

**- 20 -****From 1880 to 1884****710. THE MARQUESS OF SALISBURY, BRITISH SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS, TO SEÑOR JOSÉ DE ROJAS, VENEZUELAN MINISTER TO GREAT BRITAIN****[10 January 1880]***(Translation – Original: French)*

Foreign Office, January 10, 1880.

M. le Ministre,

With reference to my letters of the 2nd and 4th June last,\* I have the honour to state that Her Majesty's Government have had under their consideration your two letters of the 19th May,\*\* one relating to the boundary between Venezuela and British Guiana, the other to the claim put forward by Venezuela to the Island of Patos, which is held by Great Britain as a dependency of the Colony of Trinidad.

With regard to the first of these questions, I have the honour to state that Her Majesty's Government are of opinion that to argue the matter on the ground of strict right would involve so many intricate questions connected with the original discovery and settlement of the country, and subsequent conquests, cessions, and Treaties, that it would be very unlikely to lead to a satisfactory solution of the question: and Her Majesty's Government would therefore prefer the alternative course suggested by you, of endeavouring to come to an agreement with the Government of Venezuela as to the acceptance by the two Governments of a frontier of accommodation which shall satisfy the respective interests of the two countries.

The boundary which Her Majesty's Government claim, in virtue of ancient Treaties with the aboriginal tribes and of subsequent cessions from Holland, commences at a point at the mouth of the Orinoco, westward of Point Barima, proceeds thence in a southerly direction to the Imataca Mountains, the line of which it follows to the north-west, passing from them by the Highlands of Santa Maria just south of the town of Upata until it strikes a range of hills on the eastern bank of the Caroni River, following these southwards until it strikes the great backbone of the Guiana district, the Roraima Mountains of British Guiana, and thence, still southward, to the Pacaraima Mountains.

On the other hand, his Excellency General Guzman Blanco, President of Republic of Venezuela, in his Message to the National Congress of the 20th February, 1877, put forward a claim on' the part of Venezuela to the River Essequibo as the boundary to which the Republic was justly entitled, a boundary, I may observe, which would involve the surrender of a province now inhabited by 40,000 British subjects, and which has been in the uninterrupted possession of Holland and of Great Britain successively for two centuries.

The difference, therefore, between these two claims, M. le Ministre, is so great that it is clear that in order to arrive at a satisfactory arrangement, each party must be prepared to make very considerable concessions to the other; and, although the claim of Venezuela to the Essequibo River boundary could not, under any circumstances, be entertained, I beg leave to assure you that Her Majesty's Government are anxious to meet the Venezuelan Government in a spirit of conciliation, and would be willing, in the event of a renewal of negotiations for the general settlement of boundaries, to waive a portion of what they consider to be their strict rights, if Venezuela is really disposed to make corresponding concessions on her part.

Her Majesty's Government will therefore be glad to receive, and will undertake to consider in the most friendly spirit, any proposal that the Venezuelan Government may think fit to make for the establishment of a boundary satisfactory to both sides.

As regards the question to which your second letter relates, M. le Ministre, I have the honour to state that, in view of the fact that the Island of Patos has been held by Great Britain as a dependency of the Colony of Trinidad since 1797, and that the British title to it was not questioned by Venezuela until 1859, Her Majesty's Government consider that, apart from all other grounds, so long a term of undisputed possession confers upon Great Britain an indefeasible title to the island.

(Signed) SALISBURY

\* Referring to the Island of Patos.

\*\* One letter refers to the Island of Patos.

**711. SEÑOR JOSÉ DE ROJAS, VENEZUELAN MINISTER TO GREAT BRITAIN, TO THE MARQUESS OF SALISBURY, BRITISH SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

**[12 April 1880]**

*(Translation – Original: French)*

*Legation of the United States of Venezuela, Paris, April 12, 1880.*

My Lord,

I have given my Government information of the note which your Excellency did me the honour of addressing to me on the 10th January last relating principally to the limits between Venezuelan and British Guiana, and I have just received instructions for the arrangement of this long-standing affair by abandoning the ground of strict right which, as your Excellency anticipates in the aforesaid note, would make the discussion interminable, and concurring with Her Britannic Majesty's Government in the adoption for both countries of a frontier mutually convenient, and reconciling in the best possible manner their respective interests, each party having to make concessions to the other for the purpose of attaining such an important result.

I am therefore fully authorized, my Lord, to sign with your Excellency the treaty of Limits between the two Guianas, and I wish in consequence to know whether Her Britannic Majesty's

Government is disposed now, as it was in 1844, to accept the mouth of the River Moroco as the frontier at the coast. On the settlement of this starting-point I will come to London to carry on the negotiation with your Excellency or with the person whom your Excellency may please to indicate to me, and we will determine by common consent the general course of the frontier, neither blindly adhering to the demarcation indicated by Lord Aberdeen in 1844, nor to the modification subsequently proposed by my Government, but seeking by common consent a formula that may give us a frontier free for the future from all kinds of complication, sometimes by adopting limits supereminently defined (*"limites arcifinios"*) at others accepting a meridian over the mouths of the Moroco as the principal basis of the demarcation.

The foregoing observations will demonstrate to your Excellency that my Government is inspired with the same sentiments as that of Her Britannic Majesty, and wishes to terminate this question amicably for the sake of the best and most cordial relations with Her Britannic Majesty's Government.

I shall therefore be thankful if your Excellency will be pleased to honour me with a reply, and indicate to me the time when you would be able to receive me for the purpose of opening the verbal conferences on this important affair, and carrying them on until it shall be concluded to the satisfaction of both countries.

(Signed) J. M. DE ROJAS

**712. THE MARQUESS OF SALISBURY, BRITISH SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS, TO SEÑOR JOSÉ DE ROJAS, VENEZUELAN MINISTER TO GREAT BRITAIN**

[23 April 1880]

*(Translation – Original: French)*

*Foreign Office, April 23, 1880.*

M. le Ministre,

I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 12th instant upon the subject of the boundary between Venezuela and British Guiana, and also of your letter of the 14th ultimo relative to the claim of Venezuela to the Island of Patos.

In reply, I beg leave to state that the Attorney-General for the Colony of British Guiana is shortly expected in this country, and that Her Majesty's Government would prefer to postpone the discussion of these questions until the arrival of that officer.

(Signed) SALISBURY

**713. SEÑOR JOSÉ DE ROJAS, VENEZUELAN MINISTER TO GREAT BRITAIN, TO EARL GRANVILLE, BRITISH SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

[23 September 1880]

*(Translation – Original: French)*

*Legation of the United States of Venezuela,  
37, Rue de la Bienfaisance, Paris, September 23, 1880.*

My Lord,

Your Excellency's predecessor did me the honour of informing me on the 23rd April last that Her Britannic Majesty's Government was waiting for the arrival of the Attorney-General of British Guiana to London, where he was expected in a few days, to decide the question of the boundaries of the two Guianas, as well as the affair of the Island of Patos. As five months have now passed by, and your Excellency has not honoured me with a communication on these matters, I am bound to suppose that the said Attorney-General has not accomplished his voyage, and in that case it would be useless to wait for him any longer.

It appears to me appropriate to remind your Excellency that on the 24th March, 1877, your Excellency's predecessor, Lord Derby, announced to me that as the Governor of the British Colony was expected at that time, Her Majesty's Government then, too, preferred the postponement of these questions until the arrival of that officer, who, it seems, never came, for no fresh communication, announcing his arrival, was made to me as had been promised.

Consequently, it is best not to go on waiting either for the Governor or for the Attorney-General of the Colony, but to decide these questions ourselves, considering that my Government is now engaged in preparing the official map of the Republic and wishes, of course, to mark out the boundaries on the east.

In my despatch of the 12th April last I informed your Excellency that as the basis of a friendly demarcation my Government was disposed to accept the mouth of the River Moroco as the frontier on the coast. If Her Britannic Majesty's Government should accept this point of departure it would be very easy to determine the general course of the frontier, either by means of notes or in verbal conferences, as your Excellency might prefer.

With respect to the Island of Patos, I trust that my note of the 14th April last will have convinced your Excellency that it is necessary to submit that affair to arbitration, and with this idea I would ask your Excellency whether the nomination of the arbitrator may now be proceeded with.

(Signed) J. M. DE ROJAS

---

**714. SEÑOR JOSÉ DE ROJAS, VENEZUELAN MINISTER TO GREAT BRITAIN, TO  
THE FOREIGN OFFICE**

**[17 November 1880]**

*(Translation – Original: French)*

*Legation of the United States of Venezuela,  
37, Rue de la Bienfaisance, Paris, November 17, 1880.*

Dear Sir,

Owing to sore eyes I have been unable to go to London in the last two months, but I am very anxious to know if my communication addressed to his Excellency Lord Granville on the 23rd September ultimo, about the Guayana limits has been received by you, and if I will soon have an answer.

I would be very much pleased to arrive at a satisfactory end of this question, which is pending during sixty years already. Allow me to express the same desire about the little question of Patos, I know that you have been extremely busy on account of the Eastern question, but as things appear to be quiet at present, I do not doubt that you will have time enough to devote yourself to the New World.

I beg you to accept my best thanks for your acting in this sense . . .

(Signed) J. M. DE ROJAS

**715. FOREIGN OFFICE TO SEÑOR JOSÉ DE ROJAS, VENEZUELAN MINISTER TO GREAT BRITAIN**

**[29 November 1880]**

*Foreign Office, November 29, 1880.*

Dear Señor Rojas,

Lord Granville has been waiting for the arrival of the Attorney-General of British Guiana in this country before taking any steps upon your letter of the 23rd September last, but I am happy to inform you that Mr. Haynes Smith has now reached London, and is in communication with this Office and the Colonial Office upon the subject of the boundary between Venezuela and British Guiana, and that an official reply to your note will be sent to you at an early date.

Trusting that you are feeling better . . .

(Signed) JULIAN PAUNCEFOTE

**716. EARL GRANVILLE, BRITISH SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS, TO SEÑOR JOSÉ DE ROJAS, VENEZUELAN MINISTER TO GREAT BRITAIN**

**[12 February 1881]**

*(Translation – Original: French)*

*Foreign Office, February 12, 1881.*

M. le Ministre,

Her Majesty's Government have had under their consideration the desire expressed in your

letters of the 19th April and 23rd September last to reconsider the question of the boundary between British Guiana and Venezuela, and stating that your Government would be willing to accept the mouth of the River Moroco as the boundary on the coast.

I have now the honour to inform you that Her Majesty's Government are unable to accept the mouth of the Moroco as the boundary on the coast; they would nevertheless be ready to consider any conventional boundary which the Venezuelan Government may propose commencing at a more northerly point on the coast, and would be glad to be favoured with a general indication of their views, not only on that point, but also as to the general line of frontier which in their opinion might form a basis of negotiation.

(Signed) GRANVILLE

**717. SEÑOR JOSÉ DE ROJAS, VENEZUELAN MINISTER TO GREAT BRITAIN, TO EARL GRANVILLE, BRITISH SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

**[21 February 1881]**

*(Translation – Original: French)*

*Legation of the United States of Venezuela,  
Rue de la Bienfaisance, Paris, February 21, 1881.*

My Lord,

I have had the honour of receiving your Excellency's note of the 12th instant, relative to the very important question of limits between Venezuelan Guiana and English Guiana, a question which my Government has earnestly desired to see settled, and which has seriously engaged its attention for forty-one years past without arriving at any practical result.

Your Excellency will allow me to present to you in this note a brief statement of the case into which I am about to enter.

