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(Gniezno)

**BETWEEN WAR AND DIPLOMACY. FERDINAND THE
CATHOLIC AND THE FOREIGN POLICY OF SPAIN IN 1492-1516**

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My doctoral dissertation concerns Spanish foreign policy in the early modern era. The turn of the 15th and the 16th century was a turning point in the history of Spain and marks the beginning of its modern times. The conquest of Granada, the last Arabian bastion on the Iberian Peninsula, by the Catholic Monarchs — Isabel I of Castile and Ferdinand II of Aragon in 1492, ended the centuries long reconquest and precipitated the integration process of the Christian kingdoms. Spain, set against other states of the time, stood out through its active international presence spanning not only western Europe but also North Africa and America. As a result of the foreign policy, carried out by various means, the Catholic Monarchs laid the foundations for the future empire of Carol V and Philip II. A particular role in the process was played by Ferdinand the Catholic, who, in principle, independently shaped Spanish foreign policy from 1492. In fact, it was thanks to Ferdinand's modern diplomacy and a system of alliances, his grandson and grand grandson built the first modern empire of a global character.

So far, the foreign policy of the Spanish monarchy on the verge of the modern era has not been the subject of a comprehensive study. Admittedly, we have the work José María Doussinague, "La política internacional de Fernando el Católico" (Madrid, 1944), however, for several reasons the monograph does not exhaust the topic. The author focuses chiefly on Ferdinand's Mediterranean policy, pays little attention to his European policy and completely ignores the policy of Ferdinand's with regard to the American continent. Besides, the value of this study is reduced by the fact that the role of religion in the politics of Ferdinand the Catholic is excessively highlighted. Due to the year of publication, Doussinague's work does not take into consideration the new and rich literature in the subject. In Poland, apart from monographs of general nature, there are essentially no sources on the foreign policy of Spain at the turn of the 15th and 16th centuries. Some sparse information may be found in general syntheses of Spanish history translated into Polish: Pierre Vilar, "Historia Hiszpanii" [History of Spain], Warsaw 1991; Manuel Tuñón de Lara, Julio Valdeón Baruque, Antonio Domínguez Ortiz, "Historia Hiszpanii" [History of Spain], Cracow 1997; Enrique Martínez Ruiz, "Zarys dziejów Hiszpanii Nowożytnej od końca XV wieku do 1808 roku" [An outline of history of Modern Spain from the end of the 15th century to 1808], Poznań 2003 and one by Polish authors: Tomasz Miłkowski, Paweł Machcewicz, "Historia Hiszpanii" [History of Spain], Wrocław 1998. There is not a single biography of Ferdinand the Catholic available.

This dissertation aims to change the state of affairs, aiming to reconstruct the main premises and directions of the foreign policy of Ferdinand the Catho-

lic. Apart from filling a significant gap in historiography, I set myself an additional task. I thought it necessary to depart from the custom of analysing the monarchy of the Catholic Monarchs from the Castilian perspective, which predominates in historiography, not only the Spanish one. This practice assumes that Spain's birth and development are perceived as a process where Castile imposes its language, policy and law on the other kingdoms. In such an approach, the elucidation of the concepts in the foreign policy of the double monarchy is subordinated to the Castilian tradition. This is singularly evident in the axiological plane, which specifies the chief motives and objectives of Ferdinand's and Isabel's political actions. This refers, in particular, to the policy of the monarchy in the Mediterranean, which is traditionally interpreted in the categories of ideological and religious war with Islam. Doussinague's claim that the war with infidels was the essence of Ferdinand the Catholic's policy became an axiom of sorts. Seen in this manner, the policy of Ferdinand, especially the African, is construed as a part of a broader concept of Christianity's war with Islam, while military undertakings mounted against the Muslims are usually called crusades. Such one-sided Castilian perspective, originating with the chroniclers of the period, is perpetuated by successive generations of historians. Consequently, the actual purposes which guided the foreign policy of the Catholic Monarchs are obscured, at the same time exaggerating the role of Isabel in it, at the expense of Ferdinand, who is clearly left in the shadow of his consort. Additionally, the matter is complicated by the fairly common practice of analysing the Catholic Monarchs jointly. In the unanimous opinion of the historians they are considered founders of modern Spain. It goes as far as stating at places that in the history of Spain there are periods *before* and *after* the Catholic Monarchs. What is more, some historians, such as Joseph Pérez, simply question the legitimacy of separate examination of Isabel and Ferdinand, especially in a broader perspective.

