

DOCUMENTS

SOME LETTERS TO BOLÍVAR AND TO BELLO

The six letters here transcribed are part of a number of manuscripts relating chiefly to the period of Bolívar and Gran Colombia that came into the possession of Mrs. Victor M. Cutter, of Newton, Mass., some fifteen years ago, and of which she has recently made a gift to the Dartmouth College Library. The material now published ranges in time from 1819 to 1827.

By their very concentration on individual cases, these documents bring out in fuller relief the outwardly undramatic side of Bolívar's performance as a Liberator: the sundry plaints, claims, and bickerings that encroached upon his time and attention. They also serve to mark the pitfalls along the hard road to economic independence awaiting the newly born republics.

The first four letters are a graphic commentary on the rôle of the Caribbean islands during the wars of independence as active bases for armament supplies. No less indispensable were they, it seems, as centers for the dissemination of patriot propaganda for European and North American consumption as well as for the relay of vital information to the revolutionary government from the outside world.

Bolívar himself had found refuge in the Antilles as an exile after his early unfortunate campaigns, and there he had made friendships that, as this correspondence shows, were later to be capitalized for various purposes. The news of the political success at Angostura, on February 15, 1819, crowning a series of victorious engagements, gives rise to warm protestations of loyalty to the revolutionary cause coupled with appeals of one sort or another. Dgo. Gourgues in his virile handwriting and peculiar spelling makes his destitution known to the Liberator; M. Hyslop tries to bring grist to his mill by asking commercial preferment even to the point of suggesting a scheme of endorsement for his mercantile establishment that smacks of an up-to-date advertising campaign; while V. B. Bigardon presses for the payment of a bill for a cargo of arms that apparently had failed to attract the attention of Admiral Brion. Bigardon wants a settlement even if it is in wares and mules, evidently a means of exchange for the patriots to which, in their penury, they often resorted to pay for all kinds of services. It will be recalled that the inhabitants of Ven-

ezueta derided the foreign legionaries of Bolívar as mercenaries, fancying that their allegiance had been purchased with the mules and bullocks exported to England from the country.¹

Wm. White's letter is a report of his activities as a confidential agent of the revolutionary government. His services had been requested by Bolívar himself in a letter to White from Angostura, dated June 15, 1818.² Bolívar had written a few days before to Luis López Méndez, the representative of the Republic of Venezuela in London, announcing the arrangements and assuring him that from then on his communications, which up to that time had often gone astray or were lost, would arrive safely through the good offices of "señor Guillermo White de la Isla de Trinidad."³

Bolívar's trust in the fertile brain of his future intermediary was amply borne out by deeds throughout a sprightly career of adventure and speculation in that turbulent period of South American history. In fact, Guillermo White has been considered "unique because he was not a military adventurer seeking to win fame and fortune in the patriot armies, but the pioneer of the later descending horde of concession hunters and seekers after special rights and privileges in Latin America."⁴

William Porter White was born at Pittsfield, Mass., October 10, 1769, and died at Buenos Aires, January 4, 1842.⁵ He became a merchant and lived some time in London, where he lost his wife. During his stay in England he may have changed his nationality, because he speaks in his letter as a British subject, a status he is said to have claimed at Buenos Aires years before when, being accused of defrauding the state, he was obliged to flee and take refuge on board a British man-of-war.⁶ He may likewise have discontinued the use

¹ Alfred Hasbrouck, *Foreign Legionnaires in the Liberation of Spanish South America* (New York, 1928), p. 89.

² Vicente Lecuna, *Cartas del Libertador* (10 vols., Caracas, 1929-1930), II, 21.

³ *Ibid.*, II, 18.

⁴ Edward S. Wallace, "Forgotten Men of Dartmouth: Father of the Argentine Navy, William Porter White, 1790," *Dartmouth Alumni Magazine*, March 1935, p. 22. The original article, a good biographical study of the expatriate New Englander, appears abridged in the *Magazine* and provided with a somewhat too glowing title.

⁵ George T. Chapman, *Sketches of the Alumni of Dartmouth College* (Cambridge, 1867), p. 57.

⁶ H. M. Brackenbridge, *Voyage to South America, Performed by Order of the American Government, in the Years 1817 and 1818 in the Frigate Congress* (2 vols., Baltimore, 1819), I, 240. Rufino Blanco Fombona describes White as: "Comerciante (†) inglés, residente en Trinidad, agente voluntario de la Revolución," in Daniel F. O'Leary, *Correspondencia de extranjeros notables con el*

of his middle name in his signature.⁷

For a man whose character was far from reproach in his dealings with the revolutionary governments of the Río de la Plata, White's relations with Bolívar show a remarkably consistent loyalty and devotion, judging by the extant correspondence ranging from 1818 to 1826.⁸ Former amicable relations with Bernardino Rivadavia⁹ and other prominent personalities at Buenos Aires had given White the reputation of knowing how to win and to keep, even under trying circumstances, the confidence of some of his outstanding Spanish-American contemporaries. This capacity was also shown in the case of Bolívar. The Liberator wrote to White with open good will on the subject of military news and political information that were to secure public attention through the resourceful medium of his advocate and friend. More than once these communications are exceptionally revealing. On April 4, 1819, the day after the battle of Las Queseras del Medio, Bolívar wrote to White an account that, in Larrazábal's opinion, discloses the whole plan of the campaign against Morillo. "Todo, en fin, me aconseja la conducta de Fabio, que con harta pena me veo obligado a seguir; pues, desgraciadamente, estoy muy distante del carácter de aquel gran general romano: él era prudente y yo soy impetuoso."¹⁰ To these enforced tactics of attrition by a Fabian policy of watchful waiting White alludes in the letter here published.

