

The Cyclone Route

EN LA RUTA DEL HURACÁN

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On a Friday in the summer of 2015, Tropical Storm Erika, feared and longed-for, decided to take the path to Santiago de los Caballeros, the capital city of the Cibao valley, to the Dominican Republic, where we were waiting, anxious and hopeful. The lesson that one can learn from a cyclone category four, is probably that every danger also brings with it a chance. Wherever Erika's eye turned, death and destruction would undoubtedly follow. But with some luck, she would take a turn through Jarabacoa in the south of Cibao, to cut the top of Pico Duarte, and then turn northward. She would leave the island via Monte Cristi on the Haitian border and release her terrible downpour of rain over Mao and Navarrete, nourish the looped river of the Yaque and leave a strip of new life behind, which in a year of drought is so important. And, in fact, Erika turned to Haiti and left Cibao without rain, dry and bereft of her deadly touch, which also promises life.

The route of hurricanes and cyclones are only one of the things that connect the Caribbean and the Canaries, the Spanish archipelago off the coast of the Sahara. Between the "Fortunate Isles," as they are also called, and the southern Cape Verde storms arise, driven by the heat of the desert, following the route of Columbus across the Atlantic and nourishing themselves with the fury of the ocean on their way to America.

But there is more: the tropical climate, warm and humid, the volcanic soil, the heavenly beaches, and the lush vegetation as the fruitful

Un viernes de verano del 2015, la tormenta tropical Erika, temida y deseada, decidió pasearse por Santiago de los Caballeros, capital del valle del Cibao, en República Dominicana. Todos la esperábamos (yo estaba allí) entre asustados y esperanzados, que son las dos lecturas que se pueden hacer de un huracán de fortaleza cuatro cuando está a punto de llegar, pues toda amenaza trae consigo una oportunidad. Erika sembraría la destrucción y la muerte por dónde pasara su ojo, qué duda cabe, pero si, con un poco de fortuna, trazara su parábola por el sur del Cibao, por Jarabacoa, para peinar la cumbre del pico Duarte y dirigirse después hacia al norte y salir de la isla por Monte Cristi, en la frontera con Haití, el vuelo fértil de su falda de agua habría pasado someramente sobre Mao y Navarrete, alimentando el retorcido curso del río Yaque y dejando a su paso un renacer de vida, tan necesitado en aquel año de sequía. Al final, Erika se decantó por Haití y dejó al Cibao plantado, seco, sin su beso de muerte y vida.

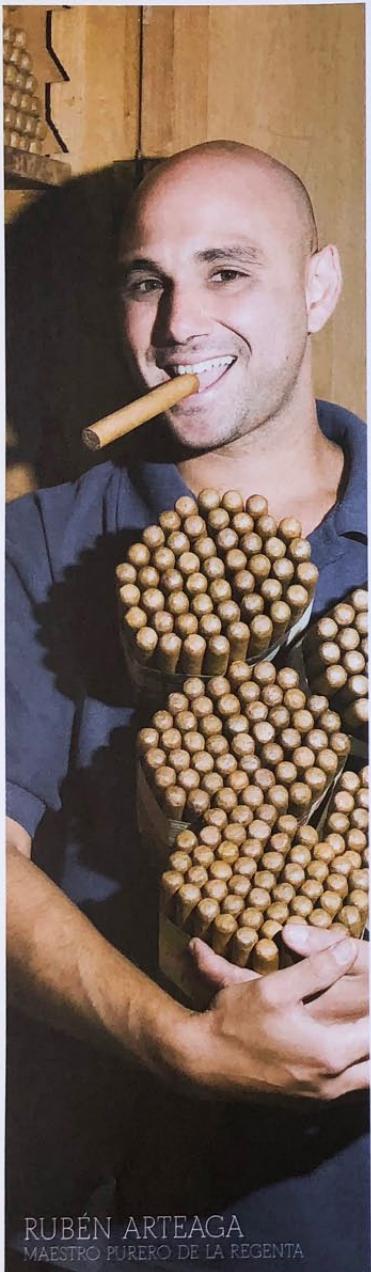
La ruta de los huracanes es sólo una de las conexiones que hermana a las Canarias, el archipiélago español situado en la costa occidental del Sáhara, con el Caribe. Hacia el sur, entre las islas Afortunadas (como son también conocidas) y Cabo Verde, nacen las tormentas que, empujadas por el calor del desierto, cruzarán el Atlántico siguiendo la ruta de Colón, alimentándose de la ira del océano, hasta las Américas.

