

## BASQUE AND BRITISH SEAMEN: SOME LINKS IN HISTORY

By MAIRIN MITCHELL

For various reasons British people feel at home in the Basque Country. First because the sea has played the same important part in our lives as in yours. In your history as a seafaring people you have been all that the British have been: intrepid explorers, famous navigators, fearless fishermen. Yet our own capital, London, doesn't show anything like the same number of street-names commemorating seafarers as you do in San Sebastián. Any foreign visitor coming for the first time to the capital of your Province, and knowing even a little of your history, cannot fail to be impressed by the wealth of names recalling your great mariners —Elcano, Urdaneta, Oquendo, Churruca, Blas de Lezo— to mention only some. Then you have the Calle de los Corsarios Vascos, a reminder of the armed vessels which proved so effective against English commerce in the seventeenth century. And there is the Avenida de Sancho el Sabio, recalling the *fuero* which that Navarrese king gave to San Sebastián in 1150, and which was so largely concerned with maritime life.

As we have said, considering the size of London, it seems strange that we haven't more street-names commemorating our great navigators and admirals. I suppose that in erecting a monument as high as the one we have given to Nelson and in calling the wide area round it Trafalgar Square, we think we've done enough. And I believe even his adversaries would have agreed that Nelson deserves every inch of that column. Even the name of Drake —a totally different type of seaman from Nelson— is found only twice-once down by the docks, and once in a suburb in the south-east of London. (Perhaps Guipuzcoans will say that's twice too much in his case.) But the sea is something inborn in nearly all Britishers, as those of you who have been to our coastal resorts in summer will

know. In places like Brighton, Eastbourne, Hastings, you will have seen us on the beaches, so crowded that you can't squeeze a sardine between us. What pleasure people find in waiting first in a queue of cars before they can even *reach* the sea front, and then trying to find room to sit on the beach, I don't myself know, and can only offer the phenomenon as one more proof of the eccentricity of the English. It has always surprised us that we should have been called insular, because, except for the fact that we happen to have been born on an island, there is little that is insular about us. No people have voyaged in such numbers and spread themselves as widely over the earth as the British, and in our urge to explore, our compulsive tendency to go overseas, we resemble Guipuzcoans and Bizcayans, whose instinct it has always been to look beyond their own shores. An Englishman is happy if he can cross the channel for his weekend holiday, and indeed the suitcase might well have stood for our national emblem instead of the poor old bull-dog. We know how your people too, are to be found all over the world, especially of course in the Americas. Don José de Arteche in some of his books, particularly in *Portar Bien* and *Siluetas y Recuerdos*, has given accounts of many who after their long Atlantic voyage have settled in those lands, and in the far Marianas. In Canada, particularly in British Columbia, there are considerable communities of Guipuzcoans. So there, as in Terranova, the voyages of your people have linked them with ours.

The earliest known inhabitants of Britain did not belong to the peoples commonly classified as Brythonic: they were those whom we call Iberians, and I use the term as applying strictly to people coming from the Iberian Peninsula, and not in the sense in which it is sometimes used in discussing such subjects as «Is the Basque language related to Iberian?» Those earliest visitors to our island from Spain were favoured by the west and south-west winds in winter which brought them to the shores of England, and also of Ireland. Some of the earliest arrivals were very probably either Basque, or of Basque *parentesco* —proto-Basque— because we have a Basque toponymy in Britain, to which we will refer later. When your ancestors reached our coasts they are likely to have been struck by a certain similarity in our scenery and climate to their own. Your coastal landscape resembles the rockier parts of some of ours, so does the green of your hills, the soft clouds of your skies. One of my English friends who had long been living in the south of Spain where the scenery and climate are so different from Guipúzcoa's, told me that when she later came to your Province and saw the

green of your hills and headlands, she said: «Now I've come home again».

Then your climate. We in Britain know your stormy seas, the erosion of coasts, when the waves hurl themselves against the cliffs and shatter breakwaters, your times of tempest when your fishing fleets can't put to sea.

To refer now to the Basque toponomy in Britain. In England we have a river Adur and one which in early times was called Deva, now known as Dee, on which the city of Chester stands. But it doesn't do to say much about the word 'Deva' because as we know, it is an Indo-European one, so it may have been brought to your country and to Britain by the Celts. (As we also know, there are two rivers of that name in Spain, one in Asturia and the other in Guipúzcoa). But it is interesting to find the name 'Deva' both in Spain and in England. I have mentioned only two rivers with names corresponding to those in the Basque Country, but we have others with origins older than Celtic. Taking advantage of the favourable winds previously mentioned, seafarers from the Cantabrian coast, sailing north, would find plenty of natural harbours in Britain deep enough to take their small vessels, and these may well have brought some of them to the mouth of the Adur, which is still navigable to sailing barges. What those vessels were like in those early days we don't know, as of course neither you nor we have any records of them.

