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[10 January 1842]**

(Translation: Original – French)

22, Wimpole Street, London, January 10, 1842.

The Undersigned, Minister Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Venezuela, has the honour to reply to the note which the Right Honourable Earl of Aberdeen Her Britannic Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, wrote to him on the 11th ultimo, and in which, referring to the marks set up in the territory of Venezuela by the surveyor Schomburgk, his Lordship states that their removal would occasion much useless embarrassment, inasmuch as they offer the only tangible means whereby Her Majesty's Government can prepare to discuss the question of boundaries, and which were fixed expressly for that object, not as signs of dominion and empire on the part of Great Britain, as the Government of Venezuela seems to apprehend.

The Undersigned is sorry to be obliged to insist, nevertheless, on this point, but as grievous prejudices result to Venezuela from the permanency of those marks, it hopes on that account that the embarrassment ensuing from their removal will not appear useless.

The Undersigned has already declared both by word of mouth and in writing that the unexpectedness of the operation of the English Commissioner, the solemnity with which he executed it, and he having fixed on those marks the British flag and the initials of Her Majesty, have excited, and could not but excite, in the people of Venezuela, not only disgust, but grave apprehensions, which all the explanations hitherto received, and the hopes expressed by the Undersigned that they will speedily be removed, will not be able totally to dissipate. In vain has the Government endeavoured to inspire confidence in the honour of that of Her Majesty, and to persuade the people that negotiation is preferable to acts of violence. In vain have highly respectable citizens, on finding the good relations which happily subsist between the two countries put to hazard, and fearing, perhaps, for the tranquillity of the English subjects residing in the Republic, co-operate to the same end; but the people of Venezuela, having seen the British flag wave in their territory, it cannot be expected that while those marks remain, which were set up at an unlucky hour, the Venezuelans should be satisfied since the malcontents will also make it a pretext for machinations of dangerous consequences.

The meeting of Congress is at hand, when the Executive will submit to its consideration not only this business, but the conduct of the Government. Who knows in what light the representatives of the nation will view the one and the other, and how far they will suffer themselves to be impressed by the public alarm? It would therefore be desirable for them to learn at one and the

same time that the confidence in Her Majesty's Government was not misplaced, and that the marks have disappeared.

Smuggling, which, while it diminishes the revenue of the Treasury, demoralizes the people in the most efficacious manner, is also a consequence of the unhappy marks, because, under favour of the British flag raised at Barima, there has established itself from the Island of Trinidad a real system of fraud, to the grievous injury of honourable English, and other commercialists who, respecting the laws of the country, seek by honest dealings a gain proportioned to their exertion. This is a calamity now deplored by the British subjects themselves residing in Trinidad, Barbados, and other points, as may be seen in the journals of those islands, as well as in the prints of this metropolis.

Can it be deemed a useless trouble that will result from taking away the marks if this conduces to preserve order and good morals among a people that has ever afforded to England proofs of amity and good faith?

When to this are added the fatal results of the public disquietude, and the suspense in which the dread of a disagreement holds all, it will appear that, even if the marks be of less moment than they have been declared to be by Her Majesty's Government, by the Governor of Demerara, and by the Commissioner Schomburgk himself, justice and the considerations due to a friendly people require their removal.

But as his Lordship is of opinion that the marks may serve as tangible points for discussing the Boundary Treaty, it ought to be observed that the line which has been traced is not that deemed by Her Majesty's Government to be the frontier of English Guiana, but that which Commissioner Schomburgk thought proper to lay down, for the map which he was ordered to construct has not even been received yet in London. In such a state of uncertainty the fixation of points is, in the estimation of the Undersigned, not the operation to begin with, nor is it a step calculated to inspire the confidence required for a negotiation, for one of the parties to present himself, as a first announcement, and without the concurrence of the other party, with a demarcation of the territory he believes is appertaining to himself.

When the points through which the line of demarcation is to pass shall have been agreed on, and when, as in the United States of North America, there shall have been previously concluded a Treaty of Boundaries, it will then be the proper time for the Commissioners of both parties to proceed to the material operation of laying down the line, and, if they should not agree, for each to fix such marks as he thinks proper until an arrangement can be come to which depends only on the understanding or realization of the stipulations. Venezuela, is ready to enter on these stipulations (or this compact), and it has fully authorized the Undersigned thereto; and if, as is to be hoped, there exists in Her Majesty's Government the best disposition for an amicable agreement, the removal of the marks is not only useful, but absolutely necessary. . . .

(Signed) ALEJO FORTIQUE

637. THE EARL OF ABERDEEN, BRITISH SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS, TO SEÑOR ALEJO FORTIQUE, VENEZUELAN MINISTER IN LONDON, [31 January 1842]

Foreign Office, January 31, 1842.

The Undersigned, Her Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, has the honour to acknowledge the receipt of the note addressed to him on the 10th instant by M. Fortique, Minister Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Venezuela, representing the alarm and excitement which have been created in

Venezuela on account of the marks fixed by Mr. Schomburgk at different points of his survey near the mouth of the Orinoco, and renewing his request that Her Majesty's Government will order the removal of those marks.

The Undersigned begs to inform M. Fortique in reply, that in order to meet the wishes of the Government of Venezuela, Her Majesty's Government will send instructions to the Governor of British Guiana directing him to remove the posts which have been placed by Mr. Schomburgk near the Orinoco.

But the Undersigned feels it his duty distinctly to declare to M. Fortique that although, in order to put an end to the misapprehension which appears to prevail in Venezuela with regard to the object of Mr. Schomburgk's survey, the Undersigned has consented to comply with the renewed representations of M. Fortique upon this affair, Her Majesty's Government must not be understood to abandon any portion of the rights of Great Britain over the territory which was formerly held by the Dutch in Guiana. . . .

(Signed) ABERDEEN

638. SEÑOR ALEJO FORTIQUE, VENEZUELAN MINISTER IN LONDON, TO THE EARL OF ABERDEEN, BRITISH SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS [8 February 1842]

(Translation: Original – French)

22, Wimpole Street, London, February 8, 1842.

The Undersigned, Minister Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Venezuela, has the honour to address himself to the Right Honourable the Earl of Aberdeen, Her Britannic Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, and to acknowledge the receipt of his Lordship's note of the 31st ultimo, in which his Lordship is pleased to announce to him that Her Majesty's Government, with the view of gratifying the wishes of that of Venezuela, would send instructions to the Governor of English Guiana to remove the posts fixed by Mr. Schomburgk near the Orinoco.

This measure stated to have been taken for the purpose of quieting the apprehensions which apparently prevailed in Venezuela as to object of the topographical operations of Mr. Schomburgk, and of acceding to the repeated representations of the Undersigned, is not only just in itself, but evinces a certain cordiality and frankness that justify the confidence reposed from the very beginning by the Undersigned and by his Government in the rectitude and good faith of that of Her Majesty, and affords also grounds for hoping an amicable and decorous termination of the negotiation to be entered into.

But his Lordship has not specified the time at which that negotiation is to commence, and it is for this reason, as well as with the view of answering the last paragraph of the note alluded to, that the Undersigned is anxious to declare that his Government, far from contesting with that of Her Majesty the rights justly belonging to it, desires that the negotiation may be set on foot for recognizing in a definitive manner and settling the boundary-line of the territory which shall be found to belong to Great Britain as legitimately possessed by the Dutch. Accordingly, the Undersigned once more points out the urgent necessity there is of proceeding to the arrangement, and is happy in anticipating that it will not be delayed longer than is absolutely unavoidable. . . .

(Signed) ALEJO FORTIQUE

639. GOVERNOR OF BRITISH GUIANA, HENRY LIGHT, TO MR. DANIEL O'LEARY, BRITISH CHARGÉ D'AFFAIRES IN CARACAS
[9 March 1842]

Government House, Demerara, March, 9, 1842.

I have the honour to inform you, for the satisfaction of the Government of Venezuela, that I have received instructions from the Right Honourable the Secretary of State for the Colonies to remove the landmarks placed by Mr. Schomburgk on the Barima and elsewhere in his survey of the assumed limits of British Guiana.

The instructions having been given will, I trust, be received as a pledge of the friendly intentions of Her Majesty's Government, and shall be obeyed as soon as possible.

In the meantime, if any delay arise in carrying into effect the orders I have received, I trust to your good offices to point out to the Venezuelan Government that all grounds of remonstrance may be considered removed from the concession made to it by the British Ministers. . . .

(Signed) HENRY LIGHT

640. MR. DANIEL O'LEARY, BRITISH CHARGÉ D'AFFAIRES IN CARACAS, TO THE EARL OF ABERDEEN, BRITISH SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS
[10 March 1842]

Caracas, March 10, 1842.

I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your Lordship's despatch of the 1st February last, transmitting to me, for my information, copy of a note addressed to your Lordship on the 10th January by M. Fortique upon the subject of the boundary-line between Venezuela and British Guiana, and likewise copy of the answer returned by your Lordship to M. Fortique, by which I perceive that Her Majesty's Government has consented to remove the posts erected by Mr. Schomburgk near the Orinoco.

With reference to M. Fortique's note of the 10th January, I beg leave to observe that that gentleman was labouring under an erroneous impression when he stated to your Lordship that smuggling was one of the effects of the erection of the posts by Mr. Schomburgk, and that "under protection of the British flag at Barima, a system of fraud has been established at the Island of Trinidad to the great detriment of honest traders, British and not British," etc.

Shortly after the intelligence of Mr. Schomburgk's proceeding near the Orinoco had transpired here, it was reported, on the faith of letters from Angostura, that articles of British manufacture had been introduced illegally into the Venezuelan territory, and were selling at a village on the Orinoco at less than first cost. I lost no time in investigating the matter, and soon ascertained that, a British vessel having been wrecked on the bar of the Orinoco, some bales of goods were plundered therefrom, and disposed of in that quarter. I waited on M. Aranda in consequence, and communicated to him the circumstances. M. Aranda assured me that he was perfectly satisfied that no advantage of the kind alluded to by M. Fortique had been taken of the affair of Barima by British subjects.

The remarks published in the French papers on the affair of Barima have tended to renew the alarm which the conduct of Mr. Schomburgk created at Angostura, but in this town they produced no effect.

(Signed) DANIEL O'LEARY

641. GOVERNOR OF BRITISH GUIANA, HENRY LIGHT, TO MR. DANIEL O'LEARY, BRITISH CHARGÉ D'AFFAIRES IN CARACAS

[4 April 1842]

Caracas, April 4, 1842.

Sir,

I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your Excellency's despatch of the 9th ultimo, acquainting me that your Excellency had received instructions from the Secretary of State for the Colonies to remove the landmarks placed by Mr. Schomburgk at the mouth of the Orinoco; and requesting me, in case any delay should arise in carrying those instructions into effect, to point out to the Venezuelan Government that all grounds of remonstrance may be considered removed from the concession made to it by the British Government.

I have now to inform your Excellency that I lost no time in complying with your wishes, and I am happy to add that the Venezuelan Minister for Foreign Affairs, to whom I communicated the contents of the above-mentioned despatch, concurs with your Excellency in considering all grounds of remonstrance removed since Her Majesty's Government has consented to displace the posts erected by Mr. Schomburgk near the mouth of the Orinoco.

And I have further to state that the Government of Venezuela has regarded as a fresh instance of your Excellency's conciliatory conduct in the boundary question the promptness with which your Excellency has communicated to it the instructions of the Colonial Office. . . .

(Signed) DANIEL F. O'LEARY

642. MR. DANIEL O'LEARY, BRITISH CHARGÉ D'AFFAIRES IN CARACAS, TO THE EARL OF ABERDEEN, BRITISH SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS

[7 April 1842]

Caracas, April 7, 1842.

(Extract)

I have the honour to transmit herewith to your Lordship copy of a despatch of the Governor of British Guiana, acquainting me he had received instructions from the Colonial Office to remove the landmarks placed by Mr. Schomburgk at Barima and elsewhere, and requesting me to inform the Venezuelan Government thereof, and to explain to it that, should any delay arise in carrying those instructions into effect, all cause of remonstrance, nevertheless, may be considered removed by the order of Her Majesty's Government to displace the landmarks.

