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from Spanish and Portuguese Domination: Volume 2

Thomas Cochrane

Excerpt

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CHAPTER I.

BRAZILIAN AND PORTUGUESE FACTIONS—DON PEDRO ORDERED TO QUIT BRAZIL—APPOINTED “PERPETUAL PROTECTOR”—PROCLAIMED EMPEROR OF BRAZIL—EFFORTS TO OBTAIN FOREIGN OFFICERS AND SEAMEN—THE NAVAL COMMAND OFFERED TO ME—ACCEPTATION THEREOF—ARRIVAL AT RIO DE JANEIRO—VISIT OF INSPECTION TO THE SQUADRON—CONDITION OF THE VESSELS—INFERIORITY OF SEAMEN—IMPERIAL AFFABILITY—ATTEMPT TO EVADE THE TERMS OFFERED ME—THIS FAILING, TO REDUCE THE VALUE OF MY PAY—PRETENDED COMMISSION CONFERRED—AND REFUSED—THE POINT ARGUED—I DECLINE THE COMMAND—THE PRIME MINISTER GIVES IN—EXPLANATORY PORTARIA—FORMAL COMMISSION—ORDERS TO BLOCKADE BAHIA—PORTUGUESE FACTION—AVERSE TO ME FROM THE OUTSET.

ALTHOUGH these memoirs relate to personal services in Brazil, it is nevertheless essential, in order to their comprehension, briefly to recapitulate a few events which more immediately led to my connection with the cause of independence in that country.

The expulsion of the Portuguese Royal Family from Lisbon, in consequence of the occupation of Portugal by the armies of the French Republic, was followed by the accession of Don John VI. to the throne of Portugal whilst resident in Rio de Janeiro.

Twelve months previous to my arrival in Brazil, His Majesty returned to Portugal, leaving his son and heir-apparent, Don Pedro, regent of the Portuguese possessions in South America, which had been for some time in a state of disaffection, arising from a growing desire throughout the various provinces for a distinct nationality. Hence two opposing in-

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BRAZILIAN AND PORTUGUESE FACTIONS.

terests had arisen,—a Brazilian party, which had for its object national independence; and a Portuguese party, whose aim was to prevent separation from the mother country—or, if this could not be accomplished, so to paralyse the efforts of the Brazilians, that in case of revolt it might not be difficult for Portugal to keep in subjection, at least the Northern portion of her South American Colonies. It will be necessary, in the course of the narrative, to bear these party distinctions clearly in mind.

As the Regent, Don Pedro, was supposed to evince a leaning to the Brazilian party, he gave proportionate offence to the Portuguese faction, which—though inferior in number, was, from its wealth and position, superior in influence; hence the Regent found himself involved in disputes with the latter, which in June 1821 compelled him to submit to some humiliations.

Shortly previous to this, the Cortes at Lisbon—aware of what was going on in Brazil, and disregarding the temperate views of the King—issued a declaration inviting the Brazilian municipalities to repudiate the Regent's authority at Rio de Janeiro, and to adhere to the immediate administration of the Cortes alone—thus indicating a course to be pursued by the Portuguese faction in Brazil. The result was—as had been anticipated—disunion amongst the people, consequent on the formation of petty provincial governments; each refusing to pay revenue to the central Government at Rio de Janeiro,

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DON PEDRO ORDERED TO QUIT BRAZIL. 3

for the alleged reason that the Regent was only waiting an opportunity to invest himself with absolute power. This opinion was eagerly adopted by the commercial class—consisting almost exclusively of native Portuguese—in the hope that the Cortes would reinvest them with their ancient trade privileges and monopolies, to the exclusion of foreigners, whom they considered as interlopers—the English especially, who, protected by a treaty of commerce, were fast undermining the former monopolists. Amidst these difficulties Don Pedro, though nominally Regent of Brazil, found himself, in reality, little more than Governor of Rio de Janeiro.

In July 1821, the Lisbon Cortes passed a decree, that thenceforth the Brazilian and Portuguese armies should form one body; the object being to ship the Brazilian troops to Portugal, and to send Portuguese troops to Brazil, thereby ensuring its subjection. The Regent was, moreover, ordered to return to Portugal.

These rash steps greatly irritated the native Brazilians, who saw in them a subversion of all their hopes of nationality. With scarcely less rashness, they issued proclamations declaring Brazil independent, with Don Pedro as Emperor; but he repudiated the act, and prepared to quit Brazil in obedience to orders.

