

Salvador de Madariaga's Federalism: A Two-Part Look at the European Integration and Spain's Decentralization

Jaime Nicolás Muñiz

Europe must become federated . . . , but as little as possible (Salvador de Madariaga, 1952).

In the 1920s and early 1930s of the last century, *Salvador de Madariaga* (1886–1978), as a result of his cosmopolitan nature and internationalism, to use two concepts from his era, was one of the most enthusiastic Europeans in favour of the *Briand* Initiative and the League of Nations, which he formed part of from the time it was created, as one of the still few but great Spaniards who served that institution. Moreover, *Madariaga* always remained loyal to the seminal supra-national experiment that the League represented. This can be seen in his radical understanding and even an exculpation which he rightly expressed about what has been considered that organisation's failure: "No, it is not the League of Nations that has failed. It is the nations in the League that have."

In fact, *Madariaga's* thinking always reached above and beyond just sovereign States. His philosophies, which, despite everything, always include some sort of "nationalistic" dimension in which one can sense a "national" and even "pro-Spanish" (*españolista* – a rather pejorative label, because of its extremism) sentiment, never ended with the nation or the State.

International society was always present in his approaches. In his organically based, naturalist viewpoint of social affairs, which focuses on the family more than the individual, understood as a self-contained unit that leads into the national State, *Madariaga* verified the necessary and healthy "intrusion" of other collective entities – social institutions with a greater or lesser natural substrate – such as municipalities, local communes and regions, or in other words the intra-national realm. However, at the same time, he also highlighted the essential nature of what he referred to as the *super-national* realm, above and beyond nations and not simply *inter-national*. Whereas internationality can be seen, in his judgement, as a mere piece of physical, mechanical and relational data, and does not necessarily imply the acceptance of an order beyond nations; the idea of supernationality bears with it the notion of a higher, integrating realm, a sphere which *Madariaga* realizes has not yet been defined and is not easy to organize. However, despite that fact, it is

no less necessary than other internal, institutionally related and even corporative mediations of the national State.

Madariaga has given a name of its own to this realm, which is brilliant and highly descriptive: the “Co-World” (*Co-Mundo*). This “Co-world” is not a universal State, or even a universal nation, which would not be or evoke anything more than a reduction of the rich diversity of nations and States to a political or cultural hegemony, but rather something more “natural”: a world belonging to all for all.

When thinking of a united Europe, which he began to design and dream at the same time as developing his universalist calling in the League of Nations, *Madariaga*, who never abandoned that calling – in fact, moved by the horror of World War II, all he did was change the order of his immediate concerns for pragmatic reasons, while adding intensity and placing a higher priority on the European project – conceives Europe in “federal” terms, as an alliance (because none other is the clear meaning of *foedus*).

Basically, *Madariaga* began thinking of Europe as a “Europe of homelands” (*patrias*). This concept, which later, due to its appropriation by De Gaulle, was considered very French and to a certain extent became sidelined as a result, always had a distinct meaning of its own for *Madariaga*, involving the need to preserve the vital substrate of federated nations in that alliance. To him, integration was a union that would not artificially break up the natural, organic entities that comprise the various homelands, or their national character, cultures, languages and lifestyles.

At the same time as referring to these homelands, *Madariaga*, in any case, drew attention to the limits of the national chauvinism of the *über alles, au-dessus de tout* and *right or wrong* of some nations. He brilliantly criticized the semi-religious cult of patriotism and warned about the dire consequences of nationalism. He loved homelands, all of them, but he did not go so far as to worship them, not even his own. He praised the specific nature of each homeland (England, France, Spain), but his choice was in favour of an integrating fusion of these characters and lifestyles. *Madariaga* preferred to be European – an option which he made clear in *Englishmen, Frenchmen, Spaniards*, his 1928 work which dazzled Europeans. He finished off the work by extending it to include all the other peoples of Europe in his no less compelling *Sketch of Europe*, in 1952.

It is therefore no surprise that, immediately after the end of the war, *Madariaga* was one of the spearheads in the fight for European unity. In fact, although he lacked the important support of a State, with all of its authority, because of his status as an exile, and only because of this, at the decisive congress of the European Movement in The Hague in 1948, he was asked to preside over the cultural commission, the third of this congress’ commissions, and in principle also the least important, but he was capable of showing off its value to the fullest. Later, when he held a position on the executive board of the European Movement and held the first presidency of the recently created International Liberal Movement, in 1949 he founded the College of Europe, through which he attempted to draw attention to the essential nature of understanding Europe as a cultural endeavour (compared with the limited nationalism of European post-war universities), and the European Centre of Culture in Geneva. By doing so, he became the “ideologue” (or perhaps better stated, the in-

tellectual inspiration) of the European Movement), above all thanks to his *Spirit of Europe*, a text written in 1952 at the request of the Movement and so well executed that he saved the organization from having to commission two other manifestos initially planned from the Catholic and Protestant confessional perspectives. Including them as complementary works was now practically unnecessary in light of the all-encompassing work by *Madariaga*.