Immediately after receiving Mr. Light's correspondence I called on the Venezuelan Foreign Secretary, and communicated to him the contents of the despatch I have referred to, and also mentioned to him that the absence of Mr. Schomburgk from Georgetown left the Governor of British Guiana without the means of ascertaining the position of the posts placed by that gentleman near the mouth of the Orinoco, on which account some delay must take place before the posts could be removed.

M. Aranda observed, in reply, that the Venezuelan Government entirely acquiesced in the Governor's opinion that the cause of complaint was removed by the instructions sent to Mr. Light, but that, apprehensive of a continuance of dissatisfaction at Angostura, until the posts were actually removed, and in consideration of the circumstances which prevented Mr. Light from obeying his instructions, he thought the Venezuelan Government might permit the authorities at Angostura to remove the landmarks if they wished. M. Aranda then requested me to let him have a copy of Mr. Light's despatch of the 9th March.

With regard to the proposal of M. Aranda to have the posts removed by the authorities of Angostura, I replied that I thought it better to leave them as they are, but that we could hereafter confer upon the subject. I made no objection to give him a copy of the despatch in question.

I have told Mr. Light, as your Lordship will perceive by the copy herewith inclosed of my answer to his despatch, that the Venezuelan Foreign Secretary concurs in his opinion that all cause of remonstrance is removed.

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Inclosure 1: Governor of British Guiana, Henry Light, to Mr. Daniel O'Leary, British Chargé d'Affaires in Caracas, 9 March 1842 [Document No. 639 above].

Inclosure 2: Governor of British Guiana, Henry Light, to Mr. Daniel O'Leary, British Chargé d'Affaires in Caracas, 4 April 1842 [Document No. 641 above].

643. VENEZUELAN LEGISLATIVE DECREE ESTABLISHING LIGHTHOUSES ON SEVERAL PARTS OF THE COAST

[5 May 1842]

(Translation: Original – Spanish)

The Senate and Chamber of Representatives of the Republic of Venezuela assembled in Congress

Having taken into consideration the representation of the Municipal Council of Puerto Cabello respecting the establishment, in aid of the navigation at that coast, on Punta Brava, of a Pharos, which, for that purpose, the Junta of Beneficence of that city has procured, and offers; and considering that it is of great utility to the navigation of the coasts of the Republic to extend to other points thereof those establishments, concurring with the suggestions of the Executive,

Decree:

There shall be established on Punta Brava, opposite the Bay of Puerto Cabello, the Pharos offered by the Junta of Beneficence of that city; and there shall be constructed one on Los Roques, another at the entrance of the Orinoco, where the Executive may determine, and another at the entrance of the Bar of Maracaibo, each at an elevation in proportion to the necessity of the locality to which it belongs.

Art. 2. The Executive shall give the necessary directions for the erection of the lighthouses ordered to be established by the foregoing Article, and for keeping them continually lighted every night of the year.

Art. 3. For the objects expressed in the two foregoing Articles, there shall be collected from the 1st July of this year, in Angostura, La Guaira, Puerto Cabello, and Maracaibo, 6 cents for every ton measured by vessels, with or without cargo, that enter those harbours, proceeding from foreign ports; and on vessels proceeding from other open ports of the Republic, that enter Angostura, Puerto Cabello, and Maracaibo, only 3 cents per ton shall be charged for every ton over and above 25 tons. A general fund shall be formed of the product of either duty.

Vessels of war and national and foreign packets or mail boats are excepted from the payment of this duty.

Art. 4. The collection of this duty as established by the foregoing Article shall be realized when the port dues are collected, and by the same officers appointed by law to collect them.

Art. 5. The sum required, in order that the four lighthouses, of which this Law speaks, may be erected immediately, shall be aided by the surplus accumulated from entry dues established in the Law of port dues, taken on condition of being repaid from the duties established by the present Law, and in the following manner: for the Pharos of Los Rogues, from the entry collected at La Guaira, and for the others from the entry dues collected at the port to which each Pharos belongs.

Given at Caracas on the 5th May of 1842, 13th year of the Law, and 32nd of Independence.

The President of the Senate,
 (Signed) T. MANUEL DE LOS RIOS
 The President of the Chamber of Representatives,
 (Signed) FRANCISCO DIAZ
 The Secretary of the Senate,
 (Signed) JOSÉ R. BURGUILLOS
 The Secretary of the Chamber of Representatives,
 (Signed) RAFAEL AGEVIDO

Caracas, May 11, 1842, 13th year of the Law, and 32nd of Independence.

Let it be executed.
 (Signed) JOSÉ A. PAEZ

For his Excellency the President of the Republic:
 The Secretary of the Interior and Justice,
 (Signed) ANGEL QUINTERO

644. MR. DANIEL O'LEARY, BRITISH CHARGÉ D'AFFAIRES IN CARACAS, TO THE FOREIGN OFFICE

[24 May 1842]

Caracas, May 24, 1842.

Sir,

I have the honour to inclose to you herewith copy of a Legislative Act ordaining the construction of lighthouses at certain points of the coast of Venezuela therein specified; and establishing a fund to defray the expenses thereof, by means of a tonnage duty of 6 cents per ton on all vessels with or without cargo (vessels of war and national and foreign packets excepted) entering the ports of Maracaibo, Puerto Cabello, La Guaira, and Angostura, from foreign parts; and 3 cents per ton on all vessels (with the above-mentioned exceptions) entering the ports of Maracaibo, Puerto Cabello, and Angostura, proceeding from other open ports of the Republic, with or without cargo.

You will perceive that Congress has left to the Executive Government the designation of a proper site for the Pharos to be erected at the mouth of the Orinoco. No other offers the advantages of Point Barima, which belongs to the territory claimed by Her Majesty's Government. This, however, may not be considered by the Venezuelan Government an objection, as Sir Robert Ker Porter addressed on the 26th May, 1836, a note to the Foreign Secretary requesting the Venezuelan Government to cause a beacon to be erected on Point Barima. . .

(Signed) DANIEL F. O'LEARY

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Inclosure: Venezuelan Legislative Decree establishing lighthouses on several parts of the coast, 5 May 1842 [Document No. 643 above].

645. THE EARL OF ABERDEEN, BRITISH SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS, TO MR. DANIEL O'LEARY, BRITISH CHARGÉ D'AFFAIRES IN CARACAS

[1 June 1842]

Foreign Office, June 1, 1842.

Sir,

I have had under my consideration your despatch of the 7th April, inclosing correspondence between the Governor of British Guiana and yourself relative to the removal of the posts erected by Mr. Schomburgk near the mouth of the Orinoco, and reporting that the Venezuelan Minister for Foreign Affairs had proposed to you that the Venezuelan authorities at Angostura should be allowed to remove those posts in consequence of the difficulty and delay which are likely to impede the execution by Governor Light of the instructions which he has removed from Her Majesty's Government upon this matter.

I have to acquaint you that Her Majesty's Secretary of State for the Colonies concurs with me in thinking that there is no objection to the course proposed by the Venezuelan Government, and if, therefore, M. Aranda should renew his proposal to you, you are authorized to assent, on the part of Her Majesty's Government, to the removal the authorities at Angostura of the posts erected by Mr. Schomburgk on the Amacura. . .

(Signed) ABERDEEN

646. FOREIGN OFFICE TO MR. DANIEL O'LEARY, BRITISH CHARGÉ D'AFFAIRES IN CARACAS

[1 August 1842]

Foreign Office, August 1, 1842.

Sir,

With reference to your despatch of the 24th May, in which you allude to a note which Sir R. Ker Porter addressed to the Venezuelan Government on the 26th May, 1836, requesting that Government would cause a beacon to be erected on Point Barima, I have to request you will send us a copy of the said note, together with such other papers upon this subject as may be in the archives, for we can find no copy of that note among the papers in this Department, nor any papers at all relative to the matter. Therefore, pray send us copies of what you find upon the matter. . .

(Signed) JOHN BIDWELL

647. MR. DANIEL O'LEARY, BRITISH CHARGÉ D'AFFAIRES IN CARACAS, TO FOREIGN OFFICE

[1 September 1842]

Caracas, September 1, 1842.

Sir,

With reference to my despatch of the 24th May last, I have the honour to inclose herewith to you, at your desire, copy of a note therein alluded to, addressed by Sir Robert Ker Porter to the Venezuela Government, requesting it to cause a beacon to be erected at Point Barima.

I also inclose herewith copy of the answer returned by M. Gallegos on the 15th June, 1836, to Sir Robert, and you will observe that M. Gallegos makes no allusion to that part of Sir Robert's note which especially refers to the beacon in his reply.

On the 14th September, 1836, Sir Robert Ker Porter, having occasion to address M. Gallegos, respecting the difficulties of embarking cattle on the Orinoco, in consequence of some Municipal Regulations, renewed the request for the construction of a lighthouse at Barima, as you will perceive by the extract which I also inclose herewith.

M. Gallegos, in his reply to the note of the 14th September, 1836 makes no reference at all to the lighthouse, and therefore I omit sending you copy of his reply. For the same reason I have not copied the note of the Minister of Marine alluded to by M. Gallegos in his note of the 15th June, 1836 (Inclosure No. 2). . .

(Signed) DANIEL F. O'LEARY.

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Inclosure 1: Sir Robert Ker Porter, British Chargé d'Affaires in Caracas, to Señor José Gallegos, Venezuelan Minister of Foreign Affairs, 26 May 1836 [Document No. 583 in *From 1803 to 1840*].

Inclosure 2: Señor José Gallegos, Venezuelan Minister of Foreign Affairs, to Sir Robert Ker Porter, British Chargé d'Affaires in Caracas, 15 June 1836 [Document No. 584 in *From 1803 to 1840*].

Inclosure 3: Sir Robert Ker Porter, British Chargé d'Affaires in Caracas, to Señor José Gallegos, Venezuelan Minister of Foreign Affairs, 14 September 1836 [Document No. 584 in *From 1803 to 1840*].

648. MR. DANIEL O'LEARY, BRITISH CHARGÉ D'AFFAIRES IN CARACAS, TO FOREIGN OFFICE

[8 September 1842]

Caracas, September 8, 1842.

Sir,

With reference to my despatch of the 1st instant, I have, the honour to enclose to you here-with extracts from two letters, dated the 10th February and 27th April, 1836, from the late Mr. Vice-Consul Hamilton to Sir Robert Ker Porter respecting the necessity of placing buoys and a beacon at the great mouth of the Orinoco.

It does not appear that Sir Robert Porter ever informed your Department that he had written to the Venezuelan Government on the subject to which the above-mentioned extracts refer. . . .

(Signed) DANIEL F. O'LEARY

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Inclosure 1: British Vice-Consul Hamilton in Angostura to Sir Robert Ker Porter, British Chargé d'Affaires in Caracas, 10 February 1836 [Document No. 581 in *From 1803 to 1840*].

Inclosure 2: British Vice-Consul Hamilton in Angostura to Sir Robert Ker Porter, British Chargé d'Affaires in Caracas, 27 April 1836 [Document No. 582 in *From 1803 to 1840*].

649. MR. DANIEL O'LEARY, BRITISH CHARGÉ D'AFFAIRES IN CARACAS, TO FOREIGN OFFICE

[13 September 1842]

Caracas, September 13, 1842.

With reference to your letter of the 1st ultimo, I forward to you by this mail two other papers* – extracts from letters of Mr. Hamilton to Sir Robert K. Porter. Upon these letters it was that Sir Robert founded the request he made to the Venezuelan Government to cause a lighthouse to be constructed at Barima.

I beg to inform you that the posts erected by Mr. Schomburgk on the disputed territory near the mouth of the Orinoco still remain there, and that M. Aranda has made no allusion to the subject since the receipt by me of the Earl of Aberdeen's despatch of the 1st June last, which authorized me to assent to the removal of the landmarks in case the Venezuelan Government should renew the proposal made to me on a former occasion.

