



## Richard Wall, the Irish-Spanish Minister <sup>[1]</sup>

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### The Character

Richard (Ricardo) Wall and Devereux (born in Nantes, 5 November 1694, died in Soto de Roma, 26 December 1777) was the son of Jacobite refugees. His father, Mateo Wall, fought in the Fitz-James Infantry Regiment of Lord Grand Prior, in the army of James II. [2] His family lived in Kilmallock, County Limerick, well known in those times as the 'crossroads of Munster,' and belonged to a branch of an *Old English* lineage. In fact, the Walls originally came from Normandy (Wall = Du Val) with William the Conqueror in 1066, and were transferred to Ireland in the following century. [3]

As Ricardo's father supported James II, the family had to escape to France around 1691. Soon after, Ricardo was born, and was baptised at Saint Nicholas's Church in Nantes. They lived then in the 'Pit of the Well of Silver' and were given shelter by a relative, probably Gilbert Wall, who was Ricardo's godfather. [4]

Links between Irish refugees and the French nobility were strong at that time. This was why Ricardo became a page to the Duchess of Vendome, one of the most important French houses. He was transferred to Spain in 1716 on the recommendation of the latter, to Cardinal Alberoni, Prime Minister in Spain. Thanks to this recommendation he was accepted as a midshipman in the Spanish Navy. He entered the Royal Company of Naval Cadets ('Colegio Real de Guardiamarinas') in 1717, where he graduated with the second promotion. Immediately thereafter, he embarked on the *Real San Felipe* (74 guns), under the command of Admiral Gaztañeta. However, the defeat of the Spanish Armada at the battle of Cape Passaro a few months later in 1718, coupled with a series of health-related problems that hindered his adjustment to the rigours of life at sea, prompted Wall to join the infantry. He first joined the Hibernia infantry regiment (1719) and, after that, the Batavia dragoons regiment (1721).

He participated in different engagements and campaigns during his life: the Sicily campaign (1718-19), the raising of the Siege of Ceuta (1720), Prince Charles' expedition to take possession of La Toscana (1731), the War of Naples (1734-35) and the Lombardy campaign (1743-46). [5] The infant D. Felipe served in the latter campaign. [6]

He made a brief incursion into the diplomatic field as well. Ricardo accompanied the Duke of Liria on his ambassadorial post to Moscow in 1727. Liria had also been born in French exile (Saint Germain-en-Laye, 1696) and was the son of the Duke of Berwick, a descendant of James II. Wall was, according to the Duke, 'a man in whom I put all my confidence, with whom undid my heart in all my misfortunes, that were not few'. [7] The sponsorship of the Duke, based on this solidarity of origin, relaunched the military career of Wall. He was entertained by the King of Prussia; he received the Order of Generosity, and he was proposed as ambassador in Berlin, though the project did not prosper. Wall thus had his first contact with the diplomatic world and became familiarised with some of the most representative capitals of the continent: Parma, Vienna, Dresden, Berlin, Saint Petersburg and Moscow.

Finally, he was invested with the habit of Santiago (Saint James) in 1737 and was awarded the 'encomienda' (landlordship) of Peñausende (1741). [8] This *encomienda* included the villages of Peñausende, Peralejos de Abajo, Saucelle, Saldeana and Barruco Pardo (now in the provinces of Zamora and Salamanca). This was a fitting acknowledgement of his noble origins and allowed him to ascend in the Spanish administration.

After passing up through all the military ranks, thanks to the protection of the Duke of Huéscar (since 1755, Duke of Alba, and Liria's son's brother-in-law), he abandoned the sword for the pen. Ricardo was first posted to Genoa (1747) before moving on to London, where he took part in a secret mission of *rapprochement* between Spain and England (1748). He was appointed Minister Plenipotentiary after a peace accord was signed (1749), and later ambassador (1752). During a brief visit to Spain (1752), Wall was finally promoted to Lieutenant General and made a good impression on the king and queen, who in 1754 appointed him successor to Carvajal, the Secretary of State, following the latter's death. In 1759, he was also appointed Secretary of War. He resigned in 1763, [9] retiring voluntarily to the Royal Residence of Soto de Roma, where he was Governor. Wall led the works on the restoration of the Arab Palace of La Alhambra. [10] He died in 1777. [11]

