

## The Final Expulsion

King Philip III and his corrupt prime minister, the Duke of Lerma, were the principal actors in the final expulsion of 1609–1614. By any standards, they were fanatics while the havoc they created throughout Spanish society still demands redress. Fray Jaime Bleda, a Dominican priest who is called "*infame*" in some reports, was another of these mass-murderers; he had grown up among Muslims around Valencia, and worked with Philip III to arrange the final expulsion. Bleda favoured a general massacre of these Spanish citizens. The Inquisition thus continued its nefarious labours under Philip III, the new king.

September 1609 marks the final Edict of Expulsion that was promulgated. Many refugees escaped to Tunis in this period, since they generally came from the East coast rather than from Granada and Seville, and settled mainly in the capital and Testour. French ships, whose masters often robbed their passengers, took them to Oran and other ports along the North African coast (if they did not previously give them "burial at sea" after they had seized their possessions).

In any case, the refugees could not carry much with them, and that little was easily stolen. In 1614 they came from Murcia, ancient Tudmir which had been named after the Visigothic and Arian Count Theodomir who set up the entity under the Arabs in the 8th century.

Forty thousand Muslim children were said to live in Valencia. This may be a high figure, but orphans were made by the thousands as the departing Muslims were forced to leave their offspring behind to the uncharitable care of Inquisitors and policemen. How could these youngsters be treated humanely, deprived in this manner of their parents' love? They were snatched even at the port of embarkation, to be raised as Catholics (and probably as house servants, to "earn their keep", like Leonor in *Heart of Jade*). They had been deprived of Islamic schools and books for their education for over a century.

So in September 1609 the final decree of expulsion was promulgated, and the Spanish fleet was summoned from Naples in Italy where it watched the Turk, to transport these hitherto useful citizens to foreign parts. The port of Alfaques on the coast near Tortosa was where most of the Aragonese Muslims were told to embark.

The expulsion from Aragon and Catalonia took place principally during 1609 and 1610, and continued

until 1614 in the case of Murcia. Spain was emptied of Muslims from all parts. Many fled to France where the Reformation was still in progress; but to stay there, they had to become Catholics, just as in Spain. So they plodded on when and where they could, many to the port of Agde on the Mediterranean coast, and others to Genoa, Venice and other Italian ports, to sail to Turkey, North Africa or the Middle East as the Mancebo of Arevalo apparently did on his Pilgrimage to Mecca.

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