 1804 at 11½ of the night' and the initials of Grandallana.

Napoleon knew much of the secrets of the Spanish Court but he does not seem to have known that the Spanish Ambassador in Paris had been instructed to do exactly the opposite of what he himself so much wished to do. 'It not being in the interests of Spain', read the first sentence of the instructions to Gravina, 'that her forces should go to Brest, this must be avoided with the double object of not leaving our coasts unprotected and of preventing our allies from succeeding in their much desired landing in England'.

It was easy for Gravina to understand the disadvantages of going to Brest. He had been blockaded there from 1799 to 1801²³ while England could menace the Spanish coasts with impunity and land forces without opposition for an attack on Ferrol. The Spanish Fleet had remained in Brest against the wishes of Spain, a pawn in Napoleon's hands to ensure the continuation of support of a wavering ally.

In his reply of 3 December 1804, Gravina assured Grandallana that in his negotiations with the French Government he would follow closely the instructions received. He certainly did so. To the annoyance of Napoleon²⁶ he presented a plan, spelled out in detail in a letter to Decrès,²⁷ the Minister of Marine, in which a number of naval operations were suggested, none of them involving a concentration of forces in Brest, as a preliminary for a landing in England. Later, as Commander of the Spanish Fleet operating with Villeneuve, his advice was more than once against going to Brest and, as is well known, despite all the proddings and menaces of Napoleon, the Combined Fleet never went to Brest.

Napoleon brushed aside the suggestions and reservations of Gravina and of his own admirals and with his usual speed had a convention signed on 4 January 1805 stipulating that Spain would have ready for 30 March 30 ships-of-the-line provisioned for 6 months. A total of 32 ships-of-the-line are mentioned in the convention as the French contribution to the operations, apart from the troops and landing craft con-

centrated in the Channel. The 11 ships which sailed later from Toulon and the one which took shelter in Cadiz were not counted. The Emperor, according to the terms of the convention, would only reveal the destination of this armament one month after its signature to his Catholic Majesty or to the commander of his forces²⁸.

This cavalier treatment was applied to ensure the utmost secrecy in the operations. The secrecy was successfully kept but there was no doubt in anybody's mind that the ultimate objective in Napoleon's grand design was the invasion of England. To the professional sailors of France and Spain such an operation was basically unsound. In January 1805, when the two nations distributed their respective rôles in the war against England – or rather Napoleon distributed them – the English Navy consisted of 175 ships-of-the-line and 774 smaller vessels, that is, a total of 949 ships.²⁹ Against this formidable force France could oppose only 44 ships-of-the-line – 50 according to the round figure given by Thiers³⁰ – and a corresponding number of smaller vessels. Spain, according to the terms of the convention signed in January, was to provide 30 ships-of-the-line but Gravina, who had signed it, added in a footnote that he considered it unlikely that the 30 ships could be manned and provisioned by 30 March.³¹ In the end, only 20 Spanish ships participated in the campaign of Trafalgar. And so five years after Mazarredo had warned the First Consul about the overwhelming superiority of England at sea, her navy still had roughly three times more ships than the combined forces of France and Spain.

Whatever clever combinations the fertile mind of Napoleon could devise, the fact remains that the French and Spanish admirals had to face a navy that was superior to their forces not only in quality but also in numbers. Not surprisingly they were reluctant to risk an engagement, unless they were certain to have a marked local superiority in numbers. Mazarredo and Gravina had told Napoleon more than once – they could do this with less risk than their French counterparts – that France and Spain could only be successful in surprise operations and for a limited period of time, that is, before the British concentrated their superior forces. But in the long term, to meet England at sea, France and Spain had no alternative but to build and train a sufficiently large naval force.

This Napoleon did not do. The superiority of England was the same in 1805 as it had been five years before, for the truth is that Napoleon never put his mind to the task of building a navy strong enough to challenge England at sea. After all, he was a general and he knew he could not become an admiral. So money and effort were put into the organization of a formidable army and into the provision of sufficient

transports for landing it in England. He was in fact trying to decide a naval issue by a victory on land.

The theme of dominating the Channel for 24 hours 'and England is ours'³² is often repeated in his comminatory letters to his admirals. What would happen in the Channel after those 24 hours he never explained but what his admirals must have foreseen was the destruction of the invading armada, condemning to their doom whatever forces had set foot in England. In retrospect it seems highly improbable that, even if defeated at first, England would have capitulated, knowing that with the Royal Navy in control of the Channel the invasion force was doomed, whatever its initial success. In retrospect too, the much denigrated Villeneuve seems to have been strategically right and the great Napoleon wrong, although by not coming to the rendezvous of Brest, Villeneuve had given a lease of life to Napoleon, who would have had, no doubt, a much shorter career if he had landed in England.

* * *

The situation which Gravina found when he arrived in Cadiz on 15 February to take command of the Spanish Fleet was worse than he had expected. The lack of seamen was extreme. The coasts of Southern Spain had suffered during the last years the ravages of yellow fever,³³ decimating an always scarce seafaring population. A bad harvest had made it difficult to obtain sufficient wheat to make the required six million rations of biscuit.³¹ Worse of all, there was no money to pay for the provisions and for the stores to replenish the empty arsenals. The capture in peace time of treasure ships had been a severe blow to the already strained finances of Spain.