## The Ministry

As Spanish Prime Minister, Ricardo Wall played a very important role. The core points of his political thought were neutrality and monarchism. Both were divested of negative overtones. In fact, historians use two stereotyped labels to define these principles. So neutrality is conceived as Anglophile and monarchism as anti-Jesuit. However, the supposed anglophilia and the presumed anti-Jesuitism of the minister were no more than political weapons used by his enemies to discredit him and to try to remove him from power. Unfortunately these are weapons that have proved extraordinarily persistent concepts in the later historiography. [12]

With regard to international relationships, Wall's policy was not as unmoving as historians claim. The concept of neutrality evolved during this time. Spain adopted different positions during the critical conjuncture of the Seven Years War. Wall was actually in favour of participating in the conflict, for instance, in 1757, when English insolences became unbearable. The king's illness postponed *sine die* this change of direction. Nevertheless, the minister himself would lead, some years later, - and not against his will, as historians think - , the final change. He signed the Third Family Compact (1761), the failure of which must be put in perspective by analysing the events of the rest of the reign. [13]

In any event, we must not exaggerate the ministerial performance of the Irish secretary. In reality there were some successes such as the signature of a convention with Denmark in 1757, or the 'second neutralisation' of Italy, with the marriage between the Spanish infant Maria Luisa and Archduke Leopold of Austria, and the solution of the question of the Placentino. But there were also failures, such as the attempt to approach England or the cancellations of the border treaty. It was not possible for Wall to resolve American conflicts with both powers: the English settlements in Belize and the Portuguese settlements in Colonia del Sacramento (present-day Uruguay). However, a certain reevaluation of the personage is necessary in considering these and other issues related to Wall's ministry.

In fact, during his ministry, important institutional reforms took place such as the connection of the diplomatic career with the offices of the Secretary of State, the preparation of a Consular Regulation, the beginning of the debate on free trade with America, and reforms in the postal service. There were many measures undertaken in the army also: regulations, the creation of the 'Monte Pío' and of the Academy of Artillery in Segovia and the preparation of the new Royal Ordinances of 1768. Notwithstanding, there were other negative measures: the sale of military ranks, the return to the system of fleets and galleons and the intensification of censorship, with the taking over of newspapers such as the *Gaceta de Madrid* and the *Mercurio Histórico-Político* by the State office.

## Wall's Party

Together with the more quotidian anecdotes, one of the most important research topics for historians is the political and courtesan network that supported Wall before his undertaking of the ministry and after his appointment. The dialectics of confrontation between the different political and courtesan groups that dominated the political scene in these decades is an exciting subject. With regard to this, we find Ricardo Wall playing a central role in the Marquis de la Ensenada's exoneration (1754) and leading a new party. [14]

The later attempt at consolidation of the new emergent group was conditioned by political struggles in the Spanish Court. The Duke of Huéscar was a powerful figure until 1757 and he was behind a number of governmental measures. On the other hand, there were other important politicians leading the opposition party: Mr. Eslava y Mr. Campo del Villar. They assumed the leadership of the *Ensenadist* party, supported also by the French ambassador, the Marquis d'Ossun, and other courtesans, after the end of Ensenada's exile. In this context, I have paid more attention to the role of the Vatican conspiracies against Wall, due to the controversies prompted by the approval of the Pragmatic Sanction. Wall's retirement in 1763 must be linked with these intrigues, but not exclusively, as I will explain in detail. There were other factors, such as personality and health problems. In fact, in 1757, he attempted his first resignation.

In spite of this last resignation in 1763, Wall's nine years leading the Spanish administration left an important legacy that has been underrated until the present day. His political and courtesan party was successful after his retirement. Several factions were born from this common root and were influential during the rest of the reign of Charles III. The 'Aragonese Party', led by the Count of Aranda, and the 'Manteísta' group, led by the Counts of Campomanes and Floridablanca, [15] were the most important. In fact, Wall was the 'discoverer' and protector of the most relevant protagonists of the subsequent decades: Roda, Campomanes, Aranda and Grimaldi. The identification of the members of an Irish party, led by Wall, was also a significant development. This group basically agreed with the 'network of Jacobite solidarity' described by Ozanam and whose vitality is fundamental in this period. [16]

Some of the members of this Irish party were ambassadors: Count Mahony was appointed ambassador, first in Switzerland (1757), and in Vienna shortly afterwards (1758). The Count of Lacy was appointed ambassador in Stockholm (1763). Some others were soldiers, such as Alejandro O'Reilly, Eduardo Wall, Agustín Wall and Juan Kelly, or merchants such Carlos McCarthy and Ambrosio O'Higgins. There were Irishmen sponsored by Wall in the administration (Bernardo Ward and Diego Nangle) and in the Royal House (Doctor Diego Purcell). [17]

However the composition of Wall's party is much more complex. Heterogeneity is the key factor. On the one hand, the inheritance of his protectors, Huéscar and Carvajal, was clear: Masones of Lima, the Count of Peralada, Mr.