(Signed) DANIEL F. O'LEARY

[* See Document No. 648 above]

650. MR. DANIEL O'LEARY, BRITISH CHARGÉ D'AFFAIRES IN CARACAS, TO THE EARL OF ABERDEEN, BRITISH SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN

AFFAIRS**[29 September 1842]***Caracas, September 29, 1842.*

I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of the despatch of the 1st instant, signed by Viscount Caning in the absence of your Lordship, stating, with reference to my despatch of the 30th June, that I had rightly interpreted the instructions contained in your Lordship's despatch of the 1st June, and that I am at liberty to authorize the Venezuelan Government to remove the posts erected by Mr Schomburgk on the right bank of the Orinoco between the mouth of the Amacura and Point Barima, as well as those on the Amacura.

I beg leave to inform your Lordship that the Venezuelan Government has not reverted to the subject of the removal of the posts since the 30th June last...

(Signed) DANIEL F. O'LEARY

651. SEÑOR ALEJO FORTIQUE, VENEZUELAN MINISTER IN LONDON, TO THE EARL OF ABERDEEN, BRITISH SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS

(Translation: Original – French)

22, Wimpole Street, London, May 23, 1843.

The Undersigned, Minister Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Venezuela, has by the last West India packet, received from his Government the most peremptory orders once more to apply to the Earl of Aberdeen, Her Britannic Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, for the speedy conclusion of a Treaty for definitively arranging the boundary-lines between Venezuela and British Guiana. His Lordship was of opinion that this matter might as hitherto continue to rest on the good faith and friendly sentiments of the two Governments. But the proceeding of Commissioner Schomburgk, who entered the territory of the Republic, and with great display fixed posts at different points, has excited suspicions and uneasy feelings which nothing can quiet but a written Convention determining what belongs to each party; and this is the more certain as last March the public experienced an alarm which the Government had a very great difficulty in pacifying, notwithstanding that the rumour which occasioned it was discovered to be entirely without foundation.

The Undersigned, therefore, being satisfied of the interest taken by Her Majesty's Government in the tranquillity of the Republic, and in whatever tends to preserve the relations of sincere amity which bind it to Great Britain, hopes that the Earl of Aberdeen will be pleased to let him soon know when his Lordship will be prepared to enter upon the discussion of an arrangement alike important to either country. . .

(Signed) A. FORTIQUE

652. SEÑOR ALEJO FORTIQUE, VENEZUELAN MINISTER IN LONDON, TO THE EARL OF ABERDEEN, BRITISH SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS [31 January 1844]

(Translation: Original – French)

22, Wimpole Street, London, January 31, 1844.

Her Majesty's Government desired to know which were the boundaries of English Guiana, and with this view caused a map to be constructed, in which operation the procedure was such that the Government of Venezuela had to complain of the conduct of the Commissioner; for, entering its territory, he fixed at his pleasure posts, and raised flags, which, however, by Her Majesty's express order, were instantly removed, and ever since the Undersigned, Minister Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Venezuela, has not ceased to entreat the Earl of Aberdeen, Her Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, to take steps, as soon as possible, towards commencing the negotiation of a Treaty for fixing definitively the boundary-line between the two countries.

Though it would doubtless have been for the party that started the question to take the initiative respecting the Treaty, the Undersigned is aware of the grave occupations of Her Majesty's Government, and deeming it inexpedient to wait indefinitely, he steps forward to promote an arrangement which, if put off any longer, might involve difficulties. It cannot be expected, however, that in such a note as the present an attempt should be made to justify the right of the Republic, and it would even be excusable if an absolute silence were preserved on the subject; but he reposes so much confidence in the good faith, spirit of conciliation, and sentiments of justice of Her Majesty's Government that, believing it may conduce to an amicable understanding, he ventures to throw out some indications.

No one has denied to Spain the right of first occupant and discoverer of the New World. All nations have either tacitly or expressly acknowledged it, and the enumeration of how and when this is done would at once be tedious and needless. This being granted, it is proper to notice that it was precisely on the coasts on which the question turns whence Columbus for the first time beheld the Continent of America; that it was on them where Alonzo de Ojeda began the discovery and conquest of Venezuela; that this was the territory whose administration the Emperor Charles V ceded to Diego de Hordaz, and which, in the early part of the sixteenth century, was very diligently explored by the same Hordaz, by Herrera, Hortal, Cedeño, and others; and it must also be mentioned that the discovery was soon after followed by occupation, by a decided intention of retaining it, by the foundation of settlements, by the sending out of missionaries, and by the civilization of the Indians through the Gospel, so that in 1579 the enemies of Spain already found towns to destroy, and priests to persecute; for the war which, by turns, divided the nations of Europe, caused its ravages to be felt in those remote lands, where invasions, attacks, and conflagrations were frequent, and the right which no one was able to dispute with Spain roused at once envy and vengeance.

But the sufferings of Spanish Guiana ought not to be exclusively ascribed to war, inasmuch as the fame of the gold supposed to exist in this region, its rich woods, its tobacco, and the facility of enslaving the natives excited also cupidity, and occasioned a variety of expeditions, among

which it may suffice to allude to the celebrated one of Sir Walter Raleigh, during which the town of St. Thomas was destroyed a second time, so as to leave no trace behind. Nevertheless, its mournful memory serves to prove, even by the testimony of an ancient English navigator, that the Spaniards possessed at that time the Orinoco and all the contiguous country; that they already occupied the Rivers Barima, Moroco, and Pumaron; that their domination extended as far as the Essequibo, and that, according to the document which he found it the hands of the Governor, Antonio Berro, those lands had again been taken solemn possession of, in the name of the King of Spain, on the 23rd April, 1593.

Should, however, another more unexceptionable testimony be required to prove the exclusive possession of the Spaniards in these regions previous to the Treaty of Munster, that of Jan de Laet, the Dutchman, and member of the University of Leyden, might be added, who at that very period proposed to write an account of the achievements performed by his countrymen in South America. He also recorded the exploits of the English and Spaniards, and, if he attributes to the Dutch the occupation of some points on the Amazons, he agrees with Sir Walter Raleigh as to the Orinoco, Moroco, and Pumaron, which were occupied by the Spaniards.

Allusion has been made to the Treaty of Munster, 1648, because it is notorious to all the world that in it there was an express stipulation that what the Contracting Parties had possessed till then should be retained, nor should it be lawful for any of them to aspire to the territories occupied by the others; and hence it is that, as the Dutch did not at that time possess any point in Guiana, at least on the other side of the Essequibo, they could not pass beyond this line without violating an express compact, independently of the right which was of itself sufficient, and which already belonged to Spain, by her right of discovery and first occupant. But, there are posterior authentic documents, signed by the Kings of Spain, which extend the territory of the Province of Guiana to the Amazons; whence it may be inferred that, in the estimation of those Sovereigns, the Dutch could not claim any territory save what they had taken from the Portuguese in Brazil. In a public Treaty, 1750, Spain and Portugal guarantee to each other reciprocally their possessions in South America, and bind themselves to aid and succour each other till they shall remain in the peaceable enjoyment of their dominions; and the obligation on the part of Portugal extends from the Amazons, or Marañon, to the banks of the Orinoco on the either side. There also exists a Royal "Cedula" which establishes the limits of Spanish Guiana, and extends them on the south as far as the Amazons, and to the eastward as far as the Atlantic. It is not likely that the Kings of Spain and all their Ministers should, in so grave a manner, have been mistaken, or that they should have wished to appear in the face of the world as claiming territories which did not belong to them. By no means. On the contrary, it is certain, as Martens' *Cours Diplomatiques*, III, p. 183 says, "The conquests which the Dutch made in the Indies and America during the long war of their insurrection against Spain were made on the Portuguese, then subject to the Crown of Spain." The Peace of Munster, therefore, took nothing from Spain when it stipulated in Article V that each of the Contracting Parties should keep its possessions in the East and West Indies and on the coasts of Asia, Africa, and America.

Be that as it may, it is undeniable that the Essequibo has been considered the dividing line of the two possessions, although partly from the difficulty of crossing it – it being so rapid and deep as to be denominated by the natives "the brother of the Orinoco" – and partly because the Kings of Spain, from the impossibility of guarding such an extensive coast, confined themselves particularly to the portion situate between the Essequibo and Orinoco, without on that account giv-

ing up the right which belonged to them. "Dutch Guiana," says Condamine, "begins on the River Marawine and terminates at the Essequibo; there remains for Spanish Guiana the country comprehended between the Essequibo, at which the Dutch Colony terminates, and the Orinoco." Norie, the English geographer, author of the survey of the coast of Guiana, says the same. His words deserve to be quoted: "British Guiana extends from the Corawine to the north-west as far as the Essequibo. This was the real extent of the Colony as settled between the Spaniards and Dutch by the Treaty of Munster in 1648, *and which since then has never been reversed.*" And Bellin, whose impartiality and information cannot without injustice be questioned, as he was Engineer of the Marine and of the Depot of Plans, Royal Censor of the Academy of Marines, and member of the Royal Society of London, in alluding to this topic, finds himself under the necessity of making a declaration which, proceeding from an ancient foreign writer, is very much to the purpose. He says that "he gives the name of Dutch Guiana to the part occupied and possessed by the Dutch at the time that he wrote, without pretending to decide on the legitimacy of their possession, and without prejudicing the rights which their neighbours, the French and Spaniards, might have to the same country, where the Dutch have been seen to encroach and extend themselves, step by step advancing their settlements as far as they have been able."

Innumerable quotations might be adduced to prove, by the authority of those learned men who have treated of the subject, that the territory comprehended between the Essequibo and Orinoco has been considered by the world as the exclusive property of Spain.

Hitherto, it will be observed, no reference has been made to Spanish writers – and purposely – although they are the most fertile source of authorities favourable to Venezuela, because the Undersigned, as he said on the outset, intended only to make some light observations, imagining that, for the present, it would be better to hear only foreign writers. He is aware, furthermore, that the right of Spain being once established as having been the first occupant, and the stipulation at the Peace at Munster being borne in mind, it will fall to the share of Her Majesty's Government to enter on the difficult task of producing evidence that the Dutch legitimately possessed their usurpations, or that Spain yielded her approbation to them. But, instead of this, it is on record that, so far back as 1596, when they attempted to cross the Essequibo, they were immediately repulsed by the Spaniards, and compelled to retire to its sources, though they cannot be said to have been suffered even there; for even so late as the middle and end of the last century they were, move particularly at the Pumarón and Moroco, disquieted and attacked, and every effort was made to dislodge them, as intruders and violators of an express compact. And it cannot be said that these hostilities proceeded from private authority, because they were expeditions either ordered or sanctioned by the Kings of Spain, directing those in authority (*vide* "Real Orden" of the 1st October, 1780) to carry them into effect; "and if the Director or Governor-General of Essequibo should complain of it, the answer was to be that the proceeding on this occasion was in conformity with the laws and general instructions of the good government of the Indies, which do not allow of such intrusions by foreigners on the Spanish dominions, as those were; and that the same would be said in Madrid if the States-General of Holland preferred complaints or made reclamations."

Assuredly these attacks, orders, and solemn declarations repel every idea of consent on the part of the Spaniards to the usurpations of the Dutch, without which consent no pretension can be advanced even to prescription, which is founded on the belief of the owner having abandoned the right which appertained to him.

The Undersigned is not ignorant that some modern travellers, as Depons and Humboldt (Depons' "*Voyage à la Terre Ferme*", tome 3, p. 333; Humboldt's "*Voyage to the Equin. Reg.*", lib. 9, cap. 26, Boundaries of Columbia,), designate Cape Nassau on the coast, and the River Essequibo in the interior, as the line of demarcation between Spanish and English Guiana; and perhaps, in reference to them, the Governor of Demerara (Parliamentary Papers, despatch of the 1st September, 1838) held that the River Pumaron, to the east [? west] of the Essequibo, might be assumed as the boundary of the Colony.