In the arsenals there were still ships in good condition, among them some of the finest first-rates built in the age of fighting sail. But the Spanish Navy was by then a dwindling force. In 1796 it had 47 ships-of-the-line but in 1805 it was thought that she could only arm 30. Spain had lost 10 ships-of-the-line between 1796 and 1802, 4 taken at the Battle of Saint Vincent, one more captured at Trinidad and 5 destroyed during operations or burnt by accident. In addition 6 ships had been handed over to France in 1801. These losses were never replaced for Spain did not build any more ships-of-the-line after 1797 due to her mounting economic difficulties.

Such was the condition of the fleet of which Gravina had been given command. Despite all his exertions, his authority in the naval service and his influence at court, in the end he could only join Villeneuve on 9 April with 6 ships-of-the-line instead of the 15 (or a minimum of 12) that

should have been ready in Cadiz by 30 March, according to the terms of the convention signed in January. Villeneuve was shocked by the state of the ships, two of them small 64's, and the poor quality of the crews, made up mostly of pressed landmen. But he admired Gravina for having come out at all with such ships and an excellent relationship was established between the two admirals which lasted throughout the campaign.³⁴

Villeneuve and Gravina sailed unmolested to the West Indies where they were soon followed by Nelson, thus completing successfully the first part of Napoleon's plan. His grand design, with its various modifications occupies several volumes of Desbrière's monumental work.³⁵ Thiers wrote in 1851 that 'never has a military operation required the despatch of so many orders and couriers'.³⁶ The aim of Napoleon's vast scheme was to obtain for a short period of time a local superiority in numbers in the Channel, after having attracted to the West Indies as much as possible of the English Fleet. That was all, he thought, that was required to get his army across the Channel and 'avenge six centuries of insults and shame'.³⁷ With the Grande Armée ready in Boulogne, he waited in vain for the sails of the Combined Fleet to appear and when he learned that Villeneuve had gone to Cadiz his rage knew no limits. 'This is certainly treason', he wrote to Decrès, 'Villeneuve is a rascal who must be kicked out without compunction. He has no talents, no courage, no interests; he would sacrifice anything in order to save his skin'.³⁸

With his usual rapidity Napoleon gave orders to move the Grande Armée from Boulogne to Central Europe, where he was soon to defeat the Emperors of Austria and Russia at Austerlitz. New combinations absorbed his mind and for a while he forgot about Villeneuve and his ships, but it was the echo of the imperial rage that reaching Cadiz forced the Combined Fleet out of harbour. But before following the great ships to their destruction at Cape Trafalgar a few words must be said of the reasons – for there were good reasons – that prevented Villeneuve from going to the Channel.

On 8 June Villeneuve and Gravina learned of Nelson's arrival in the West Indies from the men of an English convoy captured off Antigua. The French admiral, Gravina informed his government,³⁹ was rowed to his flagship at 3 a.m. in the night and in a pre-dawn conference it was decided to weigh anchor immediately and sail for Europe. A rendezvous off the Azores to meet four frigates which were to land in Guadeloupe some troops embarked in the Combined Fleet, critically delayed the fleet's return to Europe. As is well known, the brig *Curieux*, bringing Lord Nelson's dispatches to the admiralty, met the Combined Fleet at

sea and, after establishing its course, made all sail for England to deliver the momentous information it had obtained. Lord Barham, the First Lord of the Admiralty, fully realising its importance, speedily issued the necessary orders to intercept the Franco-Spanish Fleet off Finisterre.

The sudden sailing of the Combined Fleet from the West Indies on 9 June, before the time prescribed by Napoleon for his return to Europe, had been prompted by the erroneous intelligence that Nelson had an equal or larger force than the Franco-Spanish Fleet. But we learn from Gravina that increasing health problems of the allied fleet were another reason for its leaving the West Indies. There were numerous fever cases 'although not very malignant';³⁹ (this was probably malaria but cases of yellow fever may have occurred). A frigate which had accompanied the Spanish squadron to the West Indies became so undermanned through sickness that it had to be left in Martinique. In a letter to Decrès, with whom Gravina had been authorized to communicate directly, he complains himself of bad health as a consequence of the visit to the West Indies. 'We were lucky to have left soon. If we had remained there for another month we would have lost half of our men, rendering perhaps impossible our return to Europe'.⁴⁰ From Nelson's own account⁶ we know that his men hardly suffered from the voyage and this must have been due in great part to their having had less contact with the land than the French and the Spaniards.