A different subject matter but not an entirely dissimilar strain is to be found in the two letters of J. M. del Castillo to Andrés Bello and Santos Michelena (V and VI). The travail of the war was over when they were written, but for the novice statesman the pursuits of peace in the early period of the Republic of Colombia were still far from being free of anxieties, and the country had to pay dearly for the apprenticeship. National solvency after such destructive wars

Libertador (2 vols., Madrid, 1920), I, 301 n. He also speaks of the "inglés White" in Felipe Larrazábal, *Vida del Libertador Simón Bolívar* (2 vols., Madrid, 1918), II, 194 n.

⁷ He signs his name as "Guillermo P. White" in a letter dated at Buenos Aires, November 22, 1817, promoting one of his numerous ventures. See Ricardo R. Caillet Bois, "Documentos referentes a Guillermo P. White," *Boletín del Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas*, V (1927), 689-704.

⁸ There are nine letters on Bolívar to Guillermo White in Lecuna's collection, seven in Vol. II and two in Vol. V. Four letters of White are published in Daniel F. O'Leary, *ibid.*, I, 24-34.

⁹ Alberto Palcos, "Un discutido amigo de Rivadavia," *La nación* (Buenos Aires), May 25, 1932, Section II, with portrait.

¹⁰ Felipe Larrazábal, *op. cit.*, II, 193; reproduced by Lecuna, *op. cit.*, II, 107.

had of necessity to be propped by foreign loans. Two had been contracted, one in 1820 and the other in 1822, already with some mishaps. A third, negotiated in April of 1824 with the London brokers, B. A. Goldschmidt & Co., for £4,750,000, was attended with actual disaster, from which the national credit took a long time to recover.¹¹

By 1826 the finances of the country were in a deplorable condition. The public revenues were not sufficient to cover the current expenses, nothing remained in the treasury of the product of the loans, and the available liquid resources were absorbed by the army and navy.¹² These tribulations culminated in the bankruptcy of B. A. Goldschmidt & Co., with the loss of some four hundred thousand pounds sterling left in deposit with the brokers for the servicing of the debt.¹³ The news of this calamity arrived in Bogotá on May 22 when Congress was debating measures to revive the public credit.¹⁴ The information may have arrived in the very letter through which the firm made known its plight to Bolívar.¹⁵ The letter of instructions (V) made reference to the subsequent congressional decisions taken on the proposals by the then acting chief executive, Vice-President Francisco de Paula Santander. The line of action suggested by the Minister of the Treasury, based on these decisions, was not destined to achieve success. In trusting to the recovery of the sum involved in the bankruptcy and in negotiating the bills that had been pledged by the Peruvian government as its pro rata share of the revolutionary debt, the statesmen of Colombia were leaning on a broken reed. All was without avail. Not even the undoubted ability and good will of the government's agents in London sufficed to secure a new loan.

The personalities connected with the financial transactions with which letters V and VI are concerned were among the most distin-

¹¹ Corporation of foreign bondholders, *Fifty-Seventh Annual Report of the Council . . . for the Year 1930* (London, 1930), pp. 123-124. Also Jesús Ma. Henao and Gerardo Arrubla, *Historia de Colombia* (2 vols. in 1, Bogotá, 1929), p. 767.

¹² Ignacio Gutiérrez Ponce, *Vida de don Ignacio Gutiérrez Vergara y episodios históricos de su tiempo (1806-1871)* (London, 1900), p. 171. Also, *The Annual Register or A View of the History, Politics, and Literature, of the Year 1826* (London, 1827), "History of Europe," pp. 402-406; Appendix (Message of the Vice-President of Colombia to the Congress, January 2, 1826), pp. 106-107.

¹³ The actual loss was £402,099 10s 3d, according to the report of Manuel José Hurtado, the Minister in London; see José Manuel Restrepo, *Historia de la revolución de la República de Colombia en la América Meridional* (4 vols., Besanzón, 1858), III, 497 n.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, III, 497.

¹⁵ Daniel O'Leary, *op. cit.*, II, 174-176.

guished in the public life of the country. These papers throw some light on a phase of the remarkable career of Andrés Bello that has not been well documented. The standard biographies make no mention of this episode in the period of Bello's quiet and studious life in London.¹⁶ These letters, besides, offer in themselves additional testimony of the confidence which the men of the era of independence had in the loyalty and capacity of Bello and disprove the baseless charges that he betrayed the revolution.