But these travellers acted on the principle of Bellin, namely, without pretending to decide on the lawfulness of the possession of the Dutch, and without trenching on the right of the Spaniards, they divided the territory according to the actual possession at that time, not to mention that Humboldt appeals to the map of Major F. von Bouchenoeder, a Dutchman, who constructed it by order of the Commission for the Colonies and Possessions of the Batavian Republic, to whom he also dedicated it, so that it is not the testimony of Humboldt, but that of a Dutch Commissioner, who, in point of fact, served as a guide to the Governor of Demerara; and this gentleman is no doubt excusable for his good wishes of giving the greatest possible extension to the country, whose Government had been intrusted to him. And Depons expressly declares that the Dutch, in violation of primordial Treaties, had fixed posts in the Spanish territory.

Enough has been said on this kind of retention to the prejudice of the rights of Spain as the first occupant, and on the violation of the Treaty of Munster, to render it necessary to enlarge on it, and accordingly the Undersigned will only recommend one very remarkable circumstance in this effort of the Kings of Spain to defend their territory against the invasions of the Dutch, namely, that Great Britain, who succeeded to the Dutch, engaged, by the Treaty of Utrecht, 1713, to assist Spain, according to the best of her ability, in restoring the former boundary-lines of her American settlements, as they existed at the period of the Catholic King Charles II; and the Dutch themselves recognized the justice implied by this engagement, when, informed of it, they ratified in the following year and at the same place the Treaty of Munster [? Utrecht]. These documents would form a singular contrast to the attempt of disputing either with Spain or with her successor, the Republic of Venezuela, the territories bordering on the Orinoco, if such attempt proceeded from any of the Sovereigns who gave their solemn engagement at Utrecht. Fortunately this case has not occurred, and will probably never occur, for the question turns only on fixing, in peace and conciliation, the boundary-line of two friendly States, to whom good intelligence is the principal object, which assuredly is of higher value than the uncultivated and sterile land which would constitute the occasion of the contest.

In laying down this boundary-line, however, the time to come ought to be kept in view, an care ought to be taken to make choice of such points as will afford a demarcation which may remove every further motive for disagreement. There is no doubt but the Essequibo is the river which is, as it were, formed on purpose by Nature; and since the British colonists occupy either nothing, or scarcely anything between the Essequibo and Orinoco, their plantations being on the other side, an arrangement on this basis would accomplish the object, and would secure to Great Britain even the most remote rights which might belong to her as the successor of Holland. . .

(Signed) A. FORTIQUE

**653. THE EARL OF ABERDEEN, BRITISH SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS, TO SEÑOR ALEJO FORTIQUE, VENEZUELAN MINISTER IN LONDON
[30 March 1844]**

Foreign Office, March 30, 1844.

On the 1st ultimo the Undersigned had the honour to receive from M. Fortique a note calling the attention of Her Majesty's Government to the question of the boundaries between British Guiana and the Republic of Venezuela.

M. Fortique commences that note by reminding the Undersigned of certain proceedings on the part of the Commissioners appointed by Her Majesty's Government to survey the boundaries of the Colony which gave rise to a complaint from the Venezuelan Government that encroachments had been committed, and marks set up upon the territory of the Republic, and M. Fortique observes that those marks were immediately, and by the express order of Her Majesty's Government, removed.

Here, before proceeding further, the Undersigned, thinks it right to remind M. Fortique that, in consenting to the removal of these marks, Her Majesty's Government made no cession of any rights which they might hereafter feel themselves entitled to urge, but that they acted solely out of friendly deference to the request of the Government of Venezuela.

M. Fortique then observes that, although it properly to the party who raised the question to take the initiative in settling it, he is ready to come forward to promote and arrangement, which, if longer delayed, may become more difficult; and accordingly he proceeds to state some of the grounds upon which Venezuela claims a certain frontier-line, premising, however, that he, cannot reasonably be expected to justify the rights of the Republic in a note, and that he might fairly be silent on that head. The Undersigned believes that the claim put forward by M. Fortique, and the statements by which it is supported, may be shortly described as follows: –

That not only was the American Continent discovered and first occupied by subjects of the Crown of Spain, but that the part of it now in question – that is, the country watered by the Orinoco, Barima, Pomaroon, and Essequibo – at an early date explored and settled by Spaniards, and became for that reason a point of attack for the enemies of Spain; and these facts M. Fortique substantiates by reference to a grant of the emperor Charles V, and to the state in which, at the end of the sixteenth and beginning of the seventeenth century, the coasts in question were found by Sir Walter Raleigh.

That up to the date of the Treaty of Munster this country remained exclusively in the possession of the Spaniards; and that as at that time the Dutch did not hold any part of the coast to the west of the Essequibo, they could not subsequently pass that river without a violation of the Treaty.

M. Fortique then asserts that it is undeniable that the Essequibo was always considered the dividing line of the two possessions – Spanish and Dutch – partly because, being a rapid river and difficult to cross, it made a convenient natural boundary, partly because Spain, finding it impossible to guard the whole coast, confined her occupation within the Orinoco and Essequibo; and declares that innumerable authorities might be adduced to show that this territory has been regarded by all the world as the exclusive property of Spain. Of these authorities M. Fortique cites three: one the author of a modern English compilation upon the navigation of the coast,

who does not profess to write from personal knowledge or research, and the nature of whose work necessarily led him to trust to Spanish authorities; the other two French. Finally, after briefly noticing the evidence of Depons and Humboldt, which militates against this exclusive claim of Venezuela, M. Fortique states that, as there is no doubt that the Essequibo is the natural boundary, and as the British colonists possess nothing, or nearly nothing, between the Essequibo and the Orinoco, an arrangement which should fix that river as the limit of the Colony would reserve to Great Britain her full rights.

The Undersigned believes the above to be a fair exposition of the claim of Venezuela as set forth in M. Fortique's note. Whether such a claim has really been put forward with that desire to promote the friendly settlement of a disputed question which is professed at the commencement of the note might have appeared doubtful without the positive declaration of M. Fortique. The Undersigned can only say that it has been read by Her Majesty's Government with much surprise.

The fact that the American Continent was discovered, and to a great extent first occupied, by Spanish subjects is certainly indisputable; but it is one which has not necessarily any bearing upon the matter under discussion. M. Fortique, indeed, would have it to be understood that up to 1648 (the date of the Treaty of Munster), no part of the coast west of the Essequibo had been occupied by the Dutch, and that the attempts made by them to cross that river were unsuccessful; and this, if true, might be of more importance. The Undersigned, however, has to observe that, so far from such being the case, it is stated by J. de Laet (the same authority as is appealed to by M. Fortique) that as early as 1580 the Dutch navigated the Orinoco for the purpose of settling in such parts as were not occupied by the Spaniards; and in 1581 the States-General granted to certain individuals the privilege of trading exclusively with those settlements. It is said that at the close of the same century a Chamber of Merchants existed at Middleburgh trading to the River Barima. At all events, in 1621 a body of Dutch merchants, under the name of the West Indian Company, received from the States-General the privilege of carrying on an exclusive trade with America, and of governing any new Colonies which they might acquire, the States-General reserving to themselves the nomination of Governors; and Hartsinck, the most authentic historian of Guiana, mentions more than once that the limit of this Company's possessions on the west was the Orinoco.

In 1648, as M. Fortique justly states, the Treaty of Munster engaged that the Crown of Spain and the States-General should respectively continue in possession of such places in Asia, Africa, and America as either party then held; and the settlements of the West Indian Company are specifically included. Now, as a confirmation of the fact that those settlements extended as far as the Orinoco, it will be found that, in a document conveying a grant from the West Indian Company to Count Ferdinand Casimir of Hanau of a tract of land from their possessions on the American coast, the Orinoco is mentioned as the western boundary of those possessions. The date of this document is 1669, only twenty-one years after the conclusion of the Treaty of Munster.

Previously to this, in 1657, the Dutch erected the posts of New Zealand and New Middleburgh upon the Pomaroon and the Moroco.

It was at the first of these that, in an attack made as lately as 1797, the Spaniards were entirely defeated by the Dutch and English garrison, and driven to their boats with great loss of life.

In 1674, the West Indian Company, which had been incorporated in 1621, was dissolved, and a new Company chartered, the exclusive commerce of which was limited to a certain part of Af-

rica, the Island of Curaçoa; and the Colonies of Essequibo and Boneverone (Pomaroon), the latter, as already observed, extending to the Orinoco.

Proceeding to examine the authorities by which, in more modern times, these facts have been supported, it will be found that, in the *History of South America*, by Bolt, published in the middle of last century, Dutch Guiana is described as extending along the coast from the mouth of the Orinoco in 9° to the Marawaini in 6° 20' of north latitude; that in a map of that coast published in 1783 by Faden the River Orinoco is stated to be the western boundary of the Dutch according to their claim; and that, in a later chart published by Jefferys in 1798, the River Barima is described as dividing the Dutch and Spanish lands. And the Undersigned must observe that it is not to be objected to these authorities that they are English, and therefore interested in the question; for, although at the date of the last-named chart the Dutch Colony was under British protection, it was restored to the Batavian Republic in 1802, and there is no reason whatever for suspecting the testimony of Faden and Bolt of partiality.

It may well be doubted whether the same can be said of Condamine, Bellin, and other French writers, whose Government was always jealous of the progress made by the Dutch in the immediate neighbourhood of the settlement at Cayenne.

But, in truth, there cannot be a doubt that not only was the mouth of the Orinoco always claimed by the Dutch as their western boundary, but that it was early in their actual possession, and under military occupation by them. Hartsinck says, "The first rivers which, on coming from the River Orinoco, we meet in Dutch Guayana are the creeks of Barima, about a mile wide, where we formerly had a post." And there are documents of the West Indian Company extant by which the Directors instructed the Commandant of Pomaroon to keep the fortified post of Barima in repair. The remains of these fortifications were found by Colonel Moody in 1807 during the occupation of the coast by the English, when it was in contemplation to send a force to Angostura to destroy the privateers which then infested the shores of Dutch Guayana, and to fortify the point anew; and distinct traces of the intrenchment and surrounding cultivation were seen by Mr. Schomburgk when executing his late Commission.

The Undersigned believes it is not necessary to say more in order to show how entirely erroneous are M. Fortique's assertions that the Essequibo has been held to be the dividing line between the two countries, and that the territory between that river and the Orinoco was considered by the world as the exclusive property of Spain, assertions in which the Undersigned may fairly be allowed to doubt whether M. Fortique has the support of his own countrymen, seeing that in the maps of the Venezuelan provinces published at Caracas by an officer of the Venezuelan Government four years ago the extreme boundary claimed for Venezuela on the east is the Moroco, and certainly, to judge from the exaggerated pretensions on other points put forward in that publication, the author was not disposed to err on the side of too great liberality to the neighbouring British Colony.

If the Undersigned were inclined to adopt the spirit of M. Fortique's note, it is obvious from what has been stated that he must claim for Great Britain, in her right of succession to Holland, the entire coast from the Orinoco to the Essequibo; and indeed, such a claim, independently of all question of right, would be practically far less injurious to Venezuela than that which M. Fortique has asserted is to Great Britain, inasmuch as, whilst Venezuela is without a settlement of any sort upon the territory in question, the admission of the Essequibo as the boundary of Venezuela would involve at once the surrender by Great Britain of about half the Colony of Demer-

ara, including Cartabo Point and the Island of Kyk-over-al, where the Dutch had their earliest settlements upon the Mazaruni, the missionary establishment at Bartika Grove, and many actually existing settlements upon the Arabisi coast within 50 miles of the capital.

But the Undersigned is of opinion that negotiations are not facilitated by putting forward claims which it is not seriously intended to maintain, and, therefore, he will not follow M. Fortique's example, but will declare at once what concessions from her extreme claim Great Britain, out of friendly regard to Venezuela, and from a desire to prevent the occurrence of any serious differences, is willing to admit.

Believing, then, that the undivided possession of the Orinoco is the object most important for the interests of Venezuela, Her Majesty's Government are prepared to cede to the Republic a portion of the coast amply sufficient to insure Venezuela against the mouth of this her principal river being at the command of any foreign Power. With this view, and regarding it as a most valuable concession to Venezuela, Her Majesty's Government are willing to waive their claim to the Amacura as the western boundary of the British territory, and to consider the mouth of the Moroco River as the limit of Her Majesty's possessions on the sea coast.