This affair can only be considered in two ways. Either a Treaty is to be concluded between the two countries fixing in a cordial and friendly manner a frontier of accommodation and mutual convenience, or the question has to be settled according to the principles of universal right, and in conformity with the titles which each party shall present, and in this latter case the frontier will be the consequence of the right which either of the parties shall establish.

In the event of the latter method being adopted, judging from the note which your Excellency was pleased to address to me on the 10th January, 1889, Her Britannic Majesty's Government claims the following frontier: a point of departure at the mouths of the Orinoco to the west of Barima Point, thence in a southerly line towards the Imataca Mountains, the line of which it will follow towards the north west passing by the high lands of Santa Maria, exactly to the south of the city of Upata, up to the hills which form the eastern bank of the River Caroni, proceeding thence to the south until it meets the Roraima Mountains of English Guiana and still more to the south until it stops at the Sierra de Pacaraima.

The Venezuelan Government maintains, in virtue of the vouchers, documents, and official maps which it possesses, and in virtue of all the evidence most incontestable in law, which it will

bring forward in turn, that its frontier between the two Guianas begins at the mouths of the River Essequibo, proceeds up the said river to its confluence with the Rivers Rupununi and Rewa on the extreme side of the Sierra de Pacaraima, and that consequently all the immense territory now occupied by Her Britannic Majesty's Government within those limits belongs to Venezuela.

It has been agreed between the two Governments that, in order to avoid delays in this serious affair, steps should be taken for the settlement of a frontier of accommodation that should satisfy the interests of both countries. In fulfilment of this promise I had the honour to propose to your Excellency the specification of the River Moroco as point of departure on the coast. That point once fixed, the rest of the frontier came to be but secondary.

When this question was under serious consideration in 1844, Lord Aberdeen proposed to my predecessor in London the following frontier: – As point of departure on the coast, the mouth of the River Moroco at the point where the Baraina River joins the Guiana, thence up the Baraina to the Aunama, ascending by this to the Acarabisi, then going down the latter to its confluence with the Cuyuni and this last river till it reaches the high lands of Mount Roraima, where the waters which flow into the Essequibo are divided from those which run into the River Branco. Thus thirty-seven years ago Her Britannic Majesty's Government spontaneously proposed the mouth of the Moroco as the limit on the coast, a limit which your Excellency does not accept now, for you are pleased to tell me so in the note which I have the honour of answering.

Animated by the desire of preserving without alteration the good understanding and cordial friendship which happily subsist between the two countries, the Venezuelan Government now proposes the following frontier as a means of conciliation and mutual convenience in order that this affair may be definitively arranged by means of a Treaty; and for the purpose of proving the sincerity of its feelings, my Government will accept the point of departure on the coast at a mile to the north of the mouth of the Moroco. A pillar to be fixed there to show the real limit between the two countries on the coast. A meridian of latitude [*sic*] to be drawn at that point westward to the point where this line crosses the longitude of 60 degrees from Greenwich, and thence the frontier will go on southward by the said meridian of longitude up to the confines of the two countries. The advantage of this demarcation is that it is precise and unalterable, and it is the maximum of all concessions which, in this matter, the Government of Venezuela can grant by way of a friendly arrangement.

If Her Britannic Majesty's Government should consider it inexpedient to accept the proposed demarcation, the two Governments would have no alternative but to determine the frontier according to strict right. And as, in case of such eventuality, the two Governments would not be able to arrive at a common agreement, for the vouchers presented by one would be rejected by the other, and each would endeavour to prove its adversary's injustice, there would be an absolute necessity for an agreement between the two countries to submit the decision of this serious affair to arbitration or to a tribunal that should lay down the definitive settlement. I have accordingly received instructions from my Government to urge upon that of Her Britannic Majesty the submission of the question to an Arbitrator chosen by both Parties, and to whose award both Governments are to submit. The same Arbitrator could decide whether the Island of Patos belongs to Venezuela or to Her Britannic Majesty's Government.

Considering the importance of this matter and the expediency for both countries that it should be definitively settled, I beg that your Excellency will favour me with a reply, as promptly as possible . . .

(Signed) J. M. DE ROJAS

**718. DECREE ISSUED BY THE PRESIDENT OF VENEZUELA  
[19 May 1881]**

*(Translation — Original: Spanish)*

Guzman Blanco, Illustrious American President of the United States of Venezuela:

By virtue of the powers conferred upon him by the Congress of Plenipotentiaries, which were ratified by the National Legislature on the 3rd June, 1880, and amplified on the 19th May, 1881,

Decrees:

Article 1. The introduction, sale and circulation of the small Atlas of Modern Geography drawn up under the direction of E. Cortambert, and edited by the Library of Hachette et Cie., is hereby prohibited within the territory of the Republic.

Article 2. All persons contravening this Decree shall be tried as traitors to their country, and shall be handed over to the ordinary Tribunals of the Republic.

Article 3. The Minister of Foreign Affairs shall communicate this Decree to all the Legations resident in Caracas, and shall provide for its publication within the territories of the Republic and abroad.

Article 4. The Ministers for Foreign Affairs and Public Instruction are intrusted with the execution of the present Decree. . .

(Signed) GUZMAN BLANCO

(Countersigned) LUIS DUARTE LEVEL,  
Minister *ad interim* for Foreign Affairs.  
N. LOPEZ COMACHO,  
Minister *ad interim* for Public Education.

**719. EARL GRANVILLE, BRITISH SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN  
AFFAIRS, TO SEÑOR JOSÉ DE ROJAS, VENEZUELAN MINISTER TO GREAT  
BRITAIN**

**[15 September 1881]**

*(Translation – Original: French)*

*Foreign Office, September 15, 1881.*

M. le Ministre

Her Majesty's Government have carefully considered the proposals contained in your letter of the 21st February last for the settlement of the question of the boundary limits between the Colony of British Guiana and Venezuela.

In reply, I have now the honour to state to you that they regret that they are unable to accept the line of demarcation indicated in that letter as a satisfactory solution of the question. They are, however, anxious to meet the views of the Venezuelan Government fairly, and with this object they are prepared to agree to the line suggested in the accompanying Memorandum, which will leave to Venezuela the complete control of the mouths of the Orinoco, whilst it will furnish a convenient boundary in the interior, conforming to the natural features of the country.

In proposing a line which makes so important a concession to Venezuela, Her Majesty's Government desire to explain that it must not in any way be understood as admitting that they have not a rightful claim to the line which extends to the mouth of the Orinoco, and that the proposal is only made from a sincere desire to bring to a conclusion a question which has too long remained unsettled to the detriment of the interests of both countries.

A map which has been drawn up after Schomburgk's originals is inclosed herewith, showing the exact position of the boundary proposed in the accompanying Memorandum; and I may observe that the whole of the line, except that portion which lies between the source of the Amacura and the sea coast, was surveyed by Schomburgk as far back as 1837.

In conclusion, I have the honour to state that Her Majesty's Government will be happy to confer with you personally should you think it desirable to communicate with them in that manner for the purpose of discussing the proposals contained in the Memorandum which accompanies this letter.

(Signed) GRANVILLE

\*

*Inclosure 1:*

#### **MEMORANDUM ON THE QUESTION OF BOUNDARIES BETWEEN BRITISH GUIANA AND VENEZUELA**

After careful consideration of the proposition made by the Venezuelan Minister for an adjustment of the boundary between British Guiana and Venezuela, Her Majesty's Government are of opinion that the line proposed by him could not be accepted without serious injury to British Guiana.

2. They consider that the following are some of the more prominent objections which exist to a division of the territory by such a line as that suggested by Señor de Rojas. The line proposed would sever from the Colony existing settlements, and would cut off lands which have for a long series of years been held by lawful title of Dutch or British origin recognized by the Government. The acceptance of the line proposed would also involve a surrender of a larger portion of territory, to which the claim of Great Britain is unassailable, than any which can be reasonably yielded, even for the purpose of bringing this long-pending question to a close.

3. Moreover, the line proposed by Señor de Rojas offers practical difficulties which appear to

Her Majesty's Government to be insuperable. The meridian of 60E longitude intersects, and would divide, the numerous rivers and creeks and the different watersheds in a manner that would cause lasting inconvenience to both countries. It would also, they believe, be found impracticable to keep such a boundary-line sufficiently marked or defined, and thus, in an acute form, would be perpetuated the evils now felt. The Colonial Government would be exposed to all the special difficulties which would in consequence be created, more particularly with respect to the tribes of aboriginal Indians, who have never recognized other than British authority.

4. Further, the line proposed by Señor de Rojas would place within Venezuelan territory the outlets of that inland water system which, commencing in the centre of the country of Essequibo, flows through a network of rivers and creeks to the sea, and enters the ocean by the Waini and Barima. It is by these channels that fugitives from justice are often enabled to baffle pursuit, and for the due administration of the law and repression of crime in British Guiana, it is essential that the Colonial Government should possess the control of these outlets.

5. As regards that portion of the territory which lies between the Moroco and the mouth of the Orinoco, Her Majesty's Government believe that no impartial person, after studying the records, can escape the conviction that the Barima was undoubtedly before, and at the time of the conclusion of the Treaty of Munster (1648), held by the Dutch, and that the right of Her Majesty's Government to the territory up to that point is in consequence unassailable.

6. But they view it as of such importance to the welfare and material advancement of the Colony of British Guiana that this long-pending boundary question should be speedily settled, that they think that if some of the rights of Great Britain can be waived without serious detriment to the Colony, it would be highly desirable to do so if thereby a settlement can be effected.

7. With this object in view, and in a spirit of conciliation, Her Majesty's Government have sought to suggest a boundary which, while it shall afford due protection to the interests of British Guiana, shall be such as to recognize the reasonable claims and requirements of Venezuela and avoid the occasion for subsequent disputes.

8. They are disposed, therefore, to submit the following as a line of boundary, which they consider will yield to Venezuela every reasonable requirement while securing the interests of British Guiana: –

The initial point to be fixed at a spot on the sea-shore 29 miles of longitude due east from the right bank of the River Barima, and to be carried thence south over the mountain or hill, called on Schomburgk's original map the Yarikita Hill, to the 8th parallel of north latitude, thence west along the same parallel of latitude until it cuts the boundary line proposed by Schomburgk, and laid down on the map before mentioned, thence to follow such boundary along its course to the Accarabisi, following the Accarabisi to its junction with the Cuyuni, thence along the left bank of the River Cuyuni to its source, and from thence in a south-easterly direction to the line as proposed by Schomburgk to the Essequibo and Corentyne.

9. This boundary will surrender to Venezuela what has been called the Dardanelles of the Orinoco. It will give to Venezuela the entire command of the mouth of that river, and it yields about one-half of the disputed territory, while it secures to British Guiana a well-defined natural boundary along almost its whole course, except for about the first 50 miles inland from the sea, where it is necessary to lay down an arbitrary boundary in order to secure to Venezuela the undisturbed possession of the mouths of the Orinoco; but even here advantage has been taken of well-defined natural land marks. The Barima, connected as before mentioned by its tributaries

with the centre of the country of Essequibo, is also connected with the Waini by a channel through which the tide flows and ebbs.

10. The line of boundary now proposed will fall a little to the north of the junction of this channel with the Barima, thus placing these outlets within British Guiana, and enabling the Colonial Government to exercise efficient control over these means of communication with the interior of the Colony. The high land referred to as Mount Yarikita is the top of the watershed between the Barima and the Amacura at that point, and is near the range of hillocks shown on Schomburgk's Map before mentioned. The line proposed does not encroach on any territory actually settled or occupied by Venezuela, and the difference between the line as proposed by Her Majesty's Government and that as proposed by Señor de Rojas is, as regards the portion of the territory most important to Venezuela, not very considerable, while anything short of this would fail to secure to British Guiana the command of the inlets and outlets of her internal water communication.