Neither do these financial transactions loom large in the life of Santos Michelena, who at the time was only twenty-nine years old and therefore much younger than Bello. The two years, 1826 to 1828, of his residence in London as consul and fiscal agent of the government were apparently uneventful.¹⁷ For the writer of the letters, José María del Castillo y Rada, they are, however, further evidence of the meticulous probity with which he handled the public funds of his country while Minister of the Treasury and of his cautious statesmanship in economic matters.

JOSÉ M. ARCE.

Dartmouth College.

I

[A. L. S. 2 p. 22.5 x 18.6 cm.]

Mon Cher Général

Je me plais et me plairai Toujours á Croire que vous ne m'avez Jamais oublié—mais la privation continuelle que J'ai de vos Cheres Nouvelles, et de Celles de Ma Chere & Saint Patrie, M'afflige á Tel point que Je n'ai pas D'expressions assez fortes pour vous Exprimer Tout le Chagrin que Je resente, Mais aujourd'hui un Ange Tutelaire Nous á porté D'excellentes & Divines Nouvelles qui M'ont été par-

¹⁶ Miguel Luis Amunátegui, *Vida de don Andrés Bello* (Santiago de Chile, 1882), relates the hardships which the secretaryship of the legation caused Bello but makes no mention of the financial negotiations entrusted to him. Equally uninforming are the more recent biographies: Antonio Balbín de Unquera, *Andrés Bello, su época y sus obras* (Madrid, 1910), and Eugenio Orrego Vicuña, *Don Andrés Bello* (Santiago de Chile, 1935). Bello in a letter to Bolívar, dated March 21, 1821, speaks of "la absoluta imposibilidad de levantar otro empréstito en Londres" and opposes any onerous loans. J. R. Revenga, secretary general of Bolívar, replies: "Y puedo asegurar a Usted que, así como el último empréstito se hizo contra la voluntad de su Excelencia, no se hará con ella ningún otro." ("Simón Bolívar y Andrés Bello. Correspondencia reunida y anotada por Eugenio Orrego Vicuña." *Anales de la Universidad de Chile*, 1er. trim., 1935, XCIII, pp. 280, 284.)

¹⁷ Tomás Michelena, *Beseña biográfica de Santos Michelena.—Parte histórica, administrativa y política de Venezuela desde 1824 a 1848* (Curacao, 1889), p. 41.

ticipées par M^r Cortez de Madariago. Se Brave homme M'a remis Deux Lettres une de Mon Ami Brion & L'autre du Citoyen [here a space is left blank]. Toutes les Deux Sont on ne peu plus fiateuses pour L'ami de La Liberté duquel vous Savez que J'ai L'honneur de faire Nombre.

Maintenant Mon Cher Général J'ai une Grase á Vous Demander, qui Est Celle de me Retirer de Ce Miserable pays ou Je ne puis ábsolument Excister, malgrais Toutes les peines et Soins que Je me Donne pour Gagner Ma Triste Excistence, Elle Devient Tous les Jours plus Amaire, Je Crois que si Cella Continue Je Me Verais Obligais de Tendre La Main—Cruelle position pour moi—Plutot Mourir Mille foix—Je vous ouvre Mon Coeur parceque Je conais Le Votre Génereux et qu'il Viendra á Mon Secour et á Cellui de Mon Infortunée famille—aDieu Mon Cher Général—puise L'Etre Supreme que Je ne cesse D'invoquer pour La Patrie & pour vous—vous favorizer Dans Toutes Sages Entreprises, Tels Sont Mes Voeux, Tels Dans Ses Sentiments Distingues que Je vous prie de Me Croire Moi & Les Miens pour La Vie

Mon Cher Général—Votre Obte. Serviteur

D^{no} Gourgues

[Rubric]

Monsieur S^{mon} Bolivar
Général En Chef de Venezuela &
Kingston Le 2 Mars 1819

II

[L. S. 4 p. 32.0 x 20.0 cm.]

Kingston 22 April 1819

My dear General

It is now a very long time since I had the honor of hearing from you, and which I attribute altogether to the magnitude of pressure arrising out of Public Business, not to any dread that you have lost sight of me and my Establishment, but tho' I have been thus deprived of direct intelligence from yourself I have been delighted with the accounts I have learnt of you.

Allow me my dear Friend to congratulate you on the re installation of the Congress of Venezuela, which by accounts from Angostura took place the 15 Feby. in that place; also on your being appointed "President ad interim of the Republic & Capt. General of the Army." Nothing almost in this world could have given me more real pleasure, and from the bottom of my heart I sincerely wish you every success in the present campaign, so that you may have the happiness of

seing your unfortunate country freed from its enemies, and which I have not the most distant doubt will now be the case.

Your speech on the opening of the Session I have read with great delight, and it tends more fully if such had been necessary, to confirm me in the belief that you will do ample justice to the important and arduous charge assigned to you.

