

José Joaquín de Mora and the Debates on the Free Trade Policy in Spain (1843-1853)

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International Circulation of Economic Ideas; Classical Economist; Free Trade; Spanish Liberalism; Journals of Political Economy.

1. Introduction

Spain's gradual reception of classical economics began with the arrival of Smith's *The Wealth of Nations* in the late 18th century and was a key factor in the relentless battle waged by supporters of free trade and protectionism throughout the following century. Free trade's limited success as regards reforms is one of Spain's most obvious fault lines where classical ideas were concerned: Figuerola's 1869 Tariff Law, the most "free trade" tariff in the 19th century, was still moderately protectionist¹. However, the fact that the free trade option had only minority appeal in Spain did not prevent it from having significant influence. Leaving aside its Enlightenment forerunners, this alternative had a major theoretical basis as early as 1812, set out in Flórez Estrada's *Examen imparcial*². During the 1840s free trade shifted from the intellectual to the political sphere; the decade was marked by debates on the 1841 and 1849 tariff reforms and these eventually spread beyond academic discussion and entered the political arena, against a backdrop of growing social discord³. Given this scenario it is not surprising that anti-prohibitionist literature found a new lease of life in works by authors such as Pío Pita Pizarro, Pablo Preber, José Manuel Vadillo, Manuel Marliani and José Joaquín de Mora⁴.

This article examines the contribution of José Joaquín de Mora (Cádiz, 1783-Madrid, 1864) to these trade debates. Although he was also a noted novelist and poet, this eminent liberal intellectual had been cultivating an interest in political economy since the six-year period of absolutism (1814-1820), but he joined the free trade movement during the Liberal Triennium (1820-1823)⁵. His defence of free trade was the hallmark of his multifaceted career as a publisher, journalist, teacher, advisor and diplomat, and it became more significant in the 1840s. After periods in London, Argentina, Santiago de Chile, Lima and London, Mora returned to Spain in 1843, thus ending a twenty-year journey

¹ Comín, 2000, 639.

² Almenar, 1976.

³ Costas, 2000, 471; Serrano, 2011, 631.

⁴ Almenar-Velasco, 1987, 108.

⁵ Astigarraga, Usoz and Zabalza, 2023.

that began with his exile to London in 1823 as a result of the leading role he had played in the passionate liberalism of the Liberal Triennium⁶.

Mora returned to a very different Spain from the one that he had left after the restoration of absolutism. Ferdinand VII's death in 1833 had ushered in the decisive phase of the liberal reforms that had been attempted during the short-lived constitutional periods of the Cortes of Cadiz (1810-1813) and the Liberal Triennium. Following the revolution of July and August 1836 the 1837 Constitution was approved by a Cortes in which there was a progressive majority. However, the constitutional text was "transactional", in that it included a series of concessions to moderate —or doctrinaire— liberalism, so that the political regime would be accepted by a large majority⁷. The progressive majority prioritised freedom of the press, however, and abolished the preventive censorship regime, although some limits were set on freedom of expression throughout this period⁸. A few years later in 1845 a new and more moderate Constitution reversed much of this progressive legislative work, including freedom of expression. The progressive Triennium (1840-1843) was replaced by a cycle of moderate liberalism that lasted for twelve years (1843-1854) and coincided with Mora's publishing activity⁹.

The long-awaited liberal measures were passed from 1836 onwards, when Spain was in fact in the midst of the civil war (1833-1839) between the liberal *Isabelinos* and the Carlists, who supported the Ancien Régime. The reforms took a more moderate approach than the two previous phases had, entailing the confiscating of church property (the confiscation of common land began in 1855); the dismantling of entailed estates; the dissolution of feudal estates and *la Mesta* (a mediaeval association for livestock breeders that used transhumance); the abolition of the guilds and freedom of labour; the eliminating of internal customs and, finally, the abolition of church tithes¹⁰. This was accompanied by two more essential reforms: the first involved the 1841 tariff reforms and effectively amounted to the beginning of the end for prohibitionism, fostering the opening up of foreign trade in 1841 and reducing prohibitions¹¹, to be followed in 1849 by measures that further restricted tariffs and effectively transformed them into protectionist tools¹²; the second, Mon-Santillán's 1845 tax reform, marked the treasury's definitive transition from an absolutist to a liberal institution¹³. While the reform retained certain monopolies and customs charges, indirect taxation on consumption was

⁶ For more details of Mora's life, see Amunátegui, 1888; and Monguió, 1967.

⁷ Varela, 1983-1984.

⁸ Marcuello, 1999, 72.

⁹ Carr, 1968, 211-253.

¹⁰ Fontana, 1977, 147-184.

¹¹ Velasco, 1989.

¹² Serrano, 2011, 631-633.

¹³ Estapé, 1971.

modernised and direct taxation on immovable property, crops and livestock was prioritised. However, although it was unfolded during standard parliamentary and budgetary activity¹⁴, the reform failed to lift the treasury out of the dire situation that it had been in since the end of the 18th century and which was the root cause of the crisis in absolute monarchy¹⁵: enormous inherited debt, lower revenues as a result of confiscating church property and insufficient income due to the 1845 reform all meant resorting to public debt was inevitable and impeded the creation of the liberal state¹⁶. Furthermore, after Ferdinand VII these reforms were subject to public opinion on economic issues, which had been revived partly by parliamentary activity and partly by other institutional factors such as the embedding of political economy teaching in economic societies, cultural centres —as the *Ateneo*—, schools of commerce and law and philosophy faculties. All these factors led to an increase in the publishing of economics textbooks¹⁷ and the emergence of a specialist press¹⁸, which in turn benefited from more general factors such as lower production costs, the spread of reading among ordinary people and ideological pluralism.

On his return to Spain Mora settled in his native Cadiz, becoming head of the Colegio de San Felipe, which had been run by prestigious liberals such as Antonio Alcalá Galiano and Alberto Lista and where he created the *Libro de la Escuela* or *Catecismo de conocimientos útiles destinados a la primera enseñanza* (c. 1843; *School Book or Catechism of Useful Knowledge for Primary Education*) as a teaching aid. After also living in Seville for a time he moved to Madrid in 1844, where he remained until his death in 1864. Due to his moderate pragmatic views, which were similar to the positions he had adopted in his last exile period, he soon found a place in Madrid's institutions, joining the teaching staff at the *Ateneo* and being nominated a member of the Spanish Royal Academy in recognition of his literary career in 1848. Although he went so far as to register at the Seville Bar Association to practise law, there is no evidence that he ever did so. He also abandoned his previous activities as an adviser, politician and diplomat to return to the roles of educator and above all publisher of his younger days. Mora was intensely involved with the press during the *moderate* Spain of 1843-1854, working tirelessly to publish economics news, form public opinion and educate the populace. This was also a key period in the development of his essential economics work, that is, the articles he would publish from 1852 to 1855 in Francisco de Paula Mellado's *Enciclopedia Moderna* (EM)¹⁹. With this background in mind, the research discussed

¹⁴ Beltrán, 1977, 219-237.

¹⁵ Fontana, 1973.

¹⁶ Comín, 2000.

¹⁷ Almenar, 2000; Lluch and Almenar, 2000; Martín Rodríguez, 2000.

¹⁸ Almenar, 1996.

