



Strategic Tale 13.1 (On the internationalisation decision)

Talk about my grandparents!

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What are my grandparents like, you ask? What a couple! Angels and Angel. Both were born on the second of October (the feast day of the Holy Guardian Angels). They both also come from the same little village. Both have the same maternal surname - Mateos, and they were both christened with the same godmother. But otherwise... they are like chalk and cheese!

They have always lived off and for the land. You just have to see how proud they are of their cherry blossoms! Of course, their very arduous lifestyle has left them with little free time. As a child, I often heard them say how little they had travelled (only as far as the big city, and then only for admin reasons). They'd never seen the sea, so I promised to take them when I got my driving licence.

We chose Portugal. You should have seen my grandmother set foot on the beach for the first time. She was terrified. And don't think she was taken aback by the sight of the open sea, it was because of the fear and confusion of not understanding most of the beachgoers and because of the rough Atlantic waves. My grandfather acted like a child with new shoes! Even the lifeguard had to whistle at him a couple of times to warn him not to go in too deep.

Since then, my grandmother has lost the little desire she had to travel. She always said: "home, sweet home". It is not that she was unadventurous or lacked ambition; she is blissfully content with her friends, her neighbourhood shops, and her local way of life. As the saying goes, better the devil you know...

However, that trip changed my grandfather's life. I can assure you that in his own way, he has always been a dreamer. And he is not afraid of anything! I can honestly say that I sometimes think that, if I had let him, he would still be swimming out to sea until he had discovered heaven knows what. It is true that he has always loved reading, and not a day goes by without him watching the news on TV, but at that time, he was still a *man of the people*. With a lot of stored-up knowledge and in tune with current affairs, indeed, but still *the salt of the earth*. Theirs is an ageing village with few mobile phones and little coverage.





"So grandpa now claims he wants a smartphone", my grandmother announced incredulously shortly after. I don't know what you think, but I'm sure seeing other oldies on the beach with their phones made her think... And on the verge of retirement, he indulged his 'whim'. It didn't take long for him to 'get hooked' on *Google Maps*, several flight and hotel comparison websites, and even a language app. He became an expert! So much so, that his grandchildren began asking him to find us the best prices for our holidays. He began to travel around Europe at first because he didn't need a passport and everyone used the same currency. Of course, without my grandmother, who was still convinced there was nothing particularly special to see outside her village. He was travelling with other pensioners he met in a travel forum. And when Europe became too small for him, with more experience and self-confidence, he began to investigate and arrange, not without some difficulty, the visas and documents required to visit other countries. He quickly became a true man of the world, a veritable Phileas Fogg. He was increasingly involved in new adventures, with an open mind and a wiser outlook.

You can't imagine the stories he has to tell in the bar when he returns from his travels! The locals are fascinated to hear my grandfather's descriptions of faraway places. Of course, he rarely talks about his setbacks and cultural faux pas, although I can tell you he has had quite a few. He tells me about them when he knows my grandmother isn't listening.

He always brings us some typical food from his destinations. Just yesterday, he sent the family's WhatsApp group a selfie taken next to a fruit stall in Moscow's Red Square, saying: "Just look at the cherries they sell here! If they discovered the ones we have back home, they would buy them all". I replied: "Grandma says that you are missing the first cherries of the year, and she has even confessed to me that she will consider going with you on the next trip". He answered with three "surprised" emojis.

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