

**- 15 -****From 1771 to 1802****539. REPORT OF COMMANDANT DON MANUEL CENTURION ON THE PROVINCE OF GUAYANA, IN ANSWER TO THE SECOND COMMAND OF HIS MAJESTY THE KING OF SPAIN****[20 April 1771]***Guayana, April 20, 1771.*

Sir,

In your Lordship's letter of the 18th September last you informed me of an Order of Council that I should communicate to them the result of my observations with regard to the removal of the four villages of Piacoa, Vyacua, Tipurua, and Unaba. I was to report upon their tranquility, permanence, and progress, and on other points which I might think worthy of mention, so that this Council might have full information to enable them to deliberate properly. I, wishing to fulfil to the letter the superior orders of the Council, and in order to give them all due information, proceeded at once to inspect the two villages of Santa Ana and Monte Calvario, situated to the west of the River Carony, to which the people of the four villages mentioned above emigrated together. I found 715 inhabitants, in good health, cheerful, well nourished, and industrious, in place of the 350 souls, sick, sad, hungry, and idle, who made up the population of the four villages in question before their removal.

This increase of numbers, their good health, their pleasure in life, and the abundance of their harvests assure more than ever the tranquillity and settlement of the population, and prove the wisdom of their removal, and even its advantage to the Guarauno and Aruaca Indians themselves.

Very few of the latter have remained in the woods, for besides not being a numerous race, they have now for many years been united to the Dutch, and incorporated in their colonies both in relationship and other ties. Of the Guarauno Indians there are many on the islands and creeks at the mouths of the Orinoco, but it is difficult to reduce them, because the neighbourhood of the Dutch of Essequibo gives them a sufficient supply of hatchets, knives, and other baubles which they value highly, in exchange for the fish and wax which they take in pirogues and launches and which they build in their native woods. These woods are impenetrable by Europeans, and the natives are protected there by the marshy nature of the ground and the thickness of the undergrowth, while within them they have in abundance all that is necessary for savage life, as well as a freedom which to them is of inestimable value.

Notwithstanding these difficulties, I have been able, by incessant work and at some expense, to bring within the pale of civilized and Christian society 1,170 Guaraunos, whom I have settled in the outskirts of this capital in the villages of Orocopiche, Maruanta, and Buenavista, and the towns of Borbon and Carolina, where they are well contented with the good treatment they meet with and the education their children receive from the Spaniards. Thus, helping each other, all

are benefited, the Indian by the material reward he receives from the industry and religion learned from the Spaniard, and the Spaniard by the labour of the Indian's hands, which he rescues from idleness and applies to labour and agriculture. This plan is most useful for the population of the desert country round this capital, and there are no wild Indians, except the Guaraunos, for more than 100 leagues. This district is the most important in the province, as being the healthiest and the best suited to trade with many other provinces of America and with the kingdoms of Spain. But means fail me for the complete reduction of the Guaraunos and still more for that of the innumerable Indians of various tribes who have fled before the Dutch, French, Portuguese, and Spaniards who surrounded this province, and withdrew at once to the unknown interior of the vast continent of Guayana, leaving the whole outer region practically desert; so that if we Spaniards do not avail ourselves of the Guaraunos savages, and bring them from their native districts (habitable only by them), we have no one to settle along the necessary ways of communication between villages which will serve as stepping-stones to enable us to penetrate the country and establish ourselves in the famous Lake Parima (the centre of this province). On the islands and shores, *cañons*, and slopes of that lake are enough Indians to populate not only them but the banks of the Orinoco as well; for the same people who abandoned those banks and fled before the Spaniards, seeing that we are penetrating so far, and that they have no place left in which to hide from us, unless they would fall in the hands of other Europeans who do not treat them so well, will at once return to enjoy among us the rich fisheries and wonderful advantages of that river, where there will also be Spaniards enough to make new settlements, provided that they include Indians. For, if the Spaniards employ labourers, they will at once establish farms and estates, in spite of the want of negroes or slaves, which compels them to move from the provinces, where they live amid toil and want (for was there ever any one who, after living at his ease in a settled country, removed to another, uninhabited and without resources?).

This kind of settlement is the most useful and the readiest yet known in America, as is proved by experience in the pleasant and rich towns of Victoria, Turmero, Aragua, Guatire, Guarenas, and others in the Province of Venezuela, when in the beginning no scruple was made of mixing Spaniards with Indians, while the contrary is seen in the Provinces of Cumaná and New Barcelona, where, there being more Indians, and such good land, and so good a position on the sea-coast, owing to excessive care in not permitting the settlement of Spaniards in Indian villages or of Indians in Spanish villages, both are in the greatest wretchedness, for the Spaniards wanting labourers to give effect to their industry, perish of poverty, and the Indians having no trade, and being without the example of the Spaniards, keep to themselves in their villages, are nearly as naked, barbarous, and useless now as when they lived in the woods before their conversion. With regard to religion, it cannot be considered as such in the case of the Indians, who are not under the influence of constant intercourse with the example of the Spaniards, though for many years they have had Missions and Christian villages among them, for it is impossible that a single Spaniard, however active and zealous, whether he calls himself curate ("cura") or missionary, can inspire a whole town with the true love and knowledge of God and of religion. For, as they had before no idea of these things, and did not think them necessary for any purpose, they listen to the doctrines of Christianity from fear rather than devotion; and, if any insignificant servant of a missionary learns any good while employed by him, he forgets it all as soon as he marries or returns to live with his parents, and in a few days is as pretty a savage as they, and even more vicious, as he has more intelligence and cunning. The missionaries do not make better progress in

the conversion and settlement of the Indies, because, besides their aversion to doctrine and their love of polygamy, which is not allowed in the towns, they do not find any advantages in those towns for trade, while they undergo the advantages of close society, for that the policy of the missionaries is so severe that (under the specious pretext of preventing their being cheated by the Spaniards) they forbid the Indians to trade with the latter, and the wretched Indians, having no one to whom they can sell their produce, let them run waste, or intoxicate themselves. Thus, in that province, may be seen towns more than forty years old, where the Indians are still as naked and as shy as the savages themselves for want of intercourse and trade with the Spaniards.

In order partly to avoid these grave disadvantages, I have thought it necessary, in those towns where there is an officer or soldier as escort to the missionary, and there cannot be a Royal official, with ability, talent, and good conduct capable of governing the place by himself as regards political matters, it should be done by that officer or soldier, under the orders of the District Judge Commandant, acting in concert with the missionary, as is explained by the inclosed instructions. At the same time, I have arranged thirty-five marriages between Spaniards and the principal Indian women of the newly-converted tribes of Cariva, Guayea, and Guarauna. By this alliance we are being united to a wonderful degree with these and other tribes, so that even the Indians who formerly heard the name of Spaniard with the greatest horror, now come of their own free will out of the woods where they have, up till now, been kept as if buried by fear, and they have a kind of safeguard in the knowledge of my love for all of them, and are tempted by my liberality to come in troops more than thirty days' journey to see me, and ask me to give them implements to enable them to settle on their lands. Some have wished to remain in this neighbourhood to enjoy at closer quarters the advantages of trade and intercourse with the Spaniards.

By these efficacious methods, which are honest (though not much to the taste of all the missionaries), I have succeeded, during my tenure of office, in creating thirty-two new settlements of Indians and Spaniards in this province, with 8,271 inhabitants; 1,407 "*fanejas*" of land have been brought into cultivation, and there are 29,787 head of cattle more, as well as many houses and buildings of stone and mortar, which before had never been known in this country; indeed, the capital itself consisted but of fifty cabins or straw huts.

The accompanying map of this wide province is the most accurate which I have yet been able to make to give the Council some geographical acquaintance with this unknown country, and the new establishments which I am making in order to penetrate it, in the interior, and in countries which, up till now, had never been seen or known of by the Spaniards, such as the Paragua and the Erevato, where I already have some Spaniards and Indians settled to facilitate communications between this capital and the Upper Orinoco and Rio Negro, and the important conquest of the much magnified Lake Parima. This undertaking I look on as of the last importance, both for holding in check the Portuguese who keep drawing nearer to the lake, and taking possession of territory with all haste, and for freeing the Indians who are constantly being brought from those regions to their colonies by the corsairs of Amazons and Esquibo, Berviz and Surinam, and in order that we may be able to settle our province with them. But, as I said before, I want means to continue this progress, and shall scarcely be able to support or maintain that already made if I am not furnished with assistance for the purpose, as well as for bringing poor Spanish families, who, for want of means to move from other provinces, do not come to establish themselves in this. I have already exhausted all the means and resources permitted by this young country, and all that

my scanty fortune and economies can supply. It is necessary that the King shall order (1) the issue for ten years to the new settlements of the Upper and Lower Orinoco of 10,000 dollars a year, deposited in the Treasury of Cumaná, out of the surplus of the deposit brought there from Mexico; and (2) the increase of the troop of infantry which garrisons this Province of Guayana and its frontiers, and protects the Missions of Guayana, Barinas, Meta, and Casanare up to the numbers of a full battalion, in order that the vast territory of Guayana may become populated and flourishing. It is necessary that, at the same time, this province should receive the Royal privilege of free trade granted by the instructions and Royal Decree of the 8th November, 1765, to the Islands of Cuba, Santo Domingo, Puerto Rico, Margarita, and Trinidad, and latterly extended to the Province of Yucatan and Campeche by a second Royal Decree of the 16th July, 1770. By these means I believe that in twenty years the Royal Domain will be in a position to have repaid these disbursements by the produce of the Royal sales in this province, and its own Treasury will likewise contain enough to pay its garrison without it being necessary for those of Santa Fé or others to furnish these salaries any more.

All this I have thought right to lay before your Lordship, together with the accompanying documents in support thereof, that you may bring it before the superior wisdom of the Royal and Supreme Council of the Indies.

God preserve your Lordship many years.