Clemente de Aróstegui, Count of Valparaíso and Mr. Felix de Abreu. Wall also protected other colleagues (Arriaga), the 'Aragonese Party' of the Count of Aranda, the Count of Ricla and the Count of Fuentes, 'Manteístas' like Campomanes or Roda, the Irish Party, Italian and Flemish people (the Prince of Masserano, the Marquis of Grimaldi, the Count of Bournonville, Sterllingerf, Craywinckel, Goosens and Winthuysen), counsellors (Cantos, Ric), officers in the secretariats (Nicholas de Mollinedo, Jose Agustín of Llano and Francisco de Auzmendi), intellectuals (Guillermo Bowles, Jose Clavijo y Fajardo, Celestino Mutis, Benito Bails and Francisco Perez Bayer), and relatives (Eduardo and Agustín Wall).

### **Wall's 'Discreet Spain'**

From research into Wall's ministry it is possible to distinguish several contributions to the general debate on the Spanish Eighteenth Century. One of them is to answer some questions such as where and how political power was exerted during Wall's ministry and by whom. The Royal Court is the main scene, a place where politicians, courtiers, artists, intellectuals, high-ranking soldiers and clerics were centre-stage. Their purpose was to influence the 'Royal Desire'. The Secretaries of State became key players in the system because of their control over some information channels. They dispatched messages to the sovereign about political concerns, so that they could monopolise the King's influence. For that reason they were regarded as new 'court favourites' or 'ministerial despots' by political rivals. The courtesan intrigues consolidated themselves as a new form of social protest.

In this sense, the biography of the Irish minister confirms the validity of 'absolutism/enlightened despotism' as a historiographic category. Absolutism as a political system was disguised with elements of the Enlightenment. Wall is a perfect example of this. Nevertheless, his motivations were those of the State. Wall was capable, as a politician, of taking recalcitrant measures (Burriel and the Commission of Archives, for example), but he was also able to sponsor people such as D. Francisco Manuel de Mena and José Clavijo y Fajardo, very well-known intellectuals. This does not prevent the existence of a significant qualitative change with respect to previous times, which can be recognised and which justifies the invention of a new historiographic category.

Thanks to Wall's professional experience and versatility, I have been able to study the functions of several Spanish institutions in the eighteenth century: the army, the diplomatic service and the secretaries. For instance, the army is revealed as a far more complex institution, which sometimes serves as an instrument of social integration of foreigners or as a mechanism of social permeability. The same is true of diplomacy, where more important changes throughout the eighteenth century came from Wall's reforms (changes in the social extraction and in the geographic origin of ambassadors, the establishment of a diplomatic *cursus honorum* and new embassies in Russia, the Turkish Empire and Saxony).

Other reflections arise, very much linked to this institutional sphere. On the one hand, the role of the Irishmen and of other foreigners in Spanish society during the Modern Age in general, and in the eighteenth century in particular, is highlighted. On the other hand, the interrelation that exists already at so early a time between the diverse European chancelleries, a sort of initial political globalisation. There are some international political networks between politicians from different countries whose interests were the same. The Duke of Newcastle or Tanucci were the most important international allies of the Irish minister. These links explain the profound consequences that political movements had all over Europe. There are several examples, the main one being the repercussion of Ensenada's fall, a very important factor that contributed to the Reversion of Alliances.

These ideas contribute to modifying our vision of Spain in the eighteenth century. The country had great vitality and was in expansion, because the political elite became conscious of the necessity to change the image of a hegemonic Imperial Spain on the international stage to a 'Discreet Spain' that concentrated its efforts on internal recovery. Colonial administration was also improved in order to recover influence on international relationships. These efforts would be mitigated at the end of the century with the arrival of the French Revolution.

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### **Notes**

[1] This is a summary of my doctoral thesis: Diego Téllez Alarcia, *Mr. Richard Wall, the forgotten minister*, defended on 20.06.2006. University of La Rioja (Spain). The thesis was awarded with the Pablo de Olavide's Research Essay Prize. See the website: <http://www.tiemposmodernos.org/ricardowall>.

