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## Paraguayan Isolation under Dr. Francia: A Re-evaluation

JOHN HOYT WILLIAMS\*

THE "ISOLATION" of Paraguay during the dictatorship of Doctor of Theology José Gaspar de Francia is one of the truisms of Latin American political history. In the years 1814 to 1840, while "El Supremo" held power, he is supposed to have sealed Paraguay off from all outside influences, making it a hermit state. The mere mention of the Dictator and his "American China" conjures up visions of bayonet-studded borders and scores of merchant ships rotting at the Asunción wharves. This traditional view, like many others, needs revision. Drawing upon the copious documentation in the archives of Argentina, Paraguay, Brazil and Spain, the author will briefly examine what contacts there were between Francia's Paraguay and the "outside."<sup>1</sup>

Isolation is one of the few constants of Paraguayan history. Geography has made Paraguay an isolated region far from the sea. To the west lies the almost impenetrable Chaco, described in the eighteenth century as hell for the white man but "Palestine for the savages."<sup>2</sup> Another impressive barrier is the Mato Grosso, north of Paraguay, which impeded intercourse with Brazil. To the east lay a vast wilderness, largely unpopulated save by nomadic tribes. Only in the south was there any significant contact between Paraguay and the "outside world," along the Paraguay-Paraná river system in the southwest and in Misiones to the southeast. The latter area was in violent contention until the great War of the Triple Alliance (1864-1870). The

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1. This article is based upon documentation consulted in the following archives: Archivo Nacional, Asunción, Paraguay (AN-A), Archivo General de la Nación, Buenos Aires, Argentina (AGN-BA), Archivo General de la Provincia, Corrientes, Argentina (AGP-C), Biblioteca Nacional, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (BN-RJ), and the Archivo Histórico Nacional, Madrid, Spain (AHN-M).

2. Martín Dobrizhoffer, S. J., *Historia de los Abipones* (2 vols. Resistencia, Argentina, 1967-1968), I, 221.

lack of any important economic asset helped make Paraguay a backwater of the Spanish Empire.

To the physical barriers must be added a racial factor. The few Spaniards who settled in Paraguay in the sixteenth century blended with the comely Guaraní, and the miniscule European biological element in Paraguayan society had almost disappeared by 1800. In that year, few could claim *limpieza de sangre*, and Guaraní, not Spanish, was the lingua franca. Paraguay early developed an awareness of its ethnic character, as distinct from the white, European society to the south in Buenos Aires.

This localism was strong enough that by 1810 it could be the basis of a nascent nationalism. Paraguayans did not defeat Manuel Belgrano's revolutionary army from the south out of love for the Spanish yoke, but rather from local pride and fear of further domination by the Port City. Similarly, the revolution of May, 1811, was no ideological surge in defense of "Natural Rights," but a simple *cuartelazo* aimed at preventing the entrance of a Portuguese army on Paraguayan soil.

In June, 1811, a revolutionary congress elected a five man ruling junta and immediately refused to recognize the leadership of the old viceregal capital, though it desired to maintain "harmony and good relations." One of the civilians on the Junta, Dr. José Gaspar de Francia, was the prime mover and spokesman for the separatist or nationalist movement in Paraguay. The Paraguayan government in the years 1811-1813 grew in belligerent nationalism in direct proportion to Francia's rising power within it.

Buenos Aires, unable to dominate Paraguay, was forced to settle for the meaningless treaty of October, 1811. This accord, in place of a defensive-offensive alliance desired by Buenos Aires, gave the Port limited rights to tax Paraguayan trade, and contained a vague clause asserting that both parties should come to one another's defense with whatever aid possible, "as circumstances permit."<sup>3</sup>

This nebulous agreement was the high point of *porteño*-Paraguayan relations for thirty years. Within months, both sides were accusing each other of violating the treaty. Paraguay refused to aid the Port in her struggles in the Banda Oriental, and Buenos Aires

3. See the author's unpublished dissertation, "Dr. Francia and the Creation of the Republic of Paraguay, 1810-1814" (University of Florida, 1969), chapters three and four. See also copy of the October 12 Treaty between Buenos Aires and Paraguay, with signatures, AN-A, Sección historia (SH), vol. 214, fol. 1 (a "folio" is a section of a volume), pp. 154-155, and Julio César Chaves, *Historia de las relaciones entre Buenos Aires y el Paraguay, 1810-1813* (Asunción, 1959), chap. 17.

refused to send arms to Paraguay, and then virtually taxed Paraguayan river commerce out of existence.<sup>4</sup>

The issue was finally settled by a Paraguayan congress which met in October, 1813, to decide the future course of relations with the Port and to create a new governing body. In quick succession, the congress blamed the Port for the worsening relations and declared the 1811 treaty void. It next announced that it would not send deputies to the coming congress of the Platine provinces. In the late afternoon of October 1, the congress created the independent Republic of Paraguay. To rule the new nation, two consuls were chosen, Dr. Francia and Colonel Fulgencio Yegros, whose ". . . first care will be the conservation, security and defense of the Republic. . . ."<sup>5</sup>

In an atmosphere of deteriorating relations with Buenos Aires, depredations by Artigas in Misiones and trouble with the Portuguese in the north, a new congress, meeting in the fall of 1814, chose Dr. Francia Supreme Dictator of the Republic for a period not to exceed five years. In 1816, another congress extended his mandate for life.

If Paraguay endured isolation during the "Franciata" beyond its habitual insularity, it was during the first years of Francia's rule, when international problems were most threatening. Francia faced increasing *Porteño* belligerence, harassment by Artigas in Misiones and his lieutenants in the *Litoral*, and armed clashes with the Portuguese on several frontiers. He saw his task as protecting his new nation. When his own rule was more secure and Artigas and the *Litoral* caudillos were under control, commercial and other contacts could resume.

The years 1813 to 1818 were marked by an absence of trade and diplomatic contact between Paraguay and her neighbors, even though Dr. Francia desired to exchange Paraguayan yerba mate and tobacco for the armaments necessary to guarantee national survival. To keep the constricted trade routes open, Francia was willing to grant large concessions to a young Scottish merchant, John Parish Robertson, hoping to drape Paraguayan trade in the British flag. In 1814, Robertson was asked to present Paraguayan trade goods before the House

4. Cecilio Báez, *Historia diplomática del Paraguay* (2 vols. Asunción, 1930-1931), I, 230-232, and Jesualdo, *Artigas: del vassalaje a la revolución* (Buenos Aires, 1961), pp. 262-263. See also Chaves, *Relaciones*, pp. 173-174.

5. Bando of the Paraguayan Junta, October 20, 1813, AN-A, SH, vol. 222, Fol. 3, pp. 14-17. See also the important note from Nicolás de Herrera to the Buenos Aires Junta concerning the 1813 Paraguayan Congress, n.d., AGN-BA, Room X, Cabinet 1, Shelf 9, Legajo 12 (X-1-912), and Efraim Cardozo, "La proclamación de la República del Paraguay en 1813," *Boletín de