Not because of any Florentine political wizardry, but rather because of the depth of his European faith and his profound knowledge of the transcendence of the idea of Europe, *Madariaga* is one of the few who got it right by not getting tied up in the frequent internal quarrels of the European movement, proclaiming himself neither a federalist nor a confederalist, and neither functionalist nor institutionalist.

Always racing to the heart of the matter, to *Madariaga* the problem lay elsewhere, in knowing whether Europeans truly existed, a question the discussion of which he devoted his essay on *The Human Sciences and European Integration* (Leyden, 1960) to, after being the focal point of his interventions in The Hague. The important thing was to ascertain and reveal the essence of Europe and to unveil its historical reality. In fact, after the war, *Madariaga* became even more European, though at the cost of being less supernational, less global. It was not in vain, however, that, beyond his comprehension and exculpation, the League of Nations had failed. This "European" turn can be seen even in the title of his great essays on nationalism and internationalism. He no longer speaks of nationalities, of Spaniards, Frenchmen or Englishmen, but rather of Europe.

And he then becomes more optimistic about Europe, about Europeans and what we can call the European. In a certain way, he lets us see that the Europeans' great difficulty in viewing themselves as Europeans, to cease fixating mainly on their differences and distinct features and instead focusing on what they have in common, is precisely because of the fact that Europeans are so close to one another: we lack the perspective required to see our natural unity.

In his "Sketch of Europe", *Madariaga* gives an artistic form to this perspective by turning to one of Hollywood's "European" films, *The Ghost Goes West*, by *René Clair*. In it, like extravagant American millionaires have done so many times in actuality and can be seen in many places all around America, for instance, in Manhattan's Cloisters, made as if it were a sort of thematic amusement park, a Texan tycoon acquires a Scottish castle and dismantles it piece by piece, including the ghost, to take it to the United States, where he rebuilds it in the middle of a landscape which one can easily imagine bears absolutely no resemblance to the castle's original Scottish location. As if this were not enough, the rich American uses heavy machinery to have it placed in the middle of a moat, where he has no less than a gondola put in place along with its gondolier. Even without the ghost, the image of this musty castle already seems ghastly within the Texan landscape, but with the presence of the gondola, what interests us most here, the sensation of perplexity and strangeness rises even more amongst the movie's viewers. There is no doubt that neither a Scot nor an Italian, nor a Spaniard, German, Pole or Russian, could explain what this fine Venetian vessel and its presumptuous gondolier are doing there, transplanted in what would constitute a daring exercise for one's imagination on the

Spanish plateau, the hills of the Rhine, the icy steppes of Eastern Europe or foggy Scotland, as it floats around the dark, bulky fortress and its ghost. The American owner does not find this odd at all, though. To him it is completely natural, and, since Clair was not oblivious to any of this, in his film he has the business magnate explain that it was all done “*in order to make it look more European.*”

Nothing is clearer to *Madariaga* either, who tells us that, “after all, particularly when viewed from another continent, or in other words with proper perspective, the Venetian gondola and the Scottish castle seem like perfect colleagues and natural neighbours in a painting drawn by history and the psychology of a known internal unity.” In any case, however, *Madariaga*’s Europe is a complex Europe, as contradictory as that image of the gondola and fortress, a Europe in tension that reclaims a dialectical, integrating vision with the intra-European tensions and conflicts to which those tensions give shape.

In this document, he proclaims his federal vision of Europe, and it could be no other way, because his project for a United Europe in no way renounces the acknowledgement of a set of national and irremovable differences, but also declares that they themselves are enriching within the ideas of Europe. What is more, they bear the vital European substance, without the recognition of which Europe would surely be no more than a cold, inert design. *Madariaga* wants a united Europe, but one which is complex and multi-faceted: a Europe with many centres, a federal, decentralized Europe.

In any case, because he does not intend to eliminate diversity or these tensions, he also claims that “Europe . . . must be federated as little as possible.” At the same time, he calls for the birth of a new solidarity so that “the men of Europe [can] feel even freer in this new Europe than in the anarchic, divided Europe of the past” (*ibid.*). Moreover, it is upon these tensions – bipolar tensions amongst all the great European peoples (Germans versus Frenchmen, Spaniards versus Portuguese, Austrians versus Germans, Englishmen versus Continentals, Southerners versus Northerners, Westerners against Easterners and so forth) that *Madariaga* draws his sketch of Europe.