They will, moreover, consent that the inland boundary shall be marked by a line drawn directly from the mouth of the Moroco to the junction of the River Barama with the River Waini, thence up the River Barama to the Annama, and up the Annama to the point at which that stream approaches nearest to the Acarabisi, and thence down the Acarabisi to its confluence with the Cuyuni, from which point it will follow the bank of the Cuyuni upwards until it reaches the high lands in the neighbourhood of Mount Roraima which divide the waters flowing into the Essequibo from those which flow into the Rio Branco.

All the territory lying between a line such as is here described, on the one side, and the River Amacura and the chain of hills from which the Amacura rises, on the other, Great Britain is willing to cede to Venezuela, upon the condition that the Venezuelan Government enter into an engagement that no portion of it shall be alienated at any time to a foreign Power, and that the Indian tribes now residing within it shall be protected against all injury and oppression....

(Signed) ABERDEEN

654. MR. KENNETH MATHISON, BRITISH VICE-CONSUL IN BOLIVAR, TO MR. BELFORD WILSON, BRITISH CHARGÉ D'AFFAIRES IN CARACAS

[2 March 1850]

(Extract)

Bolivar, March 2, 1850.

A special messenger from Caracas has, I understand, brought order to the province in a state of defence, and to remount guns on the long abandoned forts at Old Guayana. I cannot just now learn the meaning of all this, but will do so ere the next post. The messenger must have left Caracas after the post of the 14th ultimo.

655. MR. KENNETH MATHISON, BRITISH VICE-CONSUL IN BOLIVAR, TO MR. BELFORD WILSON, BRITISH CHARGÉ D'AFFAIRES IN CARACAS

[8 March 1850]

(Extract)

Bolivar, March 8, 1850.

I have received no letters by the posts that left Caracas on the 4th and 21st ultimo, at which I am not surprised if even half of the reports now afloat are true, although some of them are conveyed in a letter from no less a personage than M. Lecuna, Minister for Finance, to his son-in-law, M. Manuel Bermudez; but true or false, the rumours are making a stir among all our half-pay officers, whose boasting and blustering is quite ridiculous. They are, however, at a loss how or where to begin, in consequence of the absence of Colonel Contasti, the Comandante de Armas, who was sent for by the Governor on the 2nd instant on receipt of the President's special communication, but has not yet returned from his estates, distant about four days' ride. I cannot imagine how the idea of the Admiral's visiting this place can have been circulated at Caracas, as no intimation of such a visit has been heard of here by any person, and of which I would most likely have known something, had it been intended, through the Harbour-Master or Colonial Secretary at Trinidad, who keep me well advised of all passing events there.

Whatever may be the result of your labours – even a serious issue – I have no fears for anything injurious happening to the British subjects in this province, as the predominating feeling is in favour of Great Britain. It is very true that we have some individuals opposed to British influence, or indeed any influence but their own wild desires, but these are few and of little note.

656. MR. KENNETH MATHISON, BRITISH VICE-CONSUL IN BOLIVAR, TO MR. J. RIDDEL, ACTING BRITISH VICE-CONSUL IN GUAYANA

[18 March 1850]

(Extract)

Bolivar, March 18, 1850.

The Minister at War wrote to the Commander of the forces here (100 raw militia, and that is all we have) to assemble and arm the whole of the able population quietly and privately. This Commander returned from his estate to town on the 9th instant, and immediately sent for all the armourers and blacksmiths he could find, and set them all to work cleaning and repairing the arms in store, with a number of carpenters to make gun-carriages for old unserviceable rusty field-pieces, and five or six 18-prs. to place on the ruined walls of the forts of Old Guayana, and all this fuss was proceeding with great bustle, noise, and even public scandal, as well as general laughing and ridicule.

**657. MR. BELFORD WILSON, BRITISH CHARGÉ D’AFFAIRES IN CARACAS, TO
MR. KENNETH MATHISON, BRITISH VICE-CONSUL IN BOLIVAR
[20 March 1850]**

Caracas, March 20, 1850.

Sir,

In my despatch of the 15th November, 1847, I stated “that you were fully justified in denying, unequivocally, that there was any foundation whatever for the designs which, for insidious purposes, were falsely attributed to Her Majesty’s Government in the question of Barima; and that I concurred in the propriety of our having declined to hold further communication with any parties in Venezuela, respecting their hopes and wishes upon this subject; and, finally, I directed you, as the preferable course, to decline to become, under any pretext, a party, even as a listener, to such conversations and suggestions.”

By my despatch of the 30th March, 1848, I informed you “that having transmitted a copy of this correspondence to Viscount Palmerston, Mr. J. Bidwell had, by his Lordship’s orders, expressed to me his Lordship’s entire approval of the answer I had returned to you.

In July of last year a report was made to Viscount Palmerston that a project was entertained by a political party in Guayana to declare that province a free and independent State under the protection of Great Britain; his Lordship accordingly stated to Mr. J. Riddel, at the time Acting British Consul-General, “for his guidance in such matters, that it would not suit the policy of Her Majesty’s Government to involve Great Britain in the responsibility which would accrue if Great Britain were to take any South American State under its protection. That Her Majesty’s Government sincerely desire the prosperity and welfare of all the States of South America, but Her Majesty’s Government think that those States ought to be able to manage their own affairs.”

With reference to this or to some other alleged plan of certain parties declare the independence of the Province of Guayana, Viscount Palmerston, under the date of the 12th October of that same year, instructed Mr. J. Riddel “to take care that it be clearly understood that the British Government will not take any part whatever in the internal differences of the American States; and that therefore none of the contending parties can have any foundation for asserting that their schemes are, or will be, supported by the Government of Great Britain.”

The purport of these instructions was communicated to you in Mr. J. Riddel’s despatch of the 22nd November of last year.

In order to subserve the private interests of a certain well-known individual, and the political schemes of a faction, it has, of late, been actively circulated throughout the Republic that, either by cession, in part payment of the debt due to the Anglo-Venezuelan bondholders, or as an indemnification for the losses which British subjects have sustained by reason of the operation of the Law of “Espem”, or by purchase from the Venezuelan Government, or by force, Great Britain is bent upon acquiring possession of Venezuelan Guayana.

Such a statement is not only utterly and entirely destitute of any foundation whatever, but is the very reverse of the truth; and as its currency and belief have produced mischievous effects, and are calculated to impair the friendly relations happily subsisting between Great Britain and Venezuela, I have to instruct you to take advantage of every fitting opportunity for exposing its

wickedness and falsehood.

Should you deem it prudent and advisable, for the attainment of this end, to show to any influential individual at Bolivar this despatch, or the instructions therein referred to, you are at liberty to do so; and in now repeating those instructions for the guidance of your official conduct in the matter, I have to press upon you the necessity of a strict and faithful observance of them.

I propose to read this despatch to the Venezuelan Minister for Foreign Affairs, and, should he desire it, to furnish him with a copy. . .

(Signed) BELFORD HINTON WILSON

658. MR. KENNETH MATHISON, BRITISH VICE-CONSUL IN BOLIVAR, TO MR. BELFORD WILSON, BRITISH CHARGÉ D'AFFAIRES IN CARACAS
[22 March 1850]

(Extract)

Bolivar, March 22, 1850.

I believe you are personally acquainted with the position and nature of the forts at Old Guayana. They have for many years been totally dismantled and abandoned, but are now to be repaired and remounted with artillery, such as they have, but in the whole of the Government stores here I have not seen one gun that I would call serviceable, and as to those forts being sufficient to defend the province or the river, it is only an ignoramus that can even imagine such a thing in any shape possible. The Governor also speaks of raising a fort at Point Barima, but he seldom speaks truth, so that no reliance can be placed on what he utters, although by chance he may allow a word of truth to escape from him. However, all the defensive preparations that can be made will avail nothing if directed against the English (so report says), as there is scarcely a man in the province that would fire a shot at them. Indeed, the general feeling, even openly expressed everywhere, is an ardent desire for English rule here, and to my knowledge this feeling is every day gaining more extension and strength; but with which I neither mix myself up nor interfere, although I cannot shut my ears to what is publicly circulated in general conversation.

659. MR. BELFORD WILSON, BRITISH CHARGÉ D'AFFAIRES IN CARACAS, TO VISCOUNT PALMERSON, BRITISH SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS
[2 April 1850]

Caracas, April 2, 1850.

Sir,

In order to excite the public mind against what is here designated concession to the British demands in respect of the "Ley de Espera," the "Ladronera" party, united with the unscrupulous

and indebted of the oligarchy, have had recourse to the old political artifice of imputing to England a design, under the plea of these demands, to seize upon the Province of Venezuelan Guayana.

I have considered it right and expedient to give at once a flat denial to this statement, and to show by unimpeachable official documents that it is not only utterly and entirely destitute of any foundation whatever, but that it is the very reverse of the truth.

With this view, I have addressed a despatch to Mr. Kenneth Mathison, British Vice-Consul at Bolivar, in which, after referring him to the instructions which, in 1847 and 1849, were communicated to him for his guidance in such matters, I have authorized him to read them to any influential person at Bolivar should he deem such a step prudent and advisable, as a means of exposing the wickedness and falsehood of the imputations upon the conduct and policy of Her Majesty's Government.

I have likewise read and at his request have furnished a copy of this despatch to the Venezuelan Minister for Foreign Affairs, who, in concurrence with his Government, has considered it desirable that publicity should be given to it in the next number of the official *Gazette*.

I have explained fully, both to President General Monagas and to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, that, in taking this step upon my own personal responsibility, I have been actuated solely by a friendly desire to evince the sincerity and good faith of England in all her relations with Venezuela, and in order to deprive the opponents of the Government of every pretext for asserting that their schemes are or will be supported by the Government of Great Britain; at the same time, I have pointed out distinctly that these declarations have no reference whatever to the pending question of boundaries between British and Venezuelan Guayana, and that they must not be understood as indicating in the slightest degree an intention on the part of the British Government to abandon any portion of the rights of Great Britain over the territory which was formerly held by the Dutch in Guayana, or as implying a cession of any rights which Her Majesty's Government may hereafter feel themselves entitled to urge in respect to that question.

Both the President and M. Olavarria, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, have stated that it is in this sense they have understood and received my declarations.

Herewith I beg to inclose a copy of my despatch to Mr. Mathison. . .

(Signed) BELFORD HINTON WILSON

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Inclosure: Mr. Belford Wilson, British Chargé d'Affaires in Caracas, to Mr. Kenneth Mathison, British Vice-Consul in Bolivar, 20 March 1850 [Document No. 657 above].

660. MR. BELFORD WILSON, BRITISH CHARGÉ D'AFFAIRES IN CARACAS, TO MR. KENNETH MATHISON, BRITISH VICE-CONSUL IN BOLIVAR
[11 April 1850]

Caracas, April 11, 1850.

Sir,

With reference to the statements contained in your letters, marked Private, of the 2nd, 8th and 22nd, to myself, and of the 18th ultimo to Mr. J. Riddel, that orders have been issued by the Venezuelan Government to the authorities at Bolivar to place the Province of Guayana in state of defence against an imaginary attack by the British squadron under Lord Dundonald, and accordingly that the dismantled and abandoned forts within that province are forthwith to be repaired and armed, and that the Governor has spoken of raising a fort at Point Barima, which is situated within the territory in dispute between Venezuela and Great Britain, I have to desire that, with due precaution and moderation you will endeavour to ascertain correctly and report to me from time to time whether, under the pretence of these military armaments, any occupation, if so, of what character and extent, be effected of territory claimed by Great Britain, and especially whether any forts or buildings be erected, or military posts stationed at Point Barima or at the mouth of the Amacura.

Within the proper acknowledged limits of Venezuela her Government has or course a perfect right to construct forts or to maintain military posts; therefore, although I am convinced that her fears respecting a British incursion into Venezuelan Guayana are entirely groundless, I have no wish to question the expediency of her acting upon them, be they real or pretended, out of deference to popular susceptibilities called forth by the stupid and malignant falsehoods and calumnies against the conduct and policy of England in respect to Venezuelan Guayana, which are systematically invented and circulated for his selfish purposes by M. Andres Eusebio Level, and in order to subserve the temporary schemes of contending factions.