(Signed) DON MANUEL CENTURION  
Guayana, April 20, 1771

To Señor Don Thomas del Mello

On the back are the following notes:

*“Council of April 10, 1772. For the Accountant and Treasurer. Report by the Accountant-General, October 5, 1773, and reply by the Treasurer on the 12th of the same month.”*

*(Archivo General de Indias, Seville)*

**540. REPORT OF COMMANDANT DON MANUEL CENTURION ON THE PROVINCE OF GUAYANA, COMMANDED BY THE KING OF SPAIN IN A ROYAL “CEDULA” OF JULY 24, 1772, “WHICH STIMULATED HIM”; THE REPORT WITH MAP TRANSMITTED BY THAT OFFICIAL IN 1770 NOT HAVING BEEN CONSIDERED SATISFACTORY BY HIS MAJESTY.**

**[11 November 1773]**

*Minute*

Despatch No. 46 from the Commandant-General of Orinoco and Guayana, Don Manuel Centurion, to His Excellency Señor Bailio Fray Don Julian de Arriaga, in which on being stimulated by the Royal “Cedula” of the 24th July; 1772, he renders an account, with documents, of the employment of 7,521 pesos (about 2,400 guilders) granted by the King, and what remains for con-

tinuing the work of the settlement and happiness of this province. And he requests, in favour of his two sons, Rafael and Lewis, Commissions in an infantry regiment, with appointments, for the present, in the garrison under the father's command in America.

*Covering Despatch*

*Guayana, November 11, 1773.*

Your Excellency,

In a Royal "Cedula" of the 24th July, 1772, which has just reached me, I am commanded, without loss of time, and with the amplification, clearness, and division which the importance of the affair demands, to draw up a circumstantial Report on all the particulars found wanting by the Council in the map, and an explanation of the state and progress of the settlement of this province, which, under date of the 31st December, 1770, I transmitted through the ex-Governor of Caracas, Don Joseph Solano; and I state to what religious and in what forms the Missions of the Jesuits have been handed over, the distribution of the lands, cattle, and other articles that have been made over and bestowed upon the settlers; under what rules, by whom, and how the seven villages of Spaniards have been founded, and the mixed that are mentioned, and those under which Don Francisco Villasaña pretended to found the "Villa" Carolina on the banks of the River Aroy; and lastly, the situation and distance between the villages and Missions, together with all other matters of interest that I may, consider worthy the attention of His Majesty, transmitting direct, by the *via reservada*, or to the Council, both the Report commanded as well as all others that I shall continue to forward in reference to the condition and progress of that new province. And that, at the same time, I shall inform the Viceroy of all that may merit the attention of His Excellency, and request the necessary help, as well in money as in respect of people and all the rest that may conduce to the advancement and prosperity of this [undertaking]. But without this communication and subordination to the Viceroy, being in any way a hindrance, or retarding the Reports, which, as has been indicated, I must transmit to the Court.

In conformity with the orders conveyed to me in the said Royal "Cedula", I hereby transmit to your Excellency a copy of the Report which, with the corresponding justification, I now make to the Council in reference to all these matters. In thus acting, I have the satisfaction of demonstrating to your Excellency that I have not only succeeded in giving to the settlement and consistency of this province the considerable increase of forty-three villages of Spaniards and of Indians, with more than 200 families of the first-mentioned, brought from the neighbouring provinces, and about 8,000 persons of the last-named, that I have forcibly taken from the forests, and from idolatry, to civil and Christian society, but equally in constructing more than 700 houses, nearly 3,000 plantations, and increased the breeding of cattle to the extent of 100,000 head, and horses besides; but I have also expended for this work more than 7,000 pesos of the subsidies and commissions established, which, by reason of the position I hold, I might have put in my pocket since I entered upon the office of Commandant-General; and what I have voluntarily sacrificed in the service of the King and settlement of this province, as proved by the authentic documents which accompany this said Report, and particularly of the two certificates, numbered 3 and 8, of the Administrator of Lands and of the Royal Auditor of this city.

A pecuniary service, as this is, willingly made on my own responsibility, with the object of

overcoming the difficulties and miseries which hindered my carrying out my wishes, and of having the glory of settling these deserts, with a view of giving the King a province which, from its situation and circumstances, can be of the greatest use to the State, I certainly had no intention of bringing to the knowledge of the King, nor to that of your Excellency, until such time as I should be relieved of this government. For until then I wish to continue this small sacrifice of my interests in proof of my love and zeal for his Majesty's service. But being now commanded by His Majesty to explain *under what rules, by whom, and how so many villages have been founded*, it is necessary that I accordingly state it. And to make known to your Excellency that, I have children, and among them two young men, Rafael and Lewis, serving as cadets in the garrison of this province; and that in recompense of these merits they hope that the favour of the King may honour them and concede them Commissions in the infantry. In which purpose I entreat the protection and great influence of your Excellency, as likewise that they be employed here, under my own care, at my side, until such time as it may please His Majesty to recall me, to continue in the Royal service in Spain, a favour which I earnestly request from your Excellency's goodness.

May God preserve your Excellency. . .

(Signed) DON MANUEL CENTURION

To His Excellency Señor Bailio Fray Don Julian de Arriaga

#### 541. COMMANDANT DON MANUEL CENTURION OF GUAYANA TO THE KING OF SPAIN

[11 November 1773]

Mighty Sire,

In a Royal Decree of the 24th July of last year, which has just reached my hands, your Majesty deigns to command me to report, without loss of time, all the details which the Council have inserted in the last map, and explain the statistics of the settlement of this province which I forwarded, under date of the 31st December, 1770, by the hand of the Governor of Caracas, Don Joseph Solano. I am to take particular care to inform the inform the Viceroy of Santa Fé of all that I may think worthy of his notice and attention and to ask him for help in money, a well as in men, and in other ways conducive to the progress and prosperity of this new province. This communication with the subordination to the Viceroy is not to prevent or delay the Reports which I am to send direct, according to my instructions either confidentially or to the Council.

In punctual and complete obedience to your Highness' commands I have to report as follows:

This Province of Guayana is the most easterly part of the King's dominions in South America on the north coast, and its boundaries are: On the north, the lower Orinoco, the southern boundary of the Provinces of Cumaná and Caracas; on the east the Atlantic Ocean; on the south the great river of the Amazons; and on the west, the Rio Negro, the *cañon* of Caciquiari, and the Upper Orinoco, boundary of the eastern and unexplored part of the Kingdom of Santa Fé.

On the confines or limits of the vast region of this province the French and Dutch have occupied the whole sea-coast with their Colonies – the French in Cayenne round the mouth of the Amazon, and the Dutch in Surinam, Berbiz, and Esquibo, 55 or 60 leagues from the great mouth

of the Orinoco On the banks of the Amazon and the Rio Negro, as far as San Josef de los Mariviana (35 leagues below the mouth of the Casiquiari, and 32 from our towns and forts of San Carlos and San Phelipe), are established the Portuguese, and our actual possessions are limited to a part of the Rio Negro, the whole of the Casiquiari, Upper and Lower Orinoco, and the new settlements which we are founding in the interior of the country along the Rivers Caroni, Paragua, Aroy, Caura, Erevato, Padamo, Ventuari, and others running from the unexplored heart of Guayana to the Orinoco. This river breaks into arms 41 leagues before reaching the sea, into which it pours itself by innumerable mouths, occupying the 70 leagues of mangrove swamps between Punta Barima and Guarapiche. The chief and easternmost of all is that called Boca Grande, or Boca de Navios. It is 17 miles wide, and has a channel of 2 leagues in the middle of the bar, with 4 fathoms of water running out to the high seas. It has a muddy bottom, low shores, and covered with mangrove swamps. The sea is very smooth, especially from February to October, and the spring tides running up 1 fathom cover and salt the shores of the Orinoco for 17 leagues above this mouth.

The other mouths can only be entered by barges and pirogues, and form a labyrinth of islands under water, and *cañons* which run into the Triste Gulf, opposite the Island of Trinidad. The best known and most practicable of these are Manamo, Macaredo, and Pedernales. By the Great Mouth, or Boca de Navios, the Orinoco can be entered and navigated without difficulty, with a good wind, by frigates of 40 guns, which can go up to the mouth of the Caroni, or the Island of Faxardo, and from May to October, when the river is highest, can ascend, though slowly, owing to the strong current and lack of wind at that season, as far as the Angostura, where is now situated the capital city the province, 83 league from the sea. From Caroni to the mouths of the Orinoco is 58 leagues, the land on both banks being uninhabited, and it is indeed a pity that it should be deserted, as the country is the best in the world for agriculture and trade, though there are a few poor places, of which one is the ancient city of Guayana, 9 leagues below Caroni, and 8 above the place where the Orinoco divides into arms as has been described.

In that unhealthy place, in the north of this province, and on the south bank of this river, stands on a rock what is called the Castle of St. Francis of Assisi. It is a battery in the form of a trapezium, with no moat or fence, and is 40 yards long by 20 wide, and has ten iron guns with their proper ammunition. Close it on the west rises the hill of Padastro, which commands, within gun-shot, the Castle of St. Francis. On the summit is a small log-fort with a star palisade, but no moat; it is 87 yards long and 26 wide, and has nine iron guns mantled and ammunitioned. Each of these posts is garrisoned by a Captain Commandant, a subaltern and twenty-five infantry soldiers, an artillery officer, and six gunners, while there is an armed launch at the foot of the forts with a gun at the prow, twelve swivel guns, and sixteen pioneers. As the average width of the Orinoco and at this part of the river is 1,800 yards, and therefore greater than the blank range of the cannon of these two batteries, the former inhabitants had to place another on the opposite bank, so that, their fires crossing, they barred the passage of the enemies vessels. With this object they construct close to the mouth of the Simones Cañon an oval tower, its greatest diameter being 20 yards, well built, and of good material; but unfortunately before it was finished it fell from its own weight owing to the lightness of the soil, when they had built it without talking the precaution of putting in piers as was necessary to strengthen a soil of mud and fine sand. This work has been entirely abandoned for the above reasons, and consequently the passage along this bank is open to the vessels of smugglers, who are the enemies of the Crown; in 10 fathoms of water,

with the wind behind them these smugglers can come up without fear of being reached by the guns of the batteries of St. Francis and the Padastro, which are opposite, unless accidentally by some high shot. To avoid these inconveniences and those caused by the lightness of the soil, and in order to have the whole force together in a post of vantage which shall be a real key of the Orinoco, the well-known navigation of which lays easily open to the enemy, the back of the Provinces of Cumaná, Caracas, Barinas, and even opens the gate of the Kingdom of Santa Fé – for these reasons, His Majesty wishes, and has declared in a Royal Order of the 3rd December, 1772, that a survey shall be made of the island-hill of Faxardo, which is 8 leagues above the Padastro and half a league below the mouth of Caroni, divides the Orinoco into two nearly equal channels, the larger 700 yards wide in flood. The summit is adapted for a fort equal to that planned for the Padastro, and the situation is better suited for barring the river and guarding the province; for from that commanding position the musket carries where from the other the cannon does not, and as there is at present no settlement below Caroni near the Orinoco, they are all within the shelter of this fortress, since although there are some other towns to the east inland, they are a long way from the river, and protected by a chain of mountains running between them and the Orinoco, an obstacle which, in conjunction with the desert nature of the country, makes any attempt upon them by the enemy difficult, and gives sufficient time in any case to take steps to prevent it.