The decisive moment for Villeneuve was to arrive after the inconclusive action with Calder off Finisterre on 22 July. Napoleon's instructions were to pick up the French and Spanish ships ready at Ferrol and proceed at once to Brest and the Channel. But the ships of the Combined Fleet were encumbered with the sick. There was a complete lack of medicines, Gravina tells us, adding that 'several French ships had only four days' supply of water and there were ships with 300 sick men'.³⁹ The Spanish crews were on short rations and there were 200 sick in the four ships left to Gravina after the action with Calder.³⁹ Clearly there was need for the Combined Fleet to call at Spanish ports to replenish stores, attend to the sick and repair the ships which had suffered damages in the action of 22 July, notably Gravina's flagship, the *Argonauta*, which had led the Combined Fleet in battle.

The time spent at Vigo and Ferrol inevitably increased the risk of sailing to the Channel. 'Sixty days have elapsed since we left Martinique', wrote Gravina on 8 August to Decrès, 'and the English have been warned of our return to Europe'. If they had intercepted the Combined Fleet on its way to Ferrol, they could more easily do so on its way to the Channel, 'thus destroying a plan of operations that was certainly most

TABLE I

PARTICULARS OF CONSTRUCTION AND ARMAMENT OF THE SPANISH SHIPS WHICH
FOUGHT AT TRAFALGAR

Ship	No. of of guns	Shipyard	Year of launching	Naval Architect
<i>Santisima Trinidad</i>	136	Havana	1769	M. Mullan
<i>Santa Ana</i>	120	Ferrol	1784	Romero y Landa
<i>Principe de Asturias</i>	118	Havana	1793	" "
<i>Rayo</i>	100	"	1749	" "
<i>Neptuno</i>	80	Ferrol	1795	Romero y Landa
<i>Argonauta</i>	"	"	1796	" "
<i>San Juan Nepomuceno</i>	74	Guarnizo (Santander)	1766	F. Gautier
<i>San Francisco de Asís</i>	"	"	1767	"
<i>San Agustín</i>	"	"	1768	"
<i>Bahama</i>	"	Havana	1784	"
<i>San Justo</i>	"	Cartagena	1779	"
<i>San Ildefonso</i>	"	"	1785	Romero y Landa
<i>Monarca</i>	"	Ferrol	1794	" "
<i>Montañés</i>	"	"	"	" "
<i>San Leandro</i>	64	"	1787	" "

Note. The French ship *Intrépide* which fought at Trafalgar, was originally the Spanish ship *Intrépido*, a 74 built at Ferrol in 1790. She was one of the six Spanish ships handed over to France in 1801.

beautiful and most interesting'⁴¹ a compliment addressed to Decrès' master who had conceived it. Gravina's letter is an important one, as it gives us a clear idea of his attitude at that crucial moment, and it has been reproduced in full (in its original French) in Alcalá Galiano's publication on Trafalgar,⁴² the best documented Spanish account of the battle.

Gravina's argument against sailing to the Channel was most convincing and probably was used to convince Villeneuve, if he had not himself realized the immense risks involved in taking his fleet to meet an enemy who had already been warned and who would be defending his own shores. When on 15 August he finally decided to bear up for Cadiz, the chances of gaining a temporary mastery of the Channel had already vanished. Napoleon must have realized this too, but preferred to make the hesitant Villeneuve his scapegoat rather than to accept his own responsibility for the failure.

* * *

The ships which joined Gravina's flag at Ferrol were better fitted and manned than those which had sailed from Cadiz in haste three months before. Admiral Grandallana, who had been in charge at Ferrol, proved his organizational abilities by getting nine ships ready for sea despite all difficulties and shortages. Of the four ships left to Gravina after the

TABLE 2

COMPLEMENTS AND LOSSES OF SPANISH SHIPS AT TRAFALGAR

Ship	Complement	Above Establishment	Below	Killed	Wounded	Total Losses
<i>Santisima Trinidad</i>	1,048		17	205	108	313
<i>Santa Ana</i>	1,089	74		97	141	238
<i>Principe de Asturias</i>	1,113	98		50	112	162
<i>Rayo</i>	830		50	4	14	18
<i>Neptuno</i>	800	63		42	47	89
<i>Argonauta*</i>	798	61		103	202	305
<i>San Juan Nepomuceno*</i>	693	58		103	131	234
<i>San Francisco de Asís</i>	677	42		5	12	17
<i>San Agustín*</i>	711	76		184	201	385
<i>Bahama</i>	690	55		75	67	142
<i>San Justo</i>	694	59			7	7
<i>San Ildefonso</i>	716	81		34	126	160
<i>Monarca*</i>	667	32		101	154	255
<i>Montañas</i>	715	80		20	29	49
<i>San Leandro</i>	606	33		8	22	30
	11,847	812	67	1,031	1,373	2,404

Figures taken from the reports of Rear-Admiral Escaño, Gravina's Chief of Staff, except losses from ships marked * (captured in the battle) which are taken from British sources.

action of 22 July, two were considered to be in too bad state to continue with the fleet and were left in Vigo with the sick. Villeneuve also left one ship there but was reinforced by five more which had previously taken shelter in Ferrol. He had thus under his command 18 French and 11 Spanish ships-of-the-line when he sailed on 13 August on a NW course until he signalled on the 15th to bear up for Cadiz. More Spanish ships were waiting there ready for sea and when on 19 October the Combined Fleet left Cadiz to engage Nelson's Fleet, it comprised 18 French and 15 Spanish ships-of-the-line. Information concerning the construction and armament of the Spanish ships is presented in Table 1 and that concerning their complements and the casualties suffered in the battle are given in Table 2.