¹⁹ Astigarraga and Zabalza, 2007.

here deals with Mora's work as a publisher in the Spain of *moderate* liberalism, prior to the appearance of his *magnum opus*. The first section covers *De la libertad de comercio* (DLC, 1843; *On Free Trade*); the second, the *Memoria sobre los puertos francos* (MPF, 1844; *Notes on Free Ports*), and the last his articles for the economics press between 1844 and 1854.

2. *De la libertad de comercio* (1843).

Mora showed renewed interest in economic issues as soon as he set foot in Spain, and quickly picked up on the mood in economic circles there. He wrote and published the DLC in Seville in 1843 as a letter of introduction to these circles for his economic ideas. On the basis of the citations in the DLC, Schwartz subdivides Mora's sources as follows: McCulloch's *The Principles of Political Economy* (1825); Preber's *Cinco Proposiciones* (1837); Mengotti's *Il Colbertismo* (1819); the British Anti-Corn Law League and, finally, incidents in British economic history. To this mix Schwartz also adds a theory of international trade, to which he attributes a weak analytical foundation because it is based on absolute advantage; a theory of economic growth, the first stage of which involves agrarian development against a backdrop of free trade and competition; and, finally, what he interprets as a theory of public choice, in that Mora analyses the effects of trade policy on economic groups in dispute in cost/ benefit terms²⁰. Schwartz also points out that Mora seems to be writing more for England than for Spain, given his relative lack of familiarity with Spanish economic literature in comparison with his mastery of British literature and economics. Although Schwartz's work is the most comprehensive current interpretation of the DLC²¹, it needs revising thoroughly, as it takes into account neither Mora's previous career nor the enormous influence that the book had on his journalism in the 1840s.

Schwartz's perception that Mora's work lacked firm roots in Spain's scenario can be put down to the fact that the DLC is closely related to the economics texts he produced in London, Buenos Aires and Santiago de Chile, in which he proposed an economic model for the new Hispanic American republics²². As a recent arrival to Spain, Mora aimed to leave cultural and economic circles in no doubt as to this "deep conviction, matured over many years of study and experience and fortified by personal work that has crowned a happy result"²³, and to this end he based his book on free trade as the main goal of Spanish economic policy.

²⁰ Schwartz, 1999, 33, 37-39, 41-42.

²¹ Schwartz 1970; 1999.

²² Astigarraga and Zabalza, 2017.

²³ Mora, 1843, 209.

The DLC continued to be of great interest to Hispanic American readers and was reissued in Mexico in 1853. Nevertheless, it was originally aimed at readers in Spain, who saw the free trade-protectionist debate once again becoming central to political discussion from the early 1840s and this would soon be the case in the parliamentary arena as well. Mora had been familiar with McCulloch, Preber and Mengotti's texts since the 1820s, and a detailed examination of the intellectual sources of the book highlights its continuity with earlier phases of his work.

These sources reveal that the DLC was probably sketched out between 1837 and 1843, towards the end of Mora's second sojourn in London when he was an agent and diplomat for Bolivian politician Andrés de Santa Cruz. There are numerous pointers to support this hypothesis. The DLC contains many extracts from Pebrer's *Cinco proposiciones*, which was published in London in 1837²⁴, but Mora cites only one work by a Spanish economist, and then only the odd extract: *De la influencia del sistema prohibitivo* (1842) by free trader Manuel Marliani, who was also a diplomatic agent in London during the 1840s. While living in London Mora must have followed the debates in parliament and uses them to show the positive effects of free trade; a speech given by Lord Palmerston on 19 May 1841, which argued that free trade promoted peace, takes up nine pages in the DLC²⁵. And while Mora's free trade rationale varies little from the previous period, in the DLC he draws on arguments from articles appearing in the early 1840s in English journals such as *The Examiner* as well as French publications, although to a lesser extent, such as the *Revue des deux Mondes*. The DLC's main influence, however, is McCulloch's article "Political Economy", but not the version that Mora had read during his first London exile, but one that appeared in the seventh edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, which was published in 1842²⁶. Hence, when Mora cites or summarises texts by Mun, Mercier del Rivière and James Mill (*Commerce Defended*, 1807), he transcribes quotations from McCulloch's article²⁷, and the work also reflects McCulloch's admiration for Huskisson's reforms. This is a natural intellectual debt, especially in a work on free trade, as McCulloch had been Mora's author of reference since the 1820s and, according to O'Brien, was a "radical and uncompromising advocate of free trade"²⁸. This was all in direct contrast to the economic culture of the day in Spain, where the influence of Flórez Estrada's treatise was all-pervasive (1828) and Say's authority had been replaced by that of his disciples Blanqui, Rossi and Droz²⁹. Mora also included his own experience as an

²⁴ Pebrer, 1837.

²⁵ Mora, 1843, 81-88.

²⁶ McCulloch, 1842, 258-307.

²⁷ McCulloch, 1842, 268-270, 279; Mora, 1843, 58-60.

²⁸ O'Brien, 1992, 191.

²⁹ Almenar, 1980; Almenar, 2000; Lluch and Almenar, 2000.

advisor to Santa Cruz as proof of the soundness of free trade policies: in short, the DLC was built on theoretical foundations from his periods of exile in Britain and Hispanic America which he brought up to date by including material gathered during his second London sojourn.

Mora's starting point in the DLC is the continuing existence in the "structure of the new [liberal] society" of "remnants" and "errors of the old one"³⁰. He identifies the main problem in the foreword, entitled *To the Reader*: the anachronism of having a treasury based on tariff revenues, which should be replaced by a "system that combines the treasury's interests with the taxpayers', and that above all facilitates, strengthens, protects and broadens the *caput mortuum* from which the prosperity of both taxpayers and the treasury must exclusively flow: production"³¹.

The issue for Mora was pinning down the principle in the new legislation that promoted economic development, either protectionism or free trade. In his opinion the former mainly favoured Catalan industry, while also fulfilling the need to raise revenue³². He naturally tried to join the deregulation and liberalisation that Spanish liberals had been proposing since the Cortes de Cádiz and had promoted from 1836 onwards, but which lacked crucial aspects. It is important to recall that Mon-Santillán's liberal tax reform of 1845 was pending at this point, and that the 1841 Tariff Law, which made moderate progress on tariff liberalisation, had been enacted shortly before Mora's book appeared. Mora condenses these two central issues of liberal reform into the expression "free trade", and they were inseparable from the economic agenda that he sets out in the DLC, as can be seen from the following statement, which has Benthamite overtones:

"free trade, applicable to the countries whose happiness this work seeks to promote, shall be taken to mean the unlimited ability to export and import all kinds of natural and manufactured products, with the lowest duties compatible with the needs of the tax office, and with no other obligations, requirements or formalities than those that are absolutely indispensable to guarantee that these taxes are paid"³³.

On the basis of other countries' experiences Mora felt that tariffs should not exceed 15% and that they should be uniform and *ad valorem*, avoiding specificity, a conviction that was based on discussions in the British Parliament, especially a debate tabled by President of the Board of Trade Henri Labouchere³⁴. Mora had already shown similar signs of pragmatism when he declared that "unlimited civil liberty would be incompatible

³⁰ Mora, 1843, V.

³¹ Mora, 1843, VI

³² Mora, 1843, 26.

³³ Mora, 1843, 36.

