

**VOL. III. DOCUMENTS RELATING
TO THE QUESTION OF BOUNDARY
BETWEEN VENEZUELA AND
BRITISH GUAYANA. SUBMITTED
TO THE BOUNDARY COMMISSION**

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COUNSEL OF THE GOVERNMENT OF VENEZUELA

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U.S. Commission to investigate
DOCUMENTS

RELATING TO THE QUESTION OF BOUNDARY

BETWEEN

VENEZUELA AND BRITISH GUAYANA.

SUBMITTED TO THE BOUNDARY COMMISSION
BY THE COUNSEL OF THE GOVERN-
MENT OF VENEZUELA.

VOL. III.

WASHINGTON, D. C.
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VOL. III, VES.—1

[Translation.]

No. XVI.

GENERAL ARCHIVES OF SIMANCAS.

DEPT. OF STATE.—BUNDLE No. 7412.—FOLIO 67.

**Copy of the original letter in cipher (as deciphered) from
Count de Aranda to the Marquis de Grimaldi, dated in
Paris, June 14, 1776.**

MOST EXCELLENT SIR: I must inform Y. E. that as I know many geographers, I have found one who is very careful and laborious in clearing up the boundaries between the Portuguese possessions and French Guayana in South America, and I have been able to deduce that he is doing it at the direction of an interested party.

He supposes that the two Crowns agreed in the Treaties of Peace that the boundary should be considered the Vincent Pinzon river, by which name it is not found on the maps; but the Portuguese have claimed that this river is the same as the Oyapoco, which empties into the sea at Cape Orange, and appears as a large river.

As there is another small stream bearing the name of Oyapoco on the Island of Juanes, which the Amazon river forms at its mouth, it appears that they here wished this Oyapoco to be the boundary.

I fancy that these ideas are of recent conception, and they might spring from the fact that as this Court has informed itself by reason of the part it is to take in the boundary dispute of the Portuguese with us, and it has seen that in those parts they have spread themselves enormously, it may think of profiting by taking advantage of the occasion and the experience gained that as regards boundaries it always comes out better with Spain than with the others. It may, perhaps, advance at this time the preparatory idea, saying that for the time being, as mediator, it purposes nothing; that hereafter it

expects from the friendship of Spain that it will clear up matters, and afterwards, should we be restored some of what has been taken by the Portuguese, go on taking it unto itself as it has done in Santo Domingo.

It is rumored that a company is being formed to settle and cultivate Guayana, and this news was also given me some twenty days ago by the same geographer who is looking up the boundaries. It may also very well be the case that the mystery of the superior authority for whom he works, is to do the work for the parties interested; and if I were to express my opinion to Y. E., I should the more regret that the latter should be the cause for removing the boundary question, since the Government not urged would be more easy to persuade, and being urged by the activity of the settlers and their associates would never give ear, for should it do so they would heap injuries upon it.

God preserve Y. E. many years. Your Excellency's most humble servant.

Marly, June 14, 1776.

COUNT DE ARANDA—[a flourish.]

The Most Excellent the Marquis de Grimaldi.

The undersigned, Consul General of Venezuela in Spain, certifies to the authenticity of the preceding copy.

Madrid, December 30, 1890.

P. FORTOUL HURTADO.

The undersigned, Minister of Foreign Relations of the United States of Venezuela, certifies to the authenticity of the signature of Señor Pedro Fortoul Hurtado, Consul General of Venezuela in Spain on the above date.

Caracas, March 6, 1896.

[SEAL.]

P. EZEQUIEL ROJAS.

[Translation.]

No. XVII.

GENERAL ARCHIVES OF SIMANCAS.

Dept. of State.—Bundle 7412.—Folios 2, 13.

**Copy of the Letter of Count de Aranda, dated in Paris,
July 20, 1777.**

The portfolio is endorsed as follows:

Count de Aranda sets forth what that Court desires to arrange with that of Portugal with respect to the boundaries of Guayana, and he expatiates upon what is advisable for us in this particular, annexing some maps for a better understanding.

He incidentally refers to the late treaties made with regard to the Island of Santo Domingo, and states several objections therein.

Inside.—No. 1080.—I have taken herefrom the paper delivered by D'Vergennes referring to the injuries done to Spain by the boundary treaty with Portugal of 1750.

Most Excellent Sir—

MY DEAR SIR: On Saturday, June 28, having gone to Versailles for the sole purpose of paying my respects, I found Count D'Vergennes with more than the usual leisure, which unconsciously led us into some discussions.

Speaking of the deep regret the English would experience because of the news of the suspension of hostilities agreed upon with Portugal (since with the fortune and the superiority of the Spanish arms they would not believe that the Catholic King would so easily relax without being sure that Portugal would succumb to reason, and in consequence the latter would not be at liberty to be an ally of England, as before) M.

D'Vergennes said to me: "*I would like to rely upon H. M. and his Court for a negotiation also with Portugal, and that Count de Florida Blanca should take part therein.*" I replied that I could easily believe that my Court would interest itself in whatever might be satisfactory to France, as also that Count de Florida Blanca would treat the matter as his own, and that H. E. should explain himself whenever he should be pleased so to do.