Pero no es lo único. El clima tropical, cálido y húmedo, el tipo suelo de origen volcánico, las playas paradisíacas y la más frondosa vegetación nacida



THE TRADITION OF THE CANARY CIGAR INDUSTRY HAS EXISTED FOR OVER ONE HUNDRED YEARS. THANKS TO THE INITIATIVE OF YOUNG LOVERS OF THE PURO PALMERO - LA REGENTA, MONTE ALTO, KOLUMBUS AND HACIENDA LIBERTAD - IT IS BEING REVIVED TODAY AFTER A TIME OF CRISIS.

LA INDUSTRIA CANARIA DEL CIGARRO ES CENTENARIA Y TRADICIONAL DESPUES DE UNA ÉPOCA DE DURA CRISIS, HOY RENACE GRACIAS A LA INICIATIVA DE GENTE JOVEN ENAMORADA DEL "PURO PALMERO": LA REGENTA, MONTE ALTO, KOLUMBUS Y HACIENDA LIBERTAD.



THE CANARY CIGAR ONCE EXPERIENCED A GOLDEN AGE, WHICH TODAY NEW INITIATIVES, LIKE KOLUMBUS OR HACIENDA LIBERTAD, WANT TO REVIVE.

EL "PURO PALMERO" HA VIVIDO UNA EDAD DE ORO QUE HOY QUIEREN RESUCITAR NUEVAS INICIATIVAS COMO KOLUMBUS O HACIENDA LIBERTAD.

consequence of any destruction caused by natural disaster, be it a hurricane or volcanic eruption. Seeking a new world, over the centuries thousands of Canarians have followed this route of the hurricane. Those who returned, brought plant species with them – like potatoes or bananas or tobacco – which in the meantime are typically Canarian, along with other industrial and cultural riches: the manufacturing of rum, honey wine, and, of course, cigars.

There are many cigar manufacturers with roots in the Canaries. Two Cubans are particularly noteworthy: Alejandro Robaina, who was Cuba's best tobacco grower for many years, and the late José Orlando Padrón.

THE GOLDEN AGE

The cultural exchange that took place during the 19th century between the Canary Islands and the Caribbean also included handmade cigars – the Puro Palmero. Although tobacco had been cultivated for two hundred years, predominantly on La Palma in the Breña Alta region, it was the returning "Indians," who after having been successful took the production method of cigars from Cuba with them. Currently, in Breña Alta Cuban types are being grown, among them Pelo de Oro, Sancti Spiritu, and naturally the local tobacco types that

can adapt the best to the climatic circumstances of the islands, and is named after the region, la Breña Canaria.

The Canary cigar once experienced a golden age, which today new initiatives, like Kolumbus or Hacienda Libertad, want to revive. At the beginning of the century, brands such as Condal and Peñamil were able to make a name for themselves on the always difficult Spanish cigar market, and even in several international markets like Germany and the US. With the mergers and acquisitions of the large, multinational tobacco companies, however, these brands went under. In 2005, the manufacturing company CITA (Compañía Insular de Tabacos) was sold to the British Gallaher, which two years later was then acquired by JT International. These large companies were not interested in premium cigars but solely in the cigarette brand Coronas, which later merged with Winston.

JT International parted from the CITA factories for handmade cigars, and thus Condal as well as Peñamil disappeared from the scene. Eleven years later, the Japanese multinational company and Dos Santos, manufacturer of La Regenta, decided that Dos Santos would be allowed to produce and sell the new Condal as part of a new license, under the condition that the exact origin-

Right: The Canary Islands nurture a cigar tradition that dates back to over a century, but tobacco has been cultivated there even longer

