

**DOCUMENTS RELATING TO
THE QUESTION OF BOUNDARY
BETWEEN VENEZUELA AND
BRITISH GUAYANA, VOL. I**

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BETWEEN VENEZUELA AND
BRITISH GUAYANA, VOL. I**

*U.S. Commission, to investigate
and report on the line division
between Venezuela and
British Guiana,*

DOCUMENTS Report

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. I.

WASHINGTON, D. C.:
MCGILL & WALLACE, PRINTERS.
1896.

*a. d.
accompanied
Page 12
V. 811*

71149

[Translation.]

Case 133.—Drawer 3.—File 16.
GENERAL ARCHIVES OF THE INDIES.
(Seville.)

1763.

REPORT SUBMITTED BY DON JOSÉ DIGUJA, GOVERNOR OF CUMANÁ, WITH LETTER NO. 19, DATED CUMANÁ, DECEMBER 15, 1763, MAKING A LONG HISTORICAL DESCRIPTION OF THESE PROVINCES.

(The testimony referred to in this report has been copied separately.)

Cumaná, December 15, 1763.

Governor Don Joseph Diguja calls attention to the irreparable injury which will be done to religion, to Your Majesty, and to the subjects of Your Majesty in these Provinces, if Guayana is transferred to Angostura del Orinoco. In support of his views he appends to his Report a volume containing testimony on the subject, and makes a long description of the advantageous situation of Guayana, etc.

Cumaná, December 15, 1763.

Governor Don Joseph Diguja forwards a volume containing testimony in support of the Report and map submitted by him in consequence of the decision of Your Majesty, communicated to him, to transfer the city of Guayana to that place

NOTE.—This paper was received on or about September, 1765, when Guayana had been already transferred to Angostura del Orinoco. For this reason no action was taken on the Report.

on the Orinoco River where the stream has the less width. He makes a long description of the advantages of the present situation of the city, and explains the irreparable injury to be sustained by religion, by the service of Your Majesty, and by the subjects of Your Majesty in those regions, if the moving of the city to the above-named place is accomplished.

The Report begins by a kind of Introduction, in which a short statement of its contents is made.—Page 1.

First Part.

CHAPTER I.—What the Government of Cumaná was in 1720.—Page 4.

CHAPTER II.—Progress of that Government from 1720 to the present year, 1763.—Page 6.

CHAPTER III.—The progress made in the Provinces of Cumaná and Barcelona from 1720 to the present year, 1763, is due to the two missionary bodies, which are evangelizing there.—Page 13.

NOTE.—Upon consideration of the Report made on December 15, 1761, by Don Joseph Solano, setting forth that the old town (*la Poblacion Antigua*) had no more than 450 inhabitants, in which number the garrison was included; that the walls of the Asis Fort had not sufficient strength; that the general conditions (*temple*) of the country was bad; that the houses as well as the church were structures of frame and mud, and straw-thatched; that the troops were liable at all times to be insulted; that the post called El Padraastro could be lost as the result of a *coup de main* of the enemy, and then no possibility to retain possession of the province would be left; that in such a case the Provinces of Cumaná, Caracas, Barinas, and even Santa Fé would be unprotected; that provisions were scarce; and that the well-known navigation of the Orinoco facilitated access to the locality, and requesting on all these grounds that the city should be moved and located at the narrow part (*la Angostura*) of the river, Your Majesty decided to grant the request. The proper orders and instructions to that effect were sent in the following year, to Don Joachin Moreno de Mendoza, and Solano was directed to pass upon any question which might arise on the subject.

Under date of August 15, 1764, the said Don Joachin Moreno, commanding officer of the city, reported that the latter had been moved as directed, and sent a statement of the number of inhabitants, and of the expenses incurred in carrying out the moving. He said that it was impossible for the inhabitants to bear the expenses of transportation, building of new houses, etc., and suggested that these expenses should be defrayed by the Royal Treasury. All of this was granted by Royal Order of the 26th of March ultimo.

When these papers were received here from San Ildefonso, in September, 1765, the map above alluded to was not among them. It had been sent, however, but as it was of large size, and had been mounted on gilded mouldings and reds, it was hung on the walls of the Secretary's Office, of which it became an ornament.

CHAPTER IV.—Present state of the Provinces of Cumaná and Barcelona, the principal ones of this Government; how little can be done under existing circumstances; and upon whom the compliance with the Royal Order to move Guayana depends.—Page 17.

CHAPTER V.—What the Province of Guayana was in 1720, and what progress had been made therein during the 141 previous years.—Page 22.

CHAPTER VI.—Measures taken to fortify the Orinoco from the year 1694 to the month of May, 1762, in which it became such as it is now.—Page 23.

CHAPTER VII.—Progress made in the Province of Guayana from 1720 to the present year, 1763.—Page 35.

CHAPTER VIII.—The fact that the Dutch have not settled in the center of the Province of Guayana, and the progress noticed at the Presidio, are due to the Mission entrusted to the Catalonian Capucins. The Presidio can not be kept without the Mission, nor the Mission without the Presidio.—Page 39.

CHAPTER IX.—Present condition of the fortifications of the Presidio and city of Santo Thomé de la Guayana, and of the Spanish settlements of this Province. This condition is somewhat different from the one existing at the time of the visit. Page 46.

CHAPTER X.—The Presidio of Guayana is the most important place which the King, our Master, possesses in these his American dominions, except Havana and Vera Cruz.—Page 84.

Second Part.

From page 98, on the reverse, to page 196 an answer is given to all the chapters of the Royal Order individually referred to on the left side of the pages.