11. The internal boundary suggested is one that would be well understood by the aboriginal Indians and others. All would soon learn that the boundary-line ran along the Cuyuni from its source to its junction with the Accarabisi, and from that point along the Accarabisi to its source, and from there along the high lands which stretch thence in a northerly direction towards the sea. A line so well marked would prevent many complications, and will commend itself, it is hoped, on that and the other grounds above stated to the acceptance of the Venezuelan Government.

\*

***Inclosure 2: Map showing the position of the boundary proposed in the preceding memorandum.***

**720. SEÑOR JOSÉ DE ROJAS, VENEZUELAN MINISTER TO GREAT BRITAIN, TO EARL GRANVILLE, BRITISH SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS  
[1 October 1881]**

*(Translation – Original: French)*

*Venezuelan Legation, Paris, October 1, 1881.*

My Lord,

I have received the note which your Excellency did me the honour to address to me on the 15th ultimo, containing a proposal for the settlement of the boundaries between the two Guayanas, and inclosing two copies of the confidential memorandum relative to the said boundaries, and two maps showing the line proposed.

On the 23rd of the same month I forwarded to my Government a copy of your Excellency's note, with one of each of the Documents inclosed.

On receiving their instructions, I shall have the honour of communicating further with your Excellency on this subject.

Signed) J. M. DE ROJAS

**721. EARL GRANVILLE, BRITISH SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS, TO SEÑOR JOSÉ DE ROJAS, VENEZUELAN MINISTER TO GREAT BRITAIN**

**[18 March 1882]**

*(Translation – Original: French)*

*Foreign Office, March 18, 1882.*

M. le Ministre,

I have the honour to invite your attention to the concluding portion of your letter of the 1st October last, and I have to state to you that Her Majesty's Government will be glad to receive the reply of the Venezuelan Government to the proposals contained in the communication which I had the honour to address to you on the 15th September last, relative to the question of the boundary limits between the Colony of British Guiana and Venezuela.

(Signed) GRANVILLE

---

**722. SEÑOR JOSÉ DE ROJAS, VENEZUELAN MINISTER TO GREAT BRITAIN, TO EARL GRANVILLE, BRITISH SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

**[25 March 1882]**

*(Translation – Original: French)*

*Paris, March 25, 1882.*

My Lord,

I have received the note which your Excellency did me the honour of addressing to me on the 18th instant, and in which your Excellency reminds me of the last portion of my despatch of the 1st October last, and add Her Majesty's, Government would willingly receive an answer from my Government with regard to the propositions for settling the boundaries of the two Guianas contained in your Excellency's despatch of the 16th September last. In the interval I have forwarded to my Government the above-mentioned proposition, and the Ministry acknowledges the receipt of them, and informs me that in a very short time I shall receive instructions to enable me to treat with your Excellency. These I expect to receive (by every post) any day, and I wish very much that this negotiation of old standing may be brought to a conclusion by an authorized settlement through me.

(Signed) J. M. DE ROJAS

---

**723. EARL GRANVILLE, BRITISH SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS, TO SEÑOR JOSÉ DE ROJAS, VENEZUELAN MINISTER TO GREAT BRITAIN**

**[30 June 1882]**

*(Translation: Original: French)*

*Foreign Office, June 30, 1882.*

M. le Ministre,

In the letter which you did me the honour of addressing to me on the 25th March last you stated that you expected shortly to receive the instructions of your Government in regard to the proposals which were submitted to you in my letter of the 15th September last for the settlement of the boundary limits between British Guiana and Venezuela.

Having up to this time received new views of your Government as to the proposed boundary, I venture to recall the matter to your attention, and to express the hope that you will be enabled to furnish me at an early date with a reply to my communication of the 15th September.

(Signed) GRANVILLE

**724. MR. ARTHUR O'LEARY, BRITISH CHARGÉ D'AFFAIRES IN CARACAS, TO EARL GRANVILLE, BRITISH SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

**[9 July 1882]**

*Caracas, July 9, 1882.*

Mr Lord,

I have the honour to transmit herewith to your Lordship copy and translation of a Decree lately issued by the President of this Republic, and which has been communicated to the foreign Legations in Caracas by the Venezuelan Secretary for Foreign Affairs, "prohibiting the introduction, sale, and circulation within the territories of Venezuela, of a small Atlas of Modern Geography drawn up by M. E. Cortambert, and edited by MM. Hachette et Cie.," of Paris, the reason for this prohibition being I understand, that the frontier-line between the Colony of British Guiana and Venezuela is wrongly given in said map, according to the views of the Venezuelan Government on the subject.

(Signed) ARTHUR MALO O'LEARY

\*

***Inclosure: Decree issued by the President of Venezuela, 19 May 1881 [Document No. 718 above].***

**725. SEÑOR JOSÉ DE ROJAS, VENEZUELAN MINISTER TO GREAT BRITAIN, TO EARL GRANVILLE, BRITISH SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS**  
**[13 July 1882]**

*(Translation — Original: French)*

*Legation of the United States of Venezuela, Paris, July 13, 1882.*

My Lord,

I have received the note your Excellency was pleased to address to me on the 30th ultimo, and in reply I have the honour to state that I have as yet received no instructions from my Government respecting the proposals communicated to me in your Excellency's note of the 15th September, 1881, for settling the question of the frontier between Venezuela and British Guiana.

I did not fail to transmit those proposals to my Government, and by last mail I also transmitted to them copy of your Excellency's note to which I now have the honour to reply. So soon as I receive the instructions I shall hasten to reply to your Excellency.

(Signed) J. M. DE ROJAS

**726. SEÑOR JOSÉ DE ROJAS, VENEZUELAN MINISTER TO GREAT BRITAIN, TO EARL GRANVILLE, BRITISH SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS**  
**[28 August 1882]**

*(Translation — Original: French)*

*Legation of the United States of Venezuela, Paris, August 28, 1882.*

My Lord,

I have received a despatch dated the 4th instant, from my Government, instructing me to inform your Excellency that the proposal for settling the question of the frontier between the two Guyanas, made by your Excellency in September 1881, is still under consideration, and no decision has yet been arrived at as to it, because the subject, by reason of its gravity, demands much reflection; but the Government will not delay in making known its opinion on the matter.

(Signed) J. M. DE ROJAS

**727. EARL GRANVILLE, BRITISH SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS, TO COLONEL MANSFIELD, BRITISH MINISTER IN CARACAS,**  
**[1 February 1883]**

*Foreign Office, February 1, 1883.*

Sir,

With reference to my despatch of the 30th September, 1881,\* I have to state to you that I have not yet received a reply from the Venezuelan Government to the proposals contained in my letter of the 15th September of that year to Señor de Rojas, on the subject of the boundary between Venezuela and British Guiana, a copy of which was inclosed in my despatch to you above mentioned.

In reply to further communications which I have addressed to Señor de Rojas on the 18th March and on the 30th June of last year, I was informed by him on the 25th March and 28th August last that the question is still under the consideration of the Venezuelan Government, but that they would not delay to make known their views on the matter to Her Majesty's Government.

I have now to instruct you to call the attention of the Venezuelan Government to the long-continued delay which has occurred in these negotiations, and to press them to favour Her Majesty's Government at an early date with a statement of their views on this question.

(Signed) GRANVILLE

[Note: \* This refers to the copy of Granville's letter to de Rojas of September 15, 1881. See Document No. 719 above.]

**728. EARL GRANVILLE, BRITISH SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS, TO SEÑOR JOSÉ DE ROJAS, VENEZUELAN MINISTER TO GREAT BRITAIN**

[1 February 1883]

(Translation – Original: French)

*Foreign Office, February 1, 1883.*

M. le Ministre,

I have the honour to invite your attention to your note of the 28th August in which you informed me that your Government would not delay in making known to Her Majesty's Government its views upon the question of the boundary between Venezuela and British Guiana, and I beg leave to state to you that I shall be glad to receive the reply of your Government to the proposals contained in the communication which I had the honour to address to you on the 15th September, 1881, on the above subject.

(Signed) GRANVILLE

**729. SEÑOR JOSÉ DE ROJAS, VENEZUELAN MINISTER TO GREAT BRITAIN, TO EARL GRANVILLE, BRITISH SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

[7 February 1883]

*(Translation — Original: French)*

*Legation of the United States of Venezuela, Paris, February 7, 1883.*

My Lord,

I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your Lordship's communication of the 1st instant, in which you inform me that Her Majesty's Government would be glad to receive the answer of my Government to the propositions your Lordship made to them, through me, on the 15th September, 1881, on the subject of the frontier of Venezuela and British Guiana.

I hastened to send to my Government by the steamer which started for Venezuela on the 5th instant, a copy of your Lordship's letter, and begged for immediate instructions to enable me to present to your Lordship the desired answer. On their arrival I shall have the honour to communicate it forthwith to your Lordship.

(Signed) J. M. DE ROJAS

**730. COLONEL C. E. MANSFIELD, BRITISH MINISTER IN CARACAS, TO EARL GRANVILLE, BRITISH SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS  
[7 March 1883]**

*Caracas, March 7, 1883.*

My Lord,

In obedience to your Lordship's instructions contained in despatch of the 1st February of the current year, I have addressed a note to this Government pressing for an early reply to your Lordship's proposals concerning the boundary between British Guiana and this Republic.

(Signed) C. E. MANSFIELD

**731. SEÑOR JOSÉ DE ROJAS, VENEZUELAN MINISTER TO GREAT BRITAIN, TO EARL GRANVILLE, BRITISH SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS  
[28 March 1883]**

*(Translation — Original: French)*

*Venezuela Legation, Paris, March 28, 1883.*

My Lord,

The last mail brought me a despatch from my Government, dated the 28th February last, in which I am instructed to state to your Excellency that they are still considering the proposal

made by your Excellency in September 1881, for the delimitation of the Guiana boundary; that with regard to a subject of such importance, the decision of my Government cannot be communicated to me just yet. As soon as I receive it I shall have the honour to communicate it to your Excellency.

(Signed) J. M. DE ROJAS

---

**732. COLONEL C. E. MANSFIELD, BRITISH MINISTER IN CARACAS, TO EARL GRANVILLE, BRITISH SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS**  
**[9 April 1883]**

*Caracas, April 9, 1883.*

My Lord,

With reference to your Lordship's despatch of the 1st February, and that from hence of the 7th March, I have the honour to report that I have received a note from Señor Seijas, dated the 31st March, informing me that the Government of Venezuela, thoroughly appreciates the importance of the settlement of their boundary with British Guiana, and that instructions will be transmitted to Señor Rojas at an early date with the view of meeting the desire of Her Majesty's Government that the subject should be treated without delay..

(Signed) C. E. MANFIELD

---

**733. EARL GRANVILLE, BRITISH SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS, TO COLONEL C. E. MANSFIELD, BRITISH MINISTER IN CARACAS**  
**[May 1883]**

*Foreign Office, May 1883.*

Sir,

I transmit for your information, an extract of a despatch addressed by the Governor of British Guiana to Her Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for the Colonies, which inclosed a Petition to the Queen by the Court of Policy of the Colony, praying that steps may be taken to obtain a settlement of the long-pending question as to the line of boundary between British Guiana and Venezuela.

As you are aware, a line of demarcation to which Her Majesty's Government are prepared to agree was suggested to Señor de Rojas on the 15th September, 1881.