The approaching departure of the Regent caused a general ferment, when a popular leader arose in the person of Jose Bonifacio de Andrada e Silva, vice-president of the provisional Junta at San Paulo. Sum-

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4 APPOINTED "PERPETUAL PROTECTOR."

moning his colleagues at midnight, they signed an address to the Regent—to the effect that his departure would be the signal for a declaration of independence—daring the Cortes at Lisbon to promulgate laws for the dismemberment of Brazil into insignificant provinces, possessing no common centre of union; above all, daring them to dispossess Don Pedro of the authority of Regent conferred by his august father. This address was conveyed to the Prince by Bonifacio himself, and was shortly afterwards followed by others of a similar nature from the Southern provinces, and from the municipality of Rio de Janeiro—all begging him to remain and avert the consequences of the late decrees of the Cortes. On more deliberate reflection Don Pedro consented, and was shortly afterwards invested with the title of "Perpetual Protector and Defender of Brazil."

Meanwhile the Cortes, confident in their own power, were enforcing their obnoxious decrees by the despatch of ships of war and troops to the Northern provinces. As the intention of this step was unmistakable, His Royal Highness the Protector promptly issued a manifesto, declaring the wish of Brazil to maintain an amicable union with Portugal, but at the same time calling on the Brazilians to secure their independence by force, if necessary. In furtherance of this determination, an attack was made by the Brazilian troops upon General Madeira, the Portuguese commandant at Bahia, but from want of proper military organization, it proved unsuccessful.

Despatches now arrived from Portugal, which cut

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off every hope of reconciliation, and on the 12th of October, Don Pedro was induced to accept the title of “Constitutional Emperor of Brazil,” with Bonifacio de Andrada as his Minister of the Interior, of Justice, and of Foreign Affairs.

The Southern provinces gave in their adhesion to the Emperor, but all the Northern provinces—including Bahia, Maranhão, and Pará—were still held by Portuguese troops; a numerous and well appointed squadron commanding the seaboard, and effectually preventing the despatch of Brazilian forces to those localities by water; whilst by land there were neither roads, nor other facilities of communication with the Northern patriots, who were thus isolated from effectual aid, could such have been rendered from Rio de Janeiro.

His Imperial Majesty saw that, without a fleet, the dismemberment of the Empire—as regarded the Northern provinces—was inevitable; and the energy of his minister Bonifacio in preparing a squadron, was as praiseworthy as had been the Emperor’s sagacity in determining upon its creation. A voluntary subscription was enthusiastically entered into; artisans flocked into the dockyard; the only ship of the line in the harbour required to be nearly rebuilt; but to man that and other available vessels with *native seamen* was impossible—the policy of the mother country having been to carry on even the coasting trade exclusively by Portuguese, who could not now be relied on by Brazil, in the approaching contest with their own countrymen.

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6 EFFORTS TO OBTAIN FOREIGN OFFICERS AND SEAMEN.

Orders were consequently sent to the Brazilian *chargé d'affaires* in London, to engage officers and seamen there; and to stimulate these, a decree was, on the 11th of December, 1822, issued by His Imperial Majesty, to sequestrate Portuguese property throughout the Empire, and also another, *that all prizes taken in the war should become the property of the captors*, which decrees must be borne in mind.

His Imperial Majesty, having ascertained that the War of Independence in the Pacific had been brought to a successful conclusion by the squadron under my command, ordered his minister, Bonifacio, to communicate with me, through the Brazilian Consul at Buenos Ayres; judging that, from the termination of hostilities in the Pacific, I might be at liberty to organize a naval force in Brazil, which—if properly conducted—might successfully cope with the Portuguese fleet protecting the Northern harbours of the Empire.

Accordingly, whilst residing on my estate at Quintera, in Chili, I received from Antonio Manuel Correa, the Brazilian Consul at Buenos Ayres, a letter on the part of His Imperial Majesty, inviting me to accept service under the Brazilian flag, guaranteeing moreover rank and position in no way inferior to that which I then held under the Republic of Chili; the Consul exhorting me, in addition, “to throw myself upon the munificence of the Emperor, and the undoubted probity of His Majesty’s Government, which would do me justice.” The following is one of the letters of invitation:—

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THE NAVAL COMMAND OFFERED TO ME.

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*Le Conseiller Agent du Brésil, près le Gouvernement de Buenos Ayres
à l'Amiral Lord Cochrane, Commandant-en-Chef les forces
navales de la République du Chili.*

MILORD,

Le Brésil, puissance du premier ordre devint un nouvel empire, une nation indépendante sous le légitime héritier de la monarchie, Pierre le Grand, son auguste défenseur.

C'est par son ordre—c'est de sa part, et en vertu des dépêches ministérielles, que je viens de recevoir de Monseigneur Joseph Bonifacio de Andrada e Silva, Ministre de l'Intérieur et des Relations Extérieures du Brésil, en date du 13 Septembre dernier—que j'ai l'honneur de vous adresser cette note; en laquelle votre Grace est invitée, pour—et de part le Gouvernement du Brésil—à accepter le service de la nation Brésilienne; chez qui je suis dûment autorisé à vous assurer le rang et le grade nullement inférieur à celui que vous tenez de la République.

Abandonnez vous, Milord, à la reconnaissance Brésilienne; à la munificence du Prince; à la probité sans tache de l'actuel Gouvernement; on vous fera justice; on ne rabaissera d'un seul point la haute considération—Rang—grade—caractère—et avantages qui vous sont dûs.