The fleet of which Nelson took command on 28 September numbered 29 sail-of-the-line. With reinforcements received later the total number was raised to 33. With such a force he could afford to be generous and let Admiral Calder return to England in his own flagship to stand trial for what was considered as unsatisfactory conduct in the action of 22 July. He could also send his ships to Gibraltar, by divisions of six, for fresh water and provisions. Thus, on the day of the battle, he had only 27 ships with him but this was considered by all concerned, knowing the

difference in the quality of the forces, as leaving him in fact with an ample margin of superiority.

This was clearly the opinion of the Franco-Spanish side, reflected in the minutes of the council of war held on board Villeneuve's flagship on 8 October. The participants 'unanimously recognize that the enemy fleet in the offing is much stronger than ours . . . They all agree also on the necessity of waiting for a favourable occasion which may arise through bad weather forcing the enemy to abandon his station or from the necessity that may force him to divide his forces in order to protect his commerce in the Mediterranean and the convoys that may be threatened by the squadrons of Cartagena and Toulon'.⁴³

These lines are taken from the copy of the minutes of the council that exists in the French National Archives, the Spanish version having disappeared long ago, although Gravina's covering letter to his government has survived.⁴⁴ This has helped to surround this council of war with an atmosphere of mystery and to produce accounts of the discussions which, although repeated by historians and biographers, are nonetheless inaccurate. Ever since Marliani⁴⁵ in his impassioned defence of the Spaniards at Trafalgar, unjustly attacked by Thiers,³⁰ made Brigadier* Churruca address the council in vehement tones, it has been accepted by many that he was present when in fact we know from the minutes of the council that he was not.

Gravina had been asked by Villeneuve to bring with him to the council the three admirals serving under him as well as his 'three more senior captains'.⁴⁴ These, according to the only existing copy of the minutes, signed by Villeneuve, were Admirals Alava, Hidalgo de Cisneros and Escaño (Gravina's Chief of Staff) and Brigadiers* Galiano, Macdonell and Hore (commanding Gravina's flagship). There does not seem to have been any tampering with the minutes of the council and the signature of Villeneuve appears as authentic, so that the names of the participants must be accepted. Besides, as Desdévise du Dezert established more than 80 years ago, the three captains who accompanied Gravina were senior to Churruca,⁴⁶ an additional reason against his pretended participation at the council. But the idea of a tempestuous meeting before the battle has had so much appeal, that the strong words of Churruca – so contrary to his courteous manners and temperament – are still quoted as authentic.

That there was some difference of opinion between the French and the Spaniards at the meeting, however, seems practically certain. Spain had

*The term has often been translated as commodore but brigadiers were in fact senior captains, usually having no other command than that of their own ship.

been dragged into a war which few thought could benefit her. That the Spanish officers were reluctant to risk what had been left of their fleet seems natural but that the French should have pressed them for action in pursuance of Napoleon's orders, seems equally natural. At the end a compromise must have been worked out, probably by the tactful Gravina, whereby, as the minutes of the council state, it was unanimously agreed to remain at anchor until more favourable conditions presented themselves. The decision must have satisfied the Spanish officers, and particularly Gravina, who had his own reasons for wishing the fleet not to go to the Mediterranean.

Napoleon's instructions to Villeneuve were to enter the Mediterranean, join the Spanish squadron at Cartagena and then proceed to Naples, to land the troops embarked in the fleet. These orders, issued on 15 and 17 September, were not modified, as Desbrière noted,⁴⁷ despite the fact that Napoleon had learned on 20 September of the presence of 27 English ships off Cadiz. The risks involved in the execution of these orders seemed out of proportion with the gains to be obtained by reinforcing the French forces in Naples. Villeneuve and Gravina were aware of this but to the latter the intended operations created some grave personal problems.

In a letter to Godoy, the Prime Minister, dated 28 September 1805, he explained that he had told Villeneuve the previous day 'that we cannot, in any case, join you in hostilities against a brother of our King. Speaking once in Paris with his Minister of Marine, Decrès, I told him: I will follow you everywhere but I will not go against my country. If my King ordered me to do it, I would beg him graciously to confer me the command of another force . . . to spare me the painful feeling of fighting against my country'.⁴⁸ Although Gravina, then 49, had entered the Spanish service at the age of 18, he never forgot that he had been born in the Kingdom of Naples.

The decision taken by the council of war to remain in Cadiz must have removed any fear of action against Naples. For the time being, the Combined Fleet was to remain at anchor, and Gravina had informed his government on 8 October⁴⁴ of the decision of the council. A few days later, as if to make quite sure that the situation was well understood, he wrote a personal letter to Godoy again stating the reasons for the fleet to remain in Cadiz. From a note appended by Godoy to his letter, we learn that he approved of the decision taken.⁴⁹

This was the situation when Villeneuve and Gravina learned that Admiral Rosily was on his way to Cadiz to replace Villeneuve, who Napoleon wished to return at once to France to explain why he had

failed to appear in the Channel. It is practically certain that it was this piece of news which prompted the unfortunate Villeneuve to order the fleet to come out of harbour, thus reversing the unanimous decision taken by the council of war a few days earlier. Gravina could have tried to dissuade Villeneuve from following such a desperate course of action, but as far as we know, he did not.