It was considered that the proposals then made would yield to Venezuela every reasonable requirement, while securing the interests of British Guiana, and that any further concession to Venezuela than is proposed in the Memorandum which was transmitted to you with my despatch of the 30th September, 1881, would have the effect of bringing the boundary line into inconvenient proximity to the settled districts of the Colony of British Guiana, and would tend to deprive

the Colonial Government of complete control over the water system of its territory.

Up to the present time no reply has been received from the Venezuelan Government to the proposals then made to them; but Señor de Rojas reported on the 28th March last that he had been instructed to state that his Government are still considering the proposals of Her Majesty's Government for the delimitation of the Guiana boundary, but that with regard to a subject of such importance their decision could not be communicated to him just yet.

I have now to repeat the instruction conveyed to you in my despatch of the 1st February last, and to request that you will again press the Venezuelan Government to furnish Señor de Rojas with the necessary instructions on this subject.

(Signed) GRANVILLE

**734. COLONEL C. E. MANSFIELD, BRITISH MINISTER IN CARACAS, TO EARL GRANVILLE, BRITISH SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

[2 July 1883]

*Caracas, July 2, 1883.*

My Lord,

While acknowledging the receipt of your Lordship's despatch of the 25th May, with inclosures, I beg to say that I have, in compliance with instructions therein transmitted, again addressed the Venezuelan Government, pressing for instructions to be furnished to Señor de Rojas concerning the boundary between the territory of this Republic and that of British Guiana.

(Signed) C. E. MANSFIELD

**735. EARL GRANVILLE, BRITISH SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS, TO COLONEL C. E. MANSFIELD, BRITISH MINISTER IN CARACAS**

[7 September 1883]

*Foreign Office, September 7, 1883.*

Sir,

I have to instruct you to invite the serious attention of the Venezuelan Government to the questions now pending between Great Britain and Venezuela, and to state that it is, in the opinion of Her Majesty's Government, desirable that an early settlement of them should be arrived at.

I had been for some time awaiting the arrival to London of Señor Rojas, in order to enter with him upon a discussion of the points at issue, but his recall has prevented my doing so; and I am desirous of knowing how soon his successor may be expected, and whether he will be furnished with such instructions as will enable him to take these matters in hand as soon as he arrives in Europe.

The questions to which I refer are –

1. The boundary between Venezuela and British Guiana.
2. The differential duties imposed on imports from British Colonies.
3. The claims of the British creditors of the Republic.

As a preliminary to entering upon negotiations, it is indispensable that an answer should be given to the proposals of Her Majesty's Government in regard to the boundary. Should that answer be in the affirmative, and should the other questions be satisfactorily settled, the wishes of the Venezuelan Government in regard to the cession of the Island of Patos will, as I have already informed you, receive favourable consideration.

With reference to the differential duties, Her Majesty's Government will be prepared to discuss in the most friendly spirit, but without pledging themselves beforehand to accept them, the proposals of the Venezuelan Government for the addition of Supplemental Articles to the Treaty now existing between the two countries.

The question of foreign claims on Venezuela has formed the subject of a recent communication from the United States' Government, and before replying to it, I should be glad to be informed of the view which the Venezuelan Government take of the recommendation that they should pay to France, over and above the stipulated *pro rata* payments, the sum of 720,000 fr.

You will say that Her Majesty's Government consider that the questions I have referred to should be dealt with as a whole, and that they attach great importance to a simultaneous settlement of them. . .

(Signed) GRANVILLE

**736. SEÑOR RAFAEL SEIJAS, VENEZUELAN MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS,  
TO COLONEL C. E. MANSFIELD, BRITISH MINISTER IN CARACAS  
[15 November 1883]**

*(Translation — Original: French)*

*Caracas, November 15, 1883.*

M. le Ministre,

I had the honour to receive the note, dated the 16th October last, in which your Excellency is good enough to explain the contents of the instructions lately transmitted by Lord Granville, Her Britannic Majesty's Minister of Foreign Affairs, to urge upon the Government of Venezuela the importance of a joint and speedy settlement of the questions pending between the two countries.

These questions are, in the opinion of the noble Lord, as follows: —

1. The boundary between Venezuela and British Guayana.
2. The differential duties upon imports from British Colonies into Venezuela.
3. The actual claims of British creditors against the Republic.

Your Excellency is good enough to add to the above, with the authorization of Lord Granville, the favourable views of Her Majesty's Government with regard to the Venezuelan claim to the island of Patos, should the above-mentioned questions arrive at a satisfactory solution, as is

indeed to be hoped.

His Excellency the President of the Republic highly appreciates the terms in which Lord Granville's instructions appear to be conceived, as well as the desire which they manifest that the subjects under consideration should receive a prompt and simultaneous solution; (he appreciates them) for the reason that they demonstrate the really friendly spirit and high-minded views entertained by Her Majesty's Government, and (that they) at the same time justify and confirm the conviction, of which his Excellency has never lost sight, that it is impossible, bearing in mind all their antecedents, that the generous demeanour of Great Britain towards Venezuela should cease to maintain that aspect which has hitherto prevailed.

With neither rights nor legitimate interests which could in any way be considered to wear an antagonistic character between the two countries, the time-honoured wisdom of the Cabinet of St. James' being borne in mind, the unremitting cordiality of the young Republic to worthily meet such favourable sentiments, and the reciprocated proofs of an especial deference (firmly) installed for all times (of our history), there can, at the present moment, exist no other prospect than that of the possibility of effecting a disappearance of every cause for discussion between the two Governments.

There is interposed but one obstacle, albeit of a secondary consideration, with regard to the *modus operandi*, and I am directed by his Excellency the President to point out the same for the consideration of Her Majesty's Government with the hope that it may be eliminated.

The difficulty mainly consists in the wish of the President of the Republic to possess the credit of having terminated with advantage, at once reciprocal and productive of results, all differences in the important relations between the Republic and Great Britain, before the 20th of next February, the date when his Excellency retires from the exercise of the executive power; entertaining, as he does, the absolute certainty of securing the approval of the Congress of the Republic for any arrangement to which his Excellency might have agreed.

This desire, which exactly corresponds with that to which Lord Granville gives expressions with urgency, would, however, be incompatible with the proposal to carry on the negotiations to Great Britain, even were his Excellency the President in a position at present to appoint a Minister accredited to Her Majesty by the Republic, in the (usual) manner in conformity with our laws; but, unfortunately, this is not the case when brought into relation with the Budget of the current financial year, nor could such an arrangement be carried into effect until next spring with the (consequent) arrangement of the new Budget.

The boundary question, the principal subject indeed recommended to our notice by Lord Granville, is precisely the subject which, during the last year, has delayed the course of negotiation on account of the hope entertained by the Government of being able to overcome by some means the grave impediment offered by the Constitution, or Fundamental Law, of the Republic to the concluding of Treaties relating to boundaries.

The Constitution in definite terms asserts its incapacity to accord to any power, however exalted, in the State the right of alienating or ceding in any case or manner either by exchange or indemnity the smallest portion of any territory assumed to constitute a part of the dominions of the Republic.

The illustrious American President of the Republic has during the past year been in consultation with the most eminent jurists and public men seeking for the means which might lend to a solution of the boundary question of Guayana by means of a Treaty; but all the documents and

talented persons (consulted) concur in affirming even more forcibly that the frontier legally inherited by the Republic with the former Dutch Colony, at present a British possession, is the River Essequibo, and thus has been rendered evident the impossibility of bringing this discussion to a conclusion by any other means than by the decision of an Arbitrator who, freely and unanimously chosen by the two Governments, would judge and pronounce a sentence of a definite character.

This is the obstacle which falls in the path of his Excellency the President with regard to satisfying as he would wish, with the best possible good-will, Lord Granville's desire to settle by means of a Treaty every point of discussion between the two Governments.

A sentence *juris* would impose an obligatory and happy solution to the boundary question, and in consequence, his Excellency the President desires me to seriously submit, for Lord Granville consideration, through your Excellency's worthy medium, the urgent necessity for the unanimous nomination of an Arbitrator in order that between the present time and next February the friendly views of both Governments may receive satisfaction, and this line of action would only depend upon Her Majesty's Government considering it inconvenient to instruct their Legation at Caracas to come to an understanding with the Government of Venezuela, without further delay, with regard to such an appointment.

The negotiation concerning the Additional Articles to the present Treaty, suggested by Venezuela, and so essentially necessary for the most complete (good) understanding for the future, as well as the difficulty arising out of the differential duties; that concerning the claims of the British creditors; and that referring to the Island of Patos might attain the desired solution during the time in which the Arbitrator should be drawing up his decision respecting the boundary, were Her Majesty's Government, taking into consideration the force of circumstances created by the limited term of the 20th day of February, to agree to carry out these negotiations in Caracas.

By this means his Excellency would have the satisfaction of attaining, before the 20th February, the object of his ambition, namely, of leaving settled every difference between the Republic and her time-honoured friend Great Britain.

This end would be efficiently achieved should Lord Granville consider it advisable to comprise, in the instructions to be transmitted to the British Legation in Caracas, all the points relating to the claims of British subjects against Venezuela, carrying out the Convention already proposed to Her Majesty's Government to convert the balance of the claims into a "Diplomatic Debt", represented by bonds bearing 3 percent interest; in reference to which it may on this occasion be opportune to bear in mind that Italy has, in the form of a Treaty, agreed to a similar mode of payment, the most usual at the present day, as well as the most advantageous both for the legitimate creditor and the honourable debtor.

Spain has accepted the arrangement (after) funding the property of her subjects, who are thoroughly well satisfied. Germany has affirmed, in agreement, that she accepts this settlement, should the same be accepted by the other creditors.

With regard to the request for information which Lord Granville has been pleased to prefer arising out of the recommendation by the United States of North America respecting the French claims, it has been submitted semi-officially to the French Government, which had declined to receive the quota assigned to them of the 13 percent assigned by law for the payment of diplomatic claims, that a ready-money payment should be made to them of 400,000 fr. to 500,000 fr. with the understanding that the balance of their claim, which, when finally settled, would proba-

bly not amount to a similar sum, should be paid off in bonds of the Diplomatic Debt, bearing 3 percent interest, or with the cash payment of 13,242 fr. a month instead of 11,637 fr., now the amount of their monthly quota.

I have thus carried out the orders of his Excellency the President with clearness, and with the exactness required by the insufficiency of time, limited as it is by the date of the 20th February, and which is invited by the earnestly expressed desire of Lord Granville, a desire which your Excellency has recommended to us with friendly emphasis; and the President continues to cherish the hope of obtaining the credit to which he aspires (namely), of leaving the Government of the Republic in the most friendly harmony and free from any point for discussion with the illustrious Government of Great Britain.

(Signed) RAFAEL SEIJAS

**737. COLONEL C. E. MANSFIELD, BRITISH MINISTER IN CARACAS, TO EARL GRANVILLE, BRITISH SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS**  
[22 November 1883]

*(Extract)*

*Caracas, November 22, 1883.*

I have the honour to transmit to your Lordship a copy and translation of the reply of the Venezuelan Government to my note embodying the views of that of Her Majesty upon the questions pending between Great Britain and Venezuela.

After several pages of preamble, couched in terms of courtesy, Señor Seijas states that for the moment his Government is not in a position to accredit a Minister to London, and proceeds to indicate the desire of the President to see some of the questions entirely settled, and the remainder in a fair way of receiving a solution, before the conclusion of his Presidential term, on the 20th February, while with this aim he would desire that all negotiations should be transferred to this Legation.

With regard to the boundary question, the Venezuelan Government suggests "arbitration" as the only solution, alleging the inability, within the limits of their Constitution, of any power, whether executive or legislative, to alienate by Act or Treaty territory which has been assumed to constitute an integral part of the dominions of the Republic.