[2] J. D'Alton, *Illustrations, historical and genealogical, of King James's Irish army list, 1689*, (London, 1861), Vol. II, p. 82.

[3] Hubert Gallwey, *The Wall family in Ireland* (Naas, H. Gallwey, 1970).

[4] Archives Départementales de la Loire-Atlantique, *Registres paroissiaux*, Nantes, Église de Saint Nicolas, BMS, 1691-1697, 7 November 1694: 'Le 7ème jour de novembre 1694 a été baptisé dans l'Église de St. Nicolas de Nantes par moi père soussigné, Richard, né le 5ème du courant, fils de Matthieu Duval, gentilhomme absent, et de Cath-

rine Devreux, sa femme habitants a la foie, rue du puits d'argent.' A Spanish translation can be found in the Archivo Histórico Nacional, *Órdenes, Santiago*, 9.020.

[5] Military services records in Archivo General de Simancas (Valladolid), *Secretaría de Guerra*, 2.465, book II, p. 12, book III, p. 10 and book IV, p. 10

[6] *Gaceta de Madrid*, 13 de enero de 1778.

[7] Duque de Liria, 'Diario del viaje del duque de Liria y Xérica', *Colección de Documentos Inéditos para la Historia de España, por el marqués de la Fuensanta, D. José Sancho Rayón y D. Francisco Zabálburu*, (Madrid, 1889). vol. xciii, pp. 200-201.

[8] Archivo Histórico Nacional (Madrid), *Órdenes, Santiago*, 9.020.

[9] Diego Téllez Alarcia, 'Guerra y regalismo a comienzos del reinado de Carlos III. El final del ministerio Wall', *Hispania*, 209, 2001, pp. 1051-1090.

[10] Diego Téllez Alarcia, 'Documentation concerning the role of Ricardo Wall (1694-1777) in the restoration of the Arab Palace of La Alhambra', *Archivium Hibernicum*, LIX, 2005, pp. 90-105.

[11] More information on Wall's career in: Diego Téllez Alarcia, 'El caballero D. Ricardo Wall y la conspiración antiensenadista', José Miguel Delgado Barrado and José Luis Gómez Urdáñez, *Ministros de Fernando VI*, (Córdoba, Universidad de Córdoba, 2002), pp. 93-138. In English: Diego Téllez Alarcia, 'Richard Wall: light and shade of an Irish minister in Spain (1694-1777)', *Irish Studies Review*, 11.2, August 2003, pp. 123-136.

[12] Diego Téllez Alarcia, 'La supuesta anglofilia de D. Ricardo Wall. Filias y fobias políticas durante el reinado de Fernando VI', *Revista de Historia Moderna. Anales de la Universidad de Alicante*, 21, 2003, pp. 501-536.

[13] Diego Téllez Alarcia, 'La neutralidad española durante el reinado de Fernando VI. ¿'Vigilante y armada' o 'inexplicable y suicida'?', Agustín Guimerá and Víctor Peralta (eds.), *El Equilibrio de los Imperios: de Utrecht a Trafalgar. Actas de la VIII Reunión Científica de la Fundación Española de Historia Moderna (Madrid, 2-4 de junio de 2004)*, (Madrid, C.S.I.C., 2005), pp. 191-206.

[14] José Luis Gómez Urdáñez, *El proyecto reformista del marqués de la Ensenada* (Lérida: Milenio, 1996).

[15] Diego Téllez Alarcia, 'El joven Campomanes y el ministro Wall (1754-63)', Dolores Mateos Dorado (ed.), *Campomanes doscientos años después* (Oviedo: Universidad de Oviedo, 2003), pp. 417-431.

[16] Didier Ozanam, *Les diplomates espagnols du XVIIIe siècle, Introduction et répertoire biographique (1700-1808)*, (Madrid: Casa de Velásquez-Burdeos-Maison des Pays Ibériques, 1998).

[17] Diego Téllez Alarcia, 'El grupo irlandés bajo el ministerio Wall (1754-63)', María Begoña Villar García y P. Pezzi Cristóbal (eds.), *Los Extranjeros en la España Moderna Actas del I Coloquio Internacional. Málaga 28-30 de noviembre de 2002* (Málaga: Universidad de Málaga, 2003), Vol. II, pp. 737-750.