Furthermore, to *Madariaga* “Europe is not and will never be a nation. It is a bunch of nations”, – a bunch, a word which expresses a multi-faceted nature and cohesion all at once. And we must not forget that bunches of grapes are only beautiful when they are complete, but no longer when someone begins to pick off their fruit. By the way, because of this lack of “national unity” (and surely more so because they were well-aware of their notable organic corporative anti-democratism in the 1930s), he is opposed to the election of the European parliament by direct suffrage amongst Europeans. Definitively, he sees Europe as a “variety-unit,” in which the variety produces wonderment, but the unit wins out (*Sketch of Europe*). He is, after all, a great, definitive pro-European. Meanwhile, *Madariaga*’s European federalism is eminently practical. This is what lies behind his somewhat disconcerting words, stated above, forming what is nearly a motto: “Europe must be federated, but as little as possible”: *ma non troppo*. It is too valuable a project to ruin it by excess, ambition or haste.

Moreover, along these same practical lines, nationalism disgusts him because of its fake mysticism, which is why he does not propose a new European mysticism in opposition to it. *Madariaga* is content with carefully demonstrating that the European community is a historical reality ("Europe is already a fact, though some may not have realized it yet"), which is exactly why he demands new forms of organizational policies, placing little importance on articulating specific proposals, and not having left behind many well-grounded specific ideas in this respect either:

Europe has one single body and one single soul, but a dozen heads and hearts. It can be compared with a monster whose body is ripped to pieces by the effort and beating of its twenty hearts. Approximately twenty governments in Europe do not acknowledge (or do not wish to acknowledge) that those decrees which aim only at their own countries are at the same time ineffective within and inoperative abroad, that, starting right now, no European government will ever be in the proper condition to manage its own country, though it may not abstain from taking part directly in directing the affairs of other people in Europe, while in each country that makes up Europe there is a whole sphere of public life that has become European and requires an equally European government (*The Spirit of Europe*).

We can also complete this picture with a few exact words by *Madariaga*, which reflect the depth of his vision for Europe and his European feeling, taken from his vibrant interventions in The Hague, in 1948:

[Europe] will have been born when Spaniards say "our Chartres", the English talk about "our Krakow", the Italians "our Copenhagen"; when the Germans say "our Bruges"; and all of them reel back in horror before the idea of placing any of these places in criminal or destructive hands. Then Europe will be a living thing, because it is then that the Spirit which leads the course of History will have pronounced the words of creation: FIAT EUROPA!

Eloquent words in the mouth of someone whose ideas, in all else, were based on what amounted to the awaited pre-existence of a Europe whose unity could not be conceived by *Madariaga* as anything other than, in the way of the Italians, a continental *Risorgimento*, the unification of one single spirit that was already a reality, but which still lacked a set of common political institutions, though it did have one thing: a promising Renaissance.

Now let us look back into the past, to shift from the supranational realm to the internal, to nationalities and regions. When analysing *Madariaga's* thought on the regional question – in essence the same as what we call today in Spain the autonomous regional problem, territorial articulation of the State or political decentralization – here, too, we may begin by remembering his same words which we placed at the forefront of reflections upon Europe and supranational communities. Becoming federated, but only as much as necessary, that is our author's motto. Inward and outward, both in Europe and within Spain.

We have already seen this formula with respect to Europe. It is not a half-hearted idea of eclecticism, but rather is complex, Galician, as one might say of a man from Galicia with the universal standing of *Don Salvador*. And while it was complex in its "European version," it was even more so, if possible, in his projection into its "Spanish version."

It could be no other way, because few people besides *Madariaga* are so knowledgeable of the profound history of Spain. In his thorough historical knowledge,

as well-grounded and assimilated as his philological wisdom, which are both so closely related, lies the key to *Don Salvador's* pro-Spain (españolista) stance, which would perhaps have been more appropriately defined as "Hispanism" by the no less intelligent *Claudio Sánchez Albornoz*, President-in-exile of the Spanish Republic. In effect, *Madariaga* is profoundly regionalist, and at the same time a steadfast Spanish nationalist, though never a Castilian nationalist, a category that at least today – and, to some extent, in History too – is rather an ideological construction of its supposed opposites than a tangible entity.

It should be no surprise then that *Madariaga's* "regionalist" proposal is so similar, perhaps without wanting to be, to what the reality of the Spanish autonomous regional State is today. In other words, it is a strong, decisive commitment to a form of regionalism integrated into a higher unit, in the same way that *Don Salvador's* sovereignism can only be explained within the higher framework of his idea of Europe and, within his broad conception thereof, the Co-world, or if you prefer, in the same way that his internationalism could only be fully explained from the perspective of his deep sense of the State and his no less complete Hispanism.