\*

***Inclosure: Señor Rafael Seijas, Venezuelan Minister of Foreign Affairs, to Colonel C. E. Mansfield, British Minister in Caracas, 15 November 1883*** [Document No. 736 above].

**738. EARL GRANVILLE, BRITISH SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS, TO COLONEL C. E. MANSFIELD, BRITISH MINISTER IN CARACAS**

**[29 February 1884]**

*Foreign Office, February 29, 1884.*

Sir,

I referred to Her Majesty's Secretary of State for the Colonies the proposal made by the Venezuelan Government to Her Majesty's Government, and communicated in your despatch of the 22nd November last, that the question of the disputed boundary between British Guiana and Venezuela should be submitted to arbitration.

A reply has now been received, stating that the Earl of Derby observes, from your despatch above-referred to, that a new difficulty is introduced into this question the statement made to you by the Venezuelan Government that the Constitution of the Republic, which prohibits any cession of territory assumed to constitute a part of the dominions of the Republic, prevents the solution of the boundary question by means of a Treaty. His Lordship expresses the fear that if Her Majesty's Government consent to arbitration, the same provision of the Constitution may be invoked as an excuse for not abiding by the Award should it prove unfavourable to Venezuela. If, on the other hand, the arbitrator should decide in favour of the Venezuelan Government to the full extent of their claim, a large and important territory, which has for a long period been inhabited and occupied by Her Majesty's subjects, and treated as part of the Colony of British Guiana would be severed from the Queen's dominions.

For the above-mentioned reasons, therefore, the circumstances of the case do not appear to Her Majesty's Government to be such as to render arbitration applicable for a solution of the difficulty, and I have accordingly to request you, in making this known to the Venezuelan Government, to express to them the hope of Her Majesty's Government that some other means may be devised for bringing this long-standing matter to an issue satisfactory to both Powers.

(Signed) GRANVILLE

---

**739. COLONEL C. E. MANSFIELD, BRITISH MINISTER IN CARACAS, TO EARL GRANVILLE, BRITISH SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

**[29 March 1884]**

*Caracas, March 29, 1884.*

My Lord,

In compliance with your Lordship's instructions, conveyed in despatch dated the 29th February, I have informed the Venezuelan Government "that, in the opinion of Her Majesty's Government, the boundary between Venezuela and British Guiana should not be referred to arbitration, but trust, at the same time, that some other means may be devised for procuring a settlement of this long-pending question satisfactory to both Powers."

(Signed) C. E. MANSFIELD

---

**740. SEÑOR RAFAEL SEIJAS, VENEZUELAN MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS,  
TO COLONEL C. E. MANSFIELD, BRITISH MINISTER IN CARACAS  
[2 April 1884]**

*(Translation — Original: French)*

Caracas, April 2, 1884.

M. le Ministre,

I received your Excellency's communication, dated the 29th March, informing me that his Excellency Her Britannic Majesty's Minister for Foreign Affairs has instructed your Legation to communicate to the President of the Republic that Her Britannic Majesty's Government does not regard favourably the proposal of submitting to arbitration the question of boundaries between British and Venezuelan Guayana, but express the hope that some other means be devised for the termination of this long-standing question in a manner satisfactory to both Powers.

In the note which I addressed to your Excellency on the 15th November last I submitted the reasons which the President adopted as the basis for proposing "arbitration" in this case. The primary reason is that the Constitution of the Republic in Article 12 prohibits any alienation of territory, and as there exists a difference of opinion between the two parties with regard to the extent of their respective possessions, the sentence of an Arbitrator could alone decide whether the pretensions of this country are or are not well founded.

This Government also bore in mind that when treating precisely the same question, Lord Aberdeen, Her Britannic Majesty's Minister for Foreign Affairs, in a Conference held on the 29th July, 1843, repeatedly proposed arbitration to Dr. Fortique, Minister Plenipotentiary of Venezuela, as a solution of the difference.

This Government does not fail to recollect that, in consequence of arrangements agreed to at the Congress of Paris in 1856, through the initiative of the Plenipotentiary of Great Britain, Her Britannic Majesty's Legation at Caracas urged the Venezuelan Government to avail themselves of the good offices of a friendly power in order to prevent international disputes, which proposal was accepted with alacrity and satisfaction, under the understanding that it implied not only mediation, but also arbitration.

This Government also held the opinion that the mode of adjusting differences by arbitration, besides being the most appropriate for the decision of questions referring to boundaries, is daily acquiring favour in the eyes of the most polished and liberal countries.

Great Britain is not the country which occupied the least distinguished position in the struggle for progress.

The present Prime Minister of Great Britain on one occasion made the following remarks in the House of Commons:

"With regard to the proposal of submitting international differences to arbitration, I believe that in itself this proposal is a very great triumph; it is perhaps the first time that Representatives of the principal European nations have given an emphatic expression to sentiments which contain at least a limited disapprobation of the appeal to arms, and vindicate the su-

premacý of reason, justice, humanity, and religion.”

These words refer to the predominant spirit manifested in the above-mentioned Conference of Paris.

In 1873 the House of Commons approved, by 96 votes against 80, the motion of Mr. Richards to recommend that Her Majesty’s Government should instruct the Minister for Foreign Affairs to place himself in communication with other Powers in order to improve the present international law, and to establish a system of permanent and general arbitration between all nations.

It is asserted that Sir John Bowring introduced the principle of arbitration in Treaties negotiated by him with Belgium, Italy, Switzerland, Spain, Sweden and Norway, and Hanover.

I need not recall to mind the practical examples in which Great Britain has adopted arbitration as a solution for international differences, amongst others, boundary questions, for instance, in 1830 by the King of Holland, and in 1871 by the Emperor of Germany.

In conclusion, and on account of the recent date, I must make mention of the arbitration clause admitted into the Supplementary Protocol to the Treaty concluded between Great Britain and Italy on the 15th June, 1883, which met with the eulogium of the Association of International Arbitration existing in England, as set forth in an Address signed by five members of the Upper House, forty-five members of the House of Commons, by several Professors of Oxford, Cambridge, and London, besides numerous magistrates, merchants, and other well-known persons in the United Kingdom.

As, however, Her Britannic Majesty’s Cabinet entertains a different opinion upon the subject in question, his Excellency the President desires me to request you, without losing sight of the aspect of the case from the point of view entailed by the conditions of the Constitution of Venezuela, to have the goodness to think out and suggest any acceptable course for attaining the solution of this difficulty – a solution so ardently desired by the Republic.

(Signed) RAFAEL SEIJAS

**741. COLONEL C. E. MANSFIELD, BRITISH MINISTER IN CARACAS, TO SEÑOR RAFAEL SEIJAS, VENEZUELAN MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

[8 April 1884]

*(Translation – Original: French)*

Caracas, April 8, 1884.

M. le Ministre,

With reference to the last paragraph of your Excellency’s note of the 2nd of this month, inviting a suggestion for a solution of the question concerning the frontier between this Republic and British Guiana, a solution which must necessarily be in accordance with the provisions of the Venezuelan Constitution, I beg to say that I have been giving the subject my best consideration, examining, at the same time, the Article of the Constitution to which allusion is made by your Excellency.

It has occurred to me that it may be worthy the consideration of the President to weigh, whether a district about the sovereignty of which, since the earliest days of the Republic of Venezuela, there has existed a discussion with a foreign Power, is to be regarded as forming so integral a portion of the territory of the Republic as to preclude the possibility, within the limits of the Constitution, of a "rectification of frontier by Treaty"; I make use of the latter term with intention and advisedly; the question appears to me one essentially of rectification of frontier, for neither in the proposals of Lord Aberdeen, nor in those made by Lord Granville to Senor Rojas, does Her Majesty's Government suggest that the whole of the territory which, at one time, was assumed to be comprised in our possessions as inherited from the Dutch, should now be declared to be British territory.

As I understand the case, the original frontier by both proposals has receded in a sense in favour of Venezuela, and under the term "rectification of frontier by Treaty," the subject may therefore perhaps be considered by the President to come within the provisions of the Constitution.

When Lord Granville, two years since, forwarded to me copies and maps of his proposals to Señor Rojas, his Lordship intimated to me in the most distinct terms that all negotiations would be carried on to London; but, in making the above suggestions to your Excellency, I conceive that I am not departing from my instructions, inasmuch as I am not taking into consideration the question of the boundary, but merely the manner and form in which negotiations might take place, in harmony with the Constitution of Venezuela.

I shall esteem it a favour if your Excellency will submit the above to General Guzman Blanco at the earliest possible opportunity, and request his Excellency to give to my ideas his most attentive consideration.

No very immediate answer will be necessary; I shall forward a copy of this note to Lord Granville, and the new Venezuelan Plenipotentiary will be able to discuss the question with his Lordship, but at the same time I cannot but express my hope that my view of the subject, as a mere rectification of frontier to be arranged by Treaty, may appear to General Guzman Blanco to present an adequate solution to the question.

(Signed) C. E. MANSFIELD

---

**742. SEÑOR RAFAEL SEIJAS, VENEZUELAN MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS,  
TO COLONEL C. E. MANSFIELD, BRITISH MINISTER IN CARACAS**

[9 April 1884]

*(Translation – Original: French)*

*Caracas, April 9, 1884.*

M. le Ministre Resident,

I hastened to communicate to the illustrious American your Excellency's answer to the note in which I explained the reasons for the proposal made by Venezuela for the settlement of the dispute concerning the boundaries between the two countries, and in which, moreover, I re-

quested Her Majesty's Government to point out some other means for attaining the object in view, by some course compatible with the Constitution of the Republic.

After examining the question your Excellency invites the President, to give his consideration to the point, whether a district, concerning the sovereignty of which there has existed a discussion with a foreign Power since the earliest days of Venezuela, is to be regarded as so integral a part of the territory of the Republic as to preclude, within the limits of the Constitution, the possibility of a rectification of frontier by Treaty.

Your Excellency also observes that neither in the proposals of Lord Aberdeen nor in those of Lord Granville does the Government of Her Majesty suggest that the entire territory which, at one time, has been assumed to be comprised in the British possessions, as inherited from the Dutch, should now be declared British territory; and that, as your Excellency understands the case, in both the proposals the original frontier has receded in favour of Venezuela; and that under the term of "rectification of frontier by Treaty," it may perhaps be possible for the President to consider the subject as included in the provisions of the Constitution.

I proceed to state to your Excellency the opinion of the First Magistrate upon this subject.

All the Constitutions of Venezuela have established that the frontiers (of the Republic) be the same as those which corresponded in 1810 to the "Captaincy-General of Venezuela."

In those of 1830 and 1857 the Congress possessed the power to decree alienation, exchange, or acquisition of territory.

In that of 1858 it is laid down that no portion of territory can pass by alienation to the rule of another Power, but that this provision is not to serve as an obstacle to arrangements which shall have become indispensable for fixing the boundaries of the Republic with neighbouring nations, always with the condition that by such arrangements no inhabitant should lose his nationality.

Forming as it does a contrast with this last clause, there stands written in the Constitutions of 1864, 1874, and 1881 the following Article 13: "The States of the Federation of Venezuela are under the obligation . . . not to alienate to a foreign Power any portion of their territory, or to ask, or solicit, their assistance, or entertain political or diplomatic relations with other nations, for this last remains to the Federal Power."

Here then are prohibitions which refer to the States, whether in an individual or collective character, and these are (the prohibitions) concerning the territory and the extreme care for protection against (any) other Power. The other prohibition does not regard the States except in their individual character, for one of the objects of the Union is to delegate the sovereignty contained in the (political) entity which constitutes the whole.

