

Religious apparitions and the Cold War in Southern Europe*

Christian, William A.

Eusko Ikaskuntza

Miramamar Jauregia

Miraconcha, 48

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II. Mundu-Gerran, katolikoak eta komunistak gerraosteko botere politikoak lehiatzeko prestatu egin ziren. Elizak, Fatimako Amabirjinaz antikomunismoaren sinbolo gisa baliatu zenean, imitaziozko agerpenak gertatu ziren Hegoaldeko eta Erdialdeko Europan, haurrak zirelarik gehienbat agerpen horien protagonistak. Gerra hotzean jarraitu zuten irudipen horiek. Espainian argikuseak, maiz askotan, gerra zibilean errepublikarren alde jokaturiko familietako haurrak ziren.

Giltz-Hitzak: Agerpenak. Fatima. Haurrak. Mizioak. Espainia. Italia. Gerra Hotza. OHEak.

Durante la II Guerra Mundial, católicos y comunistas se prepararon para disputarse el poder político en la posguerra. La Iglesia, al recurrir a la Virgen de Fátima como símbolo del anticomunismo, provocó en Europa meridional y central visiones imitativas, experimentadas sobre todo por niños. Esas visiones continuaron produciéndose a lo largo de la guerra fría. En España, los videntes fueron a menudo hijos de familias que en la Guerra Civil se habían situado en el bando republicano.

Palabras Clave: Apariciones. Fátima. Niños. Misiones. España. Italia. La Guerra Fría. OVNI.

Au cours de la II Guerre Mondiale, catholiques et communistes se préparent à se disputer le pouvoir politique dans l'après-guerre. L'Eglise, en recourant à la Vierge de Fatima comme symbole de l'anti-communisme, provoque en Europe méridionale et centrale des visions imitatives, expérimentées surtout par des enfants. Ces visions continuèrent à se produire tout au long de la guerre froide. En Espagne, les voyants furent souvent des fils de familles qui, pendant la guerre civile, s'étaient situés du côté républicain.

Mots Clés: Apparitions. Fatima. Enfants. Missions. Espagne. Italie. La Guerre Froide. OVNI.

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PRESUNTA APARICION DE LA VIRGEN A UNA NIÑA EN CACERES: MERCEDES TREJO NO FRECUENTA LA IGLESIA Y ES HIJA DE UNA LAVANDERA

Cáceres 6. —Con las reservas naturales transcribimos la siguiente información. Desde hace unos días Cáceres y sus alrededores se ven desbordados por miles y miles de personas que se dirigen a la aldea de Moret, donde en cierto lugar se dice que la Virgen se aparece a una niña. Al cabo de unos días es imposible calcular cuántos son las miles de personas que van a diario a la barriada minera de Moret para asistir al momento en que la niña dice entrevistarse con Nuestra Señora. La niña se llama Mercedes Trejo Medina, de siete años de edad. No frecuenta mucho la iglesia; es hija de una viuda lavandera llamada Teresa Medina; tiene tres hermanos y no han podido influir en su ánimo, pues no es propicio el tema religioso en el hogar. La niña es fuerte, está desarrollada, no tiene síntomas de perturbación mental. Niña humildísima, desde que esto ocurre aparenta una serenidad extraña.

Un día, hace poco, la niña iba a espigar al campo; junto a los muros de un edificio derruido se paró de repente. Dijo que había visto a una señora con un niño. Le mostraron fotografías, y parece ser que es la Virgen del Pilar. Desde aquel día la madre quiso ocultarlo. La niña no sosegaba. Cundió la noticia. Y desde entonces la niña va dos veces al día al sitio de la presunta aparición. La niña es llevada a horas determinadas. Hace el recorrido de rodillas y habla con la Virgen, como si efectivamente Nuestra Señora estuviera presente realmente. La niña hace peticiones; parece que se cae. Mientras tanto la multitud llora y reza. La niña ha pedido a la Virgen que haga un milagro. Dice que Nuestra Señora le ha prometido hacerlo a los nueve días. ¿Señales externas? Hasta ahora, ninguna. La niña va de rodillas, habla, reza, pide, pero la gente sólo puede ver a una criatura de siete años que ante enormes multitudes no se asusta, ni se altera, ni pierde su actitud natural.

La Iglesia no ha intervenido todavía en esta supuesta aparición y las jerarquías eclesiásticas nada han dicho. —CIFRA [*El Alcázar*, Madrid, 6 de mayo 1947, p. 7]

Public visions of Saints, especially Mary, by lay people, some of them lasting only a few minutes, others intermittent over a period of days, weeks, or even years, have occurred, particularly in rural areas, throughout Catholic Europe from at least the fourteenth century to the present. They have been effective ways to consecrate a place as holy — to set up a shrine; they are efficient ways for towns or regions to obtain the latest word from heaven on how to avoid collective disasters, especially the plague, and manage the collective disgrace of military subjection; and occasionally, as with Jeanne d'Arc and Savonarola, they have influenced the course of what is conventionally known as history.

I have become convinced from talking to friends and casual acquaintances that very significant numbers of persons have visions. My dental hygienist in South Boston remembers very clearly a vision of the Sacred Heart of Jesus out over the water of Boston harbor she saw from her window as a young child. But until I raised the subject she had told no one. A student came up after a seminar and told how she, her sister, and her grandmother saw from the porch of their house in rural Puerto Rico the three kings ride out of the sky on camels in 1962. They went inside to tell her parents, who just laughed. A Greek friend told me that in October, 1942, her father in a Macedonian village saw two fairies come into the room where his first-born was lying, and whisper to one another the child's future. Several acquaintances claim to have seen, and some even talked to, their dead parents. In addition to these private visions, there are those of religious virtuosi, whether members of orders or laypeople, who have frequent revelations, also private.

The kind of vision I have been studying is not intrinsically different, but it has a different effect — it is the kind people find out about and pay attention to. The frequency of such publicly known visions is an indication of the times and places that people take visions seriously, of a social need for or alertness to messages from heaven. Whether one regards the messages and symbolism of these visions as sent from God, or as a kind of reflection of the collective unconscious, they provide a fascinating counterpoint to political and social history.

According to the best statistics available, visions with a substantial public resonance —such that they attracted crowds of spectators— were most frequent in twentieth-century Europe in the years 1947-1954, especially in 1947, 1948, and 1954. Other times when there were more than the usual number of popular visions were in Spain in 1931, following anticlerical incidents after the proclamation of the Republic; in Belgium in 1932-1933, and in the years 1937-1940 in Germany, France, and Northern Italy, presumably as tensions built up toward World War II. But the frequency of visions and the popular response to them in the 1947-1954 period were exceptional. On an average there were about four times as many visions per year in the 1947-1954 period as in the rest of the years from 1930 to 1975¹:

1931-1946	65 cases in 16 years, about 4 per year;
1947-1954	112 cases in 8 years, about 14 per year; and
1955-1975	59 cases in 21 years, about 3 per year.

And this frequency increased not just in one area, but Europe-wide. One is naturally led to inquire to the connections between these visions and the Cold War. What linked 7-year old Mercedes Trejo in the drab company town of Aldeamoret to the struggle that was dividing Europe and the world into two opposing camps?

The Catholic Church has its representatives in every nook of every country in southwestern Europe — a stable set of regular clergy and conventual religious, and a cross-cutting network of more mobile religious with headquarters in Rome. And the Catholic Church had been waging the Cold War against Communism since 1917. Before World War II, however, its attention was divided among many enemies. The French Revolution, Freemasons, Republicans, the Mexican Revolution, Marxists and Anarchists in Spain, all fought the Church for people's souls. Secularization in its many forms had by the nineteenth century converted the somewhat somnolent institution of one hundred years before, secure in its base in the countries of the northwest Mediterranean, into a militant organization with well-developed procedures for political mobilization.