The fortress of Faxardo can be more easily reinforced than that of the Padastro; and the men summoned by the Commandant-General at Angostura for this purpose have a defence in the River Caroni already referred to; which is a serious one for an enemy trying by land to prevent the junction of forces. It is, too, more convenient for communications and assistance from being near this capital.

This great country having been abandoned since the last century, for settlement and the conversion of the natives, to the three Missions of the Catalonian Capuchins of Trinidad, the Franciscans of Piritu, and the Jesuits of Santa Fé, the last two remained inactive till 1732. They all distributed amongst them this vast territory, without knowing anything of it or having explored more than the banks of the Orinoco, in the following manner:

The Catalonian Capuchins, who were settled up till then in the neighbourhood of the city of Guayana, took the 83 leagues between the mouth of this great river and Angostura and the part given by the north and south from here to the Marañon, or Amazons; The Observant Franciscans took the 100 leagues between the Angostura and the mouth of the River Cuchivero, with the country back to the Amazon; while the rest, up to the sources of the Orinoco (hitherto unknown) was taken by the Jesuits, but afterwards, on the discovery of the Upper Orinoco, Rio Negro, and the Casiquiari, which joins them, it was thought too large a territory for single Mission, and, leaving to the Jesuits the 100 leagues which they had occupied between the Cuchivero and the torrents of Ature and Maypures, which divide this river into the Higher and Lower Orinoco, His Majesty gave it to the Andalucian Capuchins for the reduction and conversion of the Indians of the Upper Orinoco and Rio Negro, and afterwards he charged them provisionally with the spiritual care of the towns evacuated by the Jesuits of Orinoco; and they abandoned it all at once, as I told your Highness on the 17th September, 1771, through your Secretary, Don Pedro Garcia Majoral, there only remaining of that community the two monks, Brother Joseph Antonio de Xerez and Brother Miguel de Nerja, who, after the general flight of their brethren and the death of the Master, Brother Andres de Cadiz, retired in ill-health to this capital, and are employed in the Cu-

racies of Maruanta and Borboni; for this reason I have a monk of the Franciscan Mission constantly going up and down the Orinoco, Casiquiari, and Rio Negro, who gives what spiritual aid is possible to all the towns deserted by the Andalucian Capuchins in both districts, until your Highness provides, as I have begged, a Mission for the Upper Orinoco and Rio Negro.

The principal Committee of appointments of the Houses, Colleges, and Missions of the Company, fixed at Caracas, selects the Conventual Franciscan monks of that province, for whom I asked by an application of the 21st August, 1771, as being the missionaries who have done best of all there have been in the towns of the Jesuits since the expulsion, and who, like them, can easily replace the monks, who die or sicken in that unhealthy country. I have also considered that the Diocesan charged with those churches, in virtue of my Commission, given under the orders and instructions of his Excellency, Count Aranda, though asked several times to provide them with clergy, constantly tells me that he has none.

This province, having, as I have said, been abandoned in the last century to the discretion of the missionaries, sickness and want of trade and of government were destroying the city of Santo Thomé de la Guayana, the only Spanish settlement there was in the whole of this region. The Orinoco was nearly deserted, or rather dominated by the savage Caribs, up until about 1755, when the Royal Boundary Expedition arrived, which was commanded by Commander of the squadron, Don Joseph de Iturriaga. He tamed the pride of the Indians, and subdued and handed over many of them to the missionaries, founded, at the expense of the Royal Treasury, the two Spanish settlements of Ciudad Real and Real Corona on the Lower Orinoco, and had the country penetrated by the Upper Orinoco and Casiquiari for 800 leagues, all desert land as far as Rio Negro, where he erected a military post and a fort on the Portuguese frontier. In order better to check the advance of the Portuguese conquests he brought under the dominion of the King and into the bosom of the Holy Church the tribes of Indians ruling in that country. These tribes had up till then not only shown extraordinary courage and constancy, in preventing the entry of the Spaniards to the upper valley of the Orinoco, but had even destroyed by cruel and continual warfare the other natives. The Commander founded with these Indians the three villages of San Joseph de Maypures, at the entry of the Upper Orinoco valley, and San Carlos and San Phelipe in Rio Negro. For their support and for the foundation of other villages and towns, which he might think of advantage for the security and protection of these Royal dominions, he was declared by the King Commandant-General the new Orinoco settlements, when, by His Majesty's orders, the other Commissioners of the boundary expedition withdrew in 1761.

In consequence of the representations made by Don Joseph de Iturriaga, or rather of the reports of Don Joseph Solano, who had been Third Commissioner on the expedition in question, the King decided to place the government of this province on a new footing (up till then it was subject to that of Cumaná) and to transfer the city of Guayana to the Angostura of Orinoco. For this purpose His Majesty appointed as *interim* Commandant of this province Colonel Do Joachim Moreno de Mendoza, and sent him the Royal instructions on the 5th June, 1762, making him independent of Iturriaga and subordinate to the Viceroy of Santa Fé, as is shown by the annexed copy, No. 1.

In 1764 Moreno took possession of his command, and in 1766 I came to relieve him of it and undertake it on the same terms as he had, the only difference being that I was for the time under the orders and direction of the said Don Joseph Solano, Governor of Caracas. At the beginning of the following year, 1767, Don Joseph de Iturriaga withdrew in ill-health to the Island of La Mar-

garita, leaving in my charge the general command of the Orinoco settlements with the same powers as the King had conferred on him, as is shown by the appointment or Commission sent me on the 28th January, 1767, and by the Royal Decree of the 5th May, 1768, confirming it (Appendix No. 4).

Consequently, I tried to learn the state of affairs and the circumstances of all things belonging to my jurisdiction, to justify the Royal confidence and merit the satisfaction at my superiors. I visited all the villages of the province except the three of the Upper Orinoco and Rio Negro, and, beginning with the territory of the Catalonian Capuchin Mission, the oldest, established in the last century, I found its whole settlement and extent reduced to eighteen Indian villages with 5,273 souls, the Spanish town of San Antonio de Upata with 137 persons of both sexes and of all ages, a herd of horned cattle of more than 30,000 head, and a corresponding stud of mares and horses. Those were managed and owned by the Catalonian Capuchin Fathers as founders, in the territory under their charge, from the bank of the Orinoco for 30 leagues inland to the east of the Caroni. I found the Indians docile, and the country very healthy and very fertile, suited to agriculture and cattle breeding, and advantageously situated for population and trade. Unfortunately all these good things were in inert hands and prohibited to the natives and Spaniards, who were consequently all wretched.

Twenty-five leagues above the mouth of the Caroni I found this new town of Guayana at Angostura of the Orinoco, comprising 555 poor persons recently removed there, and lodged in some straw huts, and as yet without crops or cultivation, cattle or boats, or any means of subsistence, and it suffered from the loneliness and hardship of having no other settlements in that district, nor any resources less than 20 leagues distant, but, was in a healthy situation and suitable as regards trade, soil, and water.

In the territory which was to be occupied by the Mission of the Franciscans of Piritu there were still only two monks established, and they had founded the two Carib villages of Platanar and Guayciparo with 268 souls near the town of Real Corno [Corona], 35 leagues from that of Guayana, and certainly 105 very poor Spaniards. Ciudad Real, which is in the same territory, 60 leagues higher up on the cañon of Ayapi, near the Orinoco, had 458 Spaniards, less ill furnished, and 12 leagues off, on the east bank of the Cuchivero, a village of 127 Carib Indians, fugitives from the Jesuit Missions, and added to the population of that town by Royal Order. Nearly all this country is healthy, but not so fertile or fruitful, nor inhabited by so many Indians, as that of the Catalonian Capuchins.

Between Cuchivero and the torrents of Atures and Maypures, the Jesuit Missionaries had, on the south bank of the Lower Orinoco, five Indian villages, and one on the opposite bank within the jurisdiction of Caracas, which they had founded at the time of their establishment in 1732, at various distances, with 1,262 inhabitants, the most civilized and useful in the whole province, 6,000 head of horned cattle belonging to the Mission, and more than 1,000 owned by the Indians. They had also some Spanish families settled among them, who contributed not a little to the happiness of the Indians, and to the subsistence of those villages, in spite of the insalubrity and sterility of the country, for it appears to be poisoned by exhalations deadly both to men and plants. The Jesuits, however, preferred it, as they had before them the River Meta for navigation and trade with the Kingdom of Santa Fé, in which were their Provincial and colleges.

To visit the three small Indian villages on the Upper Orinoco and Rio Negro, containing 540 souls, as well as to explore the cocoa-groves of those wild woods, I commissioned the Prefect of

the Mission of the Andalusian Capuchins, Brother Joseph Antonio de Xeres, Infantry Lieutenant Don Francisco Bobidilla, Commandant of the station and the Rio Negro frontier, and Don Apolinar Diez de la Puente, who was to be Captain-Founder of the Esmeralda, and at present is Governor of the Quixos. He stated, in reply to my questions, on the 28th November, 1767, that the trees in question were so well grown and rich in fruit that they could supply this province, and even leave enough to export to the Kingdoms of Spain, with profit both to buyer and seller.

Nothing was before known of the vast interior of this province but the 30 leagues of their district through which the Catalonian-Capuchin missionaries had penetrated. The maps showed that, even leaving between the foreign colonies and our establishments a desert country of 80 or 100 leagues, to prevent communication and trade, there remained to us many hundreds of square leagues to settle and occupy with great profit to the State and to religion, but that, unfortunately, it was all, not only unknown to the Spaniards, but left to foreign colonists, who make themselves known to the Caribs through the trade in slaves from the savage tribes which live in the centre of this immense country and by this means considerably increase their settlement on the sea-coast, and on the Amazon, leaving us the desert land which we cannot occupy further, as we find no natives with whom to colonize it, unless by taking prompt and efficacious measures to push on to the frontiers of the foreigners, so as to check their forays and encroachments on His Majesty's dominions.

This I knew, and I was assured that there neither were, nor are, in this province Indians who can be subdued or converted by words and preaching only, and that force is necessary, as well as presents, to bring them from the forests and keep them in civilized Christian society. In this work the most active missionaries employed the European escorts with which they were furnished by the Governor.