As you had left Angostura to open the campaign and as by same intelligence you had numerous British aid with you, I fully calculate on your receiving this in *Caracas*, and that being the case it is a natural inference to be drawn that your forces will lose no time in occupying the sea port towns, as a matter of the first importance to your external relations. Affairs having arrived at that prosperous state, may I call your recollection to the promise made me that you would apprise me when and where my House ought to open a Branch as a commercial establishment. You know such has ever been our favorite plan, and as you were so good as to give me assurances of countenance both as to support and protection I am indulging the pleasing hope of shortly hearing from you on that subject. Our sacrifices have been very great for the cause and we have now been strenuous advocates of South American Independence these five years, which in *this hostile place* to the freedom of that country has not been a little injurious to our views here, but notwithstanding all this we shall be most happy if our efforts have in any shape contributed to the result so greatly to be wished, and that once obtained our recompense will follow, I should hope, as a natural consequence.

When you may find it advisable for us to open an establishment in Venezuela you would materially add to our views by writing us a letter expressive of your countenance and protection, couched in that way that we might with propriety give an extract of such to our numerous correspondents, which would have a beneficial effect in as much as it would induce them to come more freely forward to second our enterprize. I am sure you will do this if it be not inconsistent with the high office you fill, and if it should be inconsistent it cannot be expected.

From London I had the honor of addressing to yourself and Government asts the result of the commission committed to my charge, and I hope you have approved of my efforts.

Wherever I went in England the cause found a warm advocate in me, and I assure you it is with pleasure I repeat that generally speaking there was but one sentiment on the subject viz. a wish for Independence.

McGregor left this the 28 March for San Andreas where his Vessels for England had rendezvous, and on the 10 inst. captured Puerto Bello, the particulars of which you will learn from the enclosed taken from one of our daily newspapers. His object or future operations we know not, but believe he expects to communicate with Lord Cochrane, now in the Pacific. It would appear he has not acted according to the views of Venezuela, if we are to credit Public Newspapers, but be that as it may anything that tends to the annoyance of the general enemy must be beneficial in my humble opinion. Taking the whole aspect of affairs from Panama to Cape Horn it is impossible but to credit that this year will seal the destruction of Ferdinand's power in that country for ever.—God grant it. Mrs. Hyslop, myself, and our youngest boy arrived here a few months ago from London in health, we left in Scotland William, whom you have seen, and two little girls, born since I saw you, and I am happy to add we have just heard of their being quite well. Mrs. Hyslop and my Brother offer their kind regards and believe me we hail it as an auspicious moment when we had the honor of your company in Jamaica.

You will remark I address you in the familiar style of a friend, not using the customary formality to one in high office, and until I learn that such is not agreeable I will continue to do so, as I have been, and in truth will continue on that footing of intimacy we so happily enjoyed during your sojourning here. Accept my D^r. General a renewal of all my former expressions of Esteem and believe me to be

Your faithful and attached friend

M. Hyslop

To His Excellency

Simon Bolivar

President ad Interim & &
Venezuela

III

[L. S. 3 p. 30.5 x 21.2 cm.]

Monsieur le Président

La réputation qui caractérise Votre Excellence, nous enhardit à nous adresser directement à vous pour demander la liquidation de l'achat des armes contracté par Votre Excellence lorsque le Siège du Gouvernement était à la Marguerite, avec le pauvre Schottmann, qui vous vendit et livra la cargaison de la Golette Polly, Cap^e Franc^e Robert, dans le mois de février 1817. Il fut même obligé de porter une partie de cette cargaison à Barcelone pour recevoir une petite

portion de son payment qui ne put avoir lieu les ennemies prenant la place avant qu'il put l'effectuer. La Justice & l'Equité qui font la base de votre caractère et le mobile de toutes vos actions, nous font esperer que vous vous empresserez a acquitter une créance si légitime, et que Votre Excellence, voudra bien nous annoncer, s'il faut nous rendre à la Marguerite ou a l'Angoustura pour recevoir le dit montant, soit en argent, Denrées ou Mulets.

Nous recevons par tous les paquets anglais, des Lettres desagréables de notre Commettant d'Europe pour cette créance, il semble croire que nous avons reçu la somme due et que nous disposons de ces fonds a notre profit. Veuillez Monsieur le Président nous honorer d'une réponse afin que nous pussions lui en remettre une copie ou l'original pour le tranquiliser; ce Négociant qui est réellement dans le besoin, et vous êtes trop juste pour le priver de cette Satisfaction.

Vous Saver trop bien juger des choses pour ne pas apprecier les sacrifices que cette maison éprouve du retard de ces fonds ainsi que de la justice de Sa demande pour la liquidation du contract fait avec ce Sr. Schlottmann pour Ses armes.

Nous avons eu l'honneur d'écrire plusieurs fois à Monsieur L'Amiral Brion qui ne nous a jamais répondu, mais Espérant mieux de votre Justice nous ne doutons pas un instant, Monsieur le Président, que vous nous honorerez d'une réponse favorable & qui satisfera cet ami respectable.

En attendant ce moment désiré, nous avons l'honneur d'être avec une haute considération & un Profond Respect Monsieur le Président
de Votre Excellence

Le très humble & très
Obéissant Serviteur
V. B. Bigardon

[Rubric]

St. Barthélemi 10 Juillet 1819

a Son Excellence Monsieur le Président
Bolivar, chef Suprême de la R/que de
Venezuela

IV

[A. L. S. 4 p. 25.3 x 22.2 cm.]

Port of Spain,
Trinidad, October 12th. 1819

My dear General!