³⁴ Mora, 1843, 89.

with public safety and the administration of justice”³⁵, and this attributing of ends relating to order, justice and market conditions to the state shows a notable parallel with book V of Smith’s *The Wealth of Nations*, as well as with McCulloch’s 1842 work. Several passages in the text indicate that Mora advocated a “generous, liberal” public finance system that was essentially funded by consumption, which would be bound to increase notably “as a result of the price reductions that a liberal generous customs system must necessarily produce”³⁶. However, he does not go into the details here, which would take shape shortly afterwards in Mon-Santillán’s 1845 reform, confining himself to underlining the connection between free trade and rising tax revenues.

Having set out the book’s framework, Mora structures the content around free trade’s “advantages” (chaps. II to VII) and “drawbacks” (chaps. VIII to XI). Among the former are improvements in capital accumulation, progress in economic sectors, relations between peoples, the prevention of smuggling and public finances. He refutes the disadvantages that protectionists attributed to the free trade system almost symmetrically; these are encapsulated in economic dependence on foreign countries, the balance of trade deficit, the outflow of money and the destruction of domestic industry.

The “capital creation and accumulation” issue contains the elements of the economic growth model that Mora set out in Santiago de Chile in *El Mercurio Chileno* (EMC) in the late 1820s. Profit—the expression “net product” is used in 1843—plays a central role as the “infallible principle” of capital accumulation³⁷. Mora confirms his debt to McCulloch here by defining capital as “the part of the product of labour which is not intended for immediate consumption”, which McCulloch had used in *The Principles of Political Economy*³⁸. The four ways in which capital accumulation contributes to prosperity come from this work, especially from the section on “The Accumulation and Employment of Capital”:

“1st by facilitating the division of labour; 2nd by supplying means without which it would not be possible to produce many of the most necessary objects for life’s comforts; 3rd by saving a large part of labour for this production; 4th by putting capitalists in a position to improve the products and to shorten the time spent handling them”³⁹.

Having established profit’s crucial importance and its relationship with capital accumulation, Mora goes on to address the Spanish economy’s specialisation in an

³⁵ Mora, 1843, 26.

³⁶ Mora, 1843, 128, 132.

³⁷ Mora, 1843, 55.

³⁸ McCulloch, 1842, 279.

³⁹ Mora, 1843, 40; McCulloch, 1842, 279-280.

international division of labour system such as that proposed in the DLC. In chapter II he suggests that in Spain the net product must come from agriculture, but it is not until chapter IX that he theoretically underpins this by means of an example from McCulloch's *The Principles of Political Economy*⁴⁰. This is the exchange of Polish grain for British cloth, which McCulloch used to illustrate the theory of absolute advantage, attributing absolute cost advantage to the former. The approach has analytical weaknesses with respect to proving that the exchange will actually materialise, as it does not explain how prices will bring this about. However, leaving aside these and other theoretical issues, McCulloch follows Smith's conviction that nations seek the lowest supply price, which in his terms means that they will not produce what they can import more cheaply⁴¹. This results in a "territorial division of labour" in which countries specialise in producing goods that have an absolute cost advantage. Mora uses this argument repeatedly throughout the DLC to justify the specialisation of the Spanish economy and shares McCulloch's view that differences in costs stem from the uneven provision of natural resources, a factor that determines each country's specialisation. According to Mora Spain's advantages are

"our soil and climate; the excellence, abundance and variety of all the fruits that draw their nourishment from our blessed land, the opportunities it provides for livestock breeding [...] the excellence of its wines and oils, the richness of its mines"⁴².

The wording of this extract is similar to McCulloch's in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. However, wealth creation does not generate prosperity without flow: "the circulation of products, services and ideas is as important in political and economic life as the circulation of blood is in physical life". Mora repeatedly refers to physical obstacles to circulation and stresses the beneficial effects of roads and public works on production and business creation⁴³. At the same time he also alludes to the legal and institutional impediments to this circulation, grouping the measures that result in their removal under the term "free trade". All the elements of the Smith-McCulloch development model are here again: division of labour, capital accumulation and the extent of the market.

Mora proposes a development strategy for Spain that combines free trade and agrarian specialisation, in line with what he had previously advocated for the Hispanic American republics and with the aspirations of free traders in Spain⁴⁴. However, he invokes the principle of non-universality of economic laws established in the *Catecismo de Economía*

⁴⁰ Mora, 1843, 147-150.

⁴¹ O'Brien, 1992, 192-194.

⁴² Mora, 1843, 65.

⁴³ Mora, 1843, 70.

⁴⁴ Almenar, 2000.

Política (1825) to address the differences between the situations in Spain and Hispanic America, which involve different strategies. There are accounts of Mora writing about entailed estates, and the harm that they caused to the economy when he was in Chile⁴⁵; in 1843, on the other hand, his views on the issue are more ambiguous, which is consistent with his economic growth theory, based on McCulloch and experiences in Britain. Along with defending private property, Mora discusses the optimal size of farms in terms of their economic yield —“net product”— which fuels capital accumulation. His conclusion is clear: “A hundred adjacent pieces of land distributed among a hundred different owners do not produce as much fruit, nor so varied nor perfect, as if they were united under a single owner”⁴⁶.

Farm size is therefore a key element in agricultural development and economic prosperity. Although Mora does not explicitly refer to technical change and innovations, as he explained in the *Museo Universal de Ciencias y Artes* (1824-1826), written in London, he had undoubtedly accepted the Classical economists’ canonical position and invoked Say to argue that machinery reduced prices, increased the “net product”, contributed to capital accumulation and need not be confined solely to the industrial sector⁴⁷. Only larger farms were capable of incorporating technical improvements and consequently contributing more to economic prosperity. What could be done in mid-19th century Spain to encourage these more productive agricultural units, especially bearing in mind the fact that Minister Mendizábal’s 1836 promotion of disentailment had actually encouraged the old nobility and the merchant bourgeoisie to hoard land? In line with his agrarian growth model and drawing on the British experience, Mora, ever a pragmatist, advocated changes in Spanish legislation that

“should instead apply themselves to acclimatising these conditions, rather than to destroying the *caput mortuum* which the conditions could vitalise; or, if they lacked the means to do so, wait for time and the progress of the enlightened to fill this void, and put the Medinacelis, Osunas and Infantados in a position to do what the Metternichs, Russells and Northumberland do”⁴⁸.

Mora is referring to the lack of free trade, the “exclusive cause of the palpable disproportion between the extent of possessions and the scarcity of income”⁴⁹. As a result, he modifies his view of large seigniorial estates: their inefficiency is due not to the institution itself, but to “collateral circumstances”⁵⁰. In his view, eliminating tariff barriers

⁴⁵ Smith, 1969, 600.

⁴⁶ Mora, 1843, 48.

⁴⁷ MUC, 1825, II, 44.

⁴⁸ Mora, 1843, 47-48.

⁴⁹ Mora, 1843, 48.

⁵⁰ Mora, 1843, 47.

would create incentives to stimulate the transformation of manorial property into productive units that promoted economic prosperity.

This is another sign that Mora's position became more moderate after he returned to Spain, as his concern for private property and large-scale farming also shows. The early 1840s witnessed a number of reform projects, including property distribution and the quest for efficient farm size. While progressive liberals such as Flórez Estrada advocated property distribution and small farms, more moderate perspectives such as that represented by Juan Álvarez Guerra's *Proyecto de Ley Agraria. Código Rural* (1841), which was sponsored by the *Sociedad Económica Matritense*, attributed a stabilising role to large agricultural holdings, with guaranteed property rights, an approach which later became popular among moderate circles⁵¹. Mora therefore joined the movement, which, according to economists such as Andrés Borrego and Vicente Vázquez Queipo, was keen to integrate the landed gentry into the new social order, believing that free trade would provide the catalyst for this process. This is all further proof of the complexity of the protectionism-free trade debate in the mid-19th century, in that behind the discussions over trade lay deep discord between the social groups that were in dispute and over the development of capitalism.