But such mobilizations, because of the varying nature of the threats, were by necessity of a national, even regional nature. Separate struggles at different times were waged in France (a concentrated campaign for the rechristianization of the country from the 1830s through the end of the century), in Spain (the Carlist Wars, the liberal-conservative struggles of the 1890s, and the full-blown Crusade of the Civil War) and Italy (the vain resistance to the loss of temporal power).

By the early 1940s the situation was quite different. The enemy, atheistic Communism, was relatively identifiable and consolidated. It was an international enemy, the same for all

¹ These figures are based on the revised listing of Billet (1976). I separated out the European visions, substituted my own list of the Spanish ones, and augmented the Italian ones with others given in Falconi (1956: 96-120). Since Billet's sources probably used different criteria for what was or was not a vision, and whether or not to include private revelations, one should not take these numbers with undue seriousness. They probably include most of the well-known visions of Western Europe, and those visions in Eastern Europe that became known in the West.

the countries, one which posed a threat to the Faith unequalled since the challenge of the Protestants in the 1540s or the invasion of the Turks.

In Spain in particular the lines between the Church and Communism were clearly drawn. Toward the end of the Civil War, the Communists, supplied by Russia, were a dominant force on the Republican side, and in Republican areas thousands of priests and religious had been martyred (if often by other groups). The atrocities of Spain were amply circulated throughout the Catholic world, an implicit message as to the fate of Catholics should Communists reach power in other Western countries.

Hence in the thick of war with Germany, the hierarchy and the faithful were preoccupied with the configuration of post-war Europe. Two May Day visions of Jeanne-Louise Ramonet (born 1910), a Breton seer who began her visions in 1938, put the problem succinctly. On May 1, 1941, the Virgin told her:

Soon Russia will help in the war. It will be a hard blow to your enemies. From then on pray, pray a lot, o Christian souls, for this great country that is an enemy of the Church. Otherwise after the war the Communists will settle in everywhere and the Church will gravely suffer from them. Ask Jesus, through my Immaculate Heart, for the return of sinners and the conversion of Russia (Auclair 1968:100).

On May 1, 1944, Jeanne-Louise saw two tableaux vivants, each as a wing of a double picture.

On the left half men brandish flags with the intention of putting them up everywhere. Priests try to oppose them, but are insulted and threatened. A hideous character, full of evil joy, who seems to me to be the devil, hidden in the lower left corner of the painting, eggs on the men carrying the flags. In the right hand corner, dressed as she normally appears to me, is Mary. She weeps. Under this picture is an inscription: Image of Communism. In the other half young girls dressed in blue and white recite the Rosary. Beneath them this other inscription: Salvation of Communism (Auclair 1968:103).

Jeanne's vision of 1941 posed the problem; that of 1944 depicted more specifically its social dimensions and offered a solution. In the picture on the left the flags are carried by men; on the right prayers are said by girls, dressed as Daughters of Mary. In fact, in most of Europe the vision was in conformance with reality (and indeed, still is) in the sense that the left has been an essentially masculine phenomenon, and the Catholic right overwhelmingly feminine. France's "Salvation from Communism" after the war came above all from the newly awarded suffrage to women.

Consider the figures of Italian membership in Catholic Action, the Church's activist lay organization. It was rapidly expanded in the postwar period as part of the mobilization of laity, but throughout the period its membership reflected the sexual composition of the militant faithful (see Table 1).

TABLE 1: Membership in Catholic Action in Italy²

	Men	Boys	Women	Girls
1946	151,000	367,000	369,000	885,000
1954	285,000	557,000	597,000	1,216,000

² Falconi (1956:399) from *Annuario dell'Azione cattolica italiana*, 1954).

Membership in the Communist Party and Young Communists would probably show the exact opposite. To a certain extent the division within nations between militants of left and right was also a division within families, along the classic lines of men on the left, while women were still performing the religious obligations for the family group (Di Cori 1982, 1983, Scaraffia 1994).

Here we are already close to the visions, for the composition of the visionaries reflects a similar gradient (see Table 2).

TABLE 2: Visionary or Vision group, 1947-1954

	Men	Boys	Women	Girls	Mixed, (don't know)	Total
Spain	1	1	1	6	0	9
Italy	9	7	12	16	18	62

One of the dynamics leading to the personal epiphanies of some of the seers was the crystallization of the Cold War not only within a community, but even within a family.

Part of the Church's strategy, then, in the postwar period, was not only Jeanne-Louise Ramonet's more metaphysical goal of the conversion of Russia, but more immediately the conversion of Western Europe's men. For by the end of the war, especially given the Left's leadership in the partisan movements, very substantial sectors of France and Italy were ready to vote for it. As the Blessed Virgin told Ida Peerdeman, a seer of Amsterdam who had a series of private revelations, amply diffused, from 1945 to 1959, "This is the era of political Christian warfare" (15 August 1950).³

Besides expanding Catholic Action, the Church drew on the immense resources represented by its shrines and venerated images, the friends and sources of spiritual and physical health of devotees whether or not they were active Catholics. One traditional way it did this was through missions — old-fashioned preaching sessions over a given number of days that made careful use of local traditions and devotions.

According to the Spanish sociologist Aurelio Orensanz, the popular mission summed up Church devotional strategy of the 1940s. It was a carefully calculated effort to revive the religion of whole communities:

En la recepción de los misioneros está presente toda la comunidad: el clero local, autoridades civiles, organizaciones religiosas, estamentos educativos y el pueblo. Durante el desarrollo de la misión se lleva adelante un denso programa de atención sectorial a la población; no como cultivo de la especificidad sino como medio de engrosar la apoteosis conversiva y comunitaria final... La predicación interpela al pueblo. La simbología colectiva es invocada reiteradamente: La Virgen es la misionera principal, se cita al patrón de la localidad.

The missions had a double culmination. One was the confession and communion of the largest proportion possible of the population, especially the men. A Jesuit mission manual reads, "On the confessions of the men many times the success of the mission depends, and

³ Untitled booklet in English, without author (Louis Knuvelde?), publisher, or date (but between 1959 and 1968) about the visions of Our Lady of All the Peoples, of Amsterdam, p. 42. See also R. Auclair 1977.

by the same token the saving of many souls, sometimes of an entire town." The other culmination was an explosive, joyful apotheosis of farewell (Orensanz 1974:10).

Orensanz's description is borne out by newspaper accounts of missions both in cities and in villages in the 1940s and 1950s, and by the memories of older Spaniards. Many parish churches still have on their walls mission crosses from this period. The missions were total, emotional events, with procedures perfected over several centuries. But there were new twists. Electricity made possible luminous crosses on the churches and the non-stop broadcasting of prayers and hymns by powerful amplifiers. *The Correo de Zamora* reported in April 1953 a Jesuit mission in Gema de Vino, where "Un micrófono con sus dos potentes altavoces en el campanario junto a la cruz iluminada [hicieron que] ...la voz clara y grave del P. Patricio llegara hasta la cabecera del enfermo y del perezoso y le obligara a seguir el rosario del aurora que va comenzar por las calles ya saturadas de fervor mariano." At 11 o'clock in the morning the voice of Father Miguel supplied "un grato sorpresa" for farmers and shepherds working within a radius of three kilometers as he led the prayers of schoolchildren before the microphone. At the end of the mission, all persons who had reached the age of reason accepted communion, according to the newspaper.

A mission in November 1947, in the Mediterranean coastal city of Castellón de la Plana was similar, if on a much larger scale. There the newspaper (*Mediterráneo*, 14 November 1947, 18) reported that in the penitential procession all were participants, none spectators, and this without coercion. Special emphasis was accorded the participation of men. "Los caballeros dijeron bien alto que la religiosidad y la piedad castellonenses no son sólo femeninas." A special communion mass with the Bishop of Tortosa and the Civil Governor present was held for men only in a warehouse, and 3,500 received communion.