In the despatch he sent to his government on 18 October, he explained that the French admiral had come on board his ship to communicate personally that new instructions and new considerations compelled him to order the fleet out of harbour. Gravina tersely replied 'that the Spanish ships were entirely ready to follow the movements of the Imperial Fleet' and in the presence of Villeneuve gave orders for the Spanish ships to prepare to sail.⁵⁰ It is impossible to know whether the two admirals discussed or not the humiliating dismissal of Villeneuve, but there can be no doubt that it influenced Gravina when he took the prompt decision of ordering his ships to prepare to sail.

The conduct of Gravina since he had taken command of the Spanish Fleet had never been criticized at the Court of Madrid or that of Napoleon and there had never been any question of replacing him like Villeneuve. But he must have thought that the ignominious dismissal of a man accused of cowardice, with whom he had been so closely associated, might reflect adversely on his own reputation. Any hint of pusillanimity or lack of resolution could not be tolerated by this aristocrat of the *ancien régime* and like Villeneuve, another member of the nobility, he preferred to fight a desperate action rather than to have his honour tarnished. And so it was Napoleon's anger which in the end forced the Combined Fleet to come out of harbour, for what Trevelyan has termed 'the final sacrifice off Cape Trafalgar'.⁵¹ When Napoleon learned of it, between the capitulation of Ulm and the battle of Austerlitz, he was somewhat surprised, as though he had not realized before that the pawns he had been moving in his great chess game against England were, after all, men of honour.

It took two days for the Combined Fleet to come out of Cadiz harbour and when on the 20th it made finally for the Straits it was difficult for its ships to keep their proper stations. As Gravina's Chief of Staff, Rear-Admiral Escaño noted, the ships had not sailed together before, 'so that their respective speed had not been established and the adjustments of stowing and rigging, necessary for their concerted sailing and steering, had not been made'.⁵²

There were 33 ships-of-the-line in the Combined Fleet, 15 of them Spanish, and they were accompanied by 5 frigates and 2 brigs, all of

them French. Of the 6 Spanish ships that had gone with Villeneuve to the West Indies, only the *Argonauta*, Gravina's flagship, remained with the fleet, but he had shifted his flag to the *Principe de Asturias*, a much superior vessel. The three other ships left to Gravina after the action of 22 July, were hardly serviceable and had been considered not worth keeping, their crews being used to reinforce those of other ships in better conditions. Even with this reinforcement of men who had just taken part in a long voyage and a major action, the Spanish ships suffered from the lack of experienced sailors, although, as can be seen in Table 2, the majority of the ships were overmanned. But their large complements, it must be noted, were made up mostly of pressed landmen and soldiers, brought to the ships in an effort to compensate lack of experience by numbers. The situation in the three-deckers *Santa Ana* and *Rayo* and in a 74, the *San Justo*, was particularly difficult, as the ships had been armed in haste and their crews had not been exercised at sea.⁴³

There were other serious shortcomings in the Spanish Fleet, the usual lack of money being not the least important. From a letter Churruca wrote to his brother we know that the men who went to fight at Trafalgar had not been paid for four months.⁵³ But the greatest handicap the Spaniards suffered at Trafalgar, according to Escaño, was their poor seamanship⁵². The situation on the French side was very much the same and it was this lack of experience at sea which limited the manoeuvres that the Combined Fleet could undertake and the movements that the individual vessels could make in support of each other during an action.

Villeneuve had foreseen that Nelson would try to cut his line and surround his rearguard⁵⁴ but there was not much he could do with his inexperienced officers and men other than to form the time-honoured line ahead. Although he had given Gravina the command of a 'squadron of observation' of 12 French and Spanish ships, to place himself to the windward of the fleet and support whatever part seemed most menaced, Nelson found the Combined Fleet in the morning of the 21st forming a single line. We learn from Escaño's dispatch after the battle, that during the night of the 20th the Franco-Spanish Fleet found itself about 2 miles from the English Fleet sailing to the windward, as could be judged by the time interval between the flash and the report of their signal guns.⁵⁵ To prevent a night engagement, Villeneuve ordered the fleet to form a line ahead behind his leeward-most ships.⁵⁵ It was in this disposition that Nelson saw it the next morning.

Thiers³⁰ and others^{11, 45} have blamed Villeneuve for not having authorized Gravina to retain his freedom of action, but the author of these lines has found no evidence in the French and Spanish sources that

this had been either requested or denied. Besides, as Chevalier⁵⁶ and Desbrière⁴⁷ rightly pointed out, it would have made little difference if Gravina's 'squadron of observation' had remained to the windward of the fleet; for as Desbrière noted, Collingwood's column was strong enough to overwhelm it, if it had tried to protect the rearguard of the Combined Fleet.