In my opinion, the Castile-oriented optics and the postulate of Joseph Pérez cannot be justified, especially with regard to the foreign policy of the Catholic Monarch. The conquest of Granada enabled Ferdinand, for the first time, to direct his entire energy to international matters, while the death of Isabel in 1504 made him the chief architect of Spain's foreign policy. It should be emphasised that after the queen's death, Ferdinand continued to rule for another twelve years, i.e. until 1516, when he died.

The analysis of extensive literature and the available source base permitted me to found my deliberations on the research hypotheses. First, I assumed that it was Ferdinand the Catholic who in the years 1492–1516 conducted practically

an independent foreign policy of Spain. Second, I assumed that the essence of the foreign policy of Ferdinand the Catholic is expressed in his concepts for the area of the Mediterranean, with respect to which the remaining components of the foreign policy — the African and the European ones — remain in functional interdependence. Thereby I concluded that in understanding the foreign policy concepts of Ferdinand the Catholic the Aragon tradition is more important. Nevertheless, it does not mean that it chiefly served Aragon interests, as most historians suggest. For my part, I took the considerations of whether the policy of Ferdinand's was more Aragon or Castilian to be of little use. I think that in the case of Ferdinand we deal not only with an entirely new type of politician, but also with a new vision of politics, which was neither Castilian nor Aragon but Spanish. It is one of the more important hypotheses which I attempted to prove in my dissertation. In the course of the analysis I demonstrate that the two traditions — Castilian and Aragon — were not at odds with each other at all. By means of his intelligent policy, Ferdinand skilfully established priorities which served the interests of the whole monarchy. With this in mind, I deliberately use the title of Ferdinand the Catholic rather than Ferdinand II of Aragon in my dissertation. The latter title might have suggested that I relate Ferdinand's policy to the Crown of Aragon. It should be remembered that Ferdinand was also the king of Castile, Valencia, Galicia, Mallorca, Sicily, Naples, Sardinia etc. In order to avoid the many numbers that referred to various territories which belonged to him, it is still better to call him Ferdinand the Catholic. Besides, the adopted titlature — despite the ideological tone with which I dispute — expresses the Spanish dimension of Ferdinand's policy. Also, I consistently employ the name of Spain to denote the Castilian-Aragon monarchy. Many historians are of the opinion that the notion of Spain in the times of the Catholic Monarchs had solely a geographical significance, which is why Ferdinand and Isabel cannot be called monarchs of Spain. In the dissertation, I question such standpoint and prove that already in the Spanish Middle Ages one spoke of Spain, and not merely in the geographic aspect but also referring to a historical and religious-cultural community. I also quote evidence that their contemporaries used the titles *kings of Spain* to refer to Isabel and Ferdinand, both in the Iberian Peninsula as well as beyond it.

Among the factors which determined the foreign policy of Ferdinand the Catholic, I distinguished historical and geopolitical determinants. In view of the complex character of the monarchy of the Catholic Monarchs, I took the historical factors to be of particular relevance. Long before the union of Castile with Aragon, there had been historical differences between the in terms of

foreign policy. By drawing on these differences I managed to demonstrate why the Aragon tradition constituted the chief source of Ferdinand's concepts in foreign policy. In turn, the factors of geopolitical nature were ascribed the role of a key in the building of a foreign policy schemes of the double monarchy. Their analysis provided grounds for the main undertakings embarked upon by Ferdinand on the international scene.

The reconstruction of the main premises and directions in Ferdinand the Catholic's foreign policy was based on a varied source base. I resorted to archival and published documentation. The core archival material comes from the Spanish archives (in Simancas, Barcelona, Madrid, Zaragoza and Seville). Apart from the texts of international treaties and royal orders, the letters of Ferdinand the Catholic to his ambassadors were of particular use. These are very often have the form of instructions, in which the elements of his political projects are contained. Thanks to those it was possible to reconstruct the premises of the foreign policy, as well as to discover the motives behind Ferdinand's political decisions. Printed sources include primarily chronicles, of which the most useful was the six-volume "Historia del Rey Don Hernando El Católico" by Jerónimo Zurita. I also used the chronicles of Andrés Bernaldez, Hernando del Pulgara and Alonso de Santa Cruz. Furthermore, I analysed the works of Niccolò Machiavelli, especially "The Prince" and the "Discourses on the First Ten Books of Titus Livy" as well as his letters to Francisco Vettori, not translated into Polish as yet. For the needs of the dissertation I also utilised the abundant literature in the field (over 500 volumes), chiefly in Spanish, whose list is found in the bibliography. The most eminent studies by authors such as: José María Doussinague, Luis Suárez Fernández, Antonio Rumeu de Armas, Joseph Pérez or John Edwards were critically analyzed, as I questioned the theses they advanced. I also perused numerous monographs devoted to Ferdinand the Catholic, which enabled me to maintain factual accuracy of the analysis.