Population, which is to say the labour factor, is the other component in Mora's growth model, which relies on the important role of the population-agriculture binomial in boosting the export of agricultural surpluses by making the most of the Spanish economy's absolute advantages. Mora had devoted several articles in London and Buenos Aires to refuting the Malthusian population thesis in order to show that population increases, especially in the United States, were not only directly related to increased food supplies, but also to European emigration. There is no explicit mention of the Malthusian model in the DLC but Mora reaches a similar conclusion: encouraging Europeans to emigrate to Spain as a complement to capital accumulation⁵². He leaves some question marks hanging over the proposal, however, such as the nature of the link between free trade and the promoting of emigration beyond the free mobility of labour. Nor does he specify the destinations of foreign migrants: would they work on large farms? And where would Spanish colonisers settle? In the context of the agrarian reforms in Spain at the time, Mora's proposal contains many unknowns.

The DLC is not, strictly speaking, an economics treatise. The work presents a rather disorganised series of ideas, with aims that are more rhetorical than systematic. There are rambling arguments about the evils of the "mercantile system", balance of trade theory

⁵¹ Robledo, 1993, 55-59.

⁵² Mora, 1843, 69

and identifying wealth with precious metals. Mora had pointed out in earlier writings that reducing import duties did not entail “taking money out of the country”, a claim that characterised the “mercantilist” doctrine, which, in Smith’s view, held that a country’s wealth consisted in accumulating precious metals through a positive balance of trade, achieved through prohibitions and restrictions that affected imports in particular.

Mora refutes this theory in the DLC by revisiting an idea with clear classical roots which he had already put forward in the *Museo Universal* when he argued that money was equivalent to any other commodity and so accumulating it over and above one’s needs was useless⁵³. However, he offered a new critical perspective on the issue, stipulating that every “nation should take in [the] money it needs: what it does not need must go out one way or another, and no power can stop it. Excessive increases in the quantity of money lower its price as a commodity”, in such a way that it produces “the admirable distribution of money all [...] over the earth”⁵⁴.

This is essentially the Hume-Ricardo “price-specie flow” or self-correcting precious metal mechanism, which represented the theoretical defeat of the “mercantile system”. Should any doubts remain, Mora points out that “where raw materials, wages and manufactured goods rise in price, preference is given to foreigners who produce more cheaply. Money’s attempt to flow outwards and seek the goods that attract it is thus inevitable”⁵⁵.

While this is Mora’s strongest analytical argument against the “mercantile system”, much of his work also draws on historical experience. This relentless and methodical critique was merely a precursor to the overt censure of protectionism in the Catalan textile industry that he unfolds in chapter XI, in which he states that the “system called manufacturing, the deformity of which is now disguised under the title of *protection system* [...], is not a present-day invention”⁵⁶. This explains why he uses a text that was already somewhat anachronistic almost halfway through the 19th century: Francesco Mengotti’s *Il Colbertismo* (1819), a reissued work that had been awarded a prize by the Florentine Accademia dei Georgofili in 1792. Mora introduces it in chapter X in order to show the continuity between the “mercantile system” and industrial protectionism.

Mora had avoided the “fledgling industry” debate in Buenos Aires and Santiago, as the issue was practically superfluous in the context of agrarian specialisation in the

⁵³ Mora, 1843, 166-167.

⁵⁴ Mora, 1843, 169.

⁵⁵ Mora, 1843, 171.

⁵⁶ Mora, 1843, 175.

Hispanic American republics. However, 1840s Spain was familiar with the development of industry in Catalonia, supported by a protectionist strategy with roots in the late 18th century and structured around the Barcelona Board of Trade by the emerging cotton-manufacturing bourgeoisie⁵⁷. He therefore provides a detailed analysis of the advantages of free trade to promote the “domestic manufacturing industry”⁵⁸. This was of course one of his main reasons for writing the DLC and a *filo rosso* through which he tried to establish himself in the Spanish liberal circles of the 1840s, at the height of the debate over the 1841 Tariff Law. During the Liberal Triennium Mora had pinpointed the Catalan cotton industry as the chief beneficiary of the protectionist framework; however, at that time the industrial explosion of the 1830s had not yet taken place, nor had the protectionist doctrine become so deeply rooted in industrial circles in Catalonia.

Revealing the harmfulness of protection is thus a central element of the DLC, and Mora uses Pebrer’s *Cinco proposiciones* (1837) to do so. Pebrer’s work was published in Spanish during Mora’s second exile in London, but the two men had met in the 1820s during his first sojourn there. The choice of Pebrer’s work as a reference for criticising Catalan protectionism was highly symbolic, as it had been severely censured and was naturally challenged in Catalonia, as is clear from the *Refutación de las cinco proposiciones del Señor Pebrer contra el sistema prohibitivo* (1838; *Refutation of Mr. Pebrer’s Five Propositions Against the Prohibitive System*), which was written at the *Sociedad Económica Barcelonesa*. A second noteworthy and well-known refutation was written by Manuel María Gutiérrez (1837), a prominent convert to protectionism who became a defender of Catalan protectionist practices in Madrid’s economic circles. Manuel Inclán, a member of the Tariff Review Board, made an unsuccessful attempt to mediate in the controversy from positions that Mora considered were close to his own⁵⁹. In addition to these writings, Mora used McCulloch’s ideas and British parliamentary speeches from the 1840s, through which Anti-Corn Law League criteria filtered.

Mora follows Pebrer to refer to the “incompatibility of Catalan interests with those of the vast majority of the nation”⁶⁰. Catalan protectionism benefits “a privileged class, smoothing the path to fortune for its members, who enrich themselves from our deprivations and, with the price they want to demand from us, increase their speculations”⁶¹. Imposing “protective rights” is an “abuse of power” against the liberal state and destroys “legal equality”, for while it “condemns thirteen million men to ignorance and deprives them of the fruits of labour”, it benefits the “protective law of

⁵⁷ Lluch, 1973.

⁵⁸ Mora, 1843, Ch. V.

⁵⁹ Reeder, 2003; Mora, 1843, 225.

⁶⁰ Mora, 1843, 77.

⁶¹ Mora, 1843, 185.

50,000 men”⁶². Furthermore, some sectors such as agricultural producers and, evoking Smith, consumers are particularly hard-hit, while there are harmful effects for the whole system, since “the majority are essentially consumers and consumption is an overriding daily need”⁶³. These points are complemented in the DCL with typical free trader arguments such as the lack of incentives for productivity, the administrative and political costs of overseeing protection measures, the encouragement of smuggling and the moral degradation of prosecuting the non-payment of tariffs⁶⁴. In short, Mora equates free trade with economic stimulus and competition based on individual interest, and interprets protectionism as privilege and monopoly, which lends his arguments a Smithian tone, via McCulloch⁶⁵.