Such inclusive community events were only possible in countries like Spain and Portugal where Church and State were close, or in regions of other countries where religious sentiment was strong and united. But another form of mission found favor throughout Western Europe.

The Immaculate Heart of Mary had appeared at Fatima in 1917 and asked for prayers for the conversion of Russia. On 23 March 1943, the day after the consecration of France to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, *Le Grand Retour* began at Lourdes. This consisted of the carrying of the statue of Our Lady of Boulogne, one of France's most venerated shrine images, throughout the country from town to town. The image was accompanied by missionaries, and the slow trip was a kind of itinerant mission. According to its organizers, "The immediate goal of this innovative mission is to support and spread everywhere the consecration of the faithful to the Immaculate Heart of Mary as a means of returning this Catholic country to the law of God." By November 1946, the image had visited more than 12,000 parishes in 81 dioceses, traveling 45,000 kilometers. The Bishop of Versailles wrote with respect to his diocese, "The number and quality of conversions obtained are far superior to those of ordinary missions." The image was carried on a side trip to Rome in 1945, where it was blessed by Pius XII (*Iris de Paz*, 1 June 1947).

The example of *Le Grand Retour* and its approval by the Holy Father stimulated other similar ways to bring home the association of Mary with the conversion of sinners and Russia. The apparitions of Fatima were little known outside of Portugal and Spain until the early 1940s⁴. But while the war was in progress, not coincidentally, the Fatima story began to circulate throughout Western Europe. In July 1938 was the first national pilgrimage of Portugal to fulfill the Anticommunist Vow. In his 1940 encyclical *Saeculo exeunte*, Pius XII

⁴ For early Spanish attention to Fatima, Christian 1997:413n14.

recognized the “Providential Mission” of Our Lady of Fatima. Luis Gonzaga de Fonseca’s *Las Maravillas de Fatima* went through many editions in the early 1940s. By 1944 in Spain, France, and Italy there were even children’s books, like *Tre fanculli guardano in cielo* by Paolo Liggeri, with illustrations of the Fatima visions for children to see.⁵ And in May 1946 the image was canonically crowned, Pius XII speaking by radio.

So when the first “Voyage-Mission” of the Virgin of Fatima to Lisbon in November 1946 was an overwhelming success, it was a short step to imagining an international version of *Le Grand Retour*. The first was a trip to Holland to a Congress of Marian Congregations at Maastricht. The Fatima image slowly made its way through Spain and France, leaving in May 1947, and returning in March 1948, causing a wave of conversions, miracles, and revivals wherever it went. The diocesan bulletin of Salamanca reported in May 1947, “Se ha visto a gentes de rodillas y llorando, que hacia tiempo no ponían sus pies en la iglesia; y han confesado y comulgado los que no lo hacían desde muchos años, volviendo a su fe perdida....”

More international missions followed, both of the original image and of reproductions. In Spain a wealthy devotee, Pascual Arias, supplied cities and dioceses with copies (2800 by 1950), and many of these copies were sent off on their own missions. By 1959 such missions had been held in the majority of Spanish dioceses. One aspect of the missions that people found most persuasive was that doves accompanied the statues, roosting at their feet.⁶

The Bishop of Madrid, whose 25th anniversary as Bishop was one of the motives for the visit of the Fatima image to Madrid in May 1948, wrote, “Han sido nueve días de cielo: de tanto fervor religioso, tantas conversiones, tan delirantes manifestaciones de amor a Nuestra Señora: que creo que Ella ha venido a iniciar a Madrid la Cruzada de purificación de costumbres cristianas, que Ella quiere de España para la conversión de Rusia.”⁷

The image paused overnight in Toledo on its return. Priests who were there remember the visit of the Fatima image as the zenith of post-Civil War religious fervor in the city; they worked in the confessional nonstop for 24 hours; masses were said all night in the cathedral. Villages went *en masse* to the city and spent the night in its squares or churches. Again, conversion, return to the Church, especially of men, was a constant. The diocesan bulletin (1948:187) reported, “The hearts of the faithful were moved by an inner impulse; thousands asked for confessions, and about 10,000 communions were distributed.” The next morning an open-air mass and healing session was held for the sick of the diocese in the city’s largest square, and thousands wept as the image passed them.

The active and massive participation of children in missions was a time-honored practice, and before missions in collective penitential processions (Christian 1992:29-37; Christian 1997:254-255). In the Fatima missions that had a special significance, for it had been small children who had seen the Virgin in 1917. Typically some of them were dressed to represent the seers of Fatima, as can be seen from photographs in *Iris de Paz*, the organ of the Missionaries of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, the order founded by Antonio María Claret whose members often accompanied the Fatima statues. The children of Málaga in 1950

⁵ The first version of Fonseca’s book in French was that of Barthes in 1943, an adaptation for children, first published the same year in Spain. For a sampling of other Spanish books on Fatima, see bibliography

⁶ Jiménez (1960) and the same author’s additions to his translation of Fonseca are prime sources for the Fatima trips in Spain.

⁷ On Fatima in Madrid, *Iris de Paz*, 16 June 1948, 180-186, and Fonseca 324.

Se preparaban meticulosamente en la escuela, a las órdenes de los señores Maestros, siempre entusiastas y colaboradores. Confeccionaban preciosas banderitas, azules los niños, blancas las niñas. Unas veces vestidos de trajes regionales, otras de épocas remotas, ya representando la escena de la aparición de la Virgen, representando otros, pastorcillos.⁸

In Spain the Fatima missions received governmental cooperation. When the Virgin of Fatima arrived in Madrid on 24 March 1948, the image was given flowers by Franco's wife and daughter, and on 27 March the image was taken for a private visit to the Palacio de Pardo, where the Caudillo was photographed in the act of veneration. A year later he repaid the visit in Portugal, and decorated the Bishop of Leiria.⁹

Since in post-war Spain there was little likelihood of a Communist takeover, the missions rather served to consolidate the position of the Church and win back some lost sheep. But in Italy, the missions inevitably became part of electoral campaigns. As the fragile post-war coalition broke up, the movement for a Christian Left was dissolved, and Communists and Catholics faced off, mass preachers like Padre Lombardi held a series of campaigns and crusades. In 1949 the excommunication of Communists was decreed, and the Pope called for Italy's own *Grande Ritorno* for the Holy Year of 1950.

In Italy, too, images of the Virgin of Fatima were circulated. In February 1947, the Pope blessed a Madonna Pellegrina for the Diocese of Udine, and on 12 May a grandiose Marian pilgrimage in Milan stimulated similar missions throughout the nation. Leonardo Sciascia describes the arrival of an image of Fatima in his town in Sicily:

In 1948 before the elections, the Dominicans carried the images of Fatima from one town to another, a wind of miracles blew over Sicily, promises and offerings rained on the new image of the Madonna, and it was said that at the feet of the Madonna deaf-mutes mumbled words and the paralyzed had been able to drag themselves a few steps through the crowds. The Madonna came to us at Regalpetra from the neighboring town of Castro. The people of Castro carried it seven kilometers in procession, and at the gates of Regalpetra, where they were supposed to hand over the Madonna, they found the priests, the municipal band, and the townspeople. But the people of Castro wanted to carry it on their shoulders inside the town and leave it in the main church, as those of another village had done in their town. The Regalpetrese held that the instructions were to hand it over at the gates of the town, an argument started, it was poisoned by old grudges, derogatory sentiments were shouted back and forth. The fight sharpened, rockets of blasphemy exploded around the celestial image, the Fathers raised their hands to placate the tempest. Never as on that day had the Madonna been so blasphemed by the citizens of Castro and Regalpetra. The Communists were the first in the fray; if the election had been held in the days that the Madonna of Fatima was in Regalpetra, the Communist Party would not have had a single vote. It was held a month later, and the Communist Party had a thousand (Sciascia 19-56:94-95).