The structure and content of my dissertation, comprising, besides introduction, three chapters and conclusions, were adapted to serve the adopted goals. The first chapter functions as an extended introduction. In it, I introduce the figure of Ferdinand the Catholic as a precursor of the modern politics and an exemplary model for Machiavelli. Against the predominant interpretations I propound the thesis that it was not Cesar Borgia, but Ferdinand the Catholic who embodied the virtues and the genius of a "new prince". The arguments for a thesis thus formulated were provided through a detailed and complementary analysis of the two main works of the Florentinian, "The

Prince” and “The Discourses”. The juxtaposition of the basic categories on which Machiavelli devised his notion of power, especially the *fortuna*, *virtù*, *necessità* and *occasione* with the political achievements of Ferdinand the Catholic, confirmed the rightness of founding my analysis on the historical factor. In Machiavelli, *necessità* has an exceedingly historical dimension, thus compelling the rulers to reason always according to historical experience. Ferdinand the Catholic is a case in point here, since his concept of foreign policy, as well as the idea of Spanish unity, were rooted in historical thinking and were based on geopolitical premises. What is more, the virtues with which Ferdinand the Catholic is endowed, bring benefit to the state, serve its perpetuation and functioning, in contrast to the virtues ascribed to Cesar Borgia, which serve his preservation of power exclusively. It is a crucial argument, as state in Machiavelli’s political thinking played a fundamental role. Naturally, the entity in question was the modern state which emerge before the writer’s eyes, with its idea of sovereignty and the principle of the reason of state. As I prove, Ferdinand the Catholic, with his innovative method of rule, especially the primacy of the interests of the state over morality, religion and any particularistic pursuits, embodied that modern state best. Next, I demonstrated the Aragon origins of the future king, highlighting the role of the father in moulding Ferdinand’s world of values and views. I showed that it was John II of Aragon who instilled in his son the main political notions, especially the idea of rapprochement with Castile, and, in a broader dimension, a political unification of the Iberian Peninsula. In the later part, I reconstructed the process of unifying the monarchy as well as examined the historical and geopolitical sources of Ferdinand’s foreign policy concepts. This part of deliberations turned out to be exceedingly important for the entire dissertation, because the resulting findings allowed for a verification of the essential research hypotheses of the work. The historical perspective made it possible to demonstrate significant differences between the visions of foreign policy for Isabel and Ferdinand. These varying visions stemmed from essentially divergent concepts concerning the models of monarchy that Isabel and Ferdinand inherited. To bear it out, I show the complex circumstances in which the Castilian-Aragon union was formed, which shed light on the motives behind political decisions of each of the sides. What is important, the historical factor demonstrated that Ferdinand gained decisive influence on the foreign policy of the double monarchy long before 1492, which I adopted as the starting point for the analysis. In exposing the historical development process of the Castilian and Aragon kingdoms, I demonstrated the differences

between both kingdoms in conducting expansion, which provided arguments in favour of the thesis that most undertakings within Ferdinand's foreign policy framework were justified by strategic and trade considerations. It was also possible to reconstruct the main axiom of the entire policy of Ferdinand's, i.e. the unity of Spanish monarchy. In this part of the analysis I addressed several issues which are most debated in Spanish historiography, namely the nature of the reconquest, the shaping of the Spanish nation-state or the so-called Castilization. While confronting the views of the historiographic classics, Américo Castro, Claudio Sánchez Albornoz and the philosopher José Ortega y Gasset with the representatives of the younger generation of historians and intellectuals (Julio Valdeón Baroque, Fernando García de Cortázar, Julián Marías, José María Carrascal, Harold Raley), I present my own standpoint in these matters. I prove that the reconquest was done in the name of Spain not Castile, as Carrascal claims. By the same token, I took it to possess national, not regional character. I also claim that that towards the end of the 15th century there were premises for the Spanish nation to emerge. It was then that the long process of transforming Spain into nation-state began. The process had support in the indigenous dynasty of Trastámara, of which Isabel and Ferdinand are most eminent representatives. As the Catholic Monarchs they were conscious of being the monarchs of Spain, although its notion was different for either of them. In simple terms, for Isabel Spain at the time was identical with what was Castilian, while Ferdinand had a genuine vision of Spanish unity, which went beyond anything that was regional or particularistic. In this context, I do not write about Castilization of other kingdoms, but about the Hispanisation of Castile.