The county of Somerset, in the west of England, has a hilly region known as the Mendip country, and this does suggest derivation from your *Mendi*, mountain, and *ip* as a contraction of your *ipe*, below, under, for beneath the Mendips are caves, and with evidence of human habitation. In the Mendip region is a ravine called Ebor Gorge. 'Ebor' is not an English word nor is it Celtic. We know how dangerous it is to attempt to equate words of one language with those of another unless we have made a close study of comparative philology, but when I suggested to a Basque scholar that our Ebor, which has warm springs in the region, might, like your Ebro, derive from *ur-bero*, warm water, he said he thought this might well be so. In Cornwall, in the extreme south-west of England, we can still hear houses by a river referred to as *chy-an-adour*. It occurred to me that *chy* might derive from *etxea*, your Basque word for 'house', the initial 'et' having been lost in *chy*, just as we find in Spanish medieval documents the proper name Etxaberre appearing

also as Xabierre. So I asked my Basque friend if the *chy-an-adour* of Cornwall could be related to vascuence. «Yes», he said.

In Ireland there is a rooted tradition that the first king of Kerry came from the north of Spain and his name was Eber. Stories about the voyages of Eber and of others which followed from your part of Spain are still told to children in Ireland. The old name for Ireland as you know was Hibernia, which preserves the Basque root-word *iber*. So do the Iveragh mountains in Kerry.

The arrival in Britain of early mariners from the Cantabrian region is not only suggested by some of our place-names but by the existence in the south-west of England and especially in South Wales, of a physical type which persists today, resembling in head formation and certain facial features those of many Guipuzcoans. (I have a photo of a miner from South Wales which several people in Zumaya have seen, and they have said «It's very Basque»). The Romans noted the difference between these inhabitants of South Wales and those of most other regions in Britain. Tacitus goes so far as to refer to them as Iberians. Other early writers have given them the generic name of Silures. This type is also found in the south-west of Scotland, and on my first visit to San Sebastián a Basque waiter who had worked in Glasgow, Scotland's largest city, told me he was almost startled there to find so many people looking like himself! Again, it is unwise for anyone without a specialized knowledge of the subject to draw conclusions as to the possible derivations of the place-names of one country from words of another, but quite a number of Basque scholars appear to think that the name 'Glasgow' is linked with the Basque root *osc*. Basque readers of this article will know more about the *Oscos* theory than I do, so we won't go into that matter here. Certainly Guipuzcoan seamen sailing north into the Irish Sea would find no difficulty in making their way into the wide Firth of Clyde, the river on which Glasgow stands. We are on firmer ground in saying that the Orkney Islands, known earlier as the Orcades, take their name from *ugarte*, your word for island. Your vessels, sailing far north as they did in remote times, made acquaintance with the Orcades in their voyages to Iceland. It was no doubt in those far off days that we took from you our word 'Hyperborean', our name for the North Wind, in vascuence *Ipar górria*.

Chaucer, who as you know was England's first literary artist,

and gave us a gallery of portraits which only Shakespeare has surpassed, has described in a long poem the distant voyages made by the English in his time. (It will be remembered that he was born in 1340). He tells us of those voyages of the men of Bristol to the Far North, at a time when your people too were sailing to Iceland for *bacalhau*, and he says

*Of Iceland to write is little nede  
Save of stockfish.*

The stockfish is of course your *bacalhau* and our cod.

It was Guipuzcoan and Bizcayan fishermen who gave us the name of a fish very popular in England still: the herring. We took this from your word *arraia*, fish, and as the species are of larger size in Icelandic waters, our fishing fleets have sailed there from very early times. You have devoted many songs to the *ballena*, but I don't suppose you have made the humble herring a subject of song as we have. «Who 'll buy me caller herrin'?» is a charming old Scottish song in which a fisher-girl is inviting people in the streets to buy her fresh herrings.

And now one last remark before we leave the remoter ages. As you know, the figure for the Basques in Blood Group O, averaging 57. 2% is the highest in Europe. In the Severn Valley, in the west of England, it is as high as 53%. To end these remarks about our earliest links, I will just say that I think it can be inferred that we in Britain still have remnants of a people who share with you a common ancestry and that it was your earliest voyagers who gave us this.

Turning now to recorded history: as you know, after the Iberians settled in Britain there came Celts, Romans, Angles, Jutes, Frieslanders, and the so-called Saxons; then the Danes and Normans, which has given us a very mixed ancestry and may partly account for the fact that the British are a complex people, defying analysis by others, and maddeningly bewildering to those who do try to fit them into some sort of a frame. I think they will remain a riddle. Some of you may have read an amusing book by a Dutchman called «The English — Are they Human?» Well, all the uninvited settlers we've just mentioned must take their share of responsibility for that Dutchman's peculiar picture of us. Among the uninvited arrivals