The special value of the messages of apparitions, once authenticated, is that they provide information on what the Divine Will is at a given historical moment. It is simpler, if the visionaries can be believed, to hear what God has to say through his messengers about such-

⁸ Photos of children dressed as seers in *Iris de Paz*, 16 November 1947, 341, and 1 October 1947, 289. Málaga quote *Iris de Paz*, 1 March 1950, 95.

⁹ Franco photo, *Iris de Paz*, 16 June 1948: 183.

and-such a place right now, than to try to extrapolate correct conduct from what Christ said 2,000 years ago and the accumulated wisdom of the Church. The visions of Rue de Bac, 1830, La Salette, 1847, Lourdes, 1858, and Pontmain, 1870, had tremendous impact in France, when duly diffused, in the recuperation and reinvigoration of French Catholicism after the Revolution.¹⁰ In the early twentieth century the Lourdes story was known to rural and urban Europeans far beyond France's borders. The French experience had not been lost on the ecclesiastical authorities of Portugal, and in that country the apparitions of Fatima during the nation's first lay government, inevitably had a political significance. During World War II the Fatima story was particularly relevant for the nations at war, because of the explicit connection of the Fatima visions with World War I.

But the new emphasis on Fatima throughout Europe had a side effect of producing a new wave of visions. That it stimulated visions, especially by children, is not surprising. The imagery and message of Fatima entered the subconscious of Catholics.

Consider the case of a valley in Northern Italy. In 1942 the Archbishop of Milan wrote in a pastoral letter on the 25th anniversary of the apparitions of Fatima,

History teaches us that in the most tragic moments of the history of the Church, in the situations of greatest anguish, in the gravest of dangers, the Most Holy Madonna has always intervened to help Christians. We are therefore certain ... that she will have the final victory over the devil, impiety, and heresy (Ballini 1947:42-43).

Subsequently, in May of 1943 the parish priest of Ghiaie de Bonate (Bergamo) preached a sermon on the Fatima story. And around December 1943 the sisters who ran a nursery school in the Bonate valley put on an "operina" or skit, in which children played the Virgin, Saint Joseph, and the three seers of Fatima. The moment of apparition was represented by bringing in the Saints when the lights were out and suddenly turning them on. Just so in medieval mystery plays the same effect was gained by drawing a curtain to reveal a candlelit image.

With this kind of exposure it is not surprising that eight-year old Adelaide Roncalli of Bonate often prayed, posing like the children of Fatima, that the Madonna would also appear to her. On 13 May, 1944, the anniversary of the first of the Fatima visions, Adelaide had her first vision. The visions continued, thirteen in all, to a crescendo of popular attention. It was estimated that on 21 May, 150,000 persons were present, and at the final vision on 31 May, 200-300,000. As at Fatima, so at Bonate the seer brought word that the war would end soon — in two months, she said at first. Her visions had enormous resonance throughout northern Italy, even though, as with almost all of the postwar visions, the Church did not accept their supernatural character.¹¹

The next year in Spain there was a Fatima-like vision series in La Codosera (Badajoz), a town on the Portuguese border. There a girl age 10 first, then eventually hundreds of other people, saw Our Lady of the Sorrows on or near a chestnut tree, near what was known as the haunted house, "la casa de miedo." Two other seers, a girl of 17 and a married woman of 31, subsequently became major visionaries; thousands came to the site from surrounding towns in Spain and Portugal; the visions were publicized by a series of articles in the Madrid newspaper *Informaciones*; and eventually, with the permission of the bishop, a chapel was built, partly with funds from the Spanish Ministry of Education. By June 1946, La Codosera

¹⁰ See Curicque 1872, Commission 1972, Kselman 1983, Guillet 1994, Edelman 1995.

¹¹ See Fatima preparation at Bonate, Cazzamalli (1951:47, 71, 105). Sède (1977:217-226) also draws the connection, as with the visions at Vilar-Chao (Portugal) from 1946 on.

was referred to in *Informaciones* as the “Spanish Fatima.” Its precocious connection with the Cold War series of Fatima-like visions can be explained by the town’s proximity to Portugal (Marcelina, the first seer, was on her way back from an errand at the border when she had her vision). In 1945 the people of La Codosera knew the Fatima story far better than most Spaniards.¹²

The circumstances of both the Bonate and the Codosera apparitions illustrate why the main question for historians is not whether visions occurred, but rather why attention was paid to them. A week or two before Adelaide had her visions in Bonate, some boys had a vision in Verdello nearby, a fact known in the Roncalli household. But the boys’ visions did not make the big time. Similarly, there had been visions at the Codosera site around 1870, provoking little more than an outdoor mass at the chestnut tree; and some years previously a shepherd had seen Christ in the sky there, but had not even told his wife, knowing, he said later, that he would not be believed.¹³ In 1945 it was a girl who was believable, and in 1945 a vision was read by the people to mean something it did not mean in 1870.

There were many subsequent visions in which, as with that of Bonate, the influence of the Fatima story, or the subsequent Fatima missions, was patent. A man in the Toledo village of Yuncilllos saw the Virgin on 7 June 1948, eight days after the Virgin of Fatima had passed by on the way from Madrid to Toledo, and many townspeople had gone out on the road to salute her.

The influence of the Fatima story can also be seen in the content and dramaturgy of the visions. As at La Salette and Fatima, many of the postwar seers received secrets which they could reveal only to the Pope, or only after a certain number of years¹⁴. The importance of the unrevealed third secret of Fatima was very much in the news, as the Patriarch of Lisbon had revealed in September 1946 that it was fair to infer that the secret would place “the salvation of the world in this extraordinary hour ... in the Immaculate Heart of Mary” (*Iris de Paz*, 1 December 1948). Because Jacinta and Francesco, two of the Fatima seers, had died not long afterwards, it was feared by both seers and spectators that visionaries would die soon and such predictions were sometimes part of the postwar vision messages¹⁵. Like the visions of Fatima, many postwar visions were supposed to end with a great miracle, a kind of visionary equivalent to the apotheotic final day of a mission. At Fatima people saw the sun spin in the sky. The postwar visions were ordered throughout like missions, lay missions in which the Virgin was the missionary, speaking through the seer, and in which the daily or weekly visions built up to the great climax. The visions of Mercedes Trejo at Aldeamoret, the mining suburb of Cáceres, built up toward a miracle on the ninth day, when many people saw the sun spin in the sky and give off streamers of light. One witness I talked to had a partially

¹² For Codosera I used the articles of José de la Cueva in *Informaciones* (Madrid) June-September 1945, subsequently printed as a pamphlet. See also: in same newspaper two articles by Hilarión Sánchez, 27 June 1946 and 8 July 1946; a collection of early reports edited by García (1973) and a booklet with photographs, Arias (1953). As with all the Spanish visions discussed I have also drawn on my visits in the 1970s to each vision site and interviews there with witnesses.

¹³ The Verdello visions are mentioned by Cazzamalli (1951:70). The Codosera pre-visions are noted by De la Cueva, pp. 18 and 47 of the pamphlet edition. On pre-visions in general, Christian 1992:43-44.

¹⁴ True in Spain for Aldeamoret (1947) and Casaseca (1950), in Italy, Bonate (1944), Tre Fontane (1947), Gimigliano (1948), and Tor Pignattara (1948), in France, Ile Bouchard (1947) and doubtless many others. For secrets as a vision motif, see Zimdars-Swarz 1991:165-240 and Apolito 1992:153-173, 220-222.

