

NOSTRADAMUS GOES TO HAITI

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Michel de Nostredame was a French doctor and nobleman during the Renaissance; choosing a most ridiculous pseudo-Latin construction, he called himself Nostradamus.

He is remembered today only because of the collection of nearly 1,000 versified prophecies, so-called *quatrains*, which he published, and which have continued to fascinate readers, right up to the present day. Despite their enigmatic character, the author of the present text has had very little trouble in understanding these obscure statements.

The verses are numbered, but not arranged in chronological order and seem to be as mixed as a cut-up text. The present author, who sees what no one else is able to detect, has noticed that the mumbo-jumbo in verse number IV,32, *Le Pante, Choina Philon*, is a piece of corrupt classical Greek, which can be translated as 'everything common among friends', and in fact is a disguised quotation from The New Testament's *Acts*, Chapter IV,32 (notice the number), where you'll find the words, *autois hapanta koina*, translated as 'they had all things in common' in the King James Bible. This is, however, the only case of the number of a certain verse giving any meaning, and I allow myself to understand it as nothing more than a subtle greeting from the old prophet to his younger, 21st century colleague.

Permit me now, dear reader, to entertain you with an interpretation of a completely different verse, quatrain number IX,16, which goes:

*De Castel Franco sortira l'assemblee
L'ambassadeur non plaisant fera scisme.
Ceux de Ribiere seront en la meslee
Et au grand goulphre desnieront l'entree.*

Castelfranco is the name of several Italian towns, of which Castelfranco Veneto, situated near Venice, may be the most noteworthy, since *grand goulphre* in the fourth line could be a reference to the Golfo di Venezia. Nostradamus may very well have known this location from his youth, when he travelled through Italy by foot. There are, however, no events of any importance linked with this town, nor with any other rural towns of that name.

The first line may then be translated as: 'The assembly leaves Castelfranco'. It is, however, hard to find any events of importance taking place in the cities of Castelfranco, and, to the best of my knowledge, no Nostradamus scholar has even been able to link the verse to any of these locations.

On the other hand *sortira* may be considered as a transitive verb and if you look upon *Castel* and *Franco* as two separate words - and that is how they occur in the text - the door is now open for

two translations: Franco makes the assembly leave the citadel, or The assembly makes Franco leave the citadel.

Translating the rest of the verse doesn't present much difficulty:

The unpleasant ambassador causes disagreement
The people of Ribiere (or those from the river) get into a fight
and deny entry to the great gulf (or abyss)

During the last half century scholars have unanimously seen the verse as a reference to the Spanish Civil War and General Franco's seizing of power. *Castel* is then usually read as Castillia (Spanish Castilla, French le Castille), *Ribiere* may be understood as Primo de Rivèra or, according to some, the Mediterranean Riviera. Le *grand goulphre* is, by some, interpreted literally, as the great bay, i.e. the Mediterranean Sea, and by others, metaphorically, as an abyss.

The first scholar to see this verse as a reference to Franco was, as far as I can see, Gabriel Trarieux d'Egmont, in whose book, *Que sera 1939* (Paris, 1938), page 185 reads: "Traduction: 'Le général Franco sortira l'assemblée (des Cortès) de son château de Castel, c'est à dire de Castille, de Madrid, et chassera le parlementarisme. Les Italiens de la riviera seront dans la mêlée et fermeront l'entrée de Gibraltar.'"

James Laver (*Nostradamus or The Future Foretold*, London 1952, page 223) translates the verse as follows: "Franco will drive the Parliament from Castille; this will not please the ambassador, who will break away. The supporters of Ribiere (Primo de Rivèra, who became Dictator of Spain in 1923) will be in the fight, and will prevent entry into the great Gulf."

Erica Cheatham (*The Prophecies of Nostradamus*, London 1973, page 355f), translates: "From Castille Franco will bring out the assembly, the ambassadors will not agree and cause a schism. The people of Rivèra will be in the crowd, and the great man will be denied entry to the Gulf."

Jean Charles de Fontbruné writes in his book, *Nostradamus, historien et prophète*, Paris 1980, page. 271f: "Franco sortira d'une junte dans une place forte de Castille. L'envoyé qui n'aura pas plu, fera le (fa)scisme, ceux de (Primo) de Rivera seront avec lui; ils refuseront l'entrée au grand gouffre de malheurs (L'Allemagne)."

It is obvious that even though these interpreters agree about where and when to place the verse, they look very differently upon the last two lines. Cheatham interprets: "The last line is held to describe Franco's exile when he was not allowed to cross the Mediterranean (Goulphre) to his native Spain", while James Laver writes: "Perhaps the Great Gulf is the abyss of Communism, from which Spain was saved, according to one point of view, by Franco's seizure of power."

Well, everything depends on whose side you are on. Here's how a Nazi, Karl E. Krafft, understands the verse. The following is based on the Danish edition of his book *Nostradamus forudser Europas Fremtid [Nostradamus Foresees the Future of Europe]*, page 84: "... a Spaniard (Castilian) by the name Franco leaves the League of Nations. The assembly is De Vayo, of the League of Nations. Ceux de Ribiere is seen as Pilar of José Antonio Primo de Rivèra. Line 4 is seen as a description of the defence of Toledo: "... especially of the mighty gap created by the Reds' attempt at blowing up ..."