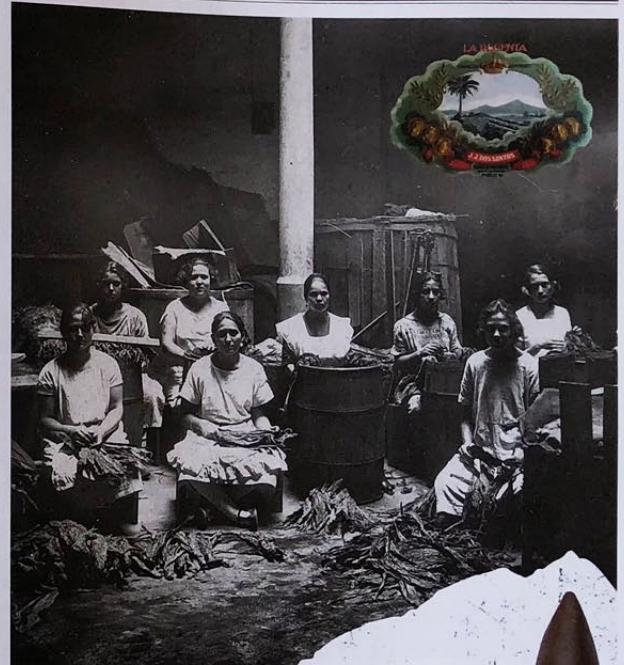
Derecha: La tradición del cigarro en las islas Canarias es más que centenaria, pero el cultivo de tabaco se daba allí incluso antes

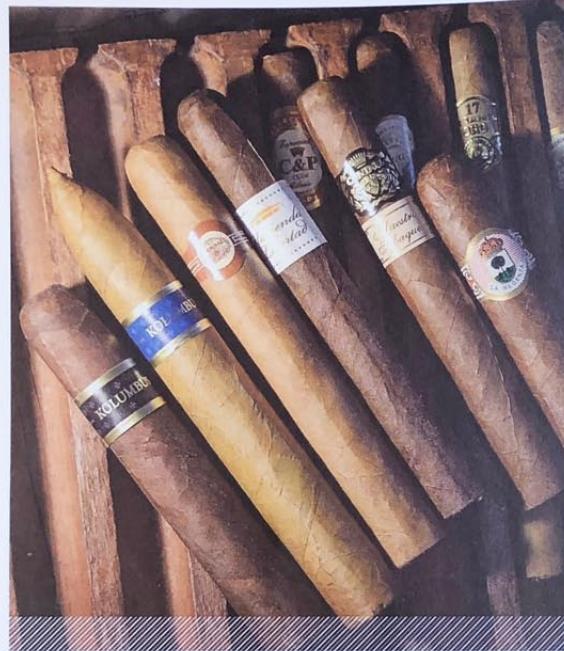
de la fertilidad que todo desastre natural, ya sea huracán o erupción volcánica, deja tras su huella de destrucción...

Hace siglos que miles de canarios emprendieron esa ruta, la de los huracanes, en busca de una oportunidad en un mundo nuevo y, los que regresaron, trajeron con ellos cultivos que hoy son típicos de Canarias, como la "papa", el plátano o el tabaco, y otro tipo de riqueza, industrial y cultural: la fabricación de ron, de hidromiel y, por supuesto, de cigarros. No son pocos los tabajeros de origen canario. Dos cubanos sobresalen por encima de todos los demás: Alejandro Robaina, el que fue por muchos años el mejor cultivador de tabaco de Cuba, y el recientemente fallecido José Orlando Padrón.

LA EDAD DE ORO

El intercambio cultural entre Canarias y el Caribe da lugar en el siglo XIX a una forma de entender el cigarro artesano: el "puro palmero". Los "indianos," emigrantes que volvían a su casa después de hacer fortuna, trajeron de Cuba a Canarias la fabricación de cigarros, aunque el cultivo ya se daba doscientos años antes y aún existe, sobre todo, en la isla de La Palma, en la región de Breña Alta. Allí se siembran actualmente variedades cubanas como el Pelo de Oro o Sancti Spiritu y, por supuesto, la semilla autóctona, la que mejor se adapta a las condiciones de las islas, que coge el nombre de la región: la Breña Canaria.





Left: The expression of the new Canarian Palermo cigar: Kolumbus, Condal, Hacienda Libertad, La Regenta ...

Izquierda: La expresión del nuevo cigarro palmero canario: Kolumbus, Condal, Hacienda Libertad, La Regenta ...

al blend would be used. The cigar returned to the Spanish market and will also be available on the German market very soon.