Venezuela and Great Britain possess the same rights in the question under discussion. If the Republic should yield up any part of her pretensions; she would recognize the superior right of Great Britain, would violate the above-quoted Article of the Constitution, and draw down the censure of her fellow-citizens.

But when both nations, putting aside their independence (of action) in deference to peace and good friendship, create by mutual consent a Tribunal which may decide in the controversy, the same is able to pass sentence that one of the two parties, or both of them, have been mistaken in their opinions concerning the extent of their territory. Thus the case would not be in opposition to the Constitution of the Republic, there being no alienation of that which shall have been determined not to be her property.

Arbitration alone possesses that advantage among the means for settling international dis-

putes, above all when it has become palpable that an arrangement or transaction has become an impossibility for attaining the desired aim.

What is mentioned by your Excellency concerning Her Majesty's Government not aspiring now to what they originally believed to be the boundaries of Guayana, proves that there may be a colour of their modifying their opinion upon the particular point which is now being handled. But I beg leave to observe that the proposal of Lord Granville, for some unknown reason, is less favourable to Venezuela than that of Lord Aberdeen, since the latter spontaneously offered as the boundary the course of the River Moroco, while the former has traced a line more towards the north, coming out at a point on the coast 29 miles of longitude to the east of the right bank of the River Barima.

(Signed) RAFAEL SEIJAS

**743. COLONEL C. E. MANSFIELD, BRITISH MINISTER IN CARACAS, TO EARL GRANVILLE, BRITISH SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS**  
**[10 April 1884]**

*Caracas, April 10, 1884.*

My Lord,

I have the honour to forward to your Lordship a copy and translation of a note from the Venezuelan Government upon the subject of arbitration in the case of the boundary between the territory of this Republic and the Colony of British Guiana.

Señor Seijas engages, at some length, to prove that Her Majesty's Government, in principle and in practice, not infrequently admits the action of arbitration in cases of international differences, quoting words of the present Prime Minister in the House of Commons, stating that Lord Aberdeen offered arbitration to Venezuela in this very instance, citing Treaties negotiated by Sir John Bowring, and, lastly, our recent Treaty with Italy.

In conclusion, Señor Seijas informs me that, inasmuch as Her Majesty's Government does not consider arbitration to be applicable to the case in question, the President requests me "to think out and indicate" some course by which a solution may be attained in consonance with the provisions of the Venezuelan Constitution.

In reply, I have addressed a note to Señor Seijas, of which I transmit a copy, setting forth that if the matter be regarded as a mere "rectification of frontier by Treaty," the same may perhaps lie within the limits of their Constitution. My note is a short one, and your Lordship will grasp my idea after a moment's perusal.

I cannot forecast whether the Venezuelan Government will be disposed to accede to my solution; according to the tone of Señor Seijas' communication, they would appear to be desirous of a settlement of the difference. If such be the case, a bridge is now offered for passing over the obstacle presented by their Constitution – in any case, my suggestions in no way depart from the views of Her Majesty's Government. I merely indicate reasons for which the settlement may be regarded in the light of, and be termed, a "rectification of frontier by Treaty," and I venture to hope that any action in this matter may meet with your Lordship's approval.

(Signed) C. E. MANSFIELD

\*

***Inclosure 1: Señor Rafael Seijas, Venezuelan Minister of Foreign Affairs, to Colonel C. E. Mansfield, British Minister in Caracas, 2 April 1884*** [Document No. 741 above].

***Inclosure 2: Colonel C. E. Mansfield, British Minister in Caracas, to Señor Rafael Seijas, Venezuelan Minister of Foreign Affairs, 8 April 1884*** [Document No. 742 above].

**744. COLONEL C. E. MANSFIELD, BRITISH MINISTER IN CARACAS, TO EARL GRANVILLE, BRITISH SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS  
[18 April 1884]**

*(Extract)*

*Caracas, April 18, 1884.*

With reference to my despatch of the 10th instant, I have the honour to transmit to your Lordship a copy and translation of a note from Señor Seijas in answer to mine, in which his Excellency explains, at further length, the reason which, in compliance with the provisions of their Constitution, preclude the Venezuelan Government from settling the boundary question with British Guiana by any other means than arbitration.

I have replied to Señor Seijas that your Lordship may perhaps discuss the matter with the new Venezuelan Minister to London, but that I must abstain from further interchange of views, as I might be drifted into engaging in discussion and consideration of points concerning which negotiations will be carried on to London in the event of Venezuela being represented in that capital, and only in a contrary contingency in Caracas.

Were this Government really desirous to promote a settlement, the 118th Article of their Constitution permits reform or modification of the same by Congress, but, of course, it is not to be expected that they will alter their Constitution in order to effect what they would probably prefer leaving undone.

Since 1830 Venezuela has possessed six Constitutions, and many more will doubtless be adopted; the only hope, therefore, which remains is that some future Constitution may be conceived in a different sense upon this point, or that one of the former more favourable Constitutions will again come into operation.

\*

***Inclosure: Señor Rafael Seijas, Venezuelan Minister of Foreign Affairs, to Colonel C. E. Mansfield, British Minister in Caracas, 9 April 1884*** [Document No. 743 above].

**745. EARL GRANVILLE, BRITISH SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN**

**AFFAIRS, TO COLONEL C. E. MANSFIELD, BRITISH MINISTER IN CARACAS  
[19 June 1884]**

*Foreign Office, June 19, 1884.*

Sir,

I have had under my consideration, in communication with Her Majesty's Secretary of State for the Colonies, to whom they were referred, your despatches of the 10th and 18th April respectively, in regard to the Guiana boundary.

I have to state to you that Her Majesty's Government adhere to their objection to arbitration as the mode of dealing with this question, and you should continue to press the Venezuelan Government to devise some means of settling it by agreement.

(Signed) GRANVILLE

**746. COLONEL C. E. MANSFIELD, BRITISH MINISTER IN CARACAS, TO EARL  
GRANVILLE, BRITISH SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS  
[2 July 1884]**

*Caracas, July 2, 1884.*

My Lord,

I have the honour to forward to your Lordship a copy of the official journal of this Government\* containing a contract signed on the 21st May, together with a translation of the same, and approved by the President on the 14th June, between the Minister of Agriculture and Commerce and Herbert Gordon, an inhabitant of the Federal Territory of Yuruary.

By this contract is conceded to Herbert Gordon the privilege to settle, colonize, and organize a vast territory, extending in the north from the *Imataca* range of mountains to the range of *Paracaima* in the south, comprising the whole district of the *Cuyuni* River as well as other territory, the sovereignty of which is disputed between Great Britain and Venezuela.

The inclosed contract is of interest in relation to the boundary question between Venezuela and British Guiana, and as a matter of principle; but that any effective or serious execution of the same will take place I do not believe.

Every day contacts are being concluded between this Government and individuals or Companies which are never put in execution and lapse from non-fulfilment; to carry out the one under consideration would require capital or credit for obtaining the same which nobody possesses in this country, while it would appear equally impossible, as I am at present informed, for a Company to be set on foot for such an undertaking, which at best would offer a more than precarious prospect of profit as a commercial speculation.

That the contact with Herbert Gordon is not to be regarded in a serious light may be gathered from the provision that the whole matter lapses unless a genuine beginning of the work of colonization takes place before the end of sixteen months.

(Signed) C. E. MANSFIELD

[\* Not Printed]

---

**747: COLONEL C. E. MANSFIELD, BRITISH MINISTER IN CARACAS, TO EARL GRANVILLE, BRITISH SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS**  
**[26 July 1884]**

*(Extract)*

*Caracas, July 26, 1884.*

I have the honour to report to your Lordship that the Venezuelan Government has constituted a new "Federal Territory" under the name of the "Federal Territory of the Delta of the Orinoco", which according to the Decree is to be bounded on the east by British Guiana, actual frontier not specified.

A Governor and staff of officials have been appointed, and the site of the capital which is to be called Manoa, has been selected on the south-eastern most branch of the Orinoco, or perhaps more properly on the extreme right channel of the Delta.

---

**748. COLONEL C. E. MANSFIELD, BRITISH MINISTER IN CARACAS, TO EARL GRANVILLE, BRITISH SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS**  
**[6 August 1884]**

*Caracas, August 6, 1884.*

My Lord,

While doing myself the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your Lordship's despatch of the 19th June, I beg to say that, in compliance with the instructions therein contained, I have addressed a further note to this Government repeating that Her Majesty's Government adhere to their opinion that arbitration is not a suitable mode of dealing with the Guiana frontier, and urging upon them to devise some other solution to the question in the direction of agreement.

I shall, of course, also omit no occasion for pressing the subject in conversation.

(Signed) C. E. MANSFIELD

---

**749. EARL GRANVILLE, BRITISH SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS, TO COLONEL C. E. MANSFIELD, BRITISH MINISTER IN CARACAS**  
**[19 August 1884]**

*Foreign Office, August 19, 1884.*

Sir,

I have communicated to Her Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for the Colonies your despatch of the 2nd ultimo relating to a contract signed on the 21st May, whereby a concession has been granted by the Venezuelan Government to Herbert Gordon, an inhabitant of the Federal Territory of Yuruary, for the colonization of a large district, the sovereignty over which is claimed both by Her Majesty's Government and by that of Venezuela.

With reference to this matter, I have to request that you will find means to caution Mr. Gordon that his concession would not be of any validity in respect of any territory, proving to be English, which it may purport to cover.

You should also find an opportunity to convey an intimation to the same effect to the Government of Venezuela in order to guard against the possibility hereafter of the tacit acquiescence of Her Majesty's Government in the concession being advanced in support of thy claim of Venezuela to the district in dispute.

(Signed) GRANVILLE

**750. EARL GRANVILLE, BRITISH SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS, TO COLONEL C. E. MANSFIELD, BRITISH MINISTER IN CARACAS**

**[9 September 1884]**

*Foreign Office, September 9, 1884.*

Sir,

With reference to your despatch of the 26th July, I have to instruct you to convey to Mr. Fitzgerald\* a caution similar to that which you were requested in my despatch of the 19th ultimo to give to Mr. Gordon, namely, that the concession granted to him by the Venezuelan Government would not be of any validity in respect of any territory proving to be English which it may purport to cover.

You will be good enough also to inform the Venezuelan Government of the substance of your communication to Mr. Fitzgerald.

(Signed) GRANVILLE

[\* *The holder of the Manoa Concession*]

**751. COLONEL C. E. MANSFIELD, BRITISH MINISTER IN CARACAS, TO GENERAL AURENGUAL**

**[9 October 1884]**

*(Translation – Original: French)*

*Caracas, October 9, 1884.*

M. le Ministre,

Her Majesty's Government having learnt that Messrs. Gordon and Fitzgerald have respectively received concessions for the colonization of districts, the sovereignty of a portion of which is claimed both by Her Majesty's Government and that of Venezuela, I have been instructed to caution those gentlemen that the concession would not be of any validity in respect of any territory, proving to be English, which they may purport to cover.

Lord Granville also wishes me to convey an intimation to the same effect to the Government of Venezuela in order to guard against the possibility, hereafter, of the tacit acquiescence of Her Majesty's Government in the concessions being advanced in support of the claim of Venezuela to the districts in dispute.

I have the honour to request your Excellency to explain to the President of the Republic that the above intimation is not inspired in the smallest degree by a spirit of hostility, but simply to guard against a misunderstanding in any future discussion of the boundary, a question which your Excellency is well aware is one of long standing, and which Her Majesty's Government would gladly see brought to a satisfactory solution.