Villeneuve has been criticized not only for forming a single line but also for reversing course, ordering the Combined Fleet to wear together in the morning of the 21st. Escaño in his report after the battle⁵² is not critical of Villeneuve's order but of the time at which it was issued. If the signal had been made at dawn instead of 8 o'clock, Escaño reasons, when the English Fleet had been sighted to the windward and an engagement seemed inevitable, the ships would have had more time to wear and to form a proper line. They would also have been nearer Cadiz if, after the battle, they had needed the shelter of the harbour.⁵² With the light wind and heavy swell of the morning of the 21st, it took a long time for the great ships to wear together and they were still trying to form their line of battle when at midday the English Fleet, divided into two columns, fell upon them. The long line of straggling ships, with its gaps and its overlapping vessels, formed a crescent that Collingwood thought was purposely made to meet Nelson's novel tactics.⁵⁷ In this he was mistaken for, as we know, the curved line was no more than the result of chance and poor seamanship.

The French and Spanish ships had been intercalated following Napoleon's instructions after the action of 22 July. This was a disposition that pleased the Spaniards who felt that they had not been properly supported by the French in that action, when they formed separate divisions. By placing the ships thus, the desire to emulate each other was probably increased among the allies. Be that as it may, the men of the two nations fought with equal bravery on that great occasion. 'The enemy', wrote Captain Blackwood, Nelson's trusted frigate commander, 'awaited the attack of the British with a coolness I was sorry to witness, and they fought in a way that must do them honour'.¹ In Collingwood's words: 'The conflict was severe; the enemy's ships were fought with a gallantry highly honourable to their officers; but the attack on them was irresistible'.⁵⁷

Napoleon had said before Trafalgar that one French ship was worth two Spanish,⁵⁸ but from the testimony of the victors we know that this was not the case and that on that occasion the ships of both nations fought with equal gallantry. Thiers,³⁶ in an attempt to absolve Napoleon from his responsibility in the battle, tried to blame the Spaniards for

what went wrong at Trafalgar but Chevalier⁵⁶ and Desbrière⁴⁷ have, since he wrote, done ample justice to the Spanish and have shown, at the same time, that Napoleon had an inescapable responsibility in the defeat.

Spain lost 9 ships of the 15 engaged at Trafalgar but of their 15 captains 12 were killed or wounded. Four Spanish admirals were present at the action and all of them were wounded, Gravina to die later of his wound. The honour of Spain had been saved for as Escaño said 'nothing that could be done had not been done'.⁵⁵ At the end of the battle, with all flag officers *hors de combat*, he found himself as the most senior officer in the Combined Fleet. Of the French admirals, Villeneuve had been taken prisoner, Magon had been killed in action and Dumanoir, after a half-hearted attempt to succour his Commander-in-Chief, had left the scene of battle. Of the Spaniards, Hidalgo de Cisneros and Alava had been taken prisoners after being wounded. Gravina fell at 2.30 pm according to the logbook of his flagship, the *Principe de Asturias*, which adds that Escaño, was left in charge, renewed the firing and remained in command until he was himself wounded at 4 pm and had to be taken below. For a moment the men of the shattered *Principe de Asturias* thought of surrendering their ship, but Escaño, who was brought back in a chair to the quarterdeck, 'not seeing the national flag, ordered it to be hoisted at once and resumed the command'.⁵⁹ It was he and not the wounded Gravina, as it is generally stated, who signalled to the remaining ships of the Combined Fleet to join the Spanish flagship and steer for Cadiz.⁵⁹ Five French and five Spanish ships followed him and these together with the four ships of the van under Dumanoir, which had left earlier, were all that remained of the 33 sail-of-the-line of the Combined Fleet after the battle.

The losses of the allies were to increase during the next days when in a gallant attempt to rescue the captured ships, still struggling in stormy weather off Cape Trafalgar, they retook two but lost three of the rescue ships. It is interesting to observe that, according to Escaño, the loss of most of the ships in the storm after the battle was due to the lack of good pumps. This, he states, was the case of the *Santisima Trinidad*, *Argonauta*, *San Agustin* and several French vessels. 'I am convinced' he adds 'that if the English had not adopted in their navy those of double action, invented in 1793, many of their ships would have sunk in the storm after the battle'.⁵² The *Santa Ana* had undoubtedly suffered more than the *Argonauta* and that she did not sink was no doubt due to the new pumps with which she had been fitted. The same applied to the *Neptuno*, Escaño tells us.⁵²

The first official report of the battle was sent by Escaño on 23

October, fulfilling 'the sad but necessary duty' of informing his government of the defeat.⁵⁵ The state of the wounded Gravina must have been so serious that he could not dictate or sign the dispatch to Madrid. He still lived for four months but the author of this article has not found a single document bearing his signature, written after Trafalgar. Behind this long silence seems to be something more than the sufferings occasioned by a painful wound. Gravina had saved his honour and that of the country he served, but he must have felt deeply the sorrow of having had to lead to their destruction some of the bravest men and the best ships entrusted to him.