It, naturally, therefore, occurred to me that more would be done in the work of subduing and pacifying the country by these soldiers, if they were to be sent by their Commandant directly, and commanded by their own officers, to occupy or conquer the country, than if sent by the missionaries, for from the latter they can expect neither reward nor punishment to stimulate them. At the same time this city was without means or resources, and, as I have said, recently settled, the inhabitants very poor and lacking the bare necessities of life, surrounded on all sides by a horrible desert, which made subsistence here impossible unless some Indian villages were founded in the neighbourhood to provide the crops and the labourers necessary for the settlement and comfort of the Spaniards. But I had not the requisite means for these enterprises, for the Royal chests were empty and in debt, and there was very little hope of help from those of Santa Fé as I have hitherto always found their funds low.

This miserable state of the province, and my wish to justify the Royal confidence by furthering the happiness of the country as far as in me lay, led me to attempt to subdue some Indians of the woods, to bring some Spanish families from the adjoining provinces, and to settle the country at once at my own expense.

To carry out this important plan, I appointed an Administrator, to have all the rights and authority belonging to me as Governor and Chief Justice, as well with regard to licences and anchorage of vessels as to justice, fines, shops, stores, etc., the proceeds which have up till now amounted to 7,521 dollars, which, as is shown by the certificate of the said Administrator, Don Diego Marino (whose testimony is given in Appendix No. 3), has been employed for the subjection and pacification of over 7,000 Indians of the forest, in bringing 200 Spanish families re-

cruited in the Provinces of Caracas, Cumaná, Barimas, and Margarita, and in founding eighteen villages in this manner. Manuanta and Parraparra, were founded 2½ leagues from this city in the territory of the Catalonian Capuchin Mission, whither also have emigrated the people of Monte Calvario and Santa Ana on the subjection of the Indians for the village of Pudedpa, and nearly the whole cost was borne of the foundation of Barceloneta on the Purana, as is equally shown by the certificate of the Rev. Father Prefect, Brother Bueno de Barzelone, a certified copy of which is given in Appendix No. 4. In the territory of the Franciscans Mission I have founded and increased (as shown by certificate No. 5 of the Rev. Fathers, the Commissary, and Acting Assistant) the villages of Buena Vista and Crocopietre, 1 and 2 leagues respectively from this city.

And penetrating the interior of the country I have founded the villages of Guaipa, those of San Lewis and San Vizente de Erevato, that of San Francisco Tuiquiuari, those of Concepcion and San Carlos de Caura. I have also helped those of Topaquire and of the "Cerro del Mono" (Monkey Hill), all Indian. As likewise the "villas" of Spaniards both at Borbon and Carolina I have increased the settlement of the Real Corona and have supported that of Ciudad Real, so that the should not go to ruin on account of the continued epidemics there prevailing in these last years.

In the district which the Missions of the Jesuits occupied I have founded, in a healthy and advantageous site, the "villa" of Indians and the dispersed Spaniards of the ruined village of Cabruta of the Province of Caracas, and I have likewise assisted and maintained the other villages which remained after the suppression of the Jesuits on this side of the Orinoco, notwithstanding the horrible mortality and sickness prevailing in nearly all of them at certain seasons of the year.

And in the Higher Orinoco and Rio Negro (as shown by the Certificate of the ex-Prefect and Assistant of the Mission of the Andalucian Capuchins, Fray Joseph Antonio de Jerez and Fray Miguel de Nerpa, marked No. 6), I have founded six formal villages, Sama, Santa Barbara, Fuamini, San Gabriel, San Francisco Solano and Santa Gertrudis, all at my own cost and charity. And in the same territory I have founded, at the expense of the Royal Treasury (in conformity with Royal Order of the 5th October [17]68, No. 7), the "villa" of Esmeralda, a cattle farm for the support of the residents; and I have laid the foundation of some twenty other Indian villages in the main route of communication, and to facilitate the quicker intercourse of those new foundations, and the formal occupation of the territory, and the subjugation of its inhabitants.

I have happily done all with the little expense of 11,483 pesos (about 2,400 guilders) (as shown by the Certificate of the Royal Accountant-General of this place, Don Andres de Oleaga). And finally, in order to occupy the important frontier of the Parime in the far interior of this province, I have dispatched a detachment of sixty men, under Lieutenant Don Vincente Diez de la Fuente, who is at present at the head-waters of the River Paragua, 300 leagues from this capital, engaged in founding the city of Guirior, with Spanish families I have sent from here, and various other Indian villages that are being subjugated in the same direction, and there are precise regulations for our establishment and security of the dominions of the King in those parts.

The "villas" of Borbon and Carolina have been founded at my request, the first by Don Joseph Francisco de Espinosa, and the second by Don Francisco Villasana, residents of this province; and each has agreed to found according to the prescribed rules and formalities, without any other stipulation or request of any kind. And under these conditions they have obtained your Highness' Royal approbation in Royal "Cedulas" of the 4th November, 1772; but in view of the

jurisdiction and land conceded them by law, they are of little or no value at present, and they have laboured and spent much of their own resources, particularly Villasana, owing to the fact that his Concession is further in the interior. I consider him worthy of your Majesty's Royal favour, and that a salary of 200 pesos annually be granted him, and 100 pesos to Espinosa during his lifetime, in reward of his service and as an incentive to others who may be disposed to found settlements.

The distribution that is made of agricultural lands, and building ground, and sites for cattle farms is carried out according to the laws of these kingdoms, and the instructions furnished by Don Joseph de Iturriaga, in his appointment, according to the Royal Order or power quoted of the 21st September, 1762, but without any title, and under the express condition that no resident should be granted the fee-simple until he cleared and occupied the land he petitions for.

To the Indian villages I am allowing one league of territory for use of every twenty; and another league of defence between those and the nearest limits, of other foundations or plantations, so that they may not suffer any prejudice the ones from the others, nor from the Spaniards and their cattle. To each village of Spaniards is assigned two leagues of good land for every twenty; one square league for each cattle farm; pasturage and water being common to all; and building ground according to the requirements of each resident.

To those of the "villa" of Esmeralda there has been given, on account of the remoteness of the place, its solitude, barrenness, and difficult situation, to each family for its settlement there 3,000 wild cocoa-trees, which are very abundant in these forest regions on land where they quickly multiply, and for the planting of other fruits, and sites for cattle farms, with building ground in perpetuity.

During the first year two labourers, a ration of cassava bread and dried meat are allowed them. And, on the first occasion, they receive two spades, two hatchets, two cutlasses, two hen coops with fowl, a pig, and a cow for each family. And for the common use of all a stocked cattle farm for the purpose of breeding has been founded within their boundaries – all this at the expense of the Royal Treasurer, as there were no other resources for the maintenance of these people and of those of Rio Negro, and the administration of which is under Captain Don Antonio Barreto. In the other settlements of the Spaniards and Indians, as they have been founded without any expense to the Royal Treasury, and in a better place free of all such inconveniences, as those more distant in the far interior, they have received, with some variation, all that could be given them.

I have taken particular care, and still continue to report all particulars to my superiors, and I have, thus far, succeeded in obtaining the approval of all, together with my zeal for your Majesty's service, and conduct (as shown by the accompanying letters No. 9 from the Governor of Caracas, Don Joseph Solano, and their Excellencies the Viceroy Don Pedro de la Zerda and Don Manuel Guirior). And thus, in like manner, I hope for the approbation of your Majesty, and that the King may be graciously pleased to consider that His Majesty is well served by me, and those under my charge, in our efforts to place this province in a state of happiness, as it now is, and which I cannot do less than bring to the knowledge of your Majesty, and in so doing make special mention, first of all, of Don Andres de Oleaga, Accountant-General of the province, recommending him to your Majesty's Royal favour for the honour of the grade of War Commissary (i.e., Quartermaster (?)), or the office of the Tribunal of Accounts of Santa Fé, with the commission of a Companion of the Royal Treasury, which may enable him to bear the insupportable

work now imposed upon him, and which I deem very necessary for the good administration of the revenue and increase of the Royal Treasury. The second is Captain Antonio Barreto, of the garrison of this province, for his great energy, talent, love, and unselfishness in helping forward the settlement and development of the Higher Orinoco, whom I strongly recommend to your Majesty's favour for the post of full Captain of the company he now commands in full right; together with a Companionship of some one of the Military Orders. And the third is Don Francisco de Amantegui Secretary of the Commandant-General, in which post he has served for seven years with intelligence, application, and unselfishness, whom I recommend to your Majesty's Royal favour for the post of Clerk of the Royal Treasury in this province, if it please your Majesty to create that office, or, failing that, something equivalent.

May God protect your Catholic Majesty. . .

(Signed) DON MANUEL CENTURION

(Seal)

*(Note: The nine documents referred to in the Report are not included in this collection)*

*(Archivo de Indias, Seville)*

**542. REPORT AND RESOLUTION OF THE COUNCIL OF STATE TO HIS MAJESTY THE KING OF SPAIN ON COMMANDANT MANUEL CENTURION'S GENERAL REPORT ON THE PROVINCE OF GUAYANA**

**[16 February 1776]**

*(Extract)*

*Madrid, February 16, 1776.*

Centurion does not appear to have taken any note of the Royal "Cedula" – probably it may not have reached him – but simply sends another large bundle of documents, more or less the same as those that were transmitted by Solano, Governor of Caracas, and consequently what he now sends are not sufficiently detailed, nor give the information the Council require.

There is no need of any Resolution concerning these; simply acknowledge receipt.

Our effective possessions are reduced to a part of the River Negro, all the Casiquiare, Higher and Lower Orinoco, and the new settlements they are founding in the interior of the country, on the Rivers Caroni, Paragua, Aroy, Caura, Erevata, Padamo, Ventuari, and others which descend from the unknown centre of Guayana to the Orinoco.

The Council respectfully informs His Majesty that from the last Reports from Lieutenant-Colonel Don Manuel Centurion, Governor of Guayana, it appears evident that the advancements of the Province of Guayana are very increased as well in the reductions of Indians as in increase of population, due to the activity and effective measures which he, guided by zeal for your Majesty's service, and well-being of the natives, has forwarded during the nine years he has been

Governor there; the Council, however, consider that even when the advantages by which the said province appears to have been benefited reduce themselves to the half of what is said to have been carried out whilst the said Lieutenant-Colonel Don Manuel Centurion has been governing; not only does he merit that thanks be given him for his accredited zeal and services, but they should be increased, so as stimulate him in increasing them. . . and therefore our Majesty might confer upon him the grade of Colonel. . .