Nevertheless, the drift and tenour of recent debates in Congress, and the official and other reports from time to time made to this Government respecting alleged designs on the part of Great Britain to seize upon Venezuelan Guayana, satisfy me of the desire and tendency in this country amongst all classes to secure, by actual occupation, possession of Point Barima, the mouth of the Amacura, and all the territory in dispute between England and Venezuela. Therefore I have a right, and it is my duty, to endeavour to discover by every proper means what steps be taken in order to give practical effect to these schemes.

As the motives and conduct of British agents in their international dealings with Venezuela, and especially in this question, are uniformly and malignantly misrepresented, I have thought it necessary to enter into the above explanations of the grounds on which I call for information respecting the proceedings of the Venezuelan authorities in this matter, but I beg of you to understand that it is my particular wish that, in the execution of this instruction, you carefully abstain from furnishing a pretext, much less a ground, for awakening the characteristic suspicion and distrust ("*malicia*") of the Venezuelans, or their puerile susceptibilities as to the nature or object of these inquiries.

In fact, it is desirable to avoid raising a popular discussion about boundaries between British and Venezuelan Guayana, as a friendly and just settlement of that question can only be effected by a dispassionate question between the two Governments, entered into with a spirit of reciprocal conciliation and good faith, and that can never occur so long as an irrational popular excitement is kept up in Venezuela upon this subject. . . .

(Signed) BELFORD HINTON WILSON

661. CIRCULAR ADDRESSED BY MR. BELFORD WILSON, BRITISH CHARGÉ D’AFFAIRES IN CARACAS, TO THE BRITISH VICE-CONSULS IN VENEZUELA
[11 April 1850]

Caracas, April 11, 1850.

Herewith I have the honour of inclosing, for your information and guidance, and for preservation among the Consular archives, a copy of the 981st number of the official *Gazette* of Venezuela, in which is published a copy of a despatch that, under date of the 20th ultimo, I have addressed to Mr. Kenneth Mathison, British Vice-Consul at Bolivar, refuting the falsehoods and calumnies concerning the conduct and policy of Her Majesty’s Government in respect to Venezuelan Guayana, which, in order to subserve the private interests of a certain well-known individual, and the political schemes of a faction, have of late and for years been systematically circulated throughout the Republic. . .

(Signed) BELFORD HINTON WILSON

662. MR. BELFORD WILSON, BRITISH CHARGÉ D’AFFAIRES IN CARACAS, TO VISCOUNT PALMERSTON, BRITISH SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS
[13 April 1850]

Caracas, April 13, 1850.

My Lord,

With reference to my despatch of the 2nd instant respecting British and Venezuelan Guayana, herewith I have the honour of transmitting to your Lordship extracts from letters which I have received from Mr. Vice-Consul Mathison, stating that orders have been communicated to the authorities at Bolivar by the Supreme Government to place the Province of Guayana in a state of defence, and to repair and arm the dismantled and abandoned forts, and, finally, that the Governor has spoken of raising a fort at Barima, a point to which the right of possession is in dispute between Venezuela and Great Britain.

Accordingly, I have requested Mr. Mathison with due precaution and moderation to endeavour to ascertain correctly, and report to me from time to time, whether, under the pretence of these military armaments, any occupation be effected of territory claimed by Great Britain, and especially whether any forts or buildings be erected or military posts established at Point Barima, or at the mouth of the Amacura.

Herewith I beg to inclose a copy of my instruction to Mr. Mathison.

Without intimating a belief in such a design on the part of the Venezuelan Government, I have pointed out in a distinct but friendly way to the President, to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, as well as to the Minister for the Home Department, the propriety and expediency of taking measures for preventing the local authorities in Venezuelan Guayana from attempting any formal occupation of the disputed territory as would be implied by the construction of forts or the estab-

ishment of military posts, and they have assured me that they have not directed, and will not sanction, the construction of any works or the establishment of military posts.

That the Venezuela government have not expressly ordered such an occupation is possible, but I am bound to add that I cannot place the same reliance in their not sanctioning or justifying any steps which, at a moment of alarm or excitement, may be taken by the local authorities towards that end; for, as the nation at large has for years past been systematically taught by M. Andres Eusebio Level and other artful demagogues to believe that this territory rightfully belongs to Venezuela, it views with great indignation and distrust the claims of England to it. Therefore, whatever steps may at any time be taken by the local authorities or Supreme Government to secure its possession for Venezuela, such steps will meet at once with national approbation and support.

Indeed, so strong is the feeling on this subject that during the present Session of Congress a Project of Law has, as it were in mistrust of the zeal of the Executive in this matter, and as I have before stated in my despatch of the 25th ultimo, been introduced into the Chamber of Representatives, authorizing the Executive Government to construct forthwith a fort at that point which serves as the boundary between Venezuela and Guayana.

This point on the sea-coast is by Venezuela held to be Point Nassau, so that if this Project were to become law the Executive Government would be empowered by it to build a fort at Point Nassau. Without, however, the adoption of this extreme course, the construction of a fort at Point Barima, or at the mouth of the Amacura, or at any other place within the territories in dispute between Venezuela and Great Britain, or near the frontiers which have been hitherto occupied by independent Indian tribes, would, in fact, amount to an aggression on those territories which the Governor of British Guiana has, as stated in your Lordship's despatch to Mr. O'Leary of the 28th November, 1840, been instructed to resist.

I have therefore drawn the attention both of the President and of the Minister for Foreign Affairs to the impolicy of the Project in question, which, if allowed to become law in the spirit in which it has been proposed, would offer a serious embarrassment to the Government.

They have replied that the Law had not been introduced with the privity of the Government, and the President has assured me that he will "object" if it passes Congress (he has not the veto power), but that in the meantime he will endeavour to prevent its passing.

Should he faithfully adhere to his promise in this respect, as I believe he will, the measure will not be passed by Congress.

By the provisions of the Venezuelan Constitution, the initiation of laws corresponds exclusively to the respective Chambers, and great jealousy is displayed at any attempt on the part of the Executive to trench upon this right by suggesting Projects of its own, or by thwarting by its influence on individual members Projects under discussion, but which the Ministers may, however, openly controvert, as, although they cannot be members of either House, and consequently have no vote, they have a right to be present at debates, and deliver their opinions upon any question they may think proper.

Herewith I beg to inclose a copy of a Circular which, under date of the 11th instant, I have addressed to the British Vice-consul in Venezuela, inclosing, for their information and guidance, and for preservation amongst the Consular archives, printed copies, with a Spanish version, of my despatch to Mr. Vice-Consul Mathison of the 20th ultimo, that, with a very good effect, has been published by the Venezuelan Government in the 981st number of its official *Gazette*, copies

of which are likewise herewith sent. . .

(Signed) BELFORD HINTON WILSON

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Inclosure 1: Mr. Kenneth Mathison, British Vice-Consul in Bolivar, to Mr. Belford Wilson, British Chargé d’Affaires in Caracas, 2 March 1850 [Document No. 654 above].

Inclosure 2: Mr. Kenneth Mathison, British Vice-Consul in Bolivar, to Mr. Belford Wilson, British Chargé d’Affaires in Caracas, 8 March 1850 [Document No. 655 above].

Inclosure 3: Mr. Kenneth Mathison, British Vice-Consul in Bolivar, to Mr. J. Riddel, Acting British Vice-Consul in Guayana, 18 March 1850 [Document No. 656 above].

Inclosure 4: Mr. Kenneth Mathison, British Vice-Consul in Bolivar, to Mr. Belford Wilson, British Chargé d’Affaires in Caracas, 22 March 1850 [Document No. 657 above].

Inclosure 5: Mr. Belford Wilson, British Chargé d’Affaires in Caracas, to Mr. Kenneth Mathison, British Vice-Consul in Bolivar, 11 April 1850 [Document No. 660 above].

Inclosure 6: Circular Addressed by Mr. Belford Wilson, British Chargé d’Affaires in Caracas, to the British Vice-Consuls in Venezuela, 11 April 1850 [Document No. 661 above].

Inclosure 7: The Gaceta de Venezuela of April 7, 1850. [Not printed]

663. VISCOUNT PALMERSTON, BRITISH SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS, TO MR. BELFORD WILSON, BRITISH CHARGÉ D’AFFAIRES IN CARACAS

[13 May 1850]

Foreign Office, May 13, 1850.

Sir,

I have received your despatch of the 2nd April, stating the steps which you have taken to contradict a rumour, mischievously circulated in Venezuela, that Great Britain intends to lay claim to the Province of Venezuelan Guiana, and I have to acquaint you that Her Majesty’s Government approve your proceedings in this matter. . .

(Signed) PALMERSTON

664. VISCOUNT PALMERSTON, BRITISH SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS, TO MR. BELFORD WILSON, BRITISH CHARGÉ D’AFFAIRES IN

CARACAS**[15 June 1850]***Foreign Office, June 15, 1850.*

Sir,

With reference to the correspondence which has passed respecting the reported intention of the Venezuelan authorities to construct fortifications in the territory in dispute between Great Britain and Venezuela, I have to instruct you to call the serious attention of the President and Government of Venezuela to this question, and to declare that whilst, on the one hand, Her Majesty's Government has no intention of occupying or encroaching upon the disputed territory, they will not, on the other hand, view with indifference aggressions on that territory by Venezuela.

Under these circumstances, Her Majesty's Government hope that positive instructions will be sent to the Venezuelan authorities in Guiana, to abstain from taking any measures which might be justly considered aggressive by the British authorities; because such measures if taken must lead to a collision, which Her Majesty's Government would deeply regret, but for which with all its consequences, whatever those consequences might be, Her Majesty's Government would consider the Government of Venezuela to be wholly responsible.

You will keep Vice-Admiral the Earl of Dundonald fully informed of everything which may occur in this matter; and it is the desire of Her Majesty's Government that you should be careful to maintain a conciliatory but firm tone in all the communications which you may have thereupon with the Venezuelan Government. . .

(Signed) PALMERSTON

665. VISCOUNT PALMERSTON, BRITISH SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS, TO MR. BELFORD WILSON, BRITISH CHARGÉ D'AFFAIRES IN CARACAS**[30 August 1850]***Foreign Office, August 30, 1850.*

With reference to your despatch of the 29th June respecting the question of boundary between British and Venezuelan Guiana, I have to inform you that it is not necessary that you should make any formal communication to the Venezuelan Government on the subject of the offer made by Lord Aberdeen in March 1844. It will be enough whenever that offer may be mentioned by the Venezuelan Government that you should say that as it was not accepted, it has of course fallen to the ground, and that it will not be renewed by Her Majesty's Government. . .

(Signed) PALMERSTON

666. MR. KENNETH MATHISON, BRITISH VICE-CONSUL IN BOLIVAR, TO MR. BELFORD WILSON, BRITISH CHARGÉ D’AFFAIRES IN CARACAS

[14 October 1850]

Bolivar, October 14, 1850.

Sir,

I have the honour to acquaint you that there is a report in circulation here of the Governor of British Guiana having been at Point Barima about the 16th ultimo, with a schooner and two large boats full of men, but, where they only remained one day. I am further informed that M. Delpeche will transmit to his Government by this post a report stating that British troops have lately taken possession of Fuerte Antigua, on the Cuyuni, about 40 miles to the south-east of Tupuquen.

This old fort is marked in Codazzi’s Map of this province, but I have never heard of it till now; and as to the latter rumour, I have not been able to discover any foundation for its accuracy; it therefore seems to me that the report is fabricated for no good purpose. . . .

(Signed) KENNETH MATHISON

667. MR. BELFORD WILSON, BRITISH CHARGÉ D’AFFAIRES IN CARACAS, TO VISCOUNT PALMERSTON, BRITISH SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS

[16 November 1850]

Caracas, November 16, 1850.