there were some Guipuzcoans, but I hope we made an exception in your case and said «Ongi etorri» when you landed on our shores with the Roman legions. Don Fausto Arocena in his *Brumas de Nuestra Historia* has given an interesting account of a Roman votive stone in Elsdon in the county of Northumberland. This stone has a Latin inscription commemorating the cohort of the Vardulos, the name often applied to the Guipuzcoans of those times stationed at the Roman camp of Elsdon (i.e. in the far north of Britain). To meet further invasions we had to build ships, just as you did when challenged by invasions from sea. It was Alfred the Great, 871-901, who was the real founder of the English navy. He was for several years a contemporary of Sancho el Mayor of the house of Navarre, but Don Sancho's kingdom as we know then included Guipúzcoa, and like our own King Alfred he saw the paramount importance of defending his coasts. King Alfred has been called «the law-giver». It was he who gave the English their first maritime laws. Of the measures which Sancho el Mayor took at the same period to protect the Cantabrian coast you will know in detail. Both monarchs, rightly called «the Great», had to meet the challenge of the Vikings, or Northmen, from Scandinavia. These people, who appear like a brilliant flash across the pages of history, were constantly making raids on England in the time of Alfred, and on your own coasts when Guipúzcoa formed part of the dominions of Navarre. Though your shores hadn't so much trouble from these Northmen as late as we had (as you know, their descendants, the Normans, conquered England in 1066), the importance of defending your coasts was not overlooked by Guipuzcoans, whether they were united with Navarre or Castille. San Sebastián, lying on the crossroads of land and seaways, was favourably placed for the development of commerce. The *Fuero* granted to it by Sancho el Sabio gave a definite impulse to trade, but this fact brought its trouble too, as it drew not only Vikings and Moorish pirates but in later times British and French corsairs to this part of your coast.

In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries Guipuzcoans and English seamen had quite a lot to do with each other, but unfortunately generally in a hostile connection. As we know, England and France were engaged during much of this period in what is known as The Hundred Years War, and Guipuzcoans and Bizcayans found their way into the French fleets. Both Guipuzcoans and British had reason to complain of each others' attacks on their vessels. Bizcayans too suffered from English interference, and the year 1351 saw the first maritime pact between Basques and British, when representatives of

Guetaria, Bermeo and Castro Urdiales signed in London an agreement with the British for a twenty years' peace. It hadn't much effect however, as only two years later another petition was made to the king of England, Edward III. But the pact which arose from this wasn't observed more faithfully than the first. I must say that on the whole the English seem to have been more to blame.

Then came the most important of these agreements between your people and ours, when in 1481 the Junta General of Guipúzcoa sent delegates to London to sign on behalf of Guipúzcoa a solemn pact with the English. This was executed at Westminster on March 9th, 1482, an interesting date in history, because the terms of the pact show an early conception of the freedom of the seas.

The fourteenth century which had seen so much trouble between the fleets of the two peoples, had at least one brighter period. In that century San Sebastián, Guetaria and Bermeo had formed a maritime union, and in 1348 had established their own Consulate in the Esterlines quarter of Bruges in the Low Countries. They had made it the base for the development of trade with England and other European countries and had done a considerable amount of commerce with our ports of London and Bristol. In connection with these particular trade relations we do seem to have been on fairly good terms. In the old quarter of San Sebastián the Calle de los Esterlines is of course a reminder of that Basque Consulate in Bruges established in the fourteenth century.

Coming now to the next one, the fifteenth, it was on the eastern coast of the New World that Basques and British met again, off the codbanks of Terranova or Newfoundland, as we call it. This is the island with whose discovery in 1497 John Cabot, the Genoese seaman in the service of England, has been credited. During much of the sixteenth century Guipuzcoan and English seafarers met off Terranova on whaling expeditions too. Sr. Arteche in his life of Elcano gives a list of places on the south shores of Newfoundland which owe their names to these early Basque fishermen, one of them being Juan de Echaide, who, as you know, was a native of San Sebastián. (It was interesting to learn that descendants of his family live today in San Sebastián, one being the well known writer Pilar de Cuadra y Echaide). The Treaty of Utrecht —infamous in the eyes of Spain because it gave us Gibraltar— has at least one merit. When by its terms Newfoundland was ceded to England, certain fishing rights were reserved to the Basques.

Cabot it will be remembered, had offered his services to Spain before he turned to England, but the Spanish king, Ferdinand, showed less interest in the possibility of finding a North-West Passage to the rich lands of the East than the English did, and Ferdinand, when Cabot put his proposal to him, declined it. Whether, if Ferdinand had accepted Cabot's plan, that navigator would have fared any better than he did in the English service, we can't say. Henry VII with characteristic Tudor generosity, repaid Cabot's discovery of the richest fishing grounds on the western Atlantic, and an island of immense mineral wealth, with the princely sum of £10, though he did later grant him a pension of £20. Cabot and the merchants of Bristol, the port which at that time was foremost in the promotion of overseas trade, had the same inspiration as Colón — to reach Asia by sailing west.

Juan de la Cosa, the official cartographer of Colón's second expedition, whose famous map was completed in 1500, shows what he marked as the Cabo Yngles, which is really Cape Breton, also what he describes as the «Mar descubierta por Yngles». At that time the English were not interested in the Spanish Main; what they wanted to find was a North-West Passage to the Pacific, a short cut from Europe to China. Cabot's voyages in the English service were undertaken expressly for this purpose. So at that time Basque and British contacts were principally confined to the fishing grounds off Newfoundland. English interest in the more southerly regions of the American continent wasn't aroused till the increase of Spanish treasure brought from the Indies revived in us our corsair practices. (These of course will be mentioned when we come to the arch-pirate Drake).