¹⁵ Predictions of early death were made in the vision messages of the seer of Yuncilllos in 1947, in Palermo in 1954 (Falconi 1956:109), and assumed by spectators at Villaesteva (Lugo) in 1961. They were also a feature of the 1931 Ezkioga visions (Christian 1997:114-115).

detached retina to remind her of the event. Similar solar phenomena were seen by at least some of those present at Ildes (Zaragoza) in 1954, in some Italian visions, and I was present during a similar alleged solar "miracle" at El Palmar de Troya in 1968¹⁶.

Other episodes did not have such satisfying outcomes. While a mission was in progress in Castellón de la Plana in November 1947, ten year old Raquel Roca was embarked on a perilous mission of her own in the village of Cuevas de Vinromà, some 60 kilometers away. She supposedly began to have her visions in March, but they became known only in mid-November, when she began to have visions daily at 11.30 in the morning and foretold a great miracle for 1 December at which the sick would be healed. The word spread in the coastal cities by mimeographed leaflets; caravans of cars came from Valencia, Tarragona and Castellón. By 24 November thousands of people were arriving every day. On 30 November 40,000 were present. Raquel was admonished by her parents and the priest of the dire consequences of deception, but she stuck to her prediction. On 1 December the hillsides of a great natural amphitheater were packed with people, a crowd estimated at between 200 and 300 thousand. All the blind of Lleida and Castellón came to have their sight restored. Some of the visionaries from apparitions in the 1930s turned up from Zaragoza. The police had to open all the houses of the village to put up the sick. But there was no miracle; no cures worth mentioning, and the girl left the village in disgrace. Similar predicted miracles failed to occur at Casaseca de los Chanes (Zamora) in 1950 and Villaesteva (Lugo) in 1961¹⁷.

Many Italian visions followed the Fatima pattern to culminate in solar phenomena. At Gimigliano (Ascoli-Piceno), for instance, on 18 May 1948, 80,000 persons from Le Marche, Abruzzo, Sabina, and Romagna stayed awake all night praying to see the miracle of the sun at sunrise. And at Acquaviva (Caltanissetta) thousands were present from larger towns, and as the sun was spinning they sang the hymn of the Virgin of Fatima, "The Thirteenth of May."¹⁸

The visions of the 1940s and 1950s were undoubtedly informed by the Fatima story. It remains to be seen why they were paid attention to, what it was in them that spoke to the historical moment of the Cold War. All of them performed the age-old role of providing a sacred place and sacred relics for curing. Those of Spain pointed out sacred trees (as, indeed, had that of Fatima), variously chestnut, ash, olive, pear, almond, and pine trees, whose leaves were used by the public for talismans and cures. In Italy pilgrims especially removed the dirt from the ground above which the Virgin had hovered. At four Spanish sites caves were sacralized as holy places, echoing the visions at Lourdes, and as at Lourdes and many older Spanish shrines, the Virgin pointed out holy springs whose water had curative powers. But in these aspects the postwar visions were indistinguishable from village apparitions in the preceding 500 years.

What does seem to key them in to the Fatima missions, the crusades of Father Lombardi, and the ethos of each nation's particular "Christian political warfare," is their emphasis on conversion. The conversion theme is most explicit in the countries where the enemy was most salient. It is dramatically evident in the descriptions of East European visions that circulated in Western Europe, quite clear in Italy, and more implicit in Spain.

¹⁶ At visions in the 1980s and 1990s they have become a constant feature, whether at El Escorial, Medjugorje, or Oliveto Citra (see Apolito 1992:96-114).

¹⁷ For Cuevas de Vinromà, newspaper articles 18 November to 7 December in the press of Castellón, Valencia, Murcia, Almería, and Tarragona. I talked to townspeople in 1977 and 1980.

¹⁸ *La Pastorella de Gimigliano* (1948); Giuselli (1950).

According to the Spanish magazine *Iris de Paz* (1 March 1948, 101), there had been four sets of visions in Yugoslavia in recent years. Whether or not these visions really took place, especially under the circumstances describes, I do not know. But the credence they were given in Spain points to the more general connection of visions and anti-communism. The four visions were said to have taken place at Josujici (Slavonia) on the site of the alleged execution of 500 Croatian members of Catholic Action; at Marburg, where the Virgin cried, "Penance, Penance; Convert before the terrible chastisement comes"; at the Isle of Zrec in Croatia, where Christ Crucified surrounded by mocking enemies appeared to two Communist women and converted them; and on an island in Dalmatia (11 May 1946) in which in the climatic vision, with 10,000 persons present, Mary was seen surrounded by priests and laymen killed by the Communists¹⁹.

On the whole, the Western European visions were more subdued, in keeping with a more subdued level of conflict. The Italian vision that received the most publicity, the only one of more than eighty between 1947 and 1953 that was explicitly encouraged by the Church, was that of the Virgin of Tre Fontane to a Seventh-Day Adventist, Bruno Cornacchiola, in Rome on 12 April 1947, in which he was converted after first his children, then he, saw Mary. Cornacchiola, who subsequently presented a Protestant Bible to the Pope, was a perfect example of the redemption of the wayward. The Virgin said to him, "You persecuted me. Ora Basta! Enter the heavenly fold, the heavenly court on earth, the nine Fridays of the Sacred Heart have saved you."

Enrico Contardi, whose pamphlet on the visions was distributed throughout the Catholic world in 1948 by various religious orders, commented on the meaning of the visions of Cornacchiola as follows, "It is all too clear that God, angered and offended by the waywardness of men, who forget to render homage to their creator, and who fight among themselves like savage wolves, wishes to punish humanity with individual and collective chastisements. But then the sublime Lady whom he chose for Immaculate Mother and Virgin, and whom he left at the foot of the Cross to be our Mother, intervenes in our favor, interposes herself between the wayward sons on earth and the Divine Son in Heaven" (Contardi 1947:5)²⁰.

The other Italian and French visions for which I have detailed information share this moral and theme. The messages of the Virgin to Angela Volpini (born 1940) in a village of Pavia from 1947 to 1956 constantly refer to the conversion of sinners. Similarly at Ile Bouchard (Touraine) in France in December 1947, Mary asked girls, 7-12, to pray for a France in danger.²¹ In these countries the enemy was present and overt. At Acquaviva in Sicily Mary asked the 12-year old seer to come back on the same afternoon with her nieces and nephews, at a time when the Communist children's league, Associazione dei Pionieri Italiani (A.P.I.), was going to have a meeting in the town. The author of a booklet about the vision, Giuselli, provides a gloss of what must have been running through the Virgin's mind,

On this very day the godless ones are holding a perfidious campaign against children: to destroy the concept of God in the hearts of innocents (1950:38).

By contrast in Spain irreligion was not organized or open, did not distribute comic books about the class struggle like those of the A.P.I. In Spain irreligion was merely an unspoken

¹⁹ For postwar Polish visions, Kudera (1975).

²⁰ Padiglione and Menarini (1978); for spread of story, Carloya (1955:3-7).

²¹ Volpini (1959, 1996), Monteforte (1997). Volpini in retrospect rules out a socio-political side to her visions, but the vision messages speak for themselves. For Ile Bouchard, *Les faits mystérieux* (1951), Souillet (1972:173-176).

presence in the skepticism and silent hostility of many of those who had fought on the Republican side. Hence the individuation by the Virgin of certain teenagers in Aldeamoret whose parents were Republicans and who had never received communion was the exception, and general recommendations like that to the seers of Ildes in 1954 to “pray for the conversion of sinners and the world” were more the rule. But there was a message buried in the choice of seers, as with Bruno Cornacchiola, and also in the effect of the visions in converting casual observers, which show that the Spanish visions, as much as the Italian ones, were addressed to a society in deep conflict.