Mora’s forceful refutation of Catalan protectionist ideas probably obliged him to argue that this did not imply an anti-industry approach. In an aside entitled “*Del origen natural y de los progresos de la industria manufacturera*” (“On the Natural Origin and Progress of the Manufacturing Industry”), in chapter XII of the DLC, he explains that he is not against encouraging industry

“The first thing to observe from this emerging development of labour is that its use is primarily directed at the raw materials within easiest reach [...] and therefore as long as [...] there are uncultivated lands on which crops and abundant grasses can grow; [...] as long as there are no workers for these useless wastelands and food is therefore scarce [...], it seems foolhardy to remove capital and labour from the agricultural sphere”⁶⁶.

Recent literature has cast doubt on Eltis, Hollander and Meek’s claims that Smith accepted “stadial theory” as a taxonomy of the relationships between modes of production and social, political and legal institutions, rather than an evolutionary model of economic development; however, it is referred to frequently in books III and V of *The Wealth of Nations*⁶⁷. Irrespective of these divergences, Mora shared this theory of development in stages, which unfolded naturally through the process of capital accumulation⁶⁸. The aside in chapter XIII ultimately makes the point that he is neither exclusively an industrialist nor an agrarianist, but in fact seeks the spread of capitalism. This should begin in the agrarian sector, as he suggested with regard to the Hispanic American republics, and then address the physical and institutional transformations that would lead “naturally” to the

⁶² Mora, 1843, 179.

⁶³ Mora, 1843, 213.

⁶⁴ Mora, 1843, 114, 109-110, 191-192.

⁶⁵ Salvadori-Signorino, 2011.

⁶⁶ Mora, 1843, 195-197.

⁶⁷ Smith, 1776; Paganelli, 2020.

⁶⁸ Mora, 1843, 199.

development of other economic sectors; that is, without the need to protect industry specifically.

3. The *Memoria sobre los puertos francos* (1844)

Unlike the DLC, which engaged in debates about foreign trade, the MPF was written for a competition organised by the *Sociedad Económica Matritense* on 17 April 1843 on the subject of “the benefits or harm to Spain if it offered all its ports free to other nations”. Mora spied an opportunity to enter Madrid’s economic circles and sent the Society an anonymous paper as the announcement stipulated, doubtlessly spurred on by the prize of free Society membership.

The competition aroused not a little controversy. The Matritense awarded its prize on 30 April to a paper, “whose author’s views it neither accepted nor rejected”, and which appeared in its official journal *El Amigo del País* (EAP)⁶⁹. Two weeks later the Society reported that as the prize-winner’s identity was still unknown, they were unable to give the customary speech of thanks, but that the winning text would be published in issue seven of the Society’s journal, ignoring the fact that it had already appeared in print⁷⁰. However, instead of Mora’s paper, another prize-winning study appeared in the issue; it discussed whether it was advisable to sign trade treaties only with less advanced nations and was written by José María Ibáñez, Secretary of the Statistics Commission, a discipline in which he held the chair at the Matritense Society⁷¹. The work criticised “theoretical economists” for not applying “absolute principles” in practice: defending industries that were in “their infancy” did justify only signing trade treaties with less developed nations. When Mora’s identity was finally revealed a row broke out in the Society, the outcome of which was Ibáñez’s *Impugnación a la memoria sobre los puertos francos*⁷² (1844b; *Challenge to On the Free Ports*). This only added to the confusion, because while it maintained that the Society recognised a certain literary merit and “good intentions and patriotism” of the prize-winning author, Mora, it did not take responsibility for the practical applications, which “influenced its members not to award this text the prize”⁷³. Prize-winning or otherwise, according to several contemporary publications, Mora’s work also created controversy outside the Matritense. In the end the Society published a note in its journal in which it declared the debate fruitful and stated that it did not incline

⁶⁹ Mora, 1844b.

⁷⁰ EAP, I, no. 6, 15/V/1844, 168.

⁷¹ Ibáñez, 1844a.

⁷² Ibáñez, 1844b.

⁷³ EAP, I, no. 10, 15/VII/1844, 316.

towards either point of view⁷⁴. Mora's work was eventually published in 1844 as a monograph, in which he was appearing as a lawyer in Seville.⁷⁵

Free ports were created by Modern Age absolutist states with the aim of gaining trading advantages and economic supremacy over other powers, something which was consistent with the "mercantile system". However, there is no unanimity as to how these institutions should be interpreted: while various historiographical currents consider them to be purely "mercantilist"⁷⁶, others assume that they actually instigated the theorising surrounding free trade⁷⁷. Mora, of course, supported the second interpretation from the outset. He adopted a particularly emphatic position in a passage in the EMC, reproduced verbatim in the MPF, in which he uses French prohibitionist François Ferrier's panegyric on Colbert's creation of three free ports in France (Bayonne, Dunkirk and Marseilles)⁷⁸. The link established here between free ports and free trade is unique in Spanish economic literature, at least during the era of Classical economics⁷⁹.

Mora's interest in free ports stemmed from personal experience. In 1819-20 he was sent on a royal mission to study the port of Livorno, as a result of which he suggested creating a free port in Cadiz. Livorno (Tuscany) was a perfect example of a free trade enclave in Europe, originating in a Mediterranean state's reaction to the rapid economic growth around the Atlantic during the 16th century. From 1566 Livorno had enjoyed special status, with its own customs system and other privileges. Due to the political and trading instability in the Mediterranean region —the frontier with the Muslim world—, the port became a centre for the warehousing and transit of goods that crossed the Mediterranean, and its success was widely recognised in the 18th century⁸⁰. Mora first refers to it in an article published in Buenos Aires, and subsequently in the EMC.

However, over and above these preliminaries, the MPF's roots were in the DLC. Its content is essentially confined to DLC content, but this is succinctly reworked for a "public that is uninitiated in the precepts of social science"⁸¹. The only exception to this, as noted previously, are the paragraphs that Mora reproduces from an EMC article, which includes a quotation from Say's *Traité's*, in what is effectively an exercise in empty rhetoric and opportunism: empty, in that these paragraphs do not alter his fundamental

⁷⁴ EAP, I, no. 13, 1/IX/1844, 397.

⁷⁵ Mora, 1844.

⁷⁶ Klieser, 2021.

⁷⁷ Tazzara, 2017, 255-257.

⁷⁸ Ferrier, 1803; Mora, 1844, 15-16, 31-34.

⁷⁹ The exception is Pio Pita Pizarro's work on free trade and the free port of Cadiz (1834), in which, as well as linking free ports to free trade, he supports the establishing of a free port there.

⁸⁰ Tazzara, 2017.

⁸¹ Mora, 1844, 21.

premise; and opportunistic because were written with the Matritense competition in mind. In the light of MPF content, it is clear that Mora considered free ports to be anachronisms in the mid-19th century, and nowhere in his work does he propose their creation. When he speaks of “providing free ports”, therefore, he is in fact referring to free trade⁸².

Free trade is Mora’s objective from the outset, and he equates it with “opening up ports to other nations” and not with the actual creation of free ports⁸³. During his stay in Argentina he had suggested creating a free port in Buenos Aires, speculating, like Smith, on the possibility of turning the whole republic into a free port⁸⁴. The MPF is, moreover, structured around the “advantages” and “drawbacks” of free trade on the basis of “the direction that society is pointing us in”, and Mora reproduces the organisation of “influences” and “objections” in the DLC. He divides the advantages into economic, moral and political, including the increase in imports, population, capital and the “movement of wealth” in the first category⁸⁵. Moral advantages include the creation of useful jobs and eradicating of smuggling, and he goes on to state that the prosperity brought by free trade will guarantee social order and increased clout for Spain in “the grand jury of European cabinets”. The drawbacks are limited to “the fear that free exporting will greatly reduce the mass of money needed for internal circulation, and our manufacturing will collapse if we open our doors to foreign goods”⁸⁶.