John Cabot's expedition, composed almost entirely of Englishmen, which took them to Newfoundland, was a remarkable one, as it was made with only one small ship, and a total company of eighteen or twenty, of whom the actual crew were not more than twelve. Moreover their return voyage to England was accomplished in just two weeks, a singular achievement. This expedition certainly helped the Basque cartographer, Juan de la Cosa, with his map of the New World, as Cabot brought back a map of his own voyage which he exhibited in London 1497-98, showing his general view of the geography of the west Atlantic. Juan de la Cosa had a copy of this and it is known to have formed the foundation of his own detailed drawing of the named part of the English coastal discoveries, which he marked with English flags. While the Basque cartographer



was indebted to the English for Cabot's map, English navigators in their turn were indebted to Juan de la Cosa for having drawn, though in many parts inaccurately, all that was then known of the New World. The men who sailed with him in the voyages that led to the production of his famous map, included some Basques.

We have said that Spanish policy (which was partly conditioned by the Treaty of Tordesillas 1494), deterred Spain from embarking on adventures in search of a North-West Passage. But there was one great Guipuzcoan cosmographer, Andrés de Urdaneta, who showed himself definitely interested in what has been called «the Northern Mystery». Before he sailed on Legazpi's expedition to the Philippines in 1564 he had sent to King Philip II a *Memorial* with his views on the proposed voyage. He suggested that the fleet should try to explore the mainland along the coast described by Juan Rodríguez de Cabrillo. That it should follow that coast in search of «the big water» of which Cabrillo had heard from natives, and that if such exploration should lead to the discovery of a passage «it is obvious» he says, «that by this route it would be possible to navigate from Spain to China». About the time when Urdaneta compiled his *Memorial* stories were being circulated of ships sailing along a North-West Passage, and in England Sir Humphrey Gilbert was one who certainly believed that Urdaneta had reached Europe by such a route. In Gilbert's *Discourse for the Discoverie of a New Passage to Cataia* he says he had heard that Urdaneta had found such a passage and by this route had passed from the Pacific to Germany, and had later reported the event to the King of Portugal. That the Portuguese king had begged him to tell no one else, as «if the English should get to know of it they would become exceedingly troublesome to the King of Spain as well as to himself». Of course we know that though Sir Humphrey was sincere in his belief the story was based on fiction, because if Urdaneta had really made any such voyage the last thing he would have done would have been to pass on the information to the King of Portugal, after the treatment he had received in that country. On the return from his first Pacific voyage his Diary and all his papers had been confiscated by the Portuguese when he arrived in Lisbon, and he had to ride for his life into Spain. Further, the alleged statement by the Portuguese sovereign to Urdaneta that the English, if they got to hear of the story would become exceedingly troublesome to Spain, has no point, because Spain at that time wasn't interested in a North-West Passage. Urdaneta's own proposal, that exploration should be

undertaken for such a discovery, had been rejected by the Audiencia in New Spain.

The belief had persisted for long with many seamen, Guipuzcoans among them, that the discovery of a north western seaway to Asia would be made by an Englishman. Drake, in his voyage along the coast of north-west America, had erroneously been credited with one, and with British audacity the undiscovered passage between America and Asia was referred to as «the Englishman's Streight». And the great British voyages of exploration went on, adding their glorious chapters to the saga of the seas under heroic navigators like Frobisher, Davis, Hudson, Parry, Ross, Franklin. The Russian sea captain Krusenstern, wrote that three centuries of effort had failed to establish a North-West Passage, but added: «To the English we are indebted for the first attempt, and with the most praiseworthy perseverance they continue their efforts, and to them in all probability we shall be obliged for the final and satisfactory answer as to the existence or non-existence of this remarkable passage». And so it proved to be the case, when in 1850 Captain McClure and his British team sailed through the Bering Strait, having covered in stages which took four years in all, the whole distance of the North-West passage from west to east, thus resolving the question raised by the Guipuzcoan cosmographer Urdaneta in his *Memorial* nearly three hundred years earlier.

Throughout the maritime history of your people and ours so much of the pioneering work by Guipuzcoans has been completed by British navigation, and vice versa, that one is tempted to feel we should have been making joint undertakings rather than working as rivals. And from here one is led to say that if only man would remember that in his unique species the human race is really one, and that if all efforts for widening our knowledge of the world and of extra-terrestrial spheres were united instead of competitive, what a different planet ours would be.

We have just referred to Urdaneta. About him more will be said later. The Magellan-Elcano voyage must be mentioned first, as preceding those of Urdaneta. On that momentous expedition two hundred and forty-two men sailed, and these included ten Guipuzcoans. There was one Englishman, the Master Gunner in the fleet, and he sailed in Magellan's flagship the *Trinidad*. When he was living in Seville he would meet quite a lot of men from your Province as well

as the ten who sailed with him. His rank as Chief Gunner brought him into contact with the officials at the Casa de Contratación, many of whom, especially the *contadores*, were Guipuzcoans. Such matters as armoury and powder supplies he would have to discuss with them.