The coast between Cape Trafalgar and Cadiz was strewn during the days after the battle with the wrecks of ships, boats, masts, spars and corpses, and the news soon spread through the South of Spain that a great battle had been fought and that the best sailors and ships of the nation had been lost. The behaviour of the coastal villagers to the shipwrecked survivors – friends or foes – was exemplary. They literally did all they could to alleviate their sufferings and attend to their needs. The accounts of the English officers and men wrecked with their prizes are unanimous in their praise of the humble people of Andalusia who shared with them their food and wine and provided them with shelter. Collingwood was surprised by the way his men were treated by the Spaniards,⁶⁰ perhaps forgetting that Spain had been dragged into an unpopular war and that, despite the tragedy of Trafalgar, the English foe was better liked than the French ally.

Trafalgar insured Britain's supremacy at sea for a century and destroyed whatever hopes Napoleon may have entertained of a landing in England. As General Fuller remarked, Trafalgar was probably the most decisive battle of the Napoleonic Wars,⁶¹ for as long as the power of England was not broken, France could not impose her will upon the continent of Europe. For Spain the battle of Trafalgar was decisive in several ways. With the destruction of the best part of her navy, which was never replaced, she ceased to be a major naval power. Deprived almost completely of communications with her vast dominions by the English blockade, she saw her overseas trade brought to a standstill. More serious perhaps were the political consequences of this lack of communications, giving a *de facto* independence to the Spanish American colonies which they were to claim in full in later years.

All the participants at the battle of Trafalgar seem to have been conscious of the finality of the action. For the men that Nelson had led to victory, the broadsides of Trafalgar were the beginning of a new era of unchallenged British mastery of the seas. To the French they meant the

shattering of many hopes but to the Spaniards it seemed that when the smoke of the battle drifted away, the rôle of Spain as a great power had ended.

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- 3 Report of Rear-Admiral Gravina and Capt. Valdés on the English Navy. Museo Naval, Madrid, Misc., MS 1927.
- 4 The word admiral (*almirante* in Spanish), derived from the Arabic *Emir* (or *Amir*) *-al-Babar*, meaning prince or commander of the sea, was used in Castille since the days of Ferdinand III in the early thirteenth century. It was probably through Spain that it reached other countries in Western Europe, although its introduction in France and England by the Crusaders cannot be excluded. Despite the early usage of the term in Spain and its common use elsewhere in Europe, the Spanish naval service in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries had no admirals, the title being reserved to high officers of state, usually members of the Royal Family, although Godoy, who accumulated the titles of Prime Minister, Generalissimo and Admiral, was an exception.
- The following are the English equivalents of the Spanish flag officers in the days of Trafalgar:

Capitán General de la Armada:	Admiral
Teniente General	: Vice-Admiral
Jefe de Escuadra:	Rear-Admiral
Brigadier de la Armada:	Usually translated as Commodore, although in most cases it meant a senior captain, having no other command than that of his own ship.
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- 20 Letter of the Capt. of the *Aigle* to the Minister of Marine, dated 16 November 1804, quoted by Desbrière, E. (1900–1902) *Projets et tentatives de débarquement aux Iles Britanniques (1793–1805)*. 5 vols. Librairie Militaire R. Chapelot et Cie., Paris.
- 21 Letter of Talleyrand to Beurnonville, French Ambassador in Madrid, dated 8 December 1804; quoted by Alcalá Galiano, P. (1909). *El combate de Trafalgar*, 2 vols. Imprenta del Depósito Hidrográfico, Madrid.
- 22 The mutual attachment of Napoleon and Gravina is mentioned by Thiers, A. (1851). *Histoire du Consulat et de l'Empire*, 9 vols. Plon, Paris.
- 23 Archivo 'Don Alvaro de Bazán', El Viso del Marqués. Legajos Expediciones a Europa. Escuadra de Brest (1799–1802).
- 24 The Larousse *Encyclopédia* (1872) reflects the widespread opinion, when in the entry of Gravina it states that 'he passed as the natural son of Charles III'.
- 25 Archivo 'Don Alvaro de Bazán', El Viso del Marqués. Legajo Expediciones a Europa (1804).
- 26 Letter to Godoy, dated 1 January 1805, dictated by Napoleon to Lacépède, used as intermediary in his secret correspondence with the Spanish Prime Minister. Archivo Histórico Nacional, Madrid. Legajo No. 2881.
- 27 Letter of Gravina to Decrès, dated 29 December 1804; quoted by Desbrière (1900–1902).
- 28 Convention between France and Spain signed in Paris on 4 January 1805 (by Decrès and Gravina) and ratified by the King of Spain on 18 January; quoted by Fernandez Duro (1973).
- 29 Abstract of the Royal Navy on 1 January 1805; quoted by Archibald, E. H. H. (1972). *The Wooden Fighting Ship in the Royal Navy*. Blandford Press, Poole, Dorset.
- 30 Thiers, (1851).
- 31 Note attached by Gravina to the Convention signed on 4 January 1805; quoted by Fernandez Duro (Edit. 1973).
- 32 In Napoleon's letter of 13 August 1805 addressed to Villeneuve in Brest, where he expected him to be, urges his admiral to 'appear for twenty-four hours and all is finished', after having said that 'England is ours'. The same is repeated in a letter to Gen. Lauriston (on board Villeneuve's flagship), also dated 13 August. Both letters in *Correspondence de Napoleon Ier* (published 1858–1869). 32 vols. Imprimerie Impériale, Paris.