And lastly, the Council informs your Majesty that, having received more particular information regarding these Reports of the said Governor, which in some manner make them appear very improbable, they therefore require to be scrupulously examined; and consequently the Council recommends to your Majesty that information in regard to those Reports be procured from the Viceroy of Santa Fé and Governor of Caracas, etc., and from the various Secretaries of State, Council of the Indies, and Superiors of the Capuchins resident in Spain; and that when all the Reports are received and examined the Council will report to your Majesty what is just and worthy. . .

(Signed)  
 VALDELIRIOS  
 ARCO  
 XIMENO  
 CASAFOND  
 SANTOS  
 MAGALLON  
 AGUERO  
 CERDA

*(Archivo de Indias, Seville)*

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**543. EXTRACTS FROM THE REPORT ON THE PROVINCES OF GUAYANA, BY BRIGADIER DON AUGUSTIN CRAME, WITH A PLAN OF DEFENCE FOR THE RIVER ORINOCO, ETC., AND GENERAL REMARKS ON THE COUNTRY.**

**[15 March 1777]**

*(Extract from Covering Despatch)*

*Guayana, March 15, 1777.*

Dear Sir,

Herewith I transmit to your Excellency the plan of defence of this Province of Guayana, accompanied with plans and Tables for the better understanding thereof.

From these your Excellency will perceive the present condition, and the attention which it demands at the present day, and what it may merit in the future.

I do not propose for its defence anything more than a slight increase in the veteran force of its garrison, and this only in case we want to go to war with Portugal; outside of this I think its gar-

rison is quite sufficient, and when the circumstances of the time require a greater force, they may be obtained from the neighbouring provinces.

For the present it does not appear to me to be necessary to increase the fortifications in the Orinoco; but whenever it pleases His Majesty to open the communication so that this province may flourish, then it will be well to bestow more attention on its security. Its poverty frees it at present from all insults. Sad situation that of placing its security in its misery! But whenever its prosperity and advantageous commerce make it known, then the pass of the Orinoco must be rendered secure, etc.

May God preserve your Excellency . . .

(Signed) AUGUSTIN CRAME

(Seal)

Señor Don José de Galvez

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***Inclosure: Plan of defence for the Province of Guayana, drawn up by command of His Majesty by Brigadier Don Augustin Crame, in connection with Lieutenant Colonel Don Joseph Linares, Acting Commandant of the said Province***

*(Extract)*

1. Guayana, the extent of which is larger than Spain, possesses on all sides excellent land for agriculture, and rich pastures for cattle-breeding. It is also believed, with some foundation, that mines exist, for in past times various explorations were made and trials carried on, which gave great hopes. And even at the present time the hopes of discovering the province of "Dorado" have not been dissipated from what little our men did, in that respect, who were most unjustly seized by the Portuguese, and are now prisoners in Pará.

2. The number of inhabitants of this province is very reduced. There are scarcely 4,000, taking Spaniards, creoles, and negroes, in the whole extent of it, but the number of reduced Indians is considerable, and will not be less than 18,000.

3. There are about 200,000 head of cattle, 170,000 belonging to the Missions, the remainder to private individuals, etc.

4. The plantations give sufficient for the interior consumption, and so far as agriculture is carried it gives good results and returns, etc.

5. The trade of this province is very limited; and tobacco from the Province of Barinas is the chief article of produce, and will be for some time. With this, and what Guayana produces, a trade amounting to about 60,000 or 70,000 pesos (about 10,000 guilders) might be carried on with Spain.

6. The income of the province reaches 15,000 pesos (about 2,500 guilders) a year, but as the expenses of the Government are 50,000 pesos (about 8,000 guilders) a year, it is necessary to transmit from the Treasury of Santa Fé 35,000 pesos (about 5,500 guilders) annually.

7. These notes are given to form an idea of the province, the garrison of which consists of

four veteran companies, three of infantry, consisting of seventy-two men in each, and one of artillery of sixty. Both are distributed among the forts, fortress, and Missions; the men are not bad, but under such a distribution there can be no discipline.

8. Besides the garrison there are four companies of militia: two of whites, one of creole, and another of mulattos, etc.

9. This province is bounded on the east by the Dutch Colony of Essequibo, and French Guayana.

The proximity of the Dutch does not by any means give any ground for alarm. In no way whatever do they belie their peaceful system, nor manifest any ambition to extend their possessions in the interior. Nevertheless, their explorations have reached to Parime; and, on the other hand, the liberty we grant to their fugitive slaves makes them chary [wary] about having us as neighbours.

Of French Guayana there is nothing to fear, but if the project concerning "France Equinoctial" had taken effect, and it may at any time be renewed, then it would be necessary to determine the limits on that silage.

10. Our greatest attention must be given to the Portuguese, with whom we are confined on the south. For not content with their old and advanced possessions, their audacity has increased to the extent of fortifying themselves in the dominions of our Sovereign, so that whether this proceeds from ambition to extend her Colony, or from an inspiration of what "El Dorado" may produce, or it may be through the fear of having us so near – from whatever motive it may be that insult demands satisfaction.

11. Our military strength on that frontier has always been too weak, and at present it is reduced to one officer and thirty men, which garrisons the fort of San Carlos, and on the side looking towards Parime, although distant from it, another officer with twenty men, in the new village of Guirior.

12. Returning now to the principal mouth of the Orinoco, one navigates for 45 leagues up river without seeing anything more than deserts, which, on the north, extend for a great distance, marshy; and on the south inclosed by forests inhabited by a multitude of Indians, and the lands are admirable for all kinds of cultivation. At 45 leagues' distance from the Grand Mouth, the port of San Francisco do Assisi is reached, and from there up the country is open, with immense savannahs on both sides of the river.

13. This fort is situated upon a hill on the south bank of the river, and at a distance of a quarter of a league from the place where Santo Thomé de la Guayana was, the capital of this province, and owing to its unhealthiness was transplanted to Angostura. . . .

16. Going upstream from San Francisco, the Island of Fajardo is reached at a distance of 8 leagues; an excellent and dominant position, where there is a small battery with four small cannon, etc.

17. From Fajardo to Guayana there are 22 leagues; it is situated also on the south bank of the river, at the point formerly known by the name of "San Phelipe", close to the town, and this is an immense rocky hill, looking out on the Orinoco, etc.

18. From here up there is no necessity to continue the description, nor of the interior, which is nearly a deserted wilderness, nor of the division into which it is separated in its Missions, as that is not the purpose in view.

19. The condition of Guayana, its forts, garrison, etc., having been shown, we shall now pass

to the question of its defence, and draw up a plan in accordance with the state in which this province now is.

Enemies can invade it either by the frontier or by the River Orinoco. The part of the frontier which chiefly demands attention is that from the Parime to the Casiquiare.

*[Paragraphs 20 to 25 deal exclusively with the southern part in dispute with the Portuguese.]*

26. The plan of defence in respect of the frontier (i.e., the limit or boundary with Brazil) being determined, we shall now propose some measures of defence for the interior, and what ought to be done for the Orinoco.

The principal mouth of this river presents no port capable of being fortified. Whatever work might be established or built on the Island of Cangrejos would always remain exposed, and would be perfectly useless in preventing an enemy entering the river.

This same difficulty continues, with little difference to the near neighbourhood of Old Guayana. And as at that point the country is open, and there are no networks of creeks as lower down, it was in the earliest times of the settlement of the country determined to construct the Fort of San Francisco. . .

(Seal) (Signed) AUGUSTIN CRAME  
(Seal) (Signed) JOSEPH DE LINARES

**544. SUMMARY AND EXTRACTS OF THE “EXPEDIENTE” DRAWN UP BY THE GOVERNOR OF GUAYANA, DON MIGUEL MARMION, BY COMMAND OF THE GOVERNOR AND CAPTAIN-GENERAL OF CARACAS, IN 1790, FOR THE COUNCIL OF THE INDIES, IN REFERENCE TO THE FOUNDING OF A NEW CATTLE FARM (“HATO”), CALLED A MISSION, IN THE SITE OF TUMEREMO, GUAYANA, BY THE CAPUCHIN MISSIONARIES**

**[No date on this document – but it was believed to have been written in early 1790]**

The “Expediente” begins with a letter from Fray Buenaventura, Superior of the Capuchin Missions in Guayana, to the Governor of that province, on the 8th February 1788, announcing that a new village, called “Maria Santissima de Belen de Tomeremo”, has been founded in that year, and requesting that altar furniture be supplied for the use of Divine Service. It also stated that the village was intended as a cattle farm, and would be of great service to His Majesty. The site of the new village is given as Tumeremo – leagues distant from the Mission of “Anjel Custodio”, 5 from that of Tupuquen, and 6 from Cura.

The Governor of Guayana, Don Miguel Marmion, replying to the Prefect’s letter above referred to, on the 19th February, 1788, says: “He has no power to grant such permission to the missionaries, and must consult the “Intendente” of Caracas, who, in his last despatch, requested to be informed with regard to the last two Missions founded; and he has warned me of the circumstances which must intervene,” etc.

The circumstance here referred to is the question of advancing the Missions so close to the frontier of the Dutch possessions.

And in another letter of the 16th of the same month and year the Governor advises the Fray Buenaventura that Don Antonio Lopez de Puente is about to proceed the interior on a special

mission; that he will inspect the site of the new intended cattle farm, and also choose out a convenient site for a post, "either at the junction of the River Yaruary with the Cuyuni, or any ether in that part that may appear to him best suited therefor." And he requests the said Superior to assist the officer charged with the Commission by every means in his power.

The Superior of the Missions, replying to the Governor's communication from Caroni, under date of the 31st May, 1788, says he fully recognizes that the demand of the Governor to be informed of the site of the new cattle farm and the last two Missions founded is by no means superfluous. "And," he continues, "although we may make a mistake in choosing the site of a new foundation, we are always most careful in studying the matter very closely before so doing. This also happens to others, as experience shows; and this will be on account of the present circumstances. At first it appeared to be an excellent site for the new farm; although later, on examining the matter better, on account of various circumstances which presented themselves, it was not considered so good as was previously represented."

And again, referring to the scrupulous care with which they observe His Majesty's laws in reference to the founding of Missions, he says: "We are by no means ignorant of the rumours which some one or others have spread. . . Nor have we any desire of choosing places that may be inconvenient to His Majesty.