When the fleet commanded by Magellan left San Lúcar de Barrameda for the great voyage, it was Master Andrew who ordered the last salute to Spain as the ships approached the Bar, and the five vessels fired their last salvos as they left the land which only thirty-six men were destined to see again. Of these as we know, only eighteen returned with Elcano in command. Master Andrew played an important part in quelling the mutiny which broke out in the Bay of San Julián in Patagonia, when some of the Spanish captains had lost confidence in Magellan's ability to find a strait. It was he who one dark night off the stark shores of Patagonia when mutiny came to a head, gave at Magellan's command the order to fire on the *Concepción* at close range. This was the decisive act which led to the subsequent surrender of the other mutinous vessels, and the outbreak was quelled. When the Strait was found, and the three remaining ships had passed through it, they made that terrible traverse of the Pacific, their first landfall being at Guam in the Marianas. There they stayed three days, and on the day they left Master Andrew died in the *Trinidad*.

With his death the link between Basque and British seamen ends so far as the Magellan-Elcano voyage is concerned. But the Will of Juan Sebastián made at sea eleven days before his death on his second Pacific voyage, shows the concern for personal possessions which is a feature of the British, though I don't think any of us would go quite as far as Elcano did in giving every piece of cloth, every bit of fabric, and in stating that the fifty-one pots in his possession are to be divided (presumably fractionally in the case of the fifty-first) with the Agent of the Armada. Even one ream of paper is not overlooked. Yet in enumerating the items of his enormous wardrobe and even stating which pairs of hose had been used, this illustrious navigator with a curious dichotomy does remind one of some fussy old English spinster of the eighteenth century whose wills make entertaining reading today. The importance attached to possessions by Elcano is something which the English share; British laws, which are a model in so many respects, do often tend in their administration to be harsher for thefts than they are for assaults on the person.

And now we come to Urdaneta, with whom there is no direct English connection. But any British person who reads the *Memorial* which he sent to King Philip II can hardly fail to be struck by the similarity of Urdaneta's conception of sea power with that of the English in their maritime history. It has sometimes been said that the British Empire came about as an accident. I am not one who shares this view. I think its birth and its expansion were due to the foresight of extremely clever men, statesmen as well as seamen, who prompted the taking of one strategic point after another. Any map of the British Empire before the First and also the Second World War shows how carefully the design was plotted. And Urdaneta in his detailed advice to the Spanish king shows the same grasp of the principles of sea power for furthering the development of commerce. First in his emphasis on the necessity of sound bases, his recommendation of Acapulco for expeditions from Mexico. Then his wish that New Guinea rather than the Philippines should be made the base for Spanish Pacific enterprise. And in his planning of the return route across that ocean to Mexico, his use of the southwest monsoon for the start of his voyage when he directed the *San Pedro* across the Pacific, and his adoption of a northerly route, all show that he was looking to the future to establish the best route to further Spanish trade. His own chart of the successful crossing of the Pacific from west to east, the first to be made which was of lasting value to Spain, provided sailing ships with their trading route for the next two hundred and fifty years. And the views in his *Parecer* presented in Madrid after his Pacific voyage, in which he claimed that Borneo and much of China fell within the rightful Spanish hemisphere, bear testimony to his aspirations for Spanish mercantile as well as missionary advancement overseas. Urdaneta, in establishing the route of the Manilla Galleon, and in making the claims mentioned in his *Parecer* shows himself as shrewd and as pragmatic as any of the builders of the British Empire.

When he revealed in his *Memorial* that New Guinea was his own desired objective for Legazpi's voyage it seems very probable that he had in mind the discovery of Terra Australis, the southern continent whose existence had for long been suspected. Had his advice been taken, had Legazpi's fleet sailed to New Guinea instead of the Philippines, it is not improbable that the Spanish imperium would have come to include Australia.

The discovery of the Straits of Magellan, through which Urda-neta had sailed on Elcano's second voyage, and of which Straits he gave a valuable account in his Diary, proved of no practical advantage to Spain, but they did form part of Drake's voyage of circumnavigation from which he returned to England in 1580. On leaving the Straits he had sailed north, along the coast later known as that of British Columbia, part of his plan being to seek a passage by which his one remaining ship could return to Europe. In this he failed, so he turned south and made his way back to England via the Cape of Good Hope. When he landed at Plymouth he brought a hoard of plunder captured from one of the Spanish treasure ships in Callao. As he had also sacked several other ports in Peru, the Spanish government not unnaturally demanded his punishment as a pirate and not unnaturally too the English sovereign Queen Elizabeth had no intention of punishing a subject so useful to her as Drake, of whose haul of treasure she took an ample share. And as though to snap her fingers at Spain, she knighted him.

Well, we know the rest of his exploits, the further raids on the Spanish Main and in the Antillas, the sacking of Cartagena, Santo Domingo, San Agostino, and in the homeland his wanton destruction of Cádiz, Vigo, and all his other iniquities. We also know how he met successfully the challenge of the Invincible Armada.