Marcelina Barroso of La Codosera was the granddaughter of the Socialist mayor of the town, and both her grandfather and her father were killed by the Nationalists, along with about 30 other townspeople for political reasons. The seer Mercedes Trejo of Aldeamoret was not from a religious household. Her father had been a Socialist, and Aldeamoret itself was a workers’ enclave in an area dominated by caciques. The Castellón village of Cuevas de Vinromà had voted and in the 1980s still voted Socialist and according to a newspaper article “had always been very irreligious.” The seer’s father too had been on the losing side of the war, had lost his job as a telegraphist, and had been banished from Extremadura. Adult male visionaries at Yuncillos (1948) and Ildes (1954) were known as blasphemers and infrequent church-goers before their visions. The seer of Ildes explained to me obliquely in 1977, “Some of us think we are better than others. But it can happen that to someone who speaks badly the Virgin appears. And to someone else who speaks well she does not appear.” I include in Appendix 1 an excerpt from an interview with a Civil Guard telling how he was present when four men were converted by an apparition of Mary in rural Galicia in 1961²².

So to the spectators, who knew the background of the seers, the very apparitions were sacred dramas of conversions that concerned seers, their families, or their towns. And in a context of divided communities and regions, still riven by the bitter hatreds of the Civil War, some of the visions seem to have served as a kind of collective catharsis. Aldeamoret was a workers’ town, but Aldeamoret believed Mercedes Trejo in 1947. Nearby Falangist Cáceres, a diocesan seat, did not believe the daughter of a Socialist. During the final apparition a young woman from a leading family of the city, a member in the Sección Femenina of the Falange, addressed the multitude, denouncing the child’s visions as a ploy to get alms. To the horror of those present, the woman was struck with a heart attack, and died later on the same day, a grim point in favor of the authenticity of the visions.

The reaction of Cáceres against Aldeamoret paralleled that of ecclesiastical authorities throughout Spain, with rare exceptions, to the postwar visions. The local press was silenced; circulars and leaflets without Church approval were condemned, and printing presses were destroyed (the case of a hapless printer in Madrid who published in 1951 the miracles worked by Mary in Yuncillos). Local authorities, civil and religious, distrusted these seers of dubious backgrounds and were probably a little afraid of their power. None of the postwar

²² Much was made at the time, and this was also true in Italy, of the conversion of skeptical observers. Several spectators at La Codosera were chastised for sacrilegious remarks, in particular a 24-year old Portuguese woman who said to a female companion when the latter’s boyfriend was approaching, “We haven’t seen the Virgin, but here comes Jesus Christ.” She was immediately struck blind, and converted, only later regaining her sight. At La Codosera, Usagre, and Ildes, as at the earlier visions of Ezkioga and Guadamur in 1931, the visions were contagious and seen by as many as a hundred people, and that was the surest way to be converted. The conversion of derisive male skeptics into seers became important object lessons for the visions in Limpías, Piedramillera, Ezkioga, Bachicabo, and Guadamur (Christian 1992:131-135, 1997:281-285). It is an ancient topos, and present in shrine miracles as well (Christian 1990:189).

seers were forcibly interned in mental hospitals, although this happened in 1932 in Gipúzkoa and in 1938 in Heede (Germany). But every effort was made to keep the visions local, controllable phenomena.

The position of the church hierarchy, one of extreme prudence born of extreme skepticism, was not shared by all of the clergy. Parish priests and religious were sometimes convinced by the undeniable sincerity and inspiredness of the seers, and were often responsible for permitting the first efflorescence of an apparition sequence. The Vatican itself was somewhat divided over the matter. Throughout the period, Vatican radio reported the existence of supposed visions. And Pius XII in a 1948 address printed in the *Osservatore Romano* (of 11 March) seemed to appreciate the visions²³.

Do you not see how the force of attraction of earthly goods is not able to prevent people from feeling lifted, as by instinct, toward spiritual and religious things? The most consoling aspect of these times is the ever-growing manifestation even at times flowering in visions of marvelous grandeur of the confidence and filial love that leads souls to the most pure and Immaculate Mary.

But by 1951 this flowering of visions was too much, and Alfredo Ottaviani, advisor to the Santo Ufficio, published an article, "Proceed, Christians, with more Prudence," that was reprinted in many diocesan bulletins, denying the visions as an outbreak of "natural religion." "The period we are traversing lies between the excesses of open and shameless irreligion, and a religiosity that is blind and out of control." Ottaviani recognized that a revival of great proportions was taking place, and that the visions were playing a part in this. But he wanted to ensure that the Catholicism produced by the revival was orthodox and clerical. "In the undeniable return to God that we are witnessing, the faithful should overcome all their reservations and come back to live in community of feeling, thoughts, and faith with the priest."²⁴

Indeed, in this period the visions, the byproduct of the Church's mobilization of the faithful, had become a kind of parallel mobilization. While in August 1947, the hierarchy of Almería organized a youth pilgrimage to the shrine of Saint Indalecio, the man who supposedly first brought Christianity to the area, as a symbol of "the great task of rechristianization that the youth of Spain has undertaken," another, more effective rechristianization was underway nearby. Ginesa Simón Casanova, age 14, was having a series of visions in a mountain village that attracted thousands of praying spectator who said all fifteen mysteries of the Rosary. While in the presence of the Bishop of Tortosa 3,500 men were receiving communion in Castellón, 10,000 persons were flocking daily to an erstwhile Socialist village in the hills, to watch the daughter of a Republican talk with Mary, in spite of the opposition of the bishops of all the neighboring dioceses.

The vision-missions were more effective, I think, even than the Fatima missions. At ordinary missions the symbolic missionary was the local shrine image; at those of Fatima it was a famous and miraculous international image; but at the vision-missions the missionary was the Virgin herself, or Jesus Christ, or the Holy Family. The effect was deep and lasting. For days, weeks, even years a sacred climate prevailed in some of the vision towns. I have

²³ Cited in *Iris de Paz*, 1948:324.

²⁴ The Ottaviani article was cited in the most comprehensive analysis of visions, that of Staehlin (1954). This skeptical book had a great impact on Spain's already skeptical clergy, but it was considered to have gone too far, particularly in its criticism of Fatima, and new editions and foreign translations were never published.

spoken to priests and religious who received their vocations at visions, either as visionaries or as spectators. And the level of emotion — collective weeping, petitions, and prayers — seems to have been very high at the vast majority of these events²⁵.

In part their attractiveness for a Spanish population that was deeply religious yet in some regions justifiably resentful of the alliance of the Church with the powerful lay precisely in their unofficial character, precisely because they were rejected by the bishops. The vision events provided a way that religious persons of all political backgrounds could come together from divided regions, towns, or families, in intense communion with the divine presence. I suspect that visions in France, Germany, and Italy to some extent also served as emotional counterweights to the deep divisions in the postwar period.

But however uncontrolled or aclerical the visions, the movement of piety they represented fed into the Mission campaigns of the Church and contributed to the genuineness of the revival of West European Catholicism after the war. So although Ottaviani could deplore their excesses, he could not treat them as a major threat to the Faith. In fact in some dioceses bishops adopted an attitude of cautious cooptation. While the visions (and much less the visionaries) were not certified as partaking of the supernatural, the piety they engendered was channeled into new shrines and devotions. One way chosen to redirect the new piety in old channels was to counter the vision-mission with a regular mission.