My Lord,

Herewith, I have the honour of inclosing to your Lordship a copy of a despatch addressed to me by Mr. Vice-Consul Mathison on the 14th ultimo, stating that there was a report in circulation at Bolivar that the Governor of British Guiana had visited “Point Barima” with a schooner and two large boats full of men, and that a fort called “Fuerte Antigua,” on the Cuyuni, had been taken possession of by British troops.

So far back as the 25th September last, Mr. Mathison had transmitted to me a copy of the “*Guiana Royal Gazette*” of the 3rd of that month, in which an incidental mention is made of Governor Barkly’s absence from Georgetown, “on a visit with his staff to the remote north-western districts of that Colony, watered by the Rivers Barima, Moruca, and Pomeron, and bordered by the territories of the Republic of Venezuela,” and I have since read in the London “Times” a statement to the same effect, thus showing that there was no mystery made about this visit, as, in fact, there was no motive for concealment.

Desirous, however, of removing at once from the mind of the Venezuelan Government the mistrust which I felt satisfied this visit would not fail to awaken, I, on the 14th ultimo, called upon M. Vicente Lecuna, Venezuelan Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, and asked him

whether he had received any intelligence from Guiana.

Being upon friendly terms with me, he frankly stated that Governor Machado had made a report of rather an alarming character respecting the visit of Governor Barkly to the Venezuelan frontier, and I readily perceived what, in fact, M. Lecuna himself did not attempt to disguise, that this incident had been seized hold of by Mr. Machado as further evidence of the truth of the designs upon Venezuelan Guiana, imputed to England by him and the Andres Eusebio Levels of the Republic.

I then read to M. Lecuna in translation your Lordship's despatch to me upon this subject of the 15th June last, pointing out at the same time that the issue of such instructions had been rendered necessary in consequence of the avowed disposition of the Venezuelan Legislature to empower and compel the Executive Government to construct forts in the disputed territory, and to exercise other acts of sovereignty inconsistent, with and offensive to, the rights of Great Britain.

I suggested, likewise, that possibly the visit of Governor Barkly originated in a desire to ascertain, by personal observation, the nature of the boundaries between the two countries, so as to be better enabled to protect them against the threatened aggression by Venezuela.

I however assured M. Lecuna distinctly that Governor Barkly did not, and cannot, under his present instructions, contemplate the adoption of any measures which might be justly considered aggressive by Venezuela.

M. Lecuna begged of me to see the President the following day, and to read to him this instruction, as it was manifestly advisable to prevent an agitation being got up upon this question, and above all, to disabuse the mind of the President himself respecting the sinister interpretation put upon Governor Barkly's visit, about which he would no doubt receive many private as well as official letters, all containing more or less exaggerated and malicious accounts of the transaction.

I accordingly saw the President by appointment, and after reading also to him, in translation, your Lordship's despatch to me of the 15th June last, I offered to him explanations and assurances similar to those which I had afforded to M. Lecuna.

The President expressed himself fully satisfied with these assurances, but frankly admitted that he had received all sorts of reports upon this subject.

A check was for a time thus put upon their active propagation, but the agitation of this matter is far too useful in the acquirement of political capital and personal importance on the part of M. Andres Eusebio Level, Governor José Thomas Machado, and their associates, for them to renounce altogether their machinations.

Reports and rumours, therefore, of British aggression have since daily poured in upon the Government and the President in the shape of official denunciations and reports, or of secret warnings and suggestions volunteered under the garb of patriotism by unscrupulous and needy place-hunters.

Upon the alleged discovery of this fresh mare's nest, namely, the seizure and occupation by British troops of Fuerte Viejo, mentioned in Mr. Vice-Consul Mathison's despatch, and communicated in letters to General Monagas, as well as to others, by M. Luis Delpeche, one of Level's propaganda, and Government visitor to the Upata gold district, this act has been denounced as an invasion by England of Venezuelan territory.

M. Lecuna, to whom I read privately Mr. Mathison's report, in answer to inquiries from him upon this subject, earnestly pressed me to lose no time in reading it to General Monagas, remark-

ing that he was not at liberty to mention to me all that had been told to him in confidence, or was doing in this matter, but that it was of much importance that I should forthwith see the President. He also urged me strongly to send to him officially a copy of Mr. Mathison's report, but this I declined to do, upon the ground that it was not for me to assume that so manifestly false and malicious a rumour was entitled to any credit, or could obtain it, on the part of the Venezuelan Government. Nevertheless, if the Government thought proper to give credit to it, and were formally to call upon me for explanation, I would, in replying to them, furnish a copy of Mr. Mathison's report.

However, in a spirit of friendliness, I waited upon the President today at his private house, and read to him privately Mr. Mathison's despatch, expressing, at the same time, my conviction of the utter groundlessness and malignity of the report relative to the occupation of Fuerte Viejo by British troops.

The President assured me that he also totally disbelieved it, and that, in his opinion, this story, like all others of a similar feature, was a sheer invention of political intriguers for party purposes. . .

(Signed) BELFORD HINTON WILSON

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Inclosure: Mr. Kenneth Mathison, British Vice-Consul in Bolivar, to Mr. Belford Wilson, British Chargé d'Affaires in Caracas, 14 October 1850 [Document No. 666 above].

668. MR. BELFORD WILSON, BRITISH CHARGÉ D'AFFAIRES IN CARACAS, TO SEÑOR VINCENTE LECUNA, VENEZUELAN MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
[18 November 1850]

Caracas, November 18, 1850.

On the 3rd April last the Undersigned, Her Britannic Majesty's Chargé d'Affaires, had the honour of showing to M. Fernando Olavarria, at the time Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs of Venezuela, an original Report which the Undersigned had on the previous day addressed to Her Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, exposing the character, and object of a propaganda of falsehood and calumny respecting the conduct and policy of the British Government in the boundary question between Great Britain and Venezuela, and at the same time the Undersigned acquainted his Lordship with the steps which he had taken to contradict a rumour mischievously circulated in Venezuela that Great Britain intends to lay claim to the Province of Venezuelan Guiana.

Those steps mainly consisted in assurances given by him to the Venezuelan Government of the utter falsehood of all that had been put forth by the propaganda on this subject, and by communicating to the Venezuelan Government a copy of a despatch that he had on the 20th of the previous month of March addressed to Mr. Kenneth Mathison, British Vice-Consul at Bolivar, in which, after stating what had in reality been the course and conduct of the British Legation at Caracas and of Her Majesty's Government since November 1847 in this matter, he formally de-

clared that the intentions which manifestly, in order to subserve the private interests of a certain well-know individual and the political schemes of the propaganda, had since 1843 been imputed to Her Majesty's Government, are not only utterly and entirely destitute of any foundation whatever, but are the very reverse of the truth.

A copy and translation of this despatch to Mr. Mathison were published by the Venezuelan Government in the 981st number of the "*Official Gazette*" of Venezuela while under date of the 13th May last the proceedings of the Undersigned in this matter were approved of by Her Majesty's Government.

The Undersigned will here remark that on the 5th April he read, in translation, to his Excellency the President the before-mentioned Report to his Government, the original of which, as he has already mentioned, he had shown to M. Olavarria who reads English, on the 3rd of that month.

On the 13th of the same month of April it became the duty of the Undersigned to transmit to his Government extracts of letters addressed to him from Bolivar by Mr. Vice-Consul Mathison, under dates of the 2nd, 8th, 18th, 22nd, and 30th March, stating that orders had been communicated to the authorities of the Province of Guiana to place it in a state of defence, and to repair and arm the dismantled and abandoned forts; and, finally, that Governor José Thomas Machado had spoken of raising a fort at Point Barima, the right of possession to which is in dispute between Great Britain and Venezuela.

It likewise became the duty of the Undersigned to communicate to his Government the introduction of a project of a law into the Chamber of Representatives, as recorded in the 62nd number of the "*Diario de Debates*", authorizing the Executive Government to construct forthwith a fort at the point which serves as the boundary between Venezuela and British Guiana, without, however, designating by name what that point is; thus empowering the Executive Government to commit *de facto* an aggressive encroachment upon the territory in dispute between the two countries by the construction of a fort at any point to which Venezuela may lay claim, although the rightful possession of that point may be equally claimed by Great Britain.

The tone and language towards Great Britain used in the course of the debates upon this project, which the Undersigned will not stop to characterize, left no reasonable ground for a doubt as to the imminence of the danger to which British rights would be exposed in the event of this project passing into a law.

The Undersigned, however, gladly reported to his Government the friendly assurances given to him, and the judicious course actually pursued on this occasion by his Excellency the President, and likewise the fact that the project has not as yet become law.

With reference, however, to the existence of a propaganda, for misleading and exciting the public mind in Venezuela respecting the question of boundaries between British and Venezuelan Guianas, and the consequent possibility of aggressive encroachment by the authorities of Venezuelan Guiana upon the territory in dispute between the two countries, Viscount Palmerston, under date of the 15th June, has transmitted to the Undersigned, for his information and guidance, a copy of a letter which his Lordship has addressed to the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, signifying the Queen's Commands as to the orders to be given to the Vice-Admiral Commanding Her Majesty's naval forces in the West Indies respecting the course which he is to pursue in the event of the Venezuelan authorities constructing fortifications in the territory in dispute between Great Britain and Venezuela.

The Undersigned has likewise been instructed to call the serious attention of the President and Government of Venezuela to this question, and to declare that, whilst on the one hand Her Majesty's Government has no intention of occupying or encroaching upon the disputed territory, they will not, on the other hand, view with indifference aggressions on that territory by Venezuela.

The Undersigned has furthermore been instructed to say that, under these circumstances, Her Majesty's Government hope that positive instructions will be sent to the Venezuelan authorities in Guiana to abstain from taking any measures which might be justly considered aggressive by the British authorities, because such measures if taken must lead to a collision, which Her Majesty's Government would deeply regret, but for which, with all its consequences, whatever those consequences might be, Her Majesty's Government would consider the Government of Venezuela to be wholly responsible.

The Venezuelan Government cannot, without injustice to Great Britain, distrust for a moment the sincerity of the formal declaration, now made in the name and by express order of Her Majesty's Government, that Great Britain has no intention of occupying or encroaching upon the disputed territory; hence, in a like spirit of good faith and friendliness, the Venezuelan Government cannot object to make a similar formal declaration to Her Majesty's Government, namely, that Venezuela herself has no intention of occupying or encroaching upon the disputed territory.

The systematic perseverance since 1843 of the propaganda in fabricating and circulating false rumours respecting the conduct and policy of Her Majesty's Government as regards Venezuelan Guiana has, amongst other mischievous effects, so far served the purposes of that propaganda as to keep alive a morbid spirit of mistrust and puerile credulity in regard to every idle rumour upon this boundary question, thereby exposing the amicable relations between Great Britain and Venezuela, to be at any moment interrupted by a collision between the two countries arising out of some sudden and possibly unauthorized aggression on the part of the Venezuelan local authorities in the construction of forts, or by occupation and encroachments upon the territory in dispute.

Her Majesty's Government, as before stated, will not itself direct or sanction any such encroachments or occupation on the part of British authorities, and should there ever be any misapprehension of its determination in this respect, it would, the Undersigned is persuaded, willingly renew its orders upon the point; he therefore feels satisfied that, in accordance with the amicable suggestions of Her Majesty's Government, that of Venezuela will not hesitate to send positive instructions to the Venezuelan authorities in Guiana to abstain from taking any measures which may be justly considered aggressive by the British authorities.

On the 14th and 15th ultimo Viscount Palmerston's instructions to the Undersigned were privately communicated by him to M. Vicente Lecuna and to his Excellency the President; and he then explained fully the friendly considerations by which he had been actuated in not communicating their purport to the Venezuelan Government on their receipt by him on the 18th July last, and in still further suspending their formal communication in writing until a fitting opportunity for doing so should occur.

Both his Excellency the President and M. Lecuna seemed fully to appreciate the friendliness of this course.

In accordance, however, with the understanding agreed to at the interviews which the Undersigned had the honour to hold with M. Lecuna on the 15th and 16th instant that the proper mo-

ment for such a communication has arrived, he has lost no time in carrying out by this note the instructions of Her Majesty's Government in respect to this matter.