The effect of his raids was to induce King Philip to at last spend money—which he disliked doing as much as Elizabeth did—on strengthening Spain's defences in her American possessions. The sound of Drake's Drum then came to be less dreaded by Spanish colonists, among whom were many from Guipúzcoa. During this period Antonio de Oquendo, your distinguished admiral, was engaged in more than a hundred encounters at sea, and most of them were against English corsairs. In the great game of chess, the British moves were made by one of the most brilliant and astute women in history. And this must be said whether we like Elizabeth Tudor or not. (As you know, the English in their inimitable way, have chosen to call the lady «Good Queen Bess»). On the other side the moves were made by a wily king, but one whose wariness prevented him from making, until too late, the bold moves which his opponent did. Elizabeth too played for time, but when she struck it was at the right moment. For twenty-seven years she had contented herself with the raids of her «Sea Dogs», until the navy which had declined under Mary Tudor had not only recovered its

strength, but had changed its character from what may be described as an assembly of floating batteries to a formidable fighting fleet. Philip too delayed; he did not attempt a major offensive till 1588, when he sent the Armada to overthrow English sea power and soldiers to conquer our island. But on that occasion it was the British who took the offensive when the two fleets joined battle in the English Channel.

As we know there were two great Guipuzcoan Vice-Admirals, Miguel de Oquendo and Juan Martínez de Recalde, who wanted to attack the English fleet when it was first sighted. But the Spanish Armada was under command of the Duke of Medina Sidonia, who had no practical knowledge of naval affairs, and he opposed the advice of his admirals.

Spanish writers have sometimes said that if Oquendo had got his way the course of history might have been changed. That however, is not the opinion of most British naval historians, who are convinced that the technical superiority of Drake's ships would in any case have ensured victory for the British. Oquendo it will be remembered died soon after the battle, worn out with grief at the defeat of the Armada. How many Guipuzcoans lost their lives in that event, I don't know. But as they and Bizcayans were still the principal seamen in Spain —Oquendo's squadron was *formed* of Guipuzcoan vessels— the number must have been considerable.

Guipuzcoan commanders and Crown officials have left vivid records of the encounters in Caribbean waters at that time. There are those of Martín de Olazábal, commander of a large fleet which left Habana for Spain with nine galleons laden with treasure and nearly sixty ships in convoy, which the English attacked; and a long tale of trouble sent to the King of Spain by Don Francisco Aliaga, Crown Counsel in Santo Domingo, in which, describing the English raids he says «All clamour and demand succour of Your Majesty. We entreat Your Majesty to protect and relieve us, for otherwise we have no hope whatever of life». The purse-strings had not yet been unloosed by King Philip. However, Pedro de Arana, the royal accountant at Habana, writes more cheerfully, saying that «since the enemy dared not attack this port, everyone feels disappointed. We were waiting for them, well prepared, and so pleased at the prospect that I give your lordship my word it was something that made one delighted to see».

And in a letter to a fellow Guipuzcoan, Juan de Ybarra, royal secretary to the Council of the Indies, Arana says: «God was pleased to keep the ships from Santo Domingo out of the hands of the thieves this time».

Well, Basque people must forgive us our thieves, because they have had theirs too, even if they haven't operated on the grand scale of Drake and Hawkins. As we know, Michel Iriart has devoted a book to «los corsarios vascos».

It is strange for how long the view persisted in England that Drake was the first circumnavigator, though it must not be forgotten that he was the first man to sail a ship round the world under his own command for the whole of the voyage. In 1951 at the opening of the Festival of Britain in London, those who did know that the Guipuzcoan, Juan Sebastián de Elcano, was the navigator who completed the first voyage round the world in 1522, were astonished to see in the section devoted to discovery, the name of Drake displayed as the first circumnavigator.

«Oh, but it wasn't Drake, it was Magellan», I heard a puzzled visitor exclaim. Letters from the Information Department of the Spanish Embassy in London brought the true facts to light, and the notice was altered. But one felt it was really time that a life of Elcano should be written in English, and this I ventured to undertake. Don José de Arteche did me the honour of accepting my book's dedication to himself, and to his own biography of Elcano I owe a great deal in my life of Juan Sebastián.

It has I believe, puzzled a lot of people in Spain that Drake, who for so much of his life at sea was engaged in piracy, should be regarded as a hero by his countrymen. (That is of course less the case today than it used to be). In the first place, he was a good deal more than a corsair. He was the first English leader of an expedition which sailed round the world, and he was an explorer, seeking a North-West Passage. Though he deserved to be hated by Spain, the natives of California held him in such high regard that they proposed to deify him! Beyond that, he was the founder of England's naval supremacy, the incarnation of the Elizabethan spirit of maritime adventure, and whenever he could get his own way he applied the master rule of seeking out the enemy fleets and carrying out a strategic offensive in preference to purely defensive methods.

It was this principle of naval strategy which for so long gave England the mastery of the sea. It was the same challenging spirit which your great naval commanders, Oquendo and Churruca showed when their command was unfettered, but in the two greatest engagements in your maritime history neither of these Guipuzcoan admirals was in supreme command.