He told me that he would at once explain himself, and immediately stated that as Guayana faced the Portuguese possessions on the Amazon river, and in the treaty of Utrecht of the year 1713 it had been arranged with Portugal what the boundary should be, nevertheless several differences had arisen, the Court of Lisbon claiming that the *Oyapoco* river was the same as the *Vincent Pinzon*, while the French understood that the *Vincent Pinzon* river differed from the *Oyapoco*, and emptied at Cape Norte. That as our Paraguay boundaries were being adjusted it would be well for Spain to settle matters also between France and Portugal.

Grasping this question with the lights I communicated to Y. E. in my dispatch of the 22d ultimo, No. 1056, and those I had previously indicated, I wished to fully discover the intentions of this Ministry, and I said to M. D'Vergennes that for a better personal understanding of the locality he should let me see the chart or plans upon which he relied, since at a glance I could easily comprehend.

He took out the special map of Guayana made by Bellin in 1763, and a memorial he had drawn up, in which the articles of the treaty of Utrecht are discussed under the supposition that agreeing with the Portuguese on the *Vincent Pinzon* river, the latter is not the *Oyapoco* which empties at Cape Orange, but another very different one which flows into the sea at Cape Norte; and he added that in anticipation he had lately ordered that a guard be placed and some establishment, though small, be located on the left bank of the river known as the *Vincent Pinzon* on that Bellin map.

I asked him if that was his contention, and the boundary which he deemed as belonging to him, and if he limited himself to stopping there without thinking of advancing farther

toward the Amazon river. He answered that they did not contend for more, nor could they, because in the very treaty of Utrecht it had been specified that from the *Vincent Pinzon* river towards the Amazon would belong to Portugal.

With these positive antecedents, I good humoredly asked him why he did not think of addressing himself to my Court for the purpose of treating therewith as a legitimate party and not as a mediating party; since those lands belonged to it and it was very proper that in the pending settlement they should be cleared up. He wondered at my statement, and I satisfied him by proposing that H. E. should take out his own map on which he had drawn the divisional meridians, and he would see from it how clearly he touched Spain and not Portugal.

He was confused, and appealed to the fact that the one France had treated with was Portugal, which country it had thought to be the legitimate owner of those lands. I replied that his idea of negotiating with Count de Florida Blanca was a good one under any form the question might assume; and that he might believe that in any event he would find in him the desire to agree to mediation, were it possible, or to lend himself, on his own part, to any amicable arrangement in case Portugal in good faith should desist from the usurpation she had essayed.

It appeared to me that holding M. D'Vergennes down to this idea would be much more advisable for our own case than for that of the other party, should it arise, and that it would be advisable to bring it at once to a settlement of boundaries with France, if the course of the Marañon or Amazon rivers should be declared ours in the pending settlement with Portugal.

Leaving Count D'Vergennes, I went immediately to my house in Versailles, where I dotted down the matters touched upon, so as to preserve them with accuracy.

Afterwards in Paris I examined the treaty of Utrecht, copying therefrom the pertinent articles which Y. E. will see annexed, and regarding which I shall make to Y. E. the following observations:

In Article VIII France relinquishes forever any claim of

ownership over the lands known as Cape Norte, situated between the *Amazon* and the *Tapoc*, or the *Vincent Pinzon* rivers; by which it therein acknowledges that the *Vincent Pinzon* is the same as the *Tapoc*. Further on it again names the said river as the boundary, in Article XII, and repeats it under the single name of *Vincent Pinzon*, prohibiting its vassals from crossing it to trade or purchase slaves in the lands of Cape Norte.

It is clearly deduced from this that the lands known as the Cape Norte lands must be on the other side of the river, which forms the barrier, and that this river must flow into the sea, leaving the said lands well to its right, as also *Cape Norte*. So that the river newly baptized as the *Vincent Pinzon* discharges its waters on a line with Cape Norte, from which it appears that it was not the one it was endeavored to specify; and more than this, it was acknowledged to be the same as the *Oyapoco* in the map itself. It is shown as a large river, and I do not mistake, discharging its waters next to Cape Orange, hence the artifice with which the said map of Bellin, of the year 1763, was made is shown. It was made expressly to arrogate to themselves what they again wished to claim with time, which is nothing less than as much more as there is from the *Oyapoco* river to the frontier of Dutch Guayana and the Surinam colonies, which is equivalent to doubling the coast front.

It occurred to me to compare the maritime chart of the same author, Bellin, made in 1764, and I find two very curious things therein; one is that he omits giving any name to the *Oyapoco* river, and also to that which should be the *Vincent Pinzon*, according to his map of 1763, in which he names both. The other is that he places the divisional line fifteen leagues further away and distant from Cape Norte, placing it at the *Carche-berry* river, which river, under the same name, and in the same position, he gives in both maps.

There is, moreover, another stronger proof in the map of the same author, made in 1762 for the Maritime Atlas, which consists of five volumes, in small folios; and in the second, of America, he gives a special map of French Guayana, in which he places the *Oyapoco* river, with very little land, on the right