For it is by this Title I must address you, since the General has saved the Republic!

Your Excellency's rapid March, under Difficulties the most appalling, has covered your military Character with Glory! The use you have made of Victory has added to those Laurels! Allow me to felicitate your Excellency & the Republic on your glorious Achievements during the Campaign; equally fortunate in imitating the Conduct of a Fabius or a Caesar!

I confess to your Excellency I was struck by the Grandeur of the Enterprize! but I entered into all the deep Combinations with which it was fraught, and I counted on Venezuelian Valour, & the Patriotism of New Granada, for the Issue. The event has justified what I prognosticated, and what that was, all my correspondence on the Subject will tell. The Minds of my Countrymen have been long prepared to receive that Intelligence, which will diffuse a general Joy throughout the British Empire: I believe I may safely add throughout all Europe! I do not know that I can except Spain, where a Revolution, having for its Object a Republic, broke out in the Expeditionary Army on the 8th. of July, & has I trust rendered the object of its assembling nugatory, by the Dispersion which followed.

As I have let no opportunity slip me of transmitting the Morning Chronicle, the Island papers, and the News I have been able to collect from other Sources, to the Government at Angostura, I consider your Excellency in Possession of the Details, in the Series they were furnished.

I have transmitted all the Bulletins from N^o 1 to 5 inclusive, with the other Official Documents, in duplicate, to London, to the United States, to *Gibraltar*, to Barbados, to Martinique, & to Jamaica, both in Spanish, & elegantly translated into English by Mr. Black, in this Island Paper. The Effect will be electric!

A most unfortunate dispute arose some time since between Mr. Mendez & Mr. Walton; but the latter has not allowed a quarrel with the Agent to affect his Exertions in Defence of the Cause, & the columns of the Chronicle are still devoted to the Independents, although I believe the Times is now Mr. Mendez' Paper. I have requested & advised Walton to leave his Dispute to your Excellency's Decision on its own Merits. I am sorry to find Gen^l. Devereaux complains equally and in most unqualified Terms of Mr. Mendez' Conduct toward him; but as the "audi alteram partem" is necessary, I have sent the whole to our respectable Friend Mr. Zea. In the mean Time, Mr. Walton has retained the confidence of the Buenos Ayres & Chili Agents, & of the most respectable Merchants who have contributed Supplies to Venezuela. I am happy to see "The Times" advocate the Cause; but I consider myself bound in Honor not to desert my old

Friend "The Chronicle" which was the *first* to take up the Cause; and any Trifle I may contribute, shall continue to appear in it as well as the best Information of what is passing, without failing to communicate also with my Friend Peñalver, who is no Psalm-Singer. I know the value of Walton's Exertions at an early Period, and although I am not a blind admirer of his, yet I am free to say, in spite of his Detractors, that he has rendered essential Services; and I prefer a Man of his Activity, Enterprize, & local Knowledge, even with many Defects, for political Purposes, to one with the greatest Virtues & devoid of the savoir faire. I do not mean, however, to insinuate that he has any Defects that derogate from his Honor, or I should cease my Correspondence with him. I trust a second Washington will not be wanting; but I candidly confess I look about in vain for a second Franklin! In this Respect, "la fortune fait mieux que nous tous," and the Freedom of America will, I fear, as little depend upon the political Calculations of such as I have hitherto appeared on the Horizon of the European Hemisphere, as the perpetuity of our Species; yet it appears from fortuitous Circumstances secured beyond a Doubt.

Your Excellency may rely that no personal Consideration shall ever weigh with me in preference to those Sentiments of Attachment to the Interests of the Republic, which I have always entertained, and you may equally rely I will not relax my Exertions, such as they are. A perfect Volunteer from Principle, without a single View to Interest or Aggrandisement by the Issue, I am not swerved by any selfish Motive from judging at least with Impartiality, or from acting with Consistency. I am not, however, exempt from an Error in Judgment. When I speak of others, I do it in the Relation their Conduct stands to the Republic, & the Influence that Conduct may have on its Interests.

I beg your Excellency to accept my sincere good wishes for your Health & Success in all your Enterprizes, & to believe me with invariable Respect & Esteem

Your faithful & affectionate Friend
& Servant

W^m. White

[Rubric]

[On the margin of the third page:]

We must not lose the Chronicle. That & the Times are the most valuable supporters of any Cause.

[At the foot of the first page:]

His Excellency Gen^l. Bolivar
President of Venezuela.

V

[L. S. 19 p. 5 numb. sheets. 26.2 x 20.2 cm.]

REPUBLICA DE COLOMBIA

Secretaría de Estado del

Despacho de Hacienda

Bogotá á 20 de Julio de 1826—16°

A los Señores

Andrés Bello y Santos Michelena

Por causas que no pudieron preverse, ni evitarse se ha encontrado el Ejecutivo sin los medios suficientes pa. cubrir oportunam^{te} los intereses de la deuda extranjera y facilitar los medios de su gradual amortizacion. Sin embargo hacia todos los esfuerzos imaginables para procurar los recursos necesarios al efecto, y contaba con el resto de los fondos del mismo empréstito que ecistía en Inglaterra, cuando recibió la funesta noticia de que había suspendido sus págos la Casa de los Señores B. A. Goldschmidt y Compañía, y de que en su poder ecistian al mismo tiempo sobre cuatrocientas mil libras pertenecientes á la Republica. Esta se encontró de repente con tan considerable disminucion en sus fondos y con la necesidad de cubrir las atenciones á que estaban destinados aquellos.