In certain respects Mora waters down his views on some of the objections expressed in the DLC. This is true of his attack on protecting Catalan industry, which was one of the main reasons for writing the work. Catalan protectionism is not even mentioned in the MPF, and there is also a suggestion that the “mercantile system” contained trading institutions which contributed to the prosperity of absolutist states, among them free ports.

The MPF’s theoretical underpinning is still the Smith-McCulloch model in the DLC, which is introduced in a simplified and more succinct form and centres on production, the division of labour and the circulation of goods as the linchpins of economic prosperity, with free trade acting as the catalyst for the whole process. There is also a brief reference to monetary theory and the self-correcting mechanism of precious metals, but on the whole greater weight is given to other countries’ free trade experiences and their consequences for economic prosperity. The origins of Spain’s economic woes are attributed to ignorance of economic science, especially Smith’s theories.

⁸² Mora, 1844, 8.

⁸³ Mora, 1844, 11.

⁸⁴ Adam Smith expressed this view in his lectures to students in Glasgow (Tazzara, 2014, p. 529). Mora is unlikely to have been aware of this, and what is being pointed out here is simply a parallel.

⁸⁵ Mora, 1844, 15.

⁸⁶ Mora, 1844, 29.

The controversy surrounding the MPF in the Matritense Society has already been noted. Ibáñez's *Impugnación* was originally handwritten, signed on 27 June 1844 and eventually published in the EAP⁸⁷. Ibáñez stated that he was motivated by the fact that Mora was offered “another prize for this year’s competition”, so that he could show how tariff revenues would be replaced in the event of free trade in greater depth than in the MPF. There is no record of Mora completing this work, but Ibáñez interpreted the commission as proof that although the Matritense declared itself neutral, it actually supported Mora’s “doctrines”. Ibáñez’s *Impugnación* accepted the classic prohibitionist arguments to reveal “the errors of the free trade system in its application to Spain”; in the MPF’s case these arose from the adopting of abstract “school” principles, which Ibáñez identifies with Smith, whose theories he deemed anachronistic and already overtaken by the forward march of economic science⁸⁸. Ibáñez also countered Mora’s information with the link that he believed existed between Britain’s prosperity and its protectionist policies. Taking as a premise the notion that free trade would destroy national output, the remainder of the *Impugnación* attempted to refute the “advantages” that the MPF attributed to this system. To sum up, the most fatal blow to Spanish industry would be to establish free ports, naturally, an allusion to a free trade system.

The controversy in the EAP rumbled on, this time in a pamphlet entitled *Reflexiones sobre la cuestión del comercio libre* (1844; *Reflexions on the Issue of the Free Trade*) by José Arias de Miranda, which was written in defence of Mora. Ibáñez himself wrote a reply in which he suggested a happy medium between “exaggerated restrictions” and “abusive freedom”⁸⁹; it was inspired, like his previous writings, by Manuel María Gutiérrez’s prohibitionism⁹⁰. Somewhat later Juan Antonio Seoane, a contributor to the journal and the guiding light of its theoretical articles, joined the fray with an article in defence of Mora and his general free trade principle, albeit suggesting some “special modifications”, especially a gradual liberalisation that would enable domestic industry to take root⁹¹. There are no signs that Mora was involved in the aftermath of the controversy sparked by the MPF.

4. The economics press

The publication of the DLC and the MPF opened the door to Madrid journalism for Mora. According to his biographers the first link was forged when he joined *El Español* as a writer (EE, 1835-1837, 1845-1848). Unlike the *Eco del comercio* (EDC, 1832-1848), which was in progressive liberal hands, the EE was the major national and international

⁸⁷ Ibáñez, 1844b.

⁸⁸ Ibáñez, 1844b, 303-305.

⁸⁹ Ibáñez, 1844c.

⁹⁰ Almenar, 2020.

⁹¹ Seoane, 1844.

daily newspaper for moderate monarchist constitutional liberalism. It was founded and edited by Andrés Borrego, who Mora knew from his exile in London, and who had taken advantage of the transition to the liberal state to set up a moderate liberal alternative publication.

However, the true hallmark of Mora's career in journalism was his participation in other distinguished newspapers in 1840s Madrid. He is associated with two types of periodicals, cultural and economic, and as part of Spanish liberalism's moderate and pragmatic currents, his work reflected common criteria. His contributions tended to be succinct interpretative essays rather than book reviews or publishing news, a sign of the new forms of journalism that dominated the mid-19th century, as well as of Mora's own maturity. He was an enormously versatile writer on a range of subjects, from literature and philosophy to politics and political economy, although once again his contributions are not particularly original. Mora tends to cover familiar ground such as free trade and university studies in Spain; his articles were published at the height of the liberal university reforms in 1836, 1842 and the far-reaching 1845 Pidal Plan, which provided the opportunity to modernise philosophy and law teaching, an issue that was at the very heart of his concerns⁹². Lastly, the fact that he also had links with journals that were oriented towards the Hispanic American world suggests that he wished to continue influencing the region from Spain. The titles of the magazines he edited or contributed to during those years are clear reflections of this topic: the *Revista de España, de Indias y del extranjero* (REIE, 1845-1848), the *Revista Hispano-Americana* (RHA, 1848) and the *Revista española de ambos mundos* (REAM, 1853-1855).

Mora witnessed the boom in the economics press during the 1840s⁹³, yet he was not involved in an extremely prominent initiative, the short-lived *Revista Económica de Madrid* (REM, 1842, 1847). The first issue appeared in 1842, when Mora was not in Spain, and was edited by Eusebio María del Valle, professor of political economy at the *Universidad Literaria de Madrid*, who had connections with political economy professors at other universities and was the leader of the new generation of protectionist economists (Andrés Borrego, Manuel Colmeiro and Manuel María Gutiérrez, who was a convert to protectionism). Mora did not participate in the EMN's second phase either, even though

⁹² As a result of this spirit of renewal Mora reissued the *Curso de ética y lógica*, in Madrid in 1845, which had originally appeared in Lima in 1832 (Mora, 1832). He also produced a brief synthesis of John Stuart Mill's *System of Logic* (1843), one of the first accounts of the work to be published in Spain (Mora, 1848a), so that it could be used in universities. Mill was presented as a "disciple of the immortal Bentham" and as the "first who has concentrated all the rules applicable to all the aptitudes of the human soul in a single vast system" (RHA, 1848, 9). On this basis his book would enable a "true and compact school" of philosophy to be established in Spain, which, according to Mora, "disastrous scholasticism" had failed to do. The current "teaching anarchy" and "lack of system" would be resolved by the treatise written by Mill, whose "service to the sciences in general" was similar to Bentham's service to jurisprudence (RHA, 1848, 71).

⁹³ Almenar, 1996.

it leaned towards moderate free trade⁹⁴, perhaps because this phase was as brief as the first—a single volume in 1847, again headed by Valle’s disciples, specifically Ruperto Navarro Zamorano and José Álvaro de Zafra and prestigious teachers such as Manuel Colmeiro and Manuel de Azpilicueta—.