There is, I think, another reason why Drake is still a hero to some English people. We British tend to repress our emotions. In the Englishman there is a strongly repressed streak of aggression. But in justice to my own people, I must say that —speaking in Jungian terms— this dark side of the psyche has perhaps been the more puzzling to others just because the British in general are a kind people. None are more ready to help than they are, when anyone is in trouble. But one must never expect consistency in the English character! Men like Drake, and in our own time that titanic figure —to many British people a saviour figure— Churchill, with their defiance and ruthlessness, release for us forces which we unconsciously or otherwise suppress.

I once asked Sr. Arteché what he thought of the English, and he said «they are a people of tremendous force». He was right. He is one of the very few non-British people I've met who realize that the so-called British phlegm is a surface quality only. I think the real genius of the English people lies in the fact that though they are intensely individualistic —it has been said that an Englishman will pull down heaven and earth to get what he wants, that is, when he *really* wants it— they have yet contrived to live as disciplined citizens in a highly organized State. And that is a remarkable achievement in a capital like London with a population of over eight millions. The outbreaks of violence to which television in your country and mine draws attention represents of course only a minimal fraction of the entire population.

Many things in British people puzzle Basques, as I know from my stay in your Province. And certain things in you, whether seamen or landmen, puzzle us. But about one thing I have got a firm impression: that, as the epic voyages of your navigators show, you have the same tenacity. Like us too, you are a pragmatic people. I think too you have a streak of sentimentality which is characteristic of the English, and which Drake at times showed, as many men of ruthless action often do. But I wonder whether Guipuzcoans would have produced quite such a contradictory character as Drake.



I've said that he was among our many navigators who tried to find a North-West Passage, but in his century English explorers were seeking for a North-East Passage too. In 1530 in the reign of Henry VIII a petition for such an expedition had been made by Robert Thorne and Richard Barlow, both of Bristol. Barlow was widely travelled and a great voyager, but he is remembered principally for his translation of a famous Spanish work on world geography. His English version of this is called *A Briefe Summe of Geographie* and I want to stress the fact that the original was the work of a native of the Iberian Peninsula, not of an Englishman, because the book contains some remarks not very flattering to Guipuzcoans. But as they are rather amusing they may perhaps be mentioned. Describing San Sebastián as a good port, Barlow says in his translation «It is in the Province of Lepúzcoa, which is mountainous country and has little corn and wine beyond what is brought from other parts. The inhabitants have plenty of wood and make many ships». So far so good, but now listen to this: «The people are choleric and soon stirred to anger and when this is roused they become very cruel, but if the first outbreak of this is firmly resisted, their hearts are soon softened».

Neither Barlow nor Thorne lived to see the North-East Passage sailed in entirety, despite the great British ventures after the English founded the Muscovy Company in 1555. This was formed to give England a monopoly of operations in the north-east for trade with Russia, and for the exploration of a sea-route to China. About the time when the Muscovy Company was founded, Basque and British seamen, finding that the whales were leaving the waters off Newfoundland, turned North-East, and met frequently off the coasts of Spitzbergen, where the Muscovy Company had set up the first whaling station on that island. I'm afraid the English behaved badly at this time in their efforts to gain a monopoly of those Arctic waters. In this connection there's a troubled story which is a long one, so I will just say that my countrymen don't come out of it too well, because though they owed their knowledge of harpooning to the Basques, they tried to stop them from whale hunting independently in the Far North. King James I of England had appealed for Basque whalers to join the English fishing fleets, because, he said, their seamen were skilled in the use of the harpoon. Naturally the whaling fleets from Spain protested against the attempts to exclude them from making independent expeditions to the whaling grounds, and in an effort to see justice done to the

*balleneros guipuzcoanos* your Province sent one of its leading captains, Juan de Erauso, as envoy to Madrid. And here one really has to smile. We British so often get exasperated by the failure of people in Spain to answer letters, but this time it was the other way round. The English deliberately stalled, and poor Captain Erauso, unable to get a reply from London, cried in despair «I can do no more». How often have we felt the same frustration when, after sending a chain of letters to some firm in Spain we just find we've wasted our time. However, as far as the actual whaling dispute went, though two wrongs don't make a right, it must be remembered that Guipuzcoans were also having trouble with Bizcayans at this period.

It was about this time in the first decade of the seventeenth century that interest was revived in the belief, persisting from ancient times, of the existence of a great southern land, a supposition which was eventually confirmed by the discovery of Australia. With the death of Drake the way was clear for a Spanish voyage of exploration whose objective was probably in the mind of Urdaneta more than forty years earlier. This venture was undertaken by Pedro Fernandez Quirós, a Portuguese in the service of Spain. He left Callao with two ships and a launch at the end of 1605. It was the account of a friar in the expedition, Juan de Iturbe, of Guipuzcoan origin, which, together with the main one of Munilla and the *Memorial* of Quirós, inspired the English sea captain James Cook to make his voyage in 1768 which resulted in the first effective discovery of Australia. Though the longest *relaciones* of the voyage are those of the Eighth *Memorial* of Quirós and those of the Franciscan chaplain Fray Martín de Munilla, the concise summary of Iturbe was just the one to be appreciated by a practical genius like Cook. Many Basques sailed with Quirós. The Chief Pilot was Ochoa de Bilbao, between whom and the commander hostility broke out early. In the course of the expedition the Chief Pilot mutinied and was dis-rated. When they reached the islands in the Duff Group, Quirós, with a cruelty which recalls that of another Portuguese commander, Magellan, ordered him to be garotted. Only the intervention of the Franciscan friars saved the life of the Bizcayan pilot.