En tamaño conflicto informó al Congreso de todo lo ocurrido y le pidió los medios para salir de sus apuros y salvar al crédito expuesto de la Republica.

El Congreso en consecuencia expidió el decreto de 27 de Mayo en el cual aprueba las medidas tomadas por el Ejecutivo para satisfacer los intereses de Mayo y Julio, y despues de hacer algunas aplicaciones á tan importante objeto, le autoriza para que procure por via de anticipacion los medios de salvar el credito público pagando los intereses y proveyendo a la amortizacion hasta Julio de 827.

El Ejecutivo interesado altamente en el honor y reputación de Colombia ha dado las orns convenientes al Sor Hurtado, Ministro Plenipotenciario de la Republica cerca del Gobierno de S. M. B. de que aplique preferentemente al págo de los intereses vencidos y que se vencieren hta Enero procsimo la suma de mas de cuatrocientas mil libras que no debieron comprenderse en la quiebra de la Casa de Goldschmidt, y ademas un millon de pesos que ha debido ó debe recibir en virtud de las letras jiradas por el Gobierno de la Republica del Perú.

Pero como se ha querido preveer todo evento desgraciado, para el caso en que ni pueda contarse con las cuatrocientas y tantas mil libras ni se cobre el millon de pesos, ha resuelto el Vicepresidente de la Republica autorizar á V. SS. mancomunadamente ó solo al Sor

Bello si no hubiese aun llegado el Sor Michelena para solisitar y procurar obtener la anticipacion de la suma bastante pa. cubrir los intereses que se deban ó debieren hta el mes de Enero procsimo, igualmente que para proveer el fondo destinado á la amortizacion gradual para cuyo efecto acompaño á V. SS. el correspond^{te} poder en que vá incerto el decreto del Congreso, y que contiene las clausulas y requisitos necesarios para valer.

En esta virtud es mi deber explicar á V. SS. las miras y deseos del Vicepresid^{te} encargado del Poder Ejecutivo para que les sirvan de regla é instruccion en el desempeño de este encargo importante y delicado.

Lo primero que debo encargar muy recomendadamté á V. SS. es el caracter, respetabilidad y garantias de la Casa ó Casas con quienes se haya de hacer el negocio. V. SS. saben muy bien cuanto importa que las naciones no se ligen con Casas de poco valor ó que no tengan en su favor todas las cauciones posibles contra los accidentes de la adversidad: en esto se interesa el honor del Estado al mismo tiempo que contribuye á fomentar y sostener su crédito el de la Casa con quien negocie, y que maneje sus fondos.

En este concepto no creo por demas recomendar á V. SS., para el caso á los Sres Baring, Wilson, Alexander y Baset, cuya importancia y respetabilidad es conocida hta en estos paises.

Mas no crean V. SS. que esta indicacion los sujeta estrictamente a contraerse á estas Casas. V. SS. en Inglaterra deben tener ó adquirir los conocimientos mas exactos que los que yo pudiera subministrarles; y el Ejecutivo tiene la mas alta confianza en el celo y prudencia de V. SS. de quienes espera que se conduzcan en la eleccion de las Casas con los datos y circunspeccion que requiere el negocio para no exponer nuevamente el crédito del pais.

Como por el desgraciado acontecimiento de la Casa Goldschmidt es necesario confiar á otra Casa la agencia para el pago de los intereses y gradual amortizacion de la deuda, el Vicepresidente ha tenido á bien ordenarme cometa á V. SS. esta eleccion, con encargo de que la consulten con el Sor Hurtado. V. SS. pues están autorizados para hacerla con calidad de que quedará sujeta á la aprobacion del Gobierno y de que ha de ser variable á su voluntad.

Al hacerla ha de ser con la expresa condicion de que ahora y siem pre los fondos destinados y que de aquí se remiten para los intereses y amortizacion han de ser necesariam^{te} depositados en el Banco de Inglaterra bajo de firmas unidas de ajentes que se nombrare, y del Ministro de Colombia cerca del Gobierno de S. M. B., ó del encargado de negocios de la Republica, ó del Consul jeneral, ó de la persona que

designare al efecto el Ejecutivo. En todo tiempo y caso debe hacerse el deposito bajo las firmas unidas de la Casa encargada de pagar los intereses, y de efectuar la amortizacion, y la de un agente del Gobierno; y los fondos no podran nunca extraerse del Banco sino en virtud de las mismas firmas unidas, en los periodos en que debe hacerse uso de los fondos y para el objeto exclusivo á que se destinan.

V. SS. teniendo presentes las cosas y con conocim^{to} de la comicion que gana los agentes de otras naciones, convendrán en la que deba abonarse á la Casa que se escoja para encargarse de la agencia de Colombia.