(Signé) ANTONIO MANUEL CORREA DA CAMARA,
Consul de l'Empire du Brésil, à Buenos Ayres,
4 Novembre, 1822.

Annoyed by the ingratitude with which my services were requited in Chili, and disliking the inaction consequent on the capture of Valdivia, followed by the annihilation of the Spanish naval force at Callao, and elsewhere in the Pacific—whereby internal peace had been obtained for Chili, and independence for Peru—I felt gratified by the further terms of invitation, contained in a second letter—“Venez, milord, “ l'honneur vous invite—la gloire vous appelle.

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ACCEPTATION THEREOF.

“ Venez—donner à nos armes navales cet ordre
 “ merveilleux et discipline incomparable de puissante
 “ Albion ”—and on mature consideration returned
 the following reply :—

Valparaiso, Nov. 29, 1822.

SIR,

The war in the Pacific having been happily terminated by the total destruction of the Spanish naval force, I am, of course, free for the crusade of liberty in any other quarter of the globe.

I confess, however, that I had not hitherto directed my attention to the Brazils; considering that the struggle for the liberties of Greece—the most oppressed of modern states—afforded the fairest opportunity for enterprise and exertion.

I have to-day tendered my ultimate resignation to the Government of Chili, and am not at this moment aware that any material delay will be necessary, previous to my setting off, by way of Cape Horn, for Rio de Janeiro, calling at Buenos Ayres, where I hope to have the pleasure of meeting you, and where we may talk further on this subject; it being, in the meantime, understood that I hold myself free to decline—as well as entitled to accept—the offer which has, through you, been made to me by His Imperial Majesty. I only mention this from a desire to preserve a consistence of character, should the Government (which I by no means anticipate) differ so widely in its nature from those which I have been in the habit of supporting, as to render the proposed situation repugnant to my principles—and so justly expose me to suspicion, and render me unworthy the confidence of His Majesty and the nation.

(Signed) COCHRANE.

To DON ANTONIO MANUEL CORREA DA CAMARA,

His Brazilian Majesty's Consul at Buenos Ayres.

Having obtained the unqualified consent of the Chilian Government—there being now no enemy in the Pacific—I chartered a vessel for my own conveyance, and that of several valuable officers and

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ARRIVAL AT RIO DE JANEIRO.

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seamen who, preferring to serve under my command, desired to accompany me. Knowing that the Portuguese were making great efforts to re-establish their authority in Brazil, no time was lost in quitting Chili.

We reached Rio de Janeiro on the 13th of March, 1822, barely six months after the declaration of Independence. Despatching a letter to the Prime Minister Bonifacio de Andrada—reporting my arrival in conformity with the invitation which His Imperial Majesty had caused to be transmitted to me through his Consul-General at Buenos Ayres—I was honoured by the Imperial command to attend His Majesty at the house of his Minister, where a complimentary reception awaited me. The Emperor assured me that, so far as the ships themselves were concerned, the squadron was nearly ready for sea; but that good officers and seamen were wanting; adding, that, if I thought proper to take the command, he would give the requisite directions to his Minister of Marine.

On the following day, the Prime Minister—after a profusion of compliments on my professional reputation, and an entire concurrence with the invitation forwarded to me by the Consul at Buenos Ayres—which invitation he stated to have arisen from his own influence with the Emperor—desired me to communicate personally with him, upon all matters of importance, the Minister of Marine being merely appointed to transact subordinate business. As nothing more positive was said in relation to my appointment, it struck me that this also might be included

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10 VISIT OF INSPECTION TO THE SQUADRON.

amongst the subordinate duties of the Minister of Marine, to whose house I repaired; but he could say nothing on the subject, as nothing specific had been laid before him. Being desirous to come to a proper understanding, I wrote to the Prime Minister, that the officers who had accompanied me from Chili would expect the same rank, pay, and emoluments as they had there enjoyed; that, as regarded myself, I was prepared to accept the terms offered by His Imperial Majesty, through the Consul at Buenos Ayres, viz. the same position, pay, and emoluments as had been accorded to me by the Chilian Government; and that although I felt myself entitled to the customary remuneration in all well-regulated states for extraordinary, as well as ordinary, services, yet I was more anxious to learn the footing on which the naval service was to be put, than the nature of any stipulations regarding myself.

On the following day His Imperial Majesty invited me at an early hour to the palace, in order to accompany him on a visit to the ships of war, with some of which I was much pleased, as demonstrative of the exertions which must have been made within a short time to get them into such creditable condition. Great care had evidently been bestowed upon the *Pedro Primiero*, rated as a 74—though in the English service she would have been termed a 64. She was evidently a good sailer, and was ready for sea, with four months provisions on board, which scarcely half filled her hold, such was her capacity for stowage; I had therefore reason to be satisfied with my intended flag-ship.