In 1953 a Sicilian bishop certified the supernatural character of a kind of vision that presents far fewer problems than the reception of messages through seers. An image of Mary wept in Siracusa — the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Here there were no special seers; when the image wept it could be seen by everyone. The message was clear and simple: Mary was sad, presumably at the state of affairs of mankind.²⁶ This kind of epiphany was part of a very old tradition in southern Europe, known also in the pagan churches, that images wept in times of crisis. In Spain weeping or bleeding images came into vogue in the seventeenth century during periods of national or regional disaster (Christian 1989, 1991:234-240). In central and eastern Italy the eyes of a number of images were seen to move during the Napoleonic invasion (Cattaneo 1991, 1993) and also when Rome was threatened in the 1850s. In 1853 a Tuscan shepherdess was told by a vision of Mary weeping in the rain, "Help me to weep. I cry for so many sinners! Do you see how much it is raining? There are more sins than the drops of water that fall." A commentator wrote, "Most Holy Mary, to alert Catholic Italy to be on guard against the terrible aggression of pagan Italy, had already in 1850 worked prodigious movements of the eyes in her images in Rimini, Fossombrone, and Sanginesio."²⁷ With this kind of tradition well kept up locally, the meaning of the tears of the Immaculate Heart of Mary in 1953 was no great mystery.

The bishop's swift approval of the supernatural character of the tears inevitably provoked, during the Marian year of 1954, more cases. Of the 22 apparitions of Mary we know about from November 1953 to 31 December 1954, thirteen were lacrimations of pictures reproducing the image of Siracusa, and the phenomenon has continued intermittently ever since, one of the latest an image of Mary from Medjugorje at Civitavecchia (Warner 1996).

²⁵ Callahan (1987) sensibly questions whether the religious enthusiasm in many parts of the country in the post-war period had a lasting effect, particularly on the working class.

²⁶ The best work on Siracusa, which cites whole portions of the official investigation verbatim, is the unpublished thesis of Carlo M. Ramondetta. The work that most spread the story was that of Musumeci (1954). In Spanish, Badame (1953).

²⁷ *Relazione storica* (1860:19).

Similarly, stimulated by the case of Siracusa, propagated through the magazine of religious orders, people in two towns in Galicia also had images that "wept" what chemists determined to be real tears. A similar case occurred in a village of Cuenca in 1959, and in Granada in 1982. In all of these instances the weeping of images provoked the weeping and in some instances the conversions of those who watched.²⁸ After 1954 the number of visions dropped back to the rate characteristic of the pre-war period. But the Church is no more in control of visions than it was when Ottaviani wrote his article, and since that time many visions have run counter to Church policy and strategy. For although to all intents and purposes the Church ended its Cold War at the Second Vatican Council, contemporary visions continue with the conversionary, apocalyptic tone of the late 1940s. Those of Garabandal in northern Spain and San Damiano (Piacenza) in Italy, both of which began in 1961, and subsequently those of Medjugorje, found worldwide audiences among those distressed by changes in Church policy, a slackening of Church discipline, and a softened attitude towards Communism (Apolito 1992).

As in the times of the Flagellants, the Cathars the beguines, and the Protestants, the Catholic Church in the twentieth century continues to engender movements of piety that escape its control. The Church's acceptance of certain visions and revelations, and their very widespread deployment, has shown lay people how to have direct, public converse with the Saints, which is especially problematic now that the Church has far fewer ways to enforce discipline.

To the question, what made people take visions seriously in large enough numbers for them to find their way into newspapers, radio, or newsreels, we answer the Cold War — its electoral and local conflicts in Italy and France, its social and personal trauma in divided nations, and the oppression of one faith by another in Spain, Portugal, and Eastern Europe. The recourse to the solutions proposed by past apparitions led to new apparitions. But to the trauma of division and oppression we should add the fear of a devastating international atomic war. For even in the United States a phenomenon not unlike that of visions was going on at the same time — the sighting of UFO's, interpreted as aliens, whether those of Russia or those from outer space. The months of June and July 1947, when the European wave of visions began, were also the beginning of the great American saucer scare. A tireless researcher who read through 140 daily newspapers from 90 North American cities for the year of 1947, found over 850 separate sightings of flying saucers in the months of June and July (cf. Bloecher).

Writing in 1950, Lewis Mumford argued, "It is plain that we are now facing something even worse than war: we are threatened with an outbreak of compulsive irrationality. By reason of the fears and suspicions and hatreds that have been introduced into the affairs of nations during the last four decades, no small part of mankind lives in a state of self-enclosed delusion..." (Mumford 1950). The explosion of atom bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the V-2 rockets of Peenemunde, the possibility of germ warfare, signaled a new era in the technology of destruction in which all were vulnerable, and in which death would come from the sky. Hear Ida Peerdeman tell of her vision of 26 December 1947 (untitled booklet, p. 28).²⁹

²⁸ For Entrecruces, where the Virgin wept, there have been only brief articles, like that of Daniel Vega, "La Milagrosa de Entrecruces," *La Milagrosa*, November 1957. The image was seen to weep eleven times from 11 February to 21 April 1954; a similar case occurred in the township of Foz (Lugo), in the church of San Martín de Mondoñedo a few months later. In the village of Villalba de la Sierra (Cuenca), a lithograph of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel wept intermittently in October and November 1959. The event was chronicled by Bort Carbó in *Diario de Cuenca*, and *Blanco y Negro* carried photographs 24 October 1959. In all three Spanish cases the weeping stopped when the images were put behind glass. More recent instances in Granada 13 May 1982 (*Ideal, Patria, Diario 16, El País, Ya*, 15-20 May) and in Puebla de Don Fadrique (Granada), 9 May 1983 (*Ideal, Diario de Granada*, 11-14 May).

²⁹ See n. 3 above.

The vision fades and now I see a sort of cigar or something shaped like a torpedo flying past me at such great speed that I can hardly discern it. It seemed to be of the same color as aluminum. I see it spring open suddenly. I feel with my hand and experience different frightening sensations. The first is a total loss of feeling. I live and yet I do not live. Then I see faces before me (broad faces) disfigured with repulsive ulcers like leprosy. Then I feel terrible diseases (cholera etc.). Then I see little black things whirling about me. I cannot perceive them with my eyes and it is as if I am expected to look through something. And then I see beautiful white fields with those little things enlarged in them. I do not know how I must explain this. (Bacilli? I ask.) Then the Lady says, 'It is hellish'. I feel my face swelling as it were and it feels swollen to the touch. It is bloated and quite stiff. I cannot move. Then I hear the Lady saying again: 'And that is what they are inventing', and then very softly: 'Russia, but the others too'. After that the Lady says, 'Nations be warned'. And then the Lady disappears.

In this context the old apocalyptic warnings of a divine chastisement of world-wide proportions has a referent in the techniques of mass annihilation that is unmatched in history, with the possible exception of the Black Death. And the division of nations in the Cold War made the use of the weapons a real possibility. At Heede, near the Dutch border in a divided Germany, Jesus Christ told seers late in 1945, after the bombings of Hamburg, Dresden, and Hiroshima, "Humanity has not listened to My Holy Mother who appeared at Fatima to ask for penance ... I am very close. The earth will tremble and contract; it will be terrible. like a smaller version of the Last Judgment" (*Iris de Paz*, 1 December 1948, 326). Small wonder, under the circumstances, that people wanted direct word from their saints as to what course of action they could take and what prayers would avoid God's wrath.

In conclusion a more general observation. A village-, region- or even nation-based analysis of an unusual event like an apparition would miss much about it. As earthquakes, seemingly spontaneous and unconnected, are in fact systematic manifestations of shifts in the earth's surface, so apparition episodes may arise from movements very deep in the individual consciousness with a collective, often systemic etiology. This kind of trans-national pattern of visions is by no means a novelty of the Cold War. In the period from 1450 to 1515 remarkably similar visions were occurring throughout southwest Europe.³⁰ Perhaps in the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries nation-states with national churches somewhat compartmentalized European religion, but in many respects the nation-state is no longer the real arena of culture. In 1947 a circuit of mutual influence could probably have been detected that linked the visions of Mercedes Trejo in Aldeamoret to the fanshen of a Chinese commune.