The American commentator, Stewart Robbs, has a different interpretation in his book, *Napoleon, Hitler and the Present Crisis*, New York, 1941. I know it only from Vlaicu Ionescu's in-depth criticism in his much discussed book, *Le message de Nostradamus sur l'ère prolétaire*, Paris 1976, p 451f. Robb sees the verse as dealing with Franco's meeting (*l'assemblée*) with Mussolini in San Remo, at the Riviera (*Ribiere*), in 1941, and believes that *meslee* refers to their disagreement (which, in fact, was of modest proportions). Line 4 is thought to describe Franco's refusal to let German troops travel via Gibraltar to Africa.

A look at these different interpretations clearly reveals how easily a commentator can fool himself. With a starting point in a few words, like Franco and Castel, you can choose from a huge variety of locations, persons and events, all of which can be arranged freely to fit into a wide-framed interpretation.

No matter how striking the appearance of the words Franco, Castel, and Ribiere in one verse may seem, there is something unsatisfactory about these interpretations. Ionescu himself realizes it: "Autant d'auteurs, autant de solutions, quoi qu'ayant un point commun: la référence au dictateur espagnol." [op. cit., loc.cit.]

Still he dares to contribute yet another interpretation about General Franco, in which he allows himself to rearrange the first two lines drastically, so that both rhyme and metre (which in this particular verse are both unusually regular for Nostradamus) are disregarded.

De castel Franco fera scisme
sortira (de) l'assemblee l'ambassadeur non plaisant.

This silliness is accompanied by the following words: "Une reconstruction est presque toujours nécessaire pour comprendre le texte nostradamienne." What nonsense! It surely leaves room for much free fantasy, and one has trouble understanding this statement, since Ionescu rarely elsewhere in his book, and definitely not 'presque toujours' attempts to 'reconstruct' the verses.

But back to his interpretation: Assuming that the verse must refer to Generalissimo Franco, he identifies *Castel* with the Alcazar fortress in Toledo, where Franco had his headquarters during the Civil War - as well as with Castile in general. In *l'assemblée* he sees the League of Nations, where

De Vayo was the Ambassador who worked for an international solution to the Spanish conflict. *Non plaisant* is read as *non satisfait*, even though the two words have different meanings. *Ceux de Ribiere* is understood as those of the Rivèra family who took part in the war. Ionescu ends with this addition to the list of explanations of *grand goulphre*: "le terme "goulphre" désigne la deuxième Guerre Mondiale ou Franco a refusé d'entrer ..."

Ionescu is very much against a literal interpretation of *goulphre*, as gulf or bay. The trouble with giving it a symbolic meaning is that you can read virtually anything into it. As we have seen in this text it may mean both Communism and Nazism, and now even the second World War.

This is all well summarized in James Laver's words, which end his own interpretation of the verse: "In any case, it is sufficiently remarkable to find the names Franco and 'Ribiere' in the same quatrain."

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Let me instead suggest an interpretation which sees the verse as a description of Haïti's severance from France.

After several years of bloody war the French colony, Saint-Domingue, was, on January 1, 1804, declared an independent nation under the name, Haïti. The last French troops had left the island on December 4, 1803. No fewer than 50,000 French, and probably even more Haïtians, had lost their lives during the independence wars. During the years of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic wars France was unable to hold on to its possession, but after the return of the Bourbons, in 1814, attempts were made to reclaim the lost colony.

At the end of June 1814, Louis XVIII's government sent three diplomats, including one Franco de Medina, to Haïti to find out if the population would be interested in returning to its former status as a French colony.

This Franco was, however, immediately arrested by President Henri Christophe; among his papers were found letters of threat and documents which revealed France's plans for recapturing the island and reintroducing slavery.

Henri Christophe said in a public speech: "Franco de Medina, one of the secret agents of the cabinet of Malouet, His Majesty, Louis XVIII's Minister of Maritime and Colonial Affairs, who was sent out to create discord (cfr. *L'ambassadeur non plaisant fera scisme*), has fallen into our hands at the very moment when he was about to fulfill his cruel mission ..."

Line 1 must then refer to his expulsion, which marked the end of France's attempts to regain Haïti. *L'assemblée* is the Haïtian senate, constituted in 1806, *Castel* is the famous Citadel in Port-au-Prince, built 1806-12 as a defence against the French.

Line 4 can clearly be understood as: France is denied entry to the Caribbean Ocean. Henri Christophe's proclamation of November 20, 1816, says: "Neither the French flag nor any French citizen will be allowed to enter any of the Kingdom's harbours before the French government has accepted Haïti's independence."

Line 3, *Ceux de Ribiere seront en la meslee*, is a slight anachronism, which was only fulfilled in 1843, when Mayor Charles Hérard Ainé, called Rivière, started an armed rebellion against Haïti's then President, Boyer, who was chased off to France, never to return again.

So here we have a Franco, expelled from a citadel by a senate after, as an unpleasant ambassador, who has attempted to start a conflict, a Rivière, who leads an armed rebellion, and a prohibition of the French from entering a huge gulf (The Caribbean).

It is a much more adequate interpretation than the ones about Generalissimo Franco. Its only weakness is the anachronism between line 3 and the other lines. The reader will perhaps agree that it is excusable; Nostradamus saw these events from a distance of well over 200 years.

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Previously unpublished