But it would also be unfair to attribute the decline of the Canary premium cigar to the mergers of the large cigarette manufacturers alone. The truth is that, with the disappearance of CITA the main driver was lost. Thanks to its cigarette brand Coronas, the company had more finances at its disposal to invest in the market and to increase the prestige of the Canary cigar. Yet the Canary cigar had one other additional enemy and that was at home: the "Chinchales." The word "chinchal" is another Canarian contribution to the tobacco industry. These are facilities with lower capacity than factories where cigars can be handmade. Often these are family-run in private houses, garages or shacks. The cigars, which are substandard in quality are mainly sold to tourists, through which the reputation of the Canary cigars has been considerably

diminished. In addition, the businesses usually operate within the shadow economy and don't pay taxes or salaries – because it's mainly family – and thus contribute, on the illegal market, to a decline in prices.

RECAPTURING THE PRESTIGE

From the original industry, mainly two factories have survived: Dos Santos, manufacturers of La Regenta, and Rica Roja. Dos Santos was founded in 1921 by J.J. Dos Santos on Tenerife and in its fourth generation is managed by the young Gara Barreto and her brother Dacil. Furthermore, they've taken on the task of resurrecting the Condal with its original blend – the wrapper from the US, the binder from San Andrés, Mexico, and the filler with tobaccos from Cuba and Mata Fina tobacco from Brazil. Miguel González Pérez, owner of the Rica Roja with headquarters in La Palma, is the son and grandchild of Cubans. Although the company mainly specializes in machine-made cigars,