(Signed) BELFORD HINTON WILSON

**669. MR. BELFORD WILSON, BRITISH CHARGÉ D'AFFAIRES IN CARACAS, TO
VISCOUNT PALMERSTON, BRITISH SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN
AFFAIRS**

[19 November 1850]

Caracas, November 19, 1850.

My Lord,

In my despatch of the 16th instant, I reported to your Lordship the fact of my having on the 14th and 15th ultimo read to the Venezuelan Minister for Foreign Affairs and to the President your Lordship's despatch to me of the 15th June respecting the determination of Great Britain not herself to occupy or encroach upon the territory in dispute between Great Britain and Venezuela, nor to view with indifference aggressions on that territory by Venezuela.

Both M. Lecuna and the President have expressed strongly their sense of my consideration and friendliness in not having communicated to them this notification, in writing, during the excitement of a Presidential election, and of my desire to consult their wishes and convenience as to the fitting moment for doing so.

Considering, however, the intrigues on foot to mislead and excite the public mind by the malicious assertion of the occupation of "Fuerte Viejo" by British troops, and the expediency of enabling the Minister for Foreign Affairs quietly to communicate in his Report to the approaching Congress the views and determination of Her Majesty's Government on the subject of the boundary question, I, with the concurrence of M. Lecuna and the President, have selected, the present moment for making that communication, in writing, in a note, of which I have herewith the honour of inclosing a copy to your Lordship.

In the discussion of this question, both with the Minister and the President, I assumed, and it is so distinctly understood by them, that as Lord Aberdeen's offer to M. Fortique in March 1844 was not accepted, it has, of course, fallen to the ground, and that it will not be renewed by Her Majesty's Government.

The President remarked to me that he much regretted that that offer should not have been accepted at the time, and begged of me to consider whether I could not aid in the settlement of the boundary question in the terms of Lord Aberdeen's offer.

An impression is prevalent as to the impolicy of Venezuela, not having accepted that offer, but no reliance whatever can or ought to be placed in the consistency or good faith of so mistrustful and double dealing a race; therefore, I could not, with any confidence, express a conviction that if England were to renew that offer it would be accepted by Venezuela, and it certainly would not be so with gratitude or with a due appreciation of the very large and generous concession on the part of Great Britain which it contains. . . .

(Signed) BELFORD HINTON WILSON

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Inclosure: Mr. Belford Wilson, British Charge d’Affaires in Caracas, to Señor Vincente Lecuna, Venezuelan Minister of Foreign Affairs, 18 November 1850 [Document No. 668 above].

670. SEÑOR VINCENTE LECUNA, VENEZUELAN MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, TO MR. BELFORD WILSON, BRITISH CHARGE D’AFFAIRES IN CARACAS

[20 December 1850]

Caracas, December 20, 1850.

(Translation – Original: French)

The Undersigned, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs of Venezuela, had the honour to receive and to lay before the Executive Power the note of Her Britannic Majesty’s Charge d’Affaires of the 18th ultimo, in which Mr. Wilson contradicts the rumours that had been circulated throughout the country, namely, that Great Britain purposes to take possession of Venezuelan Guayana; refers to the steps which he had himself adopted to secure their contradiction, and of the nature of which steps he has before informed the Government, declares in the name of the British Government that it has no intention to occupy or encroach upon (“*usurpar*”) the territory in dispute between the two countries, and requires a like declaration on the part of Venezuela, furthermore requesting that orders may be issued to the authorities of Guayana to abstain from taking any measures which might be justly considered as aggressive by the British authorities, and finally Mr. Wilson alludes to the motives by which he has been actuated in delaying to make this communication.

By order of his Excellency the President of the Republic, the Undersigned begs to state in reply that the Government never could have persuaded itself that, in despite of the negotiation open in this matter, and of the rights of Venezuela alleged in the question of boundaries pending between the two countries, Great Britain would desire to employ force in order to occupy the territory claimed by each country; much less could the Government think this possible after Mr. Wilson has so repeatedly assured it, and as the Executive Government believes with sincerity, that these imputations are destitute of any foundation whatever, and on the contrary, are the very reverse of the truth.

Reposing in this confidence, fortified by the protestations contained in the note under reply, the Government has no difficulty in replying that Venezuela has no intention of occupying or encroaching upon (“*usurpar*”) any part of the territory, the dominion of which is in dispute; and that it will not view with indifference that Great Britain shall act otherwise.

Furthermore, orders will be issued to the authorities in Guayana to abstain from taking steps by which the engagement the Venezuelan Government has hereby contracted may be violated, and which might give rise to fatal results in the same manner as Mr. Wilson has assured the

Government that like orders have been given to the British authorities in Guayana, and which, if necessary, would be cheerfully repeated.

Lastly, the Government duly appreciates the motives which have weighed in the mind of Mr. Wilson for delaying to execute at once the instructions received by him upon this subject.

(Signed) VICENTE LECUNA

671. MR. BELFORD WILSON, BRITISH CHARGE D'AFFAIRES IN CARACAS, TO VISCOUNT PALMERSTON, BRITISH SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS

[30 December 1850]

Caracas, December 30, 1850.

(Extract)

With reference to my despatch of the 19th ultimo, herewith I have the honour of inclosing to your Lordship a copy and translation of the answer which has been returned by the Venezuelan Minister for Foreign Affairs to my note to him of the 18th ultimo, in which I formally declared the determination of Great Britain, on the one hand, not herself to occupy or encroach upon the territory in Guiana in dispute between Great Britain and Venezuela; and, on the other hand, not to view with indifference aggressions on that territory by Venezuela.

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Inclosure: Señor Vicente Lecuna, Venezuelan Minister of Foreign Affairs, to Mr. Belford Wilson, British Charge d'Affaires in Caracas, 20 December 1850 [Document No. 670 above].

672. THE EARL OF CLARENDON, BRITISH SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS, TO MR. RICHARD BINGHAM, BRITISH CHARGÉ D'AFFAIRES IN CARACAS

Foreign Office, December 16, 1857

Sir,

In your despatch of the 22nd September you forwarded to me a copy of a note, which you had addressed to the Venezuelan Government on the 14th of that month, communicating to that Government a despatch addressed to you by the Lieutenant-Governor of British Guiana, explaining the circumstances under which two expeditions were about to be dispatched from the colonial territory in the direction of the site of the late discoveries of gold.

In this despatch the Lieutenant-Governor explained that the object of both expeditions was purely scientific and exploratory; and that they would be composed of British subjects having no

intention of infringing any rights of the neighbouring country, but merely to ascertain and report upon the actual position and prospects of the deposits of gold, so as to enable the Government of British Guiana to take such steps as might be advisable, either for facilitating access to them, or for disabusing the minds of the community of the impression entertained as to the importance of the discoveries.

Since the receipt of your despatch, to which I have referred, I have, however, received from the Secretary of State for the Colonial Department a copy of a despatch from the Lieutenant-Governor of British Guiana, dated the 23rd October, from which I learn that the Governor of the Province of Venezuelan Guiana, after having requested and received from the British Vice-Consul at Bolivar explanations as to the nature of the proposed expeditions, has instructed the local authorities to intimate to the gentlemen composing the expeditions that they are required to present themselves at Bolivar, and to come to an understanding with the provincial Governors before occupying themselves in fulfilling their mission.

The correspondence between Vice-Consul Mathison and the Venezuelan authorities dates between the 25th and 28th September; and copies of the correspondence, as also of a despatch on the subject from the provincial Governor to his Government at Caracas, were published in the "*Gaceta de Guayana*" of the 26th September and the 3rd October last.

I have as yet received no report from you as to this state of things, although I am in possession of despatches from you dated as late as the 2nd November last. I must therefore suppose that up to that date you could not have been cognizant of the proceedings of the Venezuelan authorities to which I have referred; but I must observe that you have already failed to keep Her Majesty's Government fully informed respecting these gold discoveries, for in your despatch of the 30th August, the first of your despatches in which you allude to the subject, you inclosed a copy of a despatch from Mr. Vice-Consul Mathison, in which he refers to two previous despatches to you of the 5th and 18th May, of which you do not appear to have forwarded copies to me.

The information, however, which has been communicated to me from the Colonial Department is of a character to attract the attention of Her Majesty's Government, who have learnt with surprise that the Venezuelan authorities have considered themselves justified in obstructing two expeditions from Her Majesty's Colony, the objects of which have been clearly explained to them as being of a purely scientific character.

Her Majesty's Government are not aware of any Regulations in force in the Venezuelan territories by which the entrance into the territories of the Republic is prohibited to the subjects of foreign Powers unless the previous assent of the local authorities has been obtained; and, until the existence of such a Regulation is proved, Her Majesty's Government cannot allow the force of the arguments by which Don F. Manuel has grounded his refusal to permit the expeditions in question to carry out the objects for which they were dispatched. That refusal seems to Her Majesty's Government the more extraordinary, as the gentlemen composing the expedition were furnished with passports from the Venezuelan Consul in British Guiana, who must have been perfectly aware of the nature of both expeditions; and, moreover, the local Governor soon after the discovery of the auriferous deposits declared them by public Proclamation equally open to natives and to strangers.

Her Majesty's Government must therefore require to be informed what is the state of the Regulations in force as to the admission of foreigners into the Venezuelan territory; and I may observe that if it is necessary to obtain a previous permission from the Venezuelan Government

in order to enable a party of scientific explorers to set foot in that territory, such a Regulation, which is happily exceptional in the case of civilized countries, would be in strong contradiction to the usages in force in the neighbouring Colony of British Guiana, where all foreigners are at liberty to enter, reside in, or traverse the colonial territory without even the formality of producing a passport.

It is probable, however, that the real motive which has induced the Venezuelan authorities to act as they have done in the matter of these expeditions has been jealousy at the prospect of a route being discovered and established for communication between British Guiana and the Venezuelan territories; and the steps taken by the Venezuelan Government to secure to Bolivar the main, if not the exclusive, communication with the auriferous districts would seem to justify this supposition. But it is to be remembered that the route of the expeditions lay for a considerable extent through territory claimed as being British, that the actual boundary is undetermined, and that it cannot be denied that the authorities of British Guiana are competent and justified in exploring a route so far as British territory is concerned. And if those explorations should have been extended within the acknowledged boundaries of Venezuelan territory, any interference with them must be justified by the production of evidence showing that the parties concerned were acting in violation of Venezuelan law.

As at present informed, Her Majesty's Government are willing to believe that the authorities at Bolivar will not be supported by their Government in the course which they have taken in this matter. But if, unfortunately, this should not be the case, and if the local authorities should have actually interfered with the gentlemen employed on this service, Her Majesty's Government will expect immediate and full explanations of the grounds on which Venezuela is pursuing a course which seems inconsistent with the friendly relations between the two Governments.

I take this opportunity of informing you that, under the circumstances of the late gold discoveries, which are likely to draw together a large number of immigrants, and possibly to stimulate the trade with the Orinoco, Her Majesty's Government have considered it necessary to direct that Her Majesty's naval authorities shall send a vessel of war to the mouth of the Orinoco, near Point Barima, for the protection of British interests. Her Majesty's Government are not as yet informed whether their wishes in this respect have been carried into effect, but as it is not impossible that the appearance of a British vessel of war off the mouth of the Orinoco may be a cause of excitement and lead to discussion in Venezuela, I think it advisable that you should be enabled to explain to the Venezuelan Government, in case of need, the object for which the vessel has been dispatched to Point Barima.

It is not impossible that the various questions which have arisen and which are likely to arise in connection with the gold discoveries may call the attention of the Venezuelan Government to the advantage which might result from a final settlement of the boundary between the territory of British Guiana and that of Venezuela, and you will point out that the Venezuelan Government, in returning no answer to the proposals made by Her Majesty's Government in 1844, is responsible for any inconvenience which has resulted from the question being still left undetermined. But you will state that you are without instructions on the subject, although you would be ready to communicate to Her Majesty's Government the views of the Venezuelan Government with reference to it. . .

(Signed) CLARENDON

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