"I really must confess that I do not understand why you have placed these difficulties in our way, why no Governor or predecessor of yours has ever before done. Our practice has always been, ever since we entered upon those Missions, to choose those places which appeared, in our judgment, to be most suitable for villages, without consulting any one; nor without believing it was all necessary that we should do so; and if this act of ours has presented any difficulty to you, now that we have chosen this site in the savannahs of Tumeremo for a cattle farm on account of the pastures on the old farm being exhausted, it appears to us that the motive of your objection must be very poor, for that site being so distant from the Cuyuni, as is notorious and well known to all, the motive of difficulty is consequently set aside at once. What is certain is that your predecessors made no difficulty in allowing a settlement to be founded at Cura, although this last is less distant from the Cuyuni than Tumeremo; and the site of Curamo was also less distant, and, nevertheless, none of your predecessors placed any difficulty in the way in allowing a "pueblo" to be established there; certainly it is to be acknowledged that the Caribs, incited by the Dutch who were living in that place, rose and destroyed it, and no attempt since then has been made to resettle it. In fine, your Excellency does not hesitate in placing before us clearly all the instructions that have been given to Major Don Antonio Lopez de la Puente in regard to his mission here; and we are quite ready to put him at once in possession of our proceedings. For as we do not agree in our way of working, though our mode of proceeding is public, we are quite ready for all investigations, we have nothing to fear, for our conscience accuses us of nothing.

"I shall not say any more for the present on this matter, not to trouble your Excellency. But simply in compliance with your request, herewith transmit a detailed and circumstantial account of the Missions, specifying the year when each was founded. . . ."

Here follows the account referred to by the Prefect.

The next document in this "Expediente" is the journal of the Governor of Guayana, in which the Commission of Major Lopez de la Puente is treated of; and the instructions given to that official in respect of his journey; and among other points noted in the journal is the following fact: "That all the inhabitants of the 'villa' de Upata were very glad to hear that steps were about to be

taken to protect the Missions which were threatened by the Dutch in that part.”

The journal gives a detailed account of the journey; and this shows that the Mission was not by any means looked upon with favour by the missionaries who put every obstacle they could in its way. It also shows that, though several points were indicated which might serve for the proposed post, none was definitely fixed upon; nor was any post ever erected in any part of that territory by the Spaniards. It is also stated that it was considered well to take some Caribs from Guascipati to strengthen the number of the expedition; for great precaution was necessary lest any news of what was on foot should reach the Dutch. And further, it is mentioned, “that the expedition did not consider it prudent, owing to the proximity of the Dutch, to proceed as far as the Cuyuni, nor did it even reach the mouth of the Yuruary, as there was no road open to it;” and steps were taken to prevent the Caribs from holding any communication with the Colony of Essequibo; “for should the news of this expedition reach the Colony, there is no doubt that the same misfortune would happen as took place on the occasion of expeditions to Parime, when all was nearly massacred.”

Another letter in this “Expediente”, addressed to the Governor of Guayana by Fray Thomas de Mataro, dated from the Mission of Copapuy on the 6th July, 1788, in which a very detailed account is given in regard to the new cattle farm of Tumeremo, its locality and distance from Cura an the Yuruary, states: “It is but too true there are great dissensions among the reverend community in regard to the founding of new Missions; and going so far away from the central authority. And I do not know how these unedifying dissensions may be set unless by applying to the reverend Commissary-General.”

And following the foregoing is a despatch from Don Miguel Marmion, to the “Intendente”, Caracas, dated Guayana, the 4th August, 1788, in which he complains in the strongest manner of the Capuchins, “who are under no control, and despite my authority; and will not recognize ‘the powers of the Chief Magistrate of this province; but simply do what they like, . . . I am well informed by persons of the best credit that the new cattle farm of Tumeremo was founded by Indians taken from another Mission, as happened in the cases of the Missions of ‘Angel Custodio’ and Cura; and in my last journey to Upata I saw many families and a great number of Indians who fled from those Missions. . . In statement No. 1, I find the Mission of ‘Angel Costodio’ suppressed; and in that of No. 6 I find it restored, and according to the register of the President, Father Marino de Perapitta, the same Mission of Tumeremo is inserted, and I am quite puzzled, for I am unable to understand those constant mistakes. This, however, I do know, that this is the origin of all these discords of which your Excellency has been informed, and of which an account was transmitted to the King.” The Governor concludes his letter by saying that “I have no hope that this Mission will have any permanency, both from the knowledge of the circumstances in reference to its foundation, and acquaintance with the locality in which it is situated.”

The in his Report to the Council of State says: “It will be necessary to examine with the greatest care this matter, in order to clearly understand whether the founding of this ‘pueblo’ would be well on account of one of the most delicate points in the circumstances, and it is necessary that His Majesty be very particularly informed of everything concerning it.”

The Fiscal, in another Report of 1789, attached to this same “Expediente”, says: “It would be well were a post established in the fork (‘orqueta’) of the Curiamo; . . . but in the event of the said post or village of Spaniards, that is to cover those frontiers and put a stop to the robberies of the Dutch and Caribs not being constructed, permission to found the cattle farm of Tumeremo

should not be granted.”

*(Archivo General de Indias, Seville)*

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**545. DON FERMIN DE SANCINENEA, GENERAL FACTOR OF THE GUIPUZCOAN COMPANY AND CONFIDENTIAL AGENT OF THE SPANISH GOVERNMENT IN GUAYANA, TO COUNT DEL CAMPO DE ALANGE**

**[15 June 1790]**

*Aranjuez, June 15, 1790*

The Province of Guayana is in imminent danger of being the principal object of attack by the enemy in the first war, for which purpose they, they, the English, at the same time they possessed the [Dutch] Colonies delimited them with more than twenty subaltern officers in their boats from the River Essequibo to the “Boca de Navios” or Ship’s Mouth, and even 10 leagues higher up the river, etc.

*(Archivo General de Simancas)*

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**546. DON FERMIN DE SANCINENEA TO THE KING OF SPAIN**

**[9 February 1791]**

*Madrid, February 9, 1791*

*(Extract)*

It has appeared well to your petitioner to profit by the present opportunity to lay before your Majesty more specific reasons concerning the importance of the said “Presidio” and fort of Guayana. They are situated at a distance of about 30 leagues from the capital [Angostura], from the sea, by the River Orinoco. They are close to the Dutch Colonies of Essequibo and Demerara, the greater part of which is populated by the English and contiguous to this province. The River Essequibo divides them; and into this the Cuyuni (an affect of the Orinoco [*sic*] flows, besides various other branches of that river. All these give a free passage to the inhabitants of the other Colonies; and these places were delimited, by the British nation when she became possessed of the said Dutch Colonies by the last war. And in this work [of delimitation] of the Colonies a number of large boats, with subaltern officers and sailors and soldiers, were engaged. The said forts alone cannot resist any sudden invasion, without taking into consideration other circumstances, quite as important, to show how important they are.

Your Majesty’s informant, who has very complete knowledge of these places and of others immediate in which he resided, surveyed the said forts in January 1789, and found that their entire garrison consisted of a Lieutenant, a sickly boy, and some eight or ten soldiers, including five artillerymen.

They merit every attention, as being the key of the province, and this last of the Kingdom, etc.

**547. EXTRACTS FROM THE CONFIDENTIAL CORRESPONDENCE OF THE VICEROYS OF SANTA FÉ DE BOGOTA (NEW GRANADA) IN REFERENCE TO THE TAKING OF THE DUTCH COLONIES BY THE ENGLISH IN 1781, AND THE DELIMITING OF THE SAME**

[February 1791]

*The following documents are included in this correspondence:*

**1. Don Fermin de Sancinenea, General Factor of the Guipuzcoan Company, and Confidential Agent of the Spanish Government in Guayana, to Count del Campo de Alange, 15 June 1790** [Document No. 545 above].

**2. Don Fermin de Sancinenea to the King of Spain, 9 February 1791** [Document No. 546 above].

**548. [FRENCH TEXT OF ARTICLE I OF THE AGREEMENT BETWEEN SPAIN AND HOLLAND SIGNED IN ARANJUEZ ON JUNE 23, 1791]**

[23 June 1791]

[The Article calls for the return of both white and black employees of the Dutch colonies who escaped to Spanish territory in the Americas. It specifically referred to those who escaped from Essequibo, Demerara, Berbice and Surinam to Spanish settlements on the Orinoco.]

*[Translated text not printed]*

**549. THE SPANISH AMBASSADOR AT THE COURT OF ST. JAMES TO PRINCE DE LA PAZ, SPANISH SECRETARY OF STATE**

[10 June 1796]

*London, June 10, 1796.*

My Dear Sir,

I have received your Excellency's three letters of the 18th May, and three others of the 25th of the same month. I shall reply separately to each as they require.

Don Mariano Luis de Urquijo will inform your Excellency, today, with the exactitude and regularity he is accustomed to do, of the news and subjects of interest to be reported concerning this country.

The news has been received of the conquest and occupation of the Dutch Colonies of Demerari and Essequibo by the English.

This operation is more directed against Spain than Holland, and it effectively appears that if we wish to preserve our Americas, we must not tolerate that the English strengthen their foothold in *Terra Firma*.

Once established there it will be very easy for them to carry out their maritime expedition against the important Island of Trinidad, the Provinces of Orinoco and Caracas, which are possessions of the first order, and which will be continually exposed.

All that will be much easier if, to the conquest of Demerari and Essequibo, they add that of the Island of Curazao, quite near to them now, and as very probably they will already have done.

As it is not possible to conceal from this Cabinet how much it wounds the interests of the Spanish Monarchy by this blow, and by proceeding thus openly and publicly against them, it is equivalent to a declaration of war.

Whatever may be the views with which they wish to cloak their proceedings, so hostile to us, I am too good a servant of the King, and love of my country, not to speak out clearly and frankly, and tell them what I understand of this affair.

My English doctors are trying to send me in a few days to take the waters at Bath for some weeks, or those of Cheltenham, in Gloucestershire, etc.

God preserve your Excellency. . . .

(Signed) LAS CASAS

To Prince de la Paz

(*Archivo de Simancas*)

## 550. DECLARATION OF WAR BY THE COURT OF MADRID AGAINST GREAT BRITAIN

[No date shown. It was received by the Marquess of Bute, British Ambassador at the Court of Madrid, on 5 October, 1796.]

(*Extract*)

Such were the proceedings of the English Ministry to prove the friendship, good understanding, and strict confidence which they had offered to observe with Spain in all the operation of the war, by virtue of the Convention of the 25th May, 1788.

Since peace was concluded with the French Republic I have not only had the best grounded motives to suppose England harboured an intention to attack my American possessions. . . .