Si se mezcla ó une el convenio sobre la agencia con el de la anticipacion que ahora se solisita, tal vez se facilitará la consecucion de esta, y podrá obtenerse con mas ventajas ó menos sacrificios. En este punto me limito á la indicacion, defiriendo al buen juicio y al celo patriótico de V. SS. Una Casa que haya de manejar los intereses de la Republica, y que por este medio contrae con ella conecciones amistosas, debe tener mas inclinacion á servirla por que se considerará sucesivamente en mejor estado de asegurarse de la providad y de la capacidad de ella para cumplir con sus empeños; y el interes de la comicion sera un estimulo mas para hacer un servicio que nunca es gratuito sino que aumenta la fortuna del que lo hace.

No es tampoco posible ni seria prudente fijar el descuento ni el interes anual, por que nunca podria hacerse con acierto á tanta distancia, y sin un conocimiento actual del curso de los negocios en Europa. En esto defiere tambien el Gobierno al buen juicio de V. SS., confiado en que estando V. SS. en actitud de recojer todos los conocim^{tos} necesarios pa semejante transacion en ningun caso la concluirian sino con el menor perjuicio posible de la Republica.

A la verdad, el estado presente del mercado de Londres y el de crédito de Colombia son obstaculos de magnitud para concluir ventajosamente esta negociacion; p^{ro} V. SS. deben penetrarse, y persuadirlo así de que no hay en el dia objeto que ocupe tanto la atencion del Gob^{no} como el estaplecimiento y consolidacion de su credito. Para ello se han dado leyes que aumentaran necesaria y considerablemente el producto de las rentas: la administracion debe mejorarse cada dia mas con las que se han expedido y han comensado á efectuarse: los C^{nos} mejoran rapidam^{te} su condicion; la agricultura y la mineria con la remocion de trabas y concesion de beneficios debe progresar asombrosamente; y por ultimo el establecim^{to} de la Com^{on} de crédito publico y de una caja abundantemente dotada para sostenerlo son hechos que bien desenvueltos por V. SS., sin necesidad de ecsajerarlos, deben inspirar la mas alta confianza de la capacidad

de Colombia p^a cumplir sus comprometimientos satisfaciendo los intereses de sus deudas, amortisandola gradualmente y cubriendo los gastos de su administracion. No se vieron los Estados Unidos del Norte America en situacion semejante antes de ser reconocidos por metr6poli, ni siete años despues; y sin embargo han establecido su crédito á la par de sus progresos ¿por que pues no se ha de esperar mucho mas de un Estado que abunda en recursos y que posée mas abundantes y numerosas semillas de prosperidad? Aquí tenemos medios cuantiosos y una voluntad decidida que, poniendolos en movimiento, como ya empiesan á estarlo á despecho de una guerra prolongada y ruinosa seran sobradisimos para hacer frente á todas nuestras urjencias. Colombia ha hecho hta el dia lo mas difícil, lo que ápenas pueden creer los contemporaneos, lo que no oirá sin asombro la posteridad: sostener por diez y seis años y solo con sus propias fuerzas, y con sus unicos recursos una lucha sangrienta en que ha logrado triunfar, para libertar y crear despues nuevos estados. ¿Podrá sospechase siquiera que después de la contienda, cuando comiensa á cojer los frutos de sus sacrificios, cuando ha dado muestras de tantas virtudes, y cuando por sus esfuerzos heroicos ha puesto de manifiesto sus inmensas riquezas antes desconocidas, no pueda ó no quiera pagar sus deudas y extinguirlas cuanto antes? Yo creo que si V. SS. hacen una esacta pintura del pais, y dan valor a las innumerables reflexiones que facilmente se presentan, logran inspirar la confianza que se ha perdido por algun tiempo, y persuadido que las apariencias del momento son argumento muy debil contra los hechos y contra los conocim^{tos} que ministran la historia de nuestros sucesos y el testimonio de los hombres de buena fe que nos conocen.

Ya indiqué al principio que la anticipacion no debe solisitarse sino en el caso de que no se cuente ni con las cuatrocientas mil libras, ni con el millon de pesos librado por el Gobierno del Perú; y ahora debo añadir que aun en ese evento deben V. SS. limitarse por ahora á obtener lo muy preciso para cubrir las presentes necesidades hta el mes de Enero procsimo por que, precindiendo de los fondos que aquí podran recogerse y remitirse p^a Mayo y Julio de 27, es muy probable que satisfechos los reditos hasta enero se mejoren los negocios en Inglaterra y se restablezca el credito del pais, en cuyo caso, cuando sea necesario obtener otro suplem^{to} para mayo y Julio de 27 podrá lograrse con ventajas ó menores sacrificios.

Ultimamente desearía el Gobno que por la presente anticipacion no se emitiesen obligaciones circulantes sino una sola en favor de la Casa o Casas que la hagan, no solo para entenderse con uno solo en el pago de reditos, sino tambien por que es de temerse que las nuevas

obligaciones circulando perjudiquen á las anteriores y se envilesquen ellas mismas. Sin embargo, si esto, en que deben V. SS. insistir con las mejores razones no pudiese conseguirse, el Sor Hurtado como Ministro de la Republica y á nombre de esta debe firmar las que se hayan de emitir á la circulacion: la otra, en el caso contrario lo será por V. SS., si ambos concluyeren el negocio, ó solo por el Sor Bello si no hubiere intervenido, por ausencia el Sor Michelena.