RECUPERACIÓN DEL PRESTIGIO

De la industria tradicional sobreviven sobre todo dos fábricas: Dos Santos,

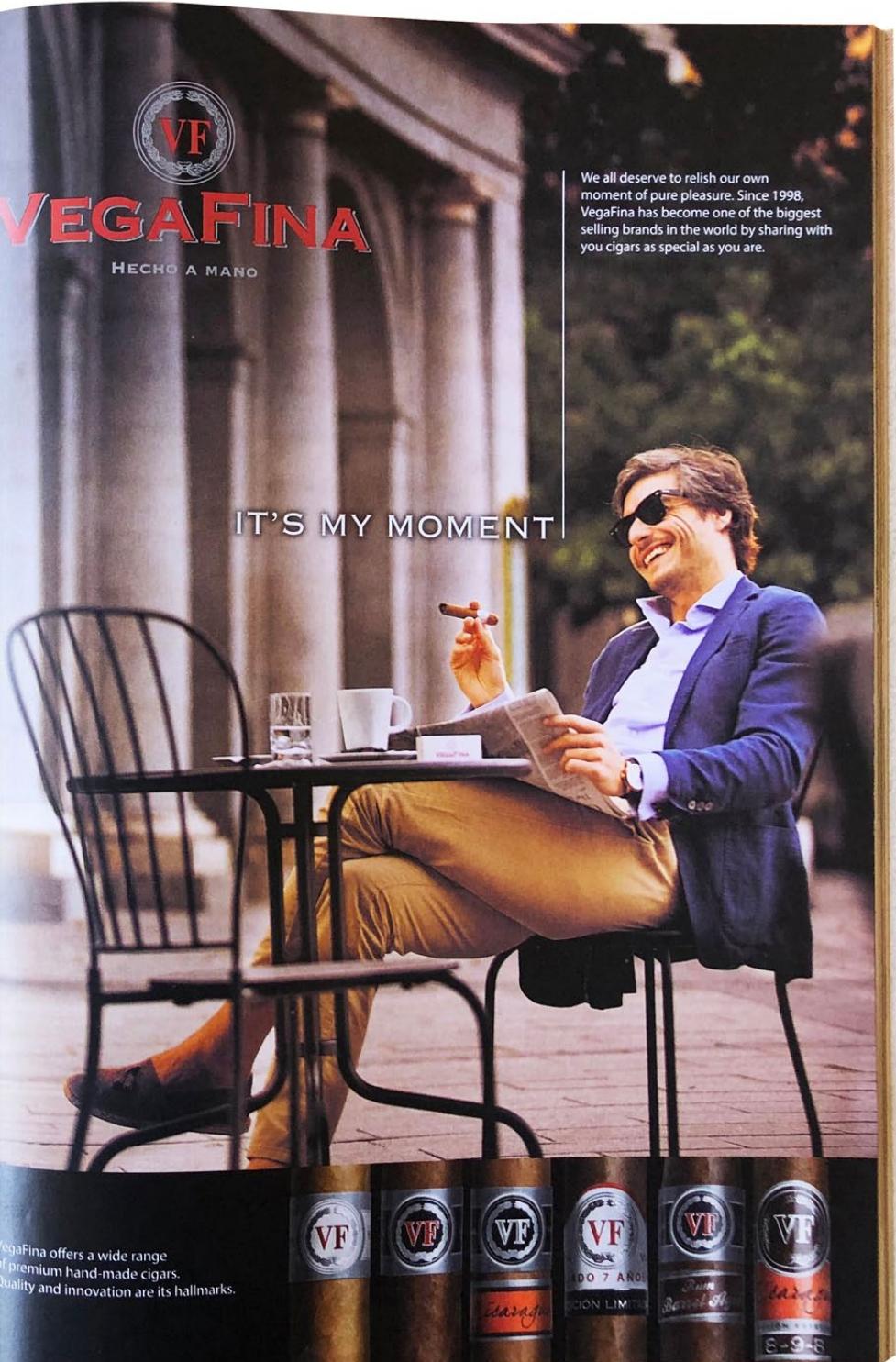


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CIGAR HISTORY

Right: Kolumbus, the new Canarian cigar, originates out of the initiative of three young cigar lovers: Sergio Suñer, Pedro de Ponte y Marc Ripoll

Derecha: Kolumbus, el nuevo cigarro canario, nace de la iniciativa de tres jóvenes amantes de los cigarros: Sergio Suñer, Pedro de Ponte y Marc Ripoll

a few, approximately 200,000 per year, are handmade. These are predominantly private brands like Hacienda Libertad, but its own brand Monte Alto is also produced.

Aside from this tradition-conscious manufacturer, there is the trio of romantics that has undertaken the Canary cigar industry to the position it deserves, if not even further: Marc Ripoll, Sergio de Suñer and Pedro de Ponte. It all began at a Canary wedding, where the entrepreneurs noticed that the cigars were not known brands. From this shortcoming, on October 12, 2016, the brand Kolumbus was born, which, also like Hacienda Libertad, enriches the traditional Canary cigar by one new dimension: a selection of various wrappers with fillers of various provenances, whereby the cigars of both brands comprise tobacco from Breña.

Kolumbus are Canary cigars of a new generation that have nothing to do with the traditional cigars like Condal and Peñamil, but of course don't have anything to do with the Chinchal sticks that are sold to tourists. The Kolumbus team is young, wants to work and promises to introduce its products onto international markets and to thus reconquer the prestige of the over one-hundred-year Canary cigar industry. At the moment, they are growing, for it seems that after a crisis, hurricanes and volcano eruptions, the rebirth of life follows.



fabricante de La Regenta, y la Rica Hoja. Dos Santos, en la isla de Tenerife, fundada en 1921 por J.J. Dos Santos, tiene al frente a la cuarta generación de la familia, representada por la joven Gara Barreto y su hermano Dacil. Son, además, los encargados de resucitar el Condal con su ligada original: capa USA, capote San Andrés (Méjico) y tripa cubana y Matafina (Brasil). Por su parte, en la isla de la Palma, Rica Hoja es propiedad de un hijo y nieto de cubanos, Miguel González Pérez. Se dedica, sobre todo, al cigarro mecanizado, aunque tiene una pequeña producción de cigarros a mano, cerca de 200.000 unidades al año, muchos de ellos marcas privadas como Hacienda Libertad, aunque también de su propia marca: Monte Alto.

Además de estos fabricantes tradicionales, están los tres amigos románticos que se han propuesto impulsar la industria canaria del cigarro al lugar que le corresponde, o incluso más: Marc Ri-

poll, Sergio de Suñer y Pedro de Ponte. Todo comenzó en una boda en Canarias en la que les llamó la atención que los cigarros no fueran palmeros. De esa falta inicial, nació el 12 de octubre de 2016 la marca Kolumbus que, junto con Hacienda Libertad, dan una nueva dimensión al cigarro tradicional canario, con más variedad de capas y con tripas multiprocedencia, aunque todos los cigarros tanto de una marca como de la otra contienen tabaco de Breña.

Kolumbus son cigarros canarios de nueva generación que nadie tiene que ver con los tradicionales Condal y Peñamil, ni desde luego con los mazos de chinchal que se venden a los turistas. Son jóvenes, tienen ganas de trabajar y prometen colocar su producto en mercados internacionales y recuperar, así, el prestigio de la centenaria industria canaria del cigarro. De momento van creciendo porque, según parece, después de la crisis, del huracán y de la erupción del volcán, viene un renacer de vida.

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