APPENDIX 1. CONVERSIONS IN GALICIA

In December 1961, Manuel Moreira, a sergeant in the Civil Guard, went with some friends to a place on a hillside near Villaesteva (Lugo) where lights were supposed to be seen, lights supposedly connected with visions of the Virgin Mary seen by four children a couple of months previously. In 1977 he recounted what he had seen sixteen years before.

³⁰ Cf. Christian (1990) and Niccoli (1987, 1995). For recent studies that explore the intersection of politics and visions in other periods: on Thomas Martin, Boutry and Nassif (1985); on Knock, Nold (1993), Donnelly (1993), and Hynes (1994); on Marpingen, Blackburn (1993); on Medjugorje, Bax (1995). For the Cold War and visions in the United States, Kselman and Avella (1986) and Zimdars-Swartz (1989).

Llegamos a la entrada del pueblo para coger el camino aquel del monte. Y vi allí un coche de Sarria parado. Ya digo, esa era las once de la noche, o más. No hicimos ni caso del coche. Ibamos subiendo por el sendero aquel, y sentimos: “¡Ay Virgen Santísima! ¡Ay Virgen Santísima!”

Y yo dije: “Bueno, hay uno que se accidentó allí, o uno que se mató; o algo le pasó”, unos llantos. Ya ve que un hombre, los hombres pues que—. Yo me echo a correr, los dejo— mire, iba el pedáneo, iba mi cuñado y yo y el tío. Ibamos los cuatro. Ya los dejo solos y me echo delante para ver lo que pasaba, para auxiliar a eso.

Entonces me encuentro cuatro tíos— cuatro señores arrodillados, mire, todo aquello mojado y lloviendo. Como estaban embarrados llorando dicen: “¡Ay Virgen Santísima!”

Dije: “¿Qué les pasó? ¿qué es lo que pasa?” Yo miré con la linterna a ver si veo algún muerto. Nada. “¿Qué es lo que les pasó?”, les dije.

“Ay, que terminamos de ver a la Virgen Santísima”. Y llorando los cuatro como niños.

Yo, aquello que supo, me aparto y digo: “Oiga, pero Uds., no sean Uds. comediantes ahora. Uds. parece que la Virgen viene a postrarse por aquí por esta”.

Y decía uno: “Ay, si no es la Virgen Santísima, cuando llego a Sarria yo encuentro mis padres muertos”. No decía otra cosa. Y yo le recriminaba. Estos son unos comediantes. Este era un chico por ahí de unos treinta y tantos años. Era de sindicatos de Sarria, que murió este chico, ya murió. Mira, fue un hombre que lo echaron de Sahara, de Venezuela, no pisaba la iglesia y era un semi-salvaje, porque era un blasfemo —y era él que decía: “Cuando llego a Sarria que encuentro mis padres muertos si no era la Virgen”. Que yo no los conocí; no conocí a ninguno.

Pero un señor de cabello blanco de unos sesenta y tantos años se acerca, se levanta y se viene hacia mí y dice: “Mire Ud., hasta hoy eran cuatro niños que no les hicimos caso, ni nadie les hacía caso. Hoy somos cuatro hombres y desgraciadamente los cuatro incrédulos”, dice, “pero lo que hemos visto es la auténtica Virgen Santísima”.

Entonces, como era un hombre que se expresaba tan bien, dije, “Bueno, ¿qué es lo que vieron?”

Dice: “Mire Ud. Yo estaba en la farmacia” —porque ese era farmacéutico, o encargado de la farmacia. Me dijo: “Yo estaba en la farmacia, eran las diez de la noche. Vieron estos señores —estos amigos— y me dijeron —eran cuatro: “¿quieres que vayamos a ver las Vírgenes de Villaesteva?”— el eso, de mofa allí. Mire, llegamos, decimos, bueno, debe ser aquí el sitio donde hay que subir para ir y ver y tal. Mire, al subir por aquí, íbamos mirando. ¿Aquí qué vamos a ver? si aquí no se ve nada”. Dice: “Mire, hemos visto un resplandor”, —porque hay, mire, aquí está el pueblo, aquí está el monte donde hay que subir, aquí está Dradas. Bueno, del pueblo aquí hay una loma para subir al monte que se junta por la parte ésta. Bueno, el monte les ocultaba el pueblo éste.

Dice que apareció un resplandor por encima de la loma, un resplandor que cada vez, claro, aumentaba y avanzaba, y dijeron: “¡Mira qué resplandor más rara!” Dice: “Este es un coche que circula por la carretera, y eso es el reflejo de la luz”. Pero aparece la luz. “Mire, la luz era forma de ovoide, que tendría un metro y pico de largo”, dijeron. Dice: “En medio de ese resplandor de esa luz, en medio de eso iba la Virgen,” decía, “la auténtica Virgen”. Nos describió cómo iba: “llevaba manto blanco, llevaba corona, llevaba la cara —mira, la cara no hemos visto porque la tenía tapada un velo azul— la cara no se lo hemos visto. Pero de la corona a medida que iba avanzando soltaba estrellas y las

estrellas la seguían en procesión”. Dice: “Mire, vino así y llegó aquí encima de nosotros. Estos no hicieron nada más que tirarse de rodillas y empezar a llorar”. Dice: “Yo tuve el valor suficiente”, esto me decía a mí, los otros llorando sin parar, “para decirle: “Virgen Santísima, acércate de nosotros”. Dice: “Llegó que casi nos tocábamos de la mano... Ahora nos vamos a Sarria, y lo primero que vamos hacer es irnos a un sacerdote a regenerar nuestra vida y tal”.

APPENDIX 2. SPANISH VISIONS 1945-1961

Place	Seers/Date	Saints seen
La Codosera (Badajoz)	Girls age 10, then others, many visions, 27 May 1945 on	Above all La Dolorosa
Aldeamoret (Cáceres)	Girl, age 7, nine visions, 29 April - 6 May 1947	Virgen del Pilar
Los Cerricos (Almería)	Girl, age 14, five visions, 31 July - 10 August 1947	Mary, for Rosary
Cuevas de Vinromà (Castellón)	Girl, age 10, ca. March -1 December 1947	Mary in various forms
Yunclillos (Toledo)	Man, middle-aged family head, one vision, 7 June 1948	Mary, vocation to preach
Usagre (Badajoz)	Two teenage girls, then many others, visions 3 May 1950 onwards	“Inmaculada del Calvario”
Casaseca de los Chanes (Zamora)	Girl, age about 12, then another, older girl from Benavente; over several months until 15 November 1950	Mary
Entrecruces (La Coruña)	11 February- 21 April 1954	Image of Milagrosa weeps eleven times
Foz (Lugo)	1954-1955	Image of Immaculate Heart of Mary weeps
Ibdes (Zaragoza)	Two girls, ages 11, 12; then man, 51; many times, 6 June 1954 on	La Dolorosa, Pascual Bailón, Santiago, Sacred Heart of Jesus
Jorcas (Teruel)	Eight boys and two girls, ages 7-11, 6 June to at least 24 June 1958	Mary, Child Jesus, in cave
Villalba de la Sierra (Cuenca)	18 September- November weeps	Print of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel 1959
Villaesteva (Lugo)	Four children, ages 7, 7, 11, 11; then others; mid-September to December 1961	Mary as in parish church
San Sebastián de Garabandal (Cantabria)	Four girls, ages 10, 12, 12, 12; very many times from 18 June 1961 to 1965	Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, other Marys, St. Michael

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