England has in fact showed openly her views against my dominions by the great expeditions and armaments sent to the West Indies. . . . and lastly by the conquest she has just made on the continent of South America of the Colony and River of Demerara belonging to the Dutch, which advantageous situation puts her in the way to occupy other important points.

**551. DON PEDRO CARBONELL, CAPTAIN-GENERAL OF CARACAS, TO THE PRINCE DE LA PAZ, SPANISH SECRETARY OF STATE**  
**[4 March 1797]**

*(De Preferencia)*

*Caracas, March 4, 1797.*

Your Excellency,

The Governor of Guayana, in reference to his despatch No. 5 of the 2nd February last, reports, among other things, that he has been informed that the English have apportioned all the lands which stretch from the Colony of Essequibo to Barima, the windward point which, with that of Cangrejos, forms the mouth of the Orinoco, and that from one point to another they have planted stakes or poles, on the extreme end of which they have affixed Notices, explaining to whom that portion is allotted, with the name of the owner.

Although this news is not as clear as it should be, nor as circumstantial as an affair of so much importance demands, I have, nevertheless, considered it well not to despise it altogether. And, consequently, in order to assure myself thereof as fully as possible, in conformity with my duty, I have dispatched Captain Don Manuel Astor, so that with the assistance of His Majesty's revenue-cutter of this river, together with whatever boats and Indians he may consider necessary, to proceed at once to Point Barima, reconnoitre it, and make a scrupulous exploration of the truth of this matter, or obtain proof that it is unfounded. That in case of finding any of the Notices that are said to be posted up, he will bring one back with him for greater evidence. But on no account is he to go any distance from that point, on account of the danger of falling in with the enemy's cruisers, which are known to be cruising in front of the mouths or into an ambuscade which the English may have prepared. For the little force which he is taking to carry out his commission is not enough for a greater expedition.

With another [despatch] of the 3rd of the same [month] he enclosed me a copy of the account which Andrew Conde, master of a schooner belonging to that port; gave him. That Conde was a prisoner of war during eight months in the Island of Grenada, where all those who have been taken from us are detained; that the expedition against Trinidad was being fitted out there; and he concludes as follows: "The English told me that Mr. Secretary Pitt had resolved to cause the Spanish-American Colonies to revolt; that, with this object in view, they had offered to help the people of Santo Domingo, and that they would remain independent; and that a Commission was dispatched to Mexico with the same offers; and that in taking the Orinoco, as was resolved upon, they would attract the neighbouring provinces by making them advantageous offers; and that they were not ignorant of the little or no force which we had here.

Together with another despatch of the 4th of the said month, marked No. 8, he, the Governor, inclosed me a copy of the Report drawn up by Fray Felix de Tarraga, a Capuchin ecclesiastic, of thirty-one years residence in the Missions of the said Province of Guayana, who, instructed by my orders, was commissioned to investigate and inquire into the strength and force of the expedition that the English were preparing in Demerary.

And having departed from Guayana on the 31st December last, and having arrived by the

Creek Amacuro, on the savannah, he found the entry closed at the head-waters of the River Amacuro, where the Aruaca Indians, whom he there found posted, informed him that on the east bank opposite the English had paid Indians in their service in order that they might guard that place, and whenever they heard [any parties approaching] or that the stakes placed at the entry of the savannah were being removed, they should throw down others at the entry of the creek, and give notice to the guard of the post placed at the mouth of the Moruca, where it flows into the sea, in which place, they told him they, the English, had a number of cannon planted and a large number of soldiers, without expressing the exact number. And added the following: They also told me for certain that from Essequibo to Point Barima the English had portioned out all the lands, with posts fixed in the ground on which Notices were affixed stating the names of the parties to whom the various lots belonged.

To form an idea of the area of the territory which extends from the Essequibo to Point Barima, I have examined the exact map, drawn up by the Colonel of Engineers Don Miguel Marmion, when Governor of Guayana, and taking from the south-west to the north-east, there are 47 leagues of coast, with many rivers and creeks, which flow into the sea; and if they have drawn their line north and south to the fork of the Rivers of Yuruan and Yaruary it embraces about 40 leagues, and from east to west 46, forming the figure of a trapezoid.

Of all the news which he gave in his Report, none has caused me more alarm and created greater consternation than that of the ingenious and detestable project of Mr. Pitt to stir up the Americas to rebellion; for I cannot conceal from the King that if the English enter the Orinoco and ascend towards the Kingdom of Santa Fé and disembark at Macuco, the port of the River Meta, which flows into it, I much fear that the hidden smouldering fire of Socorro of the year [17]80, and the sparks it gave forth in [17]93, when the pamphlet *The Rights of Man* was distributed, may renew and cause again discontent, and a disposition to throw off the easy yoke of the Spanish domination.

God preserve your Excellency . . . .

(Signed) PEDRO CARBONELL  
Governor and Captain-General of Caracas

To Prince de la Paz, First Secretary of State

(*Archivo de Indias, Seville*)

**552. MIGUEL DE ARNZA, ON BEHALF OF THE HIS MAJESTY THE KING OF SPAIN, TO DON PEDRO CARBONELL, CAPTAIN-GENERAL OF CARACAS**

[22 February 1798]

*Aranjuez, February 22, 1798.*

From your Excellency's letters of the 4th March of the past year, the King has learned of the news of the distribution of the lands which extend from the mouth of the Essequibo to that of the Orinoco that have been made by the English, and of the other matters to which your Excellency refers in the said communications, and the receipt of which I am commanded by His Majesty to

acknowledge and advise you of.

God preserve your Excellency. . . .

(Signed) MIGUEL DE ARNZA

To the Captain-General of Caracas

*(Archivo de Simancas)*

**553. GOVERNOR BEAUJON TO THE DUKE OF PORTLAND**

**[15 June 1799]**

*Demerary, June 15, 1799.*

*(Extract)*

Captain Macrae of the 11th West India Regiment takes charge of this despatch. He is a well-informed gentleman, who, from his observations, during his residence here, will be able to make your Grace acquainted with further circumstances relative to these His Majesty's possessions. He was an individual in the Colony at the time it became British, and has since been appointed to the command of a company in the above regiment. The men composing that regiment being negroes from plantations, he has, from his knowledge of the Colony, under the auspices of Lieutenant-Colonel Hislop, been of great service in aiding towards their discipline.

I beg to be permitted to recommend Captain Macrae to your Grace's notice and attention.

**554. EXTRACT FROM REPORT, IN BRITISH RECORDS WITHOUT SIGNATURE, BUT UNDERSTOOD TO BE THAT OF CAPTAIN MACRAE TO THE DUKE OF PORTLAND, WHEN HE WAS SENT WITH DESPATCHES TO ENGLAND IN 1799 BY THE GOVERNOR OF ESSEQUIBO**

**[1799]**

*What quantity of land is supposed to be actually cultivated, and in what manner was it intended that the remainder should be dispose of; also, how much more land may still be cultivated by means of the canal intended to be made?*

The Colonies of Demerary and Essequibo\* are cultivated from the boundaries of Berbice, called Abary Creek, along the sea coast to Pomerony River, including the borders of Essequibo and Demerary Rivers, the islands in the mouth of Essequibo River, Mahaica and Mahaycony Cieeks, and several canals, which form an extent of 250 English miles.

The different plantations are cultivated, one with another, to the depth of 800 or 1,000 roods; between there are public roads, 30 or 40 feet broad, from one end of the Colony to the other. The interior of the country is all wood, more or less proper for cultivation, if canals were made, by

which the rivers could communicate together as was intended to be done between Demerary River and Mahayca Creek, which would be sufficiently extensive for 300 sugar and coffee plantations; there are at present in Demerary alone near 400 plantations in cultivation.

*How much land is there remaining not yet disposed of and which is already laid out in lots, on what conditions was it given, and at what price, how many lots are lately begun upon, at what are their revenues rated when these plantations are in cultivation?*

The land not yet cultivated on the sea coast extends itself from the west coast of Essequibo, where the district of Pomerony begins, to the Spanish Settlements in Orinoco River. That land is esteemed as extremely rich, and a lot of uncultivated ground is sold now for 10,000 guilders: from thence an estimation of its value may be made when cultivated, though it is impossible at present to make a true calculation.

The Sovereign, at the recommendation of the Governor, grants lots on the conditions expressed in a Regulation made in the year 1792 and enlarged in 1795; the conditions vary according to the different cases mentioned in the several Articles of these Regulations under the head of "Acre Money" and other obligations.

*Is it possible to have an account of the revenues of Essequibo only, and the quantity of its produce?*

I am absolutely ignorant of the produce of Essequibo; most of the plantations on that river are sugar estates except the new grounds, which are excellent for coffee.

[*Note: \*The spelling of this name is reproduced as is shown in the original document.*]

**555. EXTRACTS FROM THE MEMORANDUM OF DON FRANCISCO DE REQUENA, GOVERNOR OF MAINAS, IN THE PROVINCE OF QUITO, AND PRESIDENT OF THE LAST COMMISSION FOR THE DEMARCATION OF THE LIMITS OF THE SPANISH AND PORTUGUESE POSSESSIONS IN THE AMAZONS AND GUAYANA (FOURTH DIVISION), IN REFERENCE TO THE TREATY ENTERED INTO BETWEEN THE KING OF PORTUGAL (JOAO THE REGENT) AND THE FRENCH REPUBLIC AT MADRID, SEPTEMBER 21, 1801, WITH OBSERVATIONS AS TO THE INJURY AND PREJUDICE THAT WILL BE CAUSED TO SPAIN BY THAT TREATY OF PEACE.**

[1801 – exact date not shown]

The extensive coast of Guayana, comprised between the two great Rivers Orinoco and Marañon, or Amazon, from the discovery of America belonged to the Spanish Empire.

In the year 1499 it was visited by Americo Vespucci, and some time afterwards by Captain Alonzo de Ojeda; also Vincente Yanez Pinzon examined it. Francisco Orellana, on descending from Quito by the River Marañon, passed along the whole coast. The same was done by the crew of Pedro de Ursua, who made the same voyage from Lima. Lastly, in the time of Charles V,

Diego de Ordaz, the same Orellana, and other Spaniards, with fleets, went from Spain towards these parts, without ever having made any settlement whatever on them, simply contenting themselves with taking possession of them in the name of their Sovereign.

2. As all these coasts of the Northern Hemisphere were abandoned for more than a century, the Dutch and French founded Colonies on them without any opposition whatever on the part of Spain, to whom the said territories belonged. Their Colonies were enlarged, as they still continue to be, and these possessions are known by the names of their capitals – Surinam and Cayana.