Iturbe's account describes the discovery of the islands in the New Hebrides Group, which Quirós mistook for the Australian continent. It states that the captain-general wasted time in exploring islands of no value, instead of searching for a southern continent. However, the discovery on that expedition of the strait between

Queensland in Australia and the island of New Guinea by De Torres, after whom the passage was named, was of value to later navigators. The subsequent reports on the voyage sent to the King were so unfavourable that a second Spanish expedition was not undertaken, and the Dutch, who followed, found the northern territory too uninviting to pursue further exploration. It was left for Captain Cook, who carefully studied the accounts of the Quirós expedition, to make the first effective discovery of Australia in 1770 (1) on his voyage in the *Endeavour* from Rio de Janeiro. And thereafter Australia came to form part of the British dominions.

On the other side of the world, one of your most famous naval commanders, Blas de Lezo, will always be remembered for his heroic defence of Cartagena de Indias against the English, whose fleet was assembled at Jamaica. Above everything else the British wanted to re-capture Cartagena (it had been taken once by Drake), as it had the best harbour on the Caribbean coast. It has been said, to our shame, that the English were so sure of taking it that they had medals struck in advance showing Lezo on his knees offering his sword to the English admiral Vernon. But things didn't work out like that. When the fleet confronted Cartagena and attacked it for seventeen days, Lezo put up one of the most heroic defences in the history of war at sea. He finally succeeded in scattering our ships, which was a great victory for Spain. Whereas Lezo is recalled for his valiant command in that battle, Admiral Vernon, despite his capture of Porto Bello, is remembered by us only for his issue of rum to the sailors, who for long called that spirit «grog», after the admiral's nickname of «Old Grog». That's a very British touch, to name a leading admiral after his custom of wearing coarse breeches made of grogram! And it reminds one to say that English humour in its harmless mockery, its playfulness, its curious combination of naiveté and sophistication, its subtle understatements, has something in common with Basque humour. And our clowning and your drollery are not entirely dissimilar. Here and there in his Diary, Urdaneta shows a dry humour that's rather like our own. With all the bricks that are thrown at British people today, one virtue can never be denied us: the ability to laugh at ourselves. Basques I think have this same happy gift (though unlike us they

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(1) His voyage to that continent however, had been preceded in 1699 by that of the English navigator William Dampier, whose name is commemorated by a strait, an archipelago, and part of the mainland of Western Australia.

seem unable to take a joke made against them by foreigners). And when two peoples have a like humour and share a sense of the ridiculous, that surely forms a good ground for amity.

But to conclude our references to Lezo, it is only fair to say that the arrogance shown by the English with those medals does have its counterpart in some of the objects found in the Spanish Armada, revealing how confident our adversaries were that they would conquer our island and crush its heretics.

And now with Churruca we come to the last of the notable Guipuzcoan seamen who are linked with the English in history. This great son of Motrico was, in my humble opinion, one of the most brilliant seamen not only of Guipúzcoa, but of any part of Europe, and I hope that some day Sr. Arteché will make him the subject of a biography.

When Churruca began his career at sea Spain was at war with England, and at the siege of Gibraltar he saved the lives of many Spanish sailors through his knowledge of floating batteries, of which he had made a special study at the Naval School, El Ferrol. There his outstanding proficiency in mathematics and astronomy marked him as one equipped for special investigation. In his scientific achievements he at once recalls another Guipuzcoan, Urdaneta. In his fighting qualities he resembles the greatest of English sea captains, Horatio Nelson, whom he was destined to meet at the battle of Trafalgar, fought on October 21st, 1805.

Churruca was in command of *San Juan Nepomuceno*, which was attacked first by three English ships, then by six. The gallant Guipuzcoan put up a heroic defence, and as he lay dying, mortally wounded by a cannon ball, he urged his men to fight on to the last. So did Nelson, as he lay dying that same day, the victim of a marksman's bullet, though in his case he had the satisfaction of hearing before his death that his men had won a resounding victory. Nelson's flagship, the *Victory*, had like Churruca's vessel, fought valiantly when attacked by several enemy ships simultaneously.

The decisive victory of the British was a truly great one, because they had been outnumbered by the combined fleets of France and Spain. Yet Churruca seems to have had a presentiment that his side

would lose. Perhaps he realized from the start that Villeneuve, the French admiral in command, was not the man to match one endowed with «the Nelson touch» as the English admiral's plan of battle has been described. It was a plan which gave the English the greatest of all their victories at sea. Not one of their ships was lost, while their adversaries lost fifteen.

In Churruca the British saw a man after their own hearts, one who fulfilled their idea of all that a naval commander should be. Only after his death did his ship surrender, and the English gave the last honours to Churruca's body and brought it to Gibraltar.

And there one likes to think that the Rock, for so long a symbol of discord between your country and ours, was the scene of the meeting of our two peoples in homage to that noble sailor Cosme Damián Churruca, from your good land, Guipúzcoa.