De todos modos recomiendo á V. SS. que se consulten y acuerden con el Sor Hurtado, no solo por su caracter de Ministro y por que su intervencion sera una garantía mas para el Gobierno, y p^a V. SS., sino tambien por que habiendosele comunicado algunas orns sbre los intereses y debiendo V. SS. proceder á evacuar su encargo si aquellas no hubiesen tenido su cumplido efecto, es preciso que V. SS. se entiendan con su Sria para que sepan si lo ha tenido ó no.

Por ultimo no he creido conven^{te} fixar el periodo en que deba amortisarse ó redimirse esta deuda por que esa fijacion depende de circunstancias que aquí no pueden tenerse presentes y que V. SS. pueden muy bien apreciar. Sin embargo V. SS. deben convenir en uno que no sea muy corto y obtener que sin embargo la amortizacion pueda hacerse por partes sin fijacion de sumas sino como sea posible con tal que se verifique dentro del período estipulado. V. SS. comprenderan que esto se funda en la situacion del Pais, y en que si la paz definitiva se verifica ó se gosa por algun tiempo de la calma que se ha logrado en los dos años anteriores, la amortizacion podrá hacerse con seguridad y de mayores cantidades, p^{ro} que si por desgracia sobrevienen nuevos accidentes no podra hacerse sino en menores sumas.

El establecim^{to} de la Comicion de credito publico que ha de comensar muy pronto sus trabajos debe proveer de medios suficientes para este objeto; pero siempre es conveniente preveer y precaver lo peor.

Por ahora no creo necesario estender mas estas instrucciones: lo haré sucesivam^{te} si fuere necesario: entre tanto V. SS. deben arreglarse a ellas y obrar con la circunspeccion, zelo y prudencia que les caracterizan y que le han movido al Gob^{no} á hacerles este encargo delicado.

Dios gue á V. SS.

J. M. del Castillo

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VI

[L. S. 4 p. 25.8 x 20.4 cm.]

REPUBLICA DE COLOMBIA

Secretaría de Estado
en el

Bogotá, a 14 de Febrero de 1827—17.

Despacho de Hacienda
Sección

A los Sres Santos Michelena Consul gral y Andres Bello Secret^o de la Legacion de Colombia en Inglaterra.

Señores

En esta fecha he dirigido al Sr. Juan Francisco Infanzón de Kingston la comunicación siguiente.

“He dado cuenta al Vice presidente de la Republica encargado del Egecutivo de la comunicacion que V. me ha dirigido fechada en esa Ciudad a 23 de Noviembre del año anterior, en que me participa el aviso que ha recibido de los Sres Muñoz y Goytia de haberce conformado los Sres B. A. Goldschmidt y Compañia ó sea sus Letrados ó Procuradores, en admitir la reclamacion que hicieron á nombre de V. contra la Casa en los terminos que los solicitaron es decir los 1893 £19.3 Srgs. del principal y sus gastos que todo importa 2045 £10.6 Srgs. por cuya conformacion tendrá V. inmediateamente un dividendo de 6 Shillings 8 penes Srgs. en la £, por ahora. Ademas hace V. presente que los dichos Letrados ó Procuradores habian prometido enviar a los Sres Muñoz y Goytia el poder que V. ha de firmar á favor de estos con el fin de que se avengan al combenio que han propuesto aquellos, consultando si deberá firmarlo y prevenir á los expresados Muñoz y Goytia agitar las diligencias para el recobro del resto.

En consecuencia de todo lo expuesto tengo orn de contestar á V. que la lejanía en que se encuentra el Gobno. de sus agentes en Londres le impiden tener noticias circunstanciadas sobre este asunto; y que estando encargado de los de esta clase el Consul gral de la Republica y el Secret^o de la Legacion seria aventurar su consentim^o á que V. firmase el poder, sin estar impuesto de los pasos que aquellos como autorizados hayan dado. En esta virtud para que los buenos deseos de V. en favor de los intereses del Estado puedan conciliarse con la regularidad con que en el negocio debe procederse, el paso mas acertado es el de que V. instruya a sus agentes Muñoz y Goytia para que se pongan de acuerdo con los de la Republica arriba mencionados y procedan en todo de conformidad. Debo ademas agregar qe habiendose dado orn al Intendente del Magdalena en 20 de Noviembre del año ppd⁶ que transcribí á V. en la misma fha para que por la Aduana

de Sta. Marta se verificase el pago de la cantidad mencionada, en descuento de los dros que V. debengare, debe V. dar el aviso correspond^{te} á los dichos Consul gral y Secret^o de la Legacion, acerca de si prefiere ó no el pago en estos terminos, habisandolo igualm^{te} a mi Secretaría para dictar las orns que sean consiguientes en el particular.”

La transcribo á VV. para su conocim^{to} y efectos que en ella se indica.

Dios gue á VV.
J. M. del Castillo
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