Third Part.

The Governor expresses his opinion in full.—Page 197.

CHAPTER I.—The Padrastro Hill should be fortified, and if agreeable to His Majesty a fortress, to be called La Concepción, should be built thereon, as indicated in Nos. 7 and 8 in the Map.—Page 198.

CHAPTER II.—The said Padrastro Hill should be fortified at once, whether by building the Concepción Castle, or by any other means which His Majesty might be pleased to decree. This must be done without losing any time, otherwise that important position may be lost at the first moment if a war breaks out.—Page 203.

CHAPTER III.—The city should be kept where it is, and all possible effort should be made to increase, at least twice as much, the number of its inhabitants.—Page 211.

CHAPTER IV.—The garrison of the Presidio should be strengthened by adding to it 73 soldiers, as ordered by Governor Don Gregorio de Espinosa and Governor Don Matheo Gual, and requested by me in my memorial to His Majesty of August 27, 1761.—Page 215.

CHAPTER V.—The Limones Fort should be abandoned, and a barge should be kept at the Presidio, as Marquis de San Felipe suggested to His Majesty. If the narrow part (Angostura) is to be fortified, no other fortification should be erected there than the battery suggested by Governor Don Juan de la Tornera, as shown in No. 9 on the Map.—Page 219.

CHAPTER VI.—Assistance should be given to the Missions of Catalanian Capucins and Franciscans of Piritu, as suggested by me to His Majesty after my visit to those places.—Page 222.

Report.

(Paragraphs No. 1 to No. 6 explain the subject and contents of this Report, and form a kind of Syllabus, or Summary, of the whole Document.)

Most Excellent Sir:

SIR: Under date of the 4th of May ultimo, I informed Your Excellency that on the 25th of the preceding April I had received the Royal Orders enumerated in the List which I appended to my letter. I also stated that as soon as I could get rid of the occupations I mentioned and finish the prepara-

NOTE.—The pages cited in the body of the Report are the pages of the volume which contains the testimony appended thereto. The pages of the Report itself are only mentioned in the preceding table of contents.

tion of the documents necessitated by some of them, I would answer to the said Royal Orders and avail myself of the first opportunity to mail my reply via Caracas.

2. The Royal Order, issued at Aranjuez on May 27, 1762, contains different instructions, the most important of which refers to the decision which His Majesty was pleased to make in regard to the city of Guayana. His Majesty directed the said city to be moved and transferred to a place called La Angostura, 34 leagues above the Castle, where the Orinoco has only a width of 800 yards. But I, after having given to this grave subject, as to all the others of the said Royal Order, the most serious attention, have acquired the conviction that said moving will be attended by irreparable injury to our Holy Religion, to the service of the two Majesties, to the Royal Treasury, and to the inhabitants of those countries. I am fully aware of the fact that insuperable difficulties shall have to be encountered in the execution of the said Royal Order, and that even without counting these difficulties, not less than 25 or 30 years, and three or four hundred thousand dollars, shall be necessary to carry the whole plan into effect, sacrificing many lives, and causing all these Provinces to be at the mercy of the enemies of the Royal Crown. I feel, therefore, that it is my duty, as a loyal subject, and as Governor of these Provinces, to take advantage of the authority granted by Law 24, Title 1, Book 2, and request His Majesty, with all due respect and assurances of obedience, to be pleased to reconsider the subject, and direct the execution of the said Royal Order to be suspended, until His Majesty, upon further investigation, might be pleased to decide as proper.

3. In order to convince His Majesty of the irreparable injury to be done by this measure, of the excessive expenditure which it will entail, of the numerous difficulties which will have to be overcome, of the number of years which will be consumed to carry its provisions into practical effect, and of the well-known dangerous position in which it will place all these dominions of His Majesty, I thought it advisable to submit to His Majesty the Map and testimony which I append to this Report. The one and the other, together with the general map

of this Government, and the memoranda book, or Book of notes, which contains the particularly accurate as well as concise description of the country, which I formerly submitted to His Majesty, through the hands of Your Excellency, on September 16, 1761, will vouch a great portion of what I have said in this Report. If some other points of the same document have not been accompanied by competent proof, it has not been because that proof was lacking, but because of the desire not to give this Report undue extension. Records too voluminous, instead of being conducive to throw light on a subject, are apt to produce confusion. But whenever His Majesty may be pleased to order me to prove any statement, which is not vouched here, I will do it. I bind myself to give such proofs and I hold myself responsible for the truth of all that I have said in this Report, which I have prepared in discharge of my duty, in order to correspond to the confidence that His Majesty was pleased to repose in me, and with no other desire than to improve the Royal service, protect these vast dominions, and prevent the charge from being justly made against me, that I did not call attention to facts and dangers which could be seen so easily.

4. And in order that my representations may be more easily understood, and that no confusion may be created, I have thought it proper to divide this report into three parts, showing in the first, what the Government of Cumaná was in 1720; what progress has been made in it up to the present date; to whom said progress is due; what its condition is at the present time: how little, under the circumstances now existing in it, can be undertaken in the Province of Guayana; what the Province of Guayana was in 1720 when it was subject to the Government of La Trinidad, and what progress had been made in it during the 141 previous years; what measures for the fortification of the Orinoco were taken from the year 1694 up to the 27th of May, 1762, after which date nothing has been done; what was the unhappy condition in which said Province found itself when it was annexed to this Government; what progress it has made ever since, and to whom that progress has been due; what is the present condition of the city of Guayana and its