The two remaining chapters are devoted to the analysis of the foreign policy of the Spanish monarchy with regard to separate territorial domains. In the second chapter, I analysed Spanish policy in the Mediterranean. Here, two analytical areas were distinguished: the Italian and the African. First, I discussed the historical conditioning of Ferdinand's Italian policy which dated to the Medieval Mediterranean expansion of the Crown of Aragon. The culminating point of the expansion was the conquest of Naples by Alfonso V the Magnanimous, uncle of Ferdinand, who, besides the father, was his main source of inspiration. In the course of the analysis I demonstrated that the Mediterranean projection of the Crown of Aragon was largely inspired by the Catalan merchants, who were much more interested in acquiring new markets than supporting crusades directed against the emirs of Granada. The example of Naples also demonstrated the role of the cultural factor. Ferdinand was a beneficiary of

this Mediterranean tradition. To a large extent, it was thanks to that tradition that he understood the development of modern Spain's foreign policy echo the spirit of the reconquest, so powerfully entrenched in Castile. The medieval tradition had to be replaced with a new way of thinking about politics. Ferdinand's predecessors on the throne of Aragon, especially Alfonso V, provided standards in this respect.

When analysing the African dimension, I challenge a thesis which is well fixed in historiography, that the purpose of Spanish activities in Africa was restitution of the Visigoth legacy. I demonstrate that with regard to Mediterranean Africa, the scenario was dictated by the events on the Apennine Peninsula, which played the key role in Ferdinand's policy. I argue that Ferdinand had never intended to conquer more territory in Africa than was necessary to seize the harbours or coastal cities. That which was carried out during the conquest was limited to a system of *presidios* (fortresses), which were to play the role of a defensive "backbone". Apart from controlling the situation in Italy, they were supposed to protect the coasts of the Iberian Peninsula from Berber and Turkish corsairs and facilitate Spanish trade, which was one of the most important objectives of Ferdinand's policy. Therefore I find that describing the Spanish conquest in Africa as a crusade is a misunderstanding. The Aragon perspective adopted in my analysis clearly demonstrated that the religious rationale of the conquest was pure propaganda. The analysis of papal documents confirmed that it was the popes themselves who to a large extent created the image of Ferdinand as a man of providence in the fight with Islam. The same observations apply to Ferdinand's actions with respect to Atlantic Africa, which were inspired by trade-related motives and the competition with Portugal. Analysis of the latter revealed the sources and motives behind the Spanish expansion in the New World. In this context, I demonstrated that the participation of Ferdinand the Catholic and the Aragonians in the American enterprise was not as minimal as it is presented in the pro-Castilian historiography.

The last chapter of the dissertation is devoted to the rivalry between Spain and the monarchy of the Valois, which marked Ferdinand's European policy. I demonstrated that its main priorities were maintaining peace and balance. For that end, Ferdinand chiefly employed diplomatic means, and resorted to military means when all else failed. Thanks to such approach he contributed to the development of the modern Spanish diplomacy. Responding to the aggressive French policy in Italy, Ferdinand undertook to build a political *girdle* surrounding the northern neighbour. The system of alliances thus created ensured

him the position of an arbiter in European affairs. In the light of the analysis of diplomatic correspondence I demonstrated that Ferdinand was one of the first modern rulers who appreciated the weight of relationships with the papacy. In the final part of the dissertation I examined the consequences of transferring the Spanish succession to Charles Habsburg. A synthetic analysis of the foreign policy of Charles V showed that it was strongly rooted in Ferdinand's idea of peaceful and harmonious Europe, although Charles V rendered it a more religious nature.

The findings from the conducted analysis permitted to formulate the following final conclusions: first, the realistic and pragmatic policy of Ferdinand the Catholic ensured not only security and integrity to the Spanish monarchy, but also enabled development understood as a growth of Spain's significance in Europe and the world. Second, bearing in mind the objectives of the Spanish European policy, as well as means of bringing it about, it will not be an exaggeration to claim that Ferdinand the Catholic laid the first stone of the European unity.