I shall ask your Excellency to acknowledge the receipt of this note, but any discussion of the subject therein treated would appear to me out of place at Caracas, as the Venezuelan Minister to London will, no doubt, be in communication with Her Majesty's Government upon the question of the boundary of British Guiana. . .

(Signed) C. E. MANSFIELD

**752. COLONEL C. E. MANSFIELD, BRITISH MINISTER IN CARACAS, TO EARL GRANVILLE, BRITISH SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS  
[9 October 1884]**

*Caracas, October 9, 1884.*

My Lord,

In obedience to your Lordship's instructions conveyed in despatches of the 19th August and of the 9th September, I have cautioned, Messrs. Gordon and Fitzgerald respecting their concessions for colonization in Eastern Venezuela, and as I understand that the latter has made over his concession to the "Manoa Company" in New York, I have also addressed a similar caution to Mr. Boorman, the President of the Company, sending the letters for the latter and Mr. Fitzgerald for delivery to Her Majesty's Consul-General in New York.

In compliance with your Lordship's wishes, I have also conveyed a similar intimation to the Venezuelan Government, of which I transmit a copy; I did not think it safe to trust the matter to a communication in conversation, which might afterwards be forgotten.

(Signed) C. E. MANSFIELD

\*

***Inclosure: Colonel C. E. Mansfield, British Minister in Caracas, to General Aurengual, 9 October 1884 [Document No. 751 above].***

**753. EARL GRANVILLE, BRITISH SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS, TO COLONEL C. E. MANSFIELD, BRITISH MINISTER IN CARACAS [25 October 1884]**

*Foreign Office, October 25, 1884.*

Sir,

The Venezuelan Minister called upon me this afternoon by appointment, and after a courteous expression of regret at bringing business before me at a moment when I must be much occupied and explaining that he was compelled by pressure of time to do so, said that there were three subjects upon which he desired to communicate with me.

They were the question of the boundary between Venezuela and British Guiana, the question of differential duties, and the English claims upon the Government of Venezuela.

Upon these two last subjects he made some observations, and agreed to discuss them in detail with Lord E. Fitzmaurice,

With regard to the boundary, General Blanco observed that according to the provisions of the Venezuelan Constitution, neither the Congress nor the Executive Government had the power to alienate any portion of Venezuelan territory. The Government, therefore, were unable to enter into any arrangement which would involve the cession of territory claimed as belonging to Venezuela. The only method of escaping from this difficulty was by recourse to arbitration, as the decision of the Arbiter on the proper frontier-line might be acted upon by the Venezuelan Government, who would not thereby be making any alienation of territory, but only accepting the definition thus given as to what the limits of the territory really are.

I told General Blanco that there seemed to me an obvious answer to this argument, but that I would refer to the previous correspondence and papers before entering into further discussion of the subject, which I should be ready to resume at an early opportunity.

(Signed) GRANVILLE

**754. MR. FRED GREENE TO MR. NICOLAS COX [12 November 1884]**

*Inspector's Office, Suddie, Essequibo, November 12, 1884.*

Sir,

I have the honour to lay before you the following information relative to the Venezuelan

boundary question.

On Friday, the 7th instant, a man by the name of Edward Theobald Fetherstone (who has been for some years resident in the district in dispute) came to me and reported that he had just arrived from Moorawaul, a branch creek leading from the Barini River to the Winie River. On his way here he visited a schooner lying at the mouth of the Barini River, which was just about to proceed to Bolivar, and was informed by the captain that it was his intention to take the notices that were put up by Mr. McTurk, at or about the mouth of the Amaracoura River, to Bolivar, and hand them over to the Government.

He further stated that the notices were taken down by the chief pilot, on board a schooner used as a lightship at the mouth of the Barini River, and handed to Captain Browlio for transmission to Bolivar.

My informant promised to come back and give me theof the schooner of which Browlio is the captain, also of the pilot who took the notices down, and I expect shortly I may be able to obtain some further information.

I am . . .

(Signed) FRED E. GREENE

**755. MR. NICHOLAS COX TO MR. F. VILLIERS**  
**[13 November 1884]**

November 13, 1884.

Sir,

I have the honour to forward to you, for the information of his Excellency the Governor, a letter from Mr. Acting Inspector Greene, relative to the notices posted by Mr. McTurk at the mouth of the Amaracoura River, having been taken down by the chief pilot of the lightship at the Barini River, and forwarded through a Captain Browlio to the Government at Bolivar.

I am . . .

(Signed) NICHOLAS COX

**756. MR. MICHAEL McTURK, SPECIAL MAGISTRATE OF BRITISH GUIANA, TO**  
**SEÑOR JOSÉ TOTASAN**  
**[22 November 1884]**

*Right Bank, Amacura River, British Guiana, November 22, 1884.*

Sir,

I have the honour to inform you that you are now within the boundaries of the Colony of British Guiana, and within the limit of my district, as one of the Special Magistrates and Superintendents of Crown Lands and Forests of that Colony, and consequently beyond your jurisdiction

as an officer of the Venezuelan Government. Any notifications that you may serve on the inhabitants will be of no effect, and all persons residing in or visiting this or any part of the Colony will have to conduct themselves in accordance with its laws.

I have, further, to call your attention to the notices affixed to trees in this river, and also in the Barima and Waini Rivers. These notices have been placed where they are by order of his Excellency the Governor.

(Signed) MICHAEL McTURK

**757. MR. MICHAEL McTURK, SPECIAL MAGISTRATE OF BRITISH GUIANA, TO MR. KELLY**

**[22 November 1884]**

*Right Bank, Amacura River, British Guiana, November 22, 1884.*

Sir,

It has been reported to me that the Manoa Company are about to erect a saw-mill at the mouth of the Barima River. Such report may be only an idle rumour, but, if true, I deem it my duty, as the officer now in charge of the Pomeroon River Judicial District, and which district extends to the limits of the Colony on its Venezuelan or western side, to notify you that the Barima is in the county of Essequibo and Colony of British Guiana, and forms part of the judicial district over which I exercise jurisdiction.

No Settlements of any kind, whether for the purpose of trade or any other purpose, can be made within the limits of the Colony, except in accordance with its existing laws, and those who may become resident therein will be required to obey them.

I would draw your attention to the notices posted on the trees in the Amacura, Barima, and Waini Rivers, one of which I am, told you have. I inclose written copy. These notices were placed where they now are by order of his Excellency the Governor.

(Signed) MICHAEL McTURK

**758. STATEMENT BY MR. MICHAEL McTURK, SPECIAL MAGISTRATE OF BRITISH GUIANA, AS TO THE MANOA COMPANY**

**[No date on document – but believed to have been written on 22 November 1884]**

On the evening of Tuesday last, 18th instant, while at anchor at the Barima mouth of the Mora Juana, four Portuguese came on board of my yacht, and one of them stated that on the day after I last passed through the Mora Juana in the steamer "Sproston Wood," one of them had been "hung up" by Robert Wells. On my asking why Wells had hung him up, he stated that Wells and others had been gathering the Indians together to take them up to "Manoa" to work for the Manoa Company, and that Indians being averse to going had run off in the forest, and Wells accused him of telling them to go. He described the hanging up thus: Two nooses were placed

around his ankles and the ropes drawn tightly together, and then water was thrown on the rope to make it draw still more closely: the rope was then thrown over a beam, and he hoisted up head downwards until the back of his neck just touched the ground. He was hung like this for one hour, and Wells' boatmen hung him up by Wells' order. The two other Portuguese confirmed this man's story, and Robert Wells himself acknowledged to me that he had hung the man up. An Indian came with a similar complaint with the exception that it was a Spaniard who hung him up. I heard of several other cases. On my asking the men who made these statements to do so in writing, and in the form of a charge, they refused to do so, stating that they would surely get double the punishment the moment my back was turned. I was told that the Indians who are now working at Manoa are almost starving; one of them told me the daily allowance for fifteen men was one cake of cassava bread and a salted fish, about four pounds in weight. The Indians are taken by force from their homes to work at Manoa; this is what they themselves told me, and many have gone deep into the forest at the head of the rivers to get away from the crimps of the Company.

(Signed) MICHAEL McTURK

**759. GOVERNOR OF BRITISH GUIANA, SIR HENRY IRVING, TO THE EARL OF DERBY, SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE COLONES**  
**[24 November 1884]**

*Government House, Georgetown, Demerara, November 24, 1884.*

My Lord,

In continuation of my despatch of the 25th ultimo, I have the honour to forward, for your Lordship's information, copies of a report which I have received from the Inspector-General of Police of the removal by Venezuelans of certain notices posted by Mr. J. P. McTurk at the mouth of the Amarcoura River.

2. I have instructed Mr. McTurk to revisit the district; and I shall duly communicate to your Lordship his report.

I am . . .

(Signed) HENRY T. IRVING

**760. MR. MICHAEL McTURK, SPECIAL MAGISTRATE OF BRITISH GUIANA, TO MR. F. H. VILLIERS**  
**[26 November 1884]**

*Georgetown, November 26, 1884.*

Sir,

I have the honour to report my return from the Amacura. I went there by way of the Waini

and Mora Juana Rivers, and arrived on Wednesday, 19th instant. On Friday morning one of the Venezuelan officials, a Magistrate from Coriapo, arrived in the Amacura. A short time after his arrival I saw him. He came on board of my yacht, and was introduced to me by Robert Wells as Señor Juan José Totasan, a Venezuelan Magistrate. Señor Totasan told me he was a Venezuelan Magistrate, a Juez Criminal, but was then acting for the Manoa Company, and under the orders of its resident manager, Mr. Kelly. He gave me the inclosed notification, map, and pamphlet, and showed me one of the Venezuelan official Gazettes containing the Articles of the Manoa Concession. He said he had come for the purpose of serving notices, similar to the one inclosed, to the residents on the Waini, Barima, Mora Guana and Amacura Rivers, and to fix them on the trees. I explained to him that no attention would be paid to any notifications he might serve to persons resident on the right bank of the Amacura, or in the Barima, or Mora Guana Rivers, and that I should destroy any notices I might see posted on the trees other than those posted by order of the Governor of British Guiana. He then left, and shortly after some Portuguese came to me to say that the Magistrate was going to seize his sloop and the goods he had in his house, because he would not take a licence from the Manoa Company (his sloop is licensed in this Colony). I desired him to bring his sloop near to mine, and, in the meantime, wrote a letter to Señor Totasan, of which I inclose a copy, and which letter I kept ready until he should cross the river from the Venezuelan side, where he was staying, to the British side, where the Portuguese resides. When he did cross to the Portuguese place I had the letter delivered to him personally by one of my boatmen, and he did not further interfere with the Portuguese.

During the course of conversation, Señor Totasan informed me that the Manoa Company were about to erect a saw-mill at the mouth of the Barima and that the machinery was on its way out from America; and that they were now erecting a saw-mill at Corosima.

I last saw Señor Totasan on Sunday morning, and then drew his attention to the Second Article in the Contract of the Concession wherein the boundaries of the concession are defined, and more especially to that part of it as underlined by me on page 15 of the accompanying pamphlet\*. I particularly pointed out to him that neither the Amacura, Barima, or Waini Rivers were mentioned, but that the words of the Contract were "to the limit of British Guiana." I also pointed out to him in the report of the Territorial Land Grant of the Grand Delta of the Orinoco for the Manoa Company (Limited), on page 26 of the same pamphlet, Mr. Fitzgerald's words as there underlined by me, that "about 10 miles to the south-west of Barima Point is the entrance to the Amacura River, which in 1800 formed the boundary between British Guiana and Venezuela." I told him I was not aware that the boundary had been altered since 1800, and asked if he was; he said he was not. He then told me he did not intend going any further, but would return to Mr. Kelly at "Manoa," the name of the town the Americans are now building at Corosima.