33 The magnitude of the epidemic can be judged by a detailed document, dated 20 February 1805, stating that in the town of Malaga, among 36,530 inhabitants, 9,326 died of yellow fever in the previous summer. Archivo 'Don Alvaro de Bazán', El Viso de Marqués. Legajo Sanidad – Asuntos particulares (1802–1806).

34 There is ample evidence of the excellent relationship between the two admirals in Villeneuve's correspondence; quoted by Jurien de la Gravière (1869).

35 Desbrière, (1900–1902).

36 Thiers, (1851).

37 *Correspondence de Napoleon Ier* (1858–1869).

38 Letter of Napoleon to Decrès, dated 4 September 1805. In *Correspondence de Napoleon Ier* (1858–1869).

39 Letter of Gravina to Gil y Lemus (Minister of Marine), dated 28 July 1805. Museo Naval, Madrid. MS 2273 (Gravina).

40 Handwritten letter of Gravina to Decrès, dated 16 September 1805. Archives Nationales, Paris (Marine). BB4/233.

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42 Alcalá Galiano, (1909).

43 Copy of the minutes of the council of war held on 8 October 1805 (untitled document), Archives Nationales, Paris (Marine), BB4/230.

44 Letter of Gravina to Godoy, dated 8 October 1805, sending a copy (disappeared) of the minutes of the council of war held the same day. Archivo 'Don Alvaro de Bazán', El Viso del Marqués. Legajo Histórico No. 50 (Trafalgar).

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51 Trevelyan, G. M. (1960). *History of England*. 3rd edit. Longmans, London.

52 Confidential report of Escaño on the battle of Trafalgar, dated 17 December 1805. Archivo 'Don Alvaro de Bazán', El Viso del Marqués. Legajo Histórico No. 50 (Trafalgar).

53 Letter of Churrua to his brother, dated 11 October 1805; quoted by Fernandez Duro (Edit. 1973).

54 Instructions of Villeneuve before Trafalgar, quoted by Decrès in his first report to Napoleon on the battle (without date). Archives Nationales, Paris (Marine), BB4/230.

55 Letter of Escaño to Godoy, dated 23 October 1805; quoted by Desbrière (1907).

56 Chevalier, E. (1886). *Histoire de la marine française sous le Consulat et l'Empire*. Hachette, Paris.

57 Collingwood's Trafalgar dispatch; quoted by Warner (1968).

58 Letter of Napoleon to Decrès, dated 13 August 1805. *Correspondence de Napoleon Ier* (1858–1869).

59 Logbook of the *Principe de Asturias*, extracts of which are reproduced by Desbrière (1907).

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61 Fuller, J. F. C. (1957). *The Decisive Battles of the Western World*. Eyre & Spottiswoode, London.

SUMARIO

En el curso de investigaciones sobre las condiciones de salud de las marinas de España, Francia e Inglaterra en la época de Trafalgar, el autor de este artículo ha encontrado en los archivos españoles documentos poco conocidos o nunca publicados que arrojan nueva luz sobre los hechos y los hombres de la campaña de Trafalgar. La influencia del Almirante Gravina, Comandante de la Escuadra Española, sobre el Almirante Villeneuve, Comandante en Jefe de la Flota Franco-Española, aparece como mayor de lo que generalmente se había creído. Gravina, como su predecesor el Almirante Mazarredo y como el entonces Ministro de Marina, Almirante Grandallana, eran opuestos al proyectado desembarco de Napoleon en Inglaterra. Como decían las instrucciones secretas del Gobierno Español enviadas a Gravina en Paris, cuando negociaba la participación de España en la guerra contra Inglaterra: 'No conviniendo a la España que sus fuerzas vayan a Brest, debe evitarse esto con el doble objeto de que no desamparemos nuestras costas y que los aliados no consigan el deseado desembarco en Inglaterra'.

Durante las operaciones que culminaron en la batalla de Trafalgar, la opinión de Gravina contra la concentración de las fuerzas franco-españolas en Brest, pesó sin duda alguna en las decisiones del Almirante Villeneuve. Pero cuando el almirante francés, acusado de cobardía por Napoleon y a punto de ser reemplazado, decidió enfrentarse a la escuadra inglesa, el sentimiento del honor de Gravina y de los marinos españoles les obligó a sumarse a una empresa que sabían perdida de antemano. En Trafalgar España perdió navios de los que el propio Nelson había dicho que 'no los había visto mejores' y marinos que merecieron los elogios de los vencedores por su valor. Con la pérdida de lo mejor de su escuadra, que nunca más sería reemplazada, España dejó de ser la gran potencia naval que hasta entonces había sido.

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