Of course, this is not the place for reproducing the brilliant and surprisingly dense historical analysis carried out by *Madariaga* in his monumental *Spain*, a mature work which modestly and contradictorily subtiles *Essay of Contemporary History* – here the note of contradiction, or better stated, of complexity to which we have just alluded –, or the reflections he makes in his *Memories of a Federalist*, or in *From Anguish to Freedom*, or in his controversial – not at all liberal, yet dazzling and anti-Republican – *Anarchy or Hierarchy*, works which mark his deep national commitment. In any case, though, nothing seems less opportune to me than "revealing" the keys of such a powerful and, at the same time, current way of thinking as is that of *Salvador de Madariaga* regarding this decisive topic.

Madariaga, as great a liberal as he was reticent as a democrat, is a fervent regionalist, whose regionalism knows only one limit, separatism, which provokes him no less than his decisive autonomous regionalism does. Upon first glance, in *Madariaga* there is an elementary, organically oriented, almost landscapist approach to regionalism. It could appear that he approaches regionalism in a somewhat folkloristic way, by adaptation to the landscape. What matters is the recognition of the personality – rather than the singularity, as we hear today, with more strong accents and purposes, in the contemporary Spain's political debate – of the different natural communities, a roundabout expression taken on in order to avoid more direct, politically charged labels such as nations, nationalities or "mere" regions. But this is not so. It is not that simple. To *Madariaga* it certainly seems that "the more the social landscape adapts to the natural landscape, the easier it will be for men and their nature to adapt, in turn, to what nature expects of them." And he has no doubt that the region is an essential element in social geography.

After all, however, his reference to the landscape is above all metaphoric, because while *Madariaga* advocates federalism and regionalism, he does so not for a simple natural reason, but rather one which is institutional and administrative: because ultimately decentralization means bringing responsibility closer to the places where it must actually be exercised. What is more, *Madariaga's* regionalism does

not simply involve the landscape; it is neither naturalist, nor merely administrative either, but rather notably political. He has a political conception of the region that is no less intense than today's autonomous regionalism. In fact, it may be even stronger, as when he writes (and not casually), "No more one only minister of the government who issue all kinds of orders from Madrid; instead, ten or twelve politically decentralised agents ruling from La Coruña to Seville and from Barcelona to Las Palmas; forget the single parliament in Madrid, but rather have as many Parliaments as there are kingdoms, countries or regions."

What this truly means for *Madariaga* is the idea of "making regions be born again, as the fourth part of the political building that we aspire to erect – to construct living political entities capable of dealing with the governance of their affairs without the national government's intervention." Because "regions must have complete freedom to govern themselves; and their parliaments must, as well, to legislate within the borders of their territory of their natural area of competence. They will vote their budget and direct contributions which, through meetings by local government and councils, will collect taxes and distribute funds to taxpaying families; however, they would also directly collect and distribute the contributions by those families or entities whose importance is higher up than the competence of the municipality and the local area where they reside. Likewise, they would legislate in order to equitably offset the tax burdens of rich and poor areas. They would also create their own judiciary and police." Can one imagine any greater autonomous regionalism than that described in this plan?

It is no less true (and, for the same reason, is shocking) that the greatest development in *Madariaga's* autonomous regional plan coincides with his least "democratic" stage, when he was politically involved in the ministries of the two conservative "Dark Years" of Spain's Second Republic. However, that is not of specific interest to us here, nor does it lessen his true autonomous regional claims which, beyond the politically articulated conception of the State's territorial organization, are approached parallel to the anti-separatist obsession – as we may rightly describe it – of our thinker. This antiseparatism is not visceral, however, or capricious; it is a unitarianism that is not only based on a knowledge of Spanish history beyond compare – of both Spain and the plural peoples of Spain – but also of the republican virtue of solidarity. And also of grandeur, because he never loses sight, not even when he focuses on the smallest of territorial realms, of his open-minded thinking, of wide-open spaces and communities, that of his universal federalism. After all, to *Madariaga* the ultimate meaning of the State, and of regions and countries (he leaves out the term nationalities, surely due to conviction and an awareness of its problems), does not lie in themselves, but rather in the worldwide community, the Co-world he worked so hard on.

With a bit of humour and somewhat of a contradiction, but great eloquence, he explained that complex intersection of planes, in well-spoken words taken down in an interview from 1931: "Catalonia strives to be Europe and Asturias wants to remain Asturias; doing the latter, Asturias is much more European than the former." Today we can switch Catalonia's and Asturias' names for those of any other Spanish region, nationality or country in Spain, and even Europe, that we want.

Madariaga's words continue to brim over with all the depth and currentness that we have attempted to express succinctly herein. There is no doubt that his ideas could be used to acquire a certain level of complexity that is often missing when examining the serious problems and tensions in the territorial organization of the Spanish State, and to surmount the troublesome *impasse* which its constitutional framework has reached. Anyway, Catalonia, which often stresses too emphatically its European calling and which often tends to “forget” Spain in its relations to Europe, should not forget *Madariaga's* words.