Finally, I gave Señor Totasan a letter to Mr. Kelly, a copy of which is inclosed, and I left the Amacura at midday on Sunday, 23rd, and arrived in Georgetown at 4 a.m. this morning.

(Signed) MICHAEL McTURK

[\* *Not included*]

**DERBY, SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE COLONIES**  
**[26 November 1884]**

*Government House, Georgetown, Demerara, November 26, 1884.*

My Lord,

In continuation of my despatch of the 25th October and 24th and 25th November, I have the honour to inclose the report by Mr. McTurk, Special Magistrate, of his second visit to the Amacura River district.

(Signed) HENRY T. IRVING

**762. GOVERNOR OF BRITISH GUIANA, SIR HENRY IRVING, TO THE EARL OF DERBY, SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE COLONIES**  
**[26 November 1884]**

*Government House, Georgetown, Demerara, November 26, 1884.*

My Lord,

With reference to my despatch of this day's date, I have the honour to inclose a copy of a written statement placed in my hands by Mr. McTurk in the supplement of his report of his second visit to the Barima and Amacura Rivers.

2. In view of your Lordship's telegram to me not to act without instructions as to the Manoa Company, I feel myself precluded from taking any action on Mr. McTurk's statement; but I need scarcely say that the state of things disclosed by it is one which calls for a prompt decision, and I venture to express the hope that I may receive your Lordship's instructions at an early date.

(Signed) HENRY T. IRVING

**763. EARL GRANVILLE, BRITISH SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS, TO COLONEL C. MANSFIELD, BRITISH MINISTER IN CARACAS**  
**[28 November 1884]**

*Foreign Office, November 28, 1884.*

Sir,

I have received your despatch of the 9th ultimo respecting the action you had taken with regard to the concessions made by the Venezuelan Government to Messrs. Gordon and Fitzgerald for the colonization of certain districts, the sovereignty over which is claimed by Her Majesty's Government and by that of Venezuela, and I have to express to you my approval of your proceedings.

I now transmit, for your information, a copy of a despatch, with its inclosures, from the Governor of British Guiana,\* reporting that notices were being served by an agent of the Manoa Company (Limited), which has acquired the cession vested in Mr. Fitzgerald, on the inhabitants of certain lands which are claimed as forming part of the Colony of British Guiana.

I have to instruct you to request the Venezuelan Government to take steps to prevent their Commissioners from asserting claims to, or interfering with, any of the territory claimed by Great Britain, and you will at the same time intimate to them, that should they decline to do this, the Governor of the Colony will be directed to prevent the encroachment of the Manoa Company and to maintain order by the employment of an adequate force of police. No steps, however, will be taken by the Governor of British Guiana pending the reference to the Venezuelan Government and I have, therefore, to request that you will give this matter your immediate attention.

(Signed) GRANVILLE

[\* *Not printed.*]

**764. MEMORANDUM COMMUNICATED BY GENERAL GUZMAN BLANCO, VENEZUELAN MINISTER TO THE UNITED KINGDOM, TO SIR J. PAUNCEFOTE**

**[No date on document – received at British Foreign Office on 13 December 1884]**

The British Government propose to that of Venezuela to settle simultaneously the question relating to boundaries, differential duties, and pecuniary claims.

As to the first question, the government of the Republic finds in its Constitution an insurmountable difficulty for bringing it to an end by any other way than arbitration. In fact, the States composing the Venezuelan Federation bind themselves therein not to alienate to any foreign Power any portion of their territory. Consequently, it is not possible for them to enter into Treaties by which the very bounds belonging in 1810 to the late Venezuelan Captain-Generalcy, declared by another Article in the above Constitution to be the bounds of the United States of the Venezuelan Federation, are not recognized. On that account arbitration was proposed, bearing in mind that the Award of a third Power would not imply any alienation of territory, but only a declaration of the actual rights of the parties. Her Britannic Majesty's cabinet did not deem such a proposal admissible. Venezuela proposes now, instead of arbitration by a friendly Power, the Judgment by a Court of Law, the members of which should be chosen by the parties respectively.

**765. COLONIAL OFFICE TO FOREIGN OFFICE**

**[17 December 1884]**

*Downing Street, December 17, 1884.*

Sir,

I am directed by the Earl of Derby to transmit to you, to be laid before Earl Granville, with reference to previous correspondence relating to the proceedings of the Manoa Company in terri-

tory claimed as belonging to the Colony of British Guiana, the accompanying copies of three despatches from the Governor of the Colony, inclosing reports from the Inspector-General of Police and the Stipendiary Magistrate having jurisdiction over the district in question, reporting further proceedings by Venezuelans and others connected with the Manoa Company.

Lord Derby proposed, with Earl Granville's concurrence, to direct the Governor by telegram to send Mr. McTurk, accompanied by a sufficient force of police, to the Amacura River, with instructions to hold an inquiry into the charge made against Robert Wells, and to deal with the case as he would with a similar charge brought before him from any other part of the district.

(Signed) EDWARD WINGFIELD

\*

***Inclosure 1: Governor of British Guiana, Sir Henry Irving, to the Earl of Derby, Secretary of State for the Colonies, 24 November 1884*** [Document No. 759 above]

***Inclosure 2: Mr. Nicholas Cox to Mr. F. H. Villiers, 13 November 1884*** [Document No. 755 above]

***Inclosure 3: Mr. Fred Greene to Mr. Nicholas Cox, 12 November 1884*** [Document No. 754 above].

***Inclosure 4: Governor of British Guiana, Sir Henry Irving, to the Earl of Derby, Secretary of State for the Colonies, 26 November 1884*** [Document No. 761 above].

***Inclosure 5: Mr. Michael McTurk, Special Magistrate of British Guiana, to Mr. F. H. Villiers, 26 November 1884*** [Document No. 760 above].

***Inclosure 6: Mr. Michael McTurk, Special Magistrate of British Guiana, to Señor José Totasan, 22 November 1884*** [Document No. 756 above].

***Inclosure 7: Mr. Michael McTurk, Special Magistrate of British Guiana, to Mr. Kelly, 22 November 1884*** [Document No. 757 above].

***Inclosure 8: Governor of British Guiana, Sir Henry Irving, to the Earl of Derby, Secretary of State for the Colonies, 26 November 1884*** [Document No. 762 above].

***Inclosure 9: Statement by Mr. Michael McTurk, Special Magistrate of British Guiana, as to the Manoa Company, 22 November 1884*** [Document No. 758 above].

---

**766. EARL GRANVILLE, BRITISH SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS, TO GENERAL GUZMAN BLANCO, VENEZUELAN MINISTER TO GREAT BRITAIN**

**[24 December 1884]**

*(Translation – Original: French)*

*Foreign Office, December 24, 1884.*

M. le Ministre,

In the course of the conversation which I had with you at this office on the 25th October last upon the subject of the settlement of the Venezuelan boundary question, you observed that, according to the provisions of the Venezuelan Constitution, neither the Congress nor the Executive Government had the power to alienate any portion of Venezuelan territory, and that therefore the Government of the Republic were unable to enter into any arrangement which would involve the cession of territory claimed as belonging to Venezuela.

I have now the honour to point out to you that the object of the proposals made to the Venezuelan Government by that of Her Majesty for the settlement of this question was to define the proper limits between Venezuela and the Colony of British Guiana, and not to obtain cession of any part of Venezuelan territory.

(Signed) GRANVILLE

---

**767. EARL GRANVILLE, BRITISH SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS, TO COLONEL C. MANSFIELD, BRITISH MINISTER IN CARACAS  
[30 December 1884]**

*Foreign Office, December 30, 1884.*

Sir,

With reference to my despatch of the 25th ultimo, I transmit to you, for your information, the accompanying copy of a letter from the Colonial Office, containing further correspondence in regard to the proceedings of the Manoa Company;\* and I have to request you to communicate its substance to the Venezuelan Government.

(Signed) GRANVILLE

[\* *Document No. 765 above*]

---

**768. GENERAL GUZMAN BLANCO, VENEZUELAN MINISTER TO GREAT BRITAIN, TO EARL GRANVILLE, BRITISH SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

*(Translation – Original: French)*

194, *Queen's Gate, London, December 30, 1884.*

My Lord,

I have made myself acquainted with the contents of your Lordship's note of the 24th instant.

In this note you refer to a remark made by me at the interview of the 25th October, as to the means of arriving at a solution of the pending boundary question, and you point out that the object of the proposals made by Her Majesty's Government to that of Venezuela for the settlement of the question was to define the proper limits of the Republic and the Colony of British Guiana, and not to obtain the cession of any portion of Venezuelan territory.

At that interview I merely touched on the difficulty, as the discussion turned principally on other points.

At a subsequent interview with Sir J. Pauncefote I was more explicit, and also left with him a Memorandum stating my views.

I will now explain more fully.

Article 3 of our Constitution reads as follows: –

“The limits of the United States of the Venezuelan Federation are the same as those of the ancient Captaincy-General of Venezuela.”

By the Treaty of Peace and Recognition concluded between Venezuela and Spain on the 30th March, 1845, Her Catholic Majesty renounced in favour of the Republic the sovereignty, rights, and powers which pertained to it on the portion of America known under the old name of “Captaincy-General of Venezuela.”

Her Catholic Majesty further “recognized as a free sovereign and independent nation the Republic of Venezuela, composed of the provinces and territories set forth in its Constitution and other subsequent laws, to wit, Margarita, Guayana, Cumaná, Barcelona, Caracas, Carabola, Barquisimeto, Barinas, Apure, Mérida, Trujillo, Coro and Maracaibo, and all other territories or islands which may pertain to it.”

By Article 13 of our Constitution it is laid down as one of the bases of the Union, fourthly, “that the states bind themselves not to alienate to a foreign Power any portion of their territory.”

Taking then into consideration together the enactments quoted, it is easy to understand the difficulty experienced by Venezuela in consenting to a settlement of the boundary question by any other means than arbitration. The Republic understands that the boundary of the old Captaincy-General of Venezuela extended to the Essequibo, while Great Britain denies this.

Therefore to draw any other line round the Republic, for any reason whatever, would involve an alienation or cession of territory. Neither Great Britain nor Venezuela, both being interested parties, can decide the question with impartiality, but if it were submitted to a legal Tribunal, which should examine the rights of the two nations, such a Court would pronounce judgement in conformity with the merits of the proofs adduced, and either party would have to submit to the loss of any territory to which, according to the decision arrived at, it had no right, and to content itself with the territory declared to be its own, nor could the public opinion or the Federal Congress of my country be led to imagine that any cession of national territory had taken place, a cession absolutely and irrevocably forbidden by the Venezuelan Constitution.

In view of all the reasons explained, the Venezuelan Government proposed to that of Her Britannic Majesty the arbitration of a friendly Power; but as this proposal has not proved acceptable, I have been instructed to propose that the question be referred to a legal Tribunal composed

of persons chosen by the parties.

I communicated this proposal in a Memorandum which I placed in the hands of Sir J. Pauncefote, and which he told me would be submitted to Her Majesty's Secretary of State for the Colonies.

This matter is so important to Venezuela that one of the principal motives of my coming to England is to negotiate for the settlement of the question, urged by Venezuela since 1841.

I beg leave then to commend this last proposal to your Lordship's early attention, cherishing, as I do, the hope that the means of arriving at a speedy solution of the question have now been found, a solution ardently desired by the Republic.

(Signed) GUZMAN BLANCO

---

(C) Copyright 2001, by Odeen Ishmael