However, Mora was involved in *El Amigo del País* (EAP, 1844-1848). The fortnightly journal was an arm of the *Sociedad Económica Matritense*; while it reported on the Society’s activities, it also had a theoretical side, which was expressed through speeches given by officials and its own members, and prize-winning papers. However, Mora’s involvement was limited to the controversial MPF, and the fact that he kept his distance from the journal is likely to have been because of the prize, which in the end did not lead to his nomination as a member of the Matritense. However, there may have been other reasons for his relative absence, perhaps connected with the profile of the publication, which tackled subjects that Mora did not usually cover, such as the emerging “social issue” (education, pauperism and charity), and the applied arts (agronomy, chemistry, natural history, etc.). It may also have been motivated by the Society’s need to maintain multiple ideological positions, evident from the outset in the tension between the first editor Eusebio del Valle’s moderate liberalism and fact that the secretary and a major theoretical reference, Juan Antonio Seoane, was closer to the general principle of free trade⁹⁵. Although the second position increasingly gained ground, the EAP never fully embraced it. The contrast between Mora’s warm reception of Bastiat’s *Sophismes économiques* in 1846 and the deeply critical translation of the work, attributed to Ángel Justo Pasarón and published in the EAP in 19 instalments between January and October 1847, is striking. The journal’s distance from the radical free trader that Mora was in those years and from other journals that shared this stance, specifically, the *Guía de comercio* (GDC, 1842-1851), could not be clearer.

It was precisely because Mora had always considered this publication to be the genuine defender of “free trade ideas” that he chose it as a means of influencing public opinion on economics during the 1840s. The weekly GDC had been founded in January 1842 with the aim of revealing the early benefits of the 1841 Tariff Law and to continue removing obstacles to trade⁹⁶. Its ideological orientation was initially in the hands of Casimiro Rufino, an enthusiastic free trader who edited the magazine during the ten or so years that it was active; from mid-1843, however, Ramón de la Sagra, a progressive liberal and one of the first to introduce “social economics” in Spain outside Say’s tradition, had more sway.

⁹⁴ Almenar, 2020.

⁹⁵ Almenar, 2020.

⁹⁶ GDC, no. 1, 5/1/1842.

Mora's contributions to the GDC were infused with great significance and a sense of opportunity, appearing at key moments for maintaining the journal's genuine free trade orientation. His first contribution was in January 1844, the month in which the GDC also published José Montilla's review of Mora's DLC, in which he called the paper "misguided" because it rejected the thesis that the balance of trade was the best measure of national wealth⁹⁷. Within two weeks Mora had produced a point-by-point reply from Seville⁹⁸, which began by mentioning Barbon, North, Say, Ricardo, Mill, McCulloch and Storch in order to discredit Montilla's claim that Mora was one of the first writers to defend free trade. He then recommended that Montilla should read Vadillo so as to understand the benefits of exporting money, and, finally, he asked Montilla to choose between free trade and balance of trade theory, thus calling into question his rhetorical practice—extremely common in the protectionist tradition—of defending anti-free trade positions while at the same time appealing to its benefits. All this had little effect on Montilla, who quickly replied to Mora, accusing him of being "too rigorous" in his treatment of the balance theory and insisting that it could be reconciled with free trade⁹⁹.

Mora replied with a brief note¹⁰⁰. However, much more importantly, he took advantage of this juncture to breathe new life into free trade theories. He did so by means of a forceful strategy that reflects the fact that by early 1844 his publishing activity in Spain had been completely restored to its former glory. Between 6 March and 19 April the GDC published a series of five issues with a lengthy summary of Preber's *Cinco proposiciones*, which Mora had used extensively in the DLC, and carried a long excerpt from his "award-winning" MPF just a month later¹⁰¹. In the mid-1840s Spanish free trade circles were thus functioning like a well-oiled lobby, in which Mora was a key player.

Pinning down Mora's role in the GDC in subsequent years is not easy, as many of his articles were published anonymously. In any event, throughout 1844 and 1845 the publication was a battleground for disputing authors and lobbies against the backdrop of the pending tax and tariff reforms, giving a voice to protectionist opinions—on several occasions, those of the Barcelona Board of Trade and the region's textile producers—and free traders alike. However, the GDC's inclination towards the latter became clear when under Casimiro Rufino it became the unofficial mouthpiece for the *Sociedad Mercantil Matritense* (Madrid Mercantile Society), a body that had been created in mid-1844 as a lobby for pro-free trade legislation—though not strict free trade—and a year later its national counterpart, the *Confederación Mercantil Española* (Spanish Mercantile Confederation), of which Rufino was appointed Secretary and whose mainly Madrid-

⁹⁷ GDC, no. 106, 10/I/1844.

⁹⁸ GDC, no. 108, 24/I/1844.

⁹⁹ GDC, no. 109, 31/I/1844; n. 100, 7/II/1844.

¹⁰⁰ GDC, no. 109, 28/II/1844.

¹⁰¹ Mora 1844c.

based members received the GDC. Both institutions played a notable role in the ideological reflection and militant agitation campaign in the run-up to the 1849 Tariff Law.

Mora fervently embraced this campaign, gradually moving away from his classical foundations, especially McCulloch, in favour of French economist Bastiat's radical and idealised liberalism¹⁰², which would shape his ideological position in the years to come. Mora first met Bastiat in May 1846 when he was starting to gain popularity in Spain¹⁰³; he wrote a review of the first French edition of the *Sophismes économiques* (1846) in the same month, presenting free trade as a "principle of reasoning, a clear, indisputable, inalienable right, a primitive natural law, which protests against the oppression it has suffered and claims the superiority [...] which has been proved by error and violence for so many centuries"¹⁰⁴. A succession of anonymous articles appeared over the next three months, perhaps instigated by Mora himself; as their expressive titles show, the author or authors attacked the protectionist system head-on¹⁰⁵, borrowing extensively from Flórez Estrada's *Examen imparcial* (1812), evoking Bastiat and lamenting that Vadillo, Preber, Marliani and Mora's works had not even had "the honour of rebuttal".

These writings appeared during the run-up to Cobden's visit to Spain as part of a European tour that began a few months after Robert Peel had abolished the Corn Laws in Britain and the Anti-Corn Law League was dissolved. The visit was a key moment in the free trade offensive in Spain¹⁰⁶. In September 1846 the GDC initiated the founding of a pro-free trade association along similar lines to the body led by Cobden in England. This was followed by reports of Cobden's visit to France¹⁰⁷, while similar associations to the entity that the GDC had proposed were founded in Paris, Bordeaux and Marseille¹⁰⁸, and finally an in-depth account of Cobden's trip to Spain in October and November 1846 appeared. The visit began with an excellent "banquet" in Madrid, organised by the Confederación Mercantil Española and which Mora attended¹⁰⁹, continued with events in Seville and Cadiz and a biographical account of Cobden¹¹⁰, to be rounded off by the

¹⁰² Baslé and Gédélan, 1991.

¹⁰³ At least fourteen of Bastiat's works were translated and published in the cycle from 1846 to 1870, especially the *Sophismes économiques* (1846) and the *Harmonies économiques* (1850), which were also published in Hispanic America (Cabrillo, 1978).

¹⁰⁴ Mora, 1846a.

¹⁰⁵ See among others: "Efectos de la libertad de comercio" (no. 231, 3/VI/1846); "Perjuicios que causan las aduanas y utilidad de su abolición" (no. 232, 10/VI/1846); "España más que ninguna otra nación prosperaría en todos ramos con la abolición completa de sus aduanas" (no. 233, 17/VI/1846; no. 234, 21/VI/1846); "Los estancamientos corrompen las buenas costumbres y además de ser injustos por muchos conceptos y perjudiciales, son contrarios a los derechos del ciudadano" (no. 234, 21/VI/1846); "Farsas del sistema vigente protector de nuestra industria y comercio" (no. 236, 8/VII/1846).

¹⁰⁶ Almenar and Velasco 1987; Lluch, 1988.

¹⁰⁷ GDC, no. 246, 16/IX/1846.

¹⁰⁸ GDC, no. 248, 30/IX/1846.

¹⁰⁹ GDC, no. 251, 21/X/1846.

¹¹⁰ GDC, no. 253, 4/XI/1846.

glowing coverage of this “triumphal tour” that appeared in the British press¹¹¹. Against this background the GDC republished a paper by Mora in which he refuted a common argument among those who had argued, in the presence of Cobden himself, that free trade was no use to “backward” nations such as Spain¹¹².

Meanwhile, the free-trade agitation sparked off by Cobden’s trip to Spain led to local initiatives to create institutions and a press in support of this trade option. A prime example of this was Cadiz, where in 1847 sectors linked to export agriculture created the *Asociación Española para propagar las doctrinas del Libre Comercio* (Spanish Association for the Propagation of Free Trade Doctrines) and its sister newspaper *El propagador del libre comercio* (PLC, 1847-1848; *The Free Trade Propagator*). Mora was involved in this publication from the outset; it ran from January 1847 to October 1848 and aimed to combat “the sophistry of protectionist and prohibitionist parties”¹¹³. The magazine’s orientation was left in the hands of a Cadiz free trader who Mora knew very well, José María Vadillo, head of the *Sociedad Económica de Cádiz*, and Antonio de Zulueta, who was secretary; Mora’s influence was ultimately marginal, however, as he contributed only one article, which had already appeared in the GDC¹¹⁴.

Mora continued to contribute to the DGC at least until the end of 1847. His writings contained new pro-free trade harangues arguing that trade and tax legislation should be separated once and for all, and he intermingled his old Smithian convictions that the protective system generated monopolies that pushed up prices and punished consumers with the dazzling new theory based on Bastiat and his conviction that current legislation amounted to a “real attack on natural laws”¹¹⁵. To Mora, the fact that the “immortal Cobden” had visited Spain had contributed to the “triumph of sound ideas”; now they had to be put into practice. His reform agenda was revealed in 1848 during the lead up to the 1849 Tariff Law¹¹⁶, although it was actually nothing more than a slightly better-organised version of what had already been proposed in the DLC: abolishing prohibitionism, internal customs and the costly systems for supervising transport and collecting duty. Meanwhile, tariffs should be *ad valorem* as in 1843, and not exceed 15%, which guaranteed “the domestic producer a considerable advantage”, and any resulting loss of revenue would be made up by a tax on profits (“net product”), rather than by taxing consumption, as suggested in the **DLC**.

Comentado [JAZA1]: Creo que este impuesto sobre beneficios ya lo había sugerido en el Mercurio Chileno. Vuelve a los orígenes

¹¹¹ On the effects of Cobden’s journey in *El clamor público*, *El eco del comercio* and other journals that were contemporaries of the GDC, see Lluich (1988, pp. 74-76).

¹¹² Mora, 1846e; 1847e.

¹¹³ PLC, 1, 1/01/1847; 3, 16/01/1847.

¹¹⁴ Mora, 1847e.

¹¹⁵ Mora, 1847d.

¹¹⁶ Mora 1847a; 1847b.

These articles also revealed Mora's interest in distribution. In a commentary on a paper by Scottish politician Henry Brougham he argued that trade was the best means of dissolving concentrations of economic and political power, a kind of "counter-poison to the property-owning oligarchy"; that it promoted more equal wealth distribution and, as the example of Britain showed, when combined with good education and the spread of useful knowledge, it guaranteed social order and material improvements for the poorer classes¹¹⁷.

Mora's involvement in the GDC appears to have waned from late 1847, although he is more than likely to have authored other anonymous texts, as stated in his articles. However, once Ramón de la Sagra was restored to a leading role in 1848 and the 1849, Tariff Law was finalised, the GDC itself underwent a certain decline. Under the new title of *Guía del comercio, industria y agricultura* (*Guide to Trade, Industry and Agriculture*), it became a publication for official information and statistics until its closure in February 1851. In any event, as Mora noted, the GDC's free trade orientation was not matched by other journals of its time, including the EAP, which barely mentioned Cobden's trip — even though he was welcomed by the leaders of the *Sociedad Matritense* during his stay in Madrid, which honoured him with membership— and they contained scant reference to the Anti-Corn Law League¹¹⁸.

Mora's key contribution to the GDC was his journalism. His economic stance also cast a shadow —albeit a faint one— over the cultural journals, which either reprinted earlier articles as the REIE did¹¹⁹, or carried original work like the REAM. The latter expressed a preference for "the English school presided over by Peel"¹²⁰, although its review section revealed its clear leanings towards French authors Blanqui, Coquelin-Guillaumin and Chevalier, whose work on "the progress and future of civilisation" opened the journal. However, in his only article with economics content and the last of his contributions to *moderate* Spain, still in 1853, Mora once again lashed out against the "mercantile" and "prohibitive" system. As a symbol of the intellectual journey that he had taken since the publication of the DLC ten years earlier, his source was now Bastiat, who tacitly inspired him with the idea of free trade as an "indisputable" law, based on "eternal, unalterable, all-embracing" principles, and also marked the deeply anti-statist tone of his article: "the lesser the individual sacrifice for society's ends, the more perfect the legislation"¹²¹.

¹¹⁷ Mora, 1847c.

¹¹⁸ In any event, the differences between authors on a suitable tariff level seem smaller at this time. While Mora set customs duty at 15%, Seoane set it between 12 and 20% in the EAP. Cobden advocated a rate of 20% on imported foreign goods and tariff-free imports of the raw materials needed for domestic industry (Lluch, 1988, p. 80).

¹¹⁹ Mora, 1847a.

¹²⁰ REAM, I, VII.

¹²¹ Mora, 1853a.

5. Final Remarks.

The decade of the 1940s was a crucial period in Spain for the maturing of the free trade agenda as a political program. Although this agenda had had solid intellectual foundations since the early 19th century, and had emerged distinctly during the constitutional periods of the Cortes of Cadiz (1810-1813) and the Liberal Triennium (1820-1823), it was in the 1940s when, due to a confluence of multiple factors (liberal economic reforms, regular parliamentary activity, greater institutionalisation of the political economy and an increase in the number of supporters of free trade), it took shape as a political alternative that could be implemented in Spain. José Joaquín de Mora played an outstanding role in setting up this alternative. His relentless work as a journalist during 1843-1853, which has been exhaustively reviewed in this article, shows his leading role, mainly, in the dissemination of the free trade ideology. However, his extensive work as one of the great Spanish propagators of the ideas of the Classical school cannot be properly understood without taking into account his previous career during his long exile in London and the Spanish-American republics. His eventual return to Spain made him gradually shift from an economic model akin to Smith-McCulloch to one closer to Bastiat.