3. The Portuguese violated the Treaties of Tordecillas in 1494, of Lisbon in the year 1687, and the Congress of Badajoz and Yelves of the same year (these are the only valid ones, and still subsist between Spain and Portugal), in crossing the meridian laid down by them all for the demarcation of the limits of the two Crowns in South America. They established themselves in the Grand Pará, very many leagues to the west of the meridian determined on and consented to, in close proximity to the mouth of the Amazons, whose waters unite with the many that there meet from various other rivers.

*[Paragraphs 4 to 9 and 10 to 30, relating to the question with Portugal and France, are omitted.]*

31. For the same reason, and with equal right, our Court should fix the limits with the Republic of Holland, and settle or arrange to what point she may extend her plantations also towards the west in the interior, from the Colony of Surinam, on the same coast of Guayana.

It is very expedient to foresee the evils that must arise from the fact of the boundaries of these settlements being undefined and undetermined. And it is well known how much they (the Dutch) have advanced up the River Essequibo, in spite of the many falls that impede its navigation. They have, for a long time, placed a superior or strong guard upon that river. They may also, in course of time, advance from the Rivers Cuyuni and Caroni to the Orinoco, and take possession of the lower part of this great river.

*(Archivo General de Simancas)*

**556. EXTRACTS FROM THE MEMORANDUM OF DON FRANCISCO DE REQUENA, BRIGADIER AND CHIEF COMMISSIONER OF THE SPANISH BOUNDARY COMMISSION OF 1776-77, "ON THE BEST LINE OF DEMARCATION BETWEEN THE SPANISH AND PORTUGUESE CROWNS, BY WHICH THE BEST AND SUREST DIVISION OF LIMITS IS LAID DOWN, WITH THE VIEW OF AVOIDING FOR THE FUTURE DOUBTS AND DISPUTES BETWEEN, THE SUBJECTS OF THE TWO CROWNS," ETC.**

**[1802 – exact date not shown]**

A residence of thirty-one years in America, the knowledge of geography acquired, and the necessity of carefully studying the question of the Portuguese frontier on the side of the Marañon, from the office of General Master of the camp, which I held in the expedition of 1776, gave me the best possible opportunity since that time of well knowing the utility and importance of laying down a line of division that would not only guarantee the possession and interests of His Majesty, but would at the same time be the surest and quickest possible, and greatly tend to

the avoiding of all future disputes.

But after having been seventeen years employed on the Commission of Limits, during which various rivers were surveyed, and long, arduous, and fatiguing journeys performed, and many encounters with the Portuguese Commissioners sustained as to the understanding of the Preliminary Treaty of 1777; I have more practically learned that the demarcation can only be settled by taking certain points on those rivers, from which the greatest possible extent of country is covered in those vast regions, although with some slight variation from the Articles of the Treaty of 1777.

It is easy to exactly indicate the demarcation of the country through which the line of division should run from the Rio Negro to where the dominions of both Crowns on the east have to terminate, if the course of the river through which it has to pass be taken as a guide, etc.

The Articles IX and XII of the Treaties of 1750 and 1777 are in agreement, and express that the line of frontier shall follow by the summits of the mountains which stretch between the Rivers Orinoco and Amazons. But granting that in some parts no mountains nor hills be met with, then by any other heights or prominent points, however low or small, etc.

On the same line of division, by the summit of the mountains lying between the Orinoco and Amazons, its eastern limit must be duly considered, but only in so much as may be sufficient as to leave Lake Parime on the west. For from there forward there are other European nations in possession of considerable territories, comprised under the name of Guayana. Consequently, the line of division must not be extended as far as Cape North, suggested by one of the officials in his Report to His Majesty on the question of the demarcation of those limits: firstly, because the Dutch possessions are advanced by the Essequibo, and are confined by those of the Portuguese by the Rio Blanco, although I am not aware that those nations have so far entered into any Convention in this respect; secondly, because France and Portugal are bound by their respective Treaties which have settled their limits, particularly that of Utrecht (1713), as far as the sea-coast.

And, therefore, on this account Guayana is divided into Spanish, Dutch, French, and Portuguese. For which reason the said line of division should not be drawn through countries which are in actual possession of other Sovereigns, so as not to expose ourselves to be drawn into more political discussions, which might result in changing the good harmony at present existing between our august Sovereign and the Republics of France and Holland, etc.

*(Archivo General de Simancas)*

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**557. OBSERVATIONS BY MAJOR McCREAGH RESPECTING THE ORONOCO AND THE SPANISH SETTLEMENT IN THAT RIVER – (TRANSMITTED OCTOBER 1802)  
[October 1802]**

In entering the River Oronoco by the south-east, generally called the great channel, Cape Barima forms the south-east point. An immense assemblage of flat islands, intersected by innumerable channels, appears on the opposite side like the main land, and forms what, at this time of the year, may be called the north wide side of the great channel, but is for some months almost undistinguishable, being then covered with water to a very considerable height above the surface.

Between these flat islands and the main on this side there is a small island quite distinct from them in appearance and situation, which is sufficiently remarkable on opening the river. When this appears midway between both sides it indicates being in the proper channel.

Having entered the river, you pass close to leeward of this island, and a few miles farther up you come to a second, of nearly the same appearance, on the lower point of which are three temporary huts. It is called the first military post, but is in reality a station for pilots – of whom there are always five, who are regularly relieved. They are native Indians, and are occasionally called either pilots or soldiers. The former, I believe, however, is the only of the two capacities in which they are used to act. This island is called Pagayos. It has no other inhabitants.

The second post, as it is termed, is named Sacopana, and is situated on this side of the river about 120 miles above Pagayos. It consists of eight houses, thatched, and of one floor, but large and commodious enough for their inhabitants, who are about six Indian families, governed or directed by one Spaniard, who is a sergeant, and, as far as I could perceive, the only military person of any description in the place.

From this there is no other military post or station (if such they should be called) until you arrive at Fort Barancas, about 70 miles farther. It is on the opposite side of the river, a half-moon battery, mounting eleven guns, the merlons of loose sand stockaded. The whole force consists of forty-six Indians, supposed to act as soldiers, with three Spaniards, besides the Lieutenant Commanding.

About 3 miles higher up the river, and on the same (the northern or Cumaná) side, is the post of gun-boats called Upper Barancas. There is no fortification whatever, not a single gun mounted on the land. There are three gun-boats close to the beach, each having one heavy gun and some swivels, but the three boats seem in a state of great decay; two of them appear nearly unserviceable.

Here it is the rule to stop all vessels, except Spaniards, and even those except such as are specially privileged. Adhering, howsoever, to the line of conduct which I had been ordered to pursue, I was, after some delay and difficulty, permitted to proceed.

About 38 miles farther up the river, and on this side of it, is the town of Old Guyana, The fort, as it is called, consists of a single battery, mounting six 6-prs., and six smaller guns. It is situated on the summit of a hill about 200 feet perpendicular height. It is of mason work, but very ill and loosely constructed. It is commanded by two hills, one on each side, of more than double its height, and both of very smooth and easy ascent from the water's edge. There is another fort below the hill, and in the town. It is unoccupied, and seems almost in the state of ruin.

The whole number of the troops in the fort and town consisted of six officers, who had never been out of the country, and twenty-five rank and file. This is, in ascending this great river, the fifth and last of what are termed military posts; but there is not, in fact, a gun mounted, or the appearance of a garrison or any sort of troops, except at the Lower Barancas, and this fort of Old Guyana.

The town, generally called Angostura, but properly New Guyana, the capital of the province, is about 82 miles above Old Guyana. It is a tolerably well built town, and somewhat respectable in its appearance, considering that it was commenced not quite forty years ago. The houses all of stone, the roofs tiled, the streets laid out at right angles, and the whole situated on the sloping side of a hill. There is not the least attempt or appearance of any fortification or defensive work whatever. There are about fifty soldiers, chiefly native Indians. The whole number of troops

from this capital down to the mouth of the river does not, I am confident, exceed 200, and all miserably uninstructed, and undisciplined.

From the entrance of the great river as far up as Barancas, about 200 miles, is rather an uninteresting scene, but at Barancas the expanse of flat islands on the right or northern side of the great channel of the Orinoco terminates; the river branches off in another considerable channel called Manabo Pequeño, running northward to the Gulf of Paria.

From Barancas upward the country is admirable as to diversified and beautiful scenery, and the soil fertile in the highest degree. The air and climate not only pleasant and animating, but healthful beyond all comparison with any country we are connected with out of Europe, and I believe, I might even say equal to any there.

The inhabitants are not allowed to cultivate the soil, not even so far as to form a garden for their sustenance, being obliged to purchase plantains from Government at the different posts, or from the very few favoured persons, who as exceptions to the general prohibition, are permitted to form estates. The great body of the inhabitants thus restrained from agriculture are chiefly occupied in smuggling, and live in a perpetual state of private warfare with the Governor.

The river rises from the beginning of April to the end of August, remains at its greatest height, perfectly stationary as to level, during the whole month of September, falls from the beginning of October to the end of February, and continues at the lowest during all March.

The entrance is easiest during the falling month, the wind blowing constantly up the river, and the current seldom exceeding 3 miles an hour.

This river, so distinguished for the immense extent of its course, and for the annual phenomenon of the great elevation of its waters, is, however, from Barancas upward, very little wider than Demerara, and, in some places, apparently not even so wide.

Except the conversion of the aboriginal natives (which is certainly not the primary motive), the Spanish Government has obviously no other object in occupying the Oronoque than the very important one of excluding other Powers from a river which runs along the rear of the Provinces of Popayan, Venezuela, Carraccas, Cumana, and Paria; which, therefore, in the hands of a commercial nation would carry away from them the productions, and monopolize the traffic of those rich territories, and which, if possessed by a warlike Power, might immediately paralyze the authority, and gradually destroy the tenure by which Spain holds her vast Empires South America.

And on this account not only the cultivation of the fertile country of the Oronoque is prohibited, the augmentation of its settlers in every manner discountenanced, but the very commerce of old Spain to that particular river, except to a degree indispensably requisite, sedulously discouraged.

(Signed) M. McCreagh, Major,  
2nd West India Regiment

To Lieutenant-Colonel, Hislop,  
Commanding Her Majesty's Forces in Essequibo\*, Demerara, and Berbice

[*Note: This spelling is reproduced as is shown in the original document. Many British officials in the early part of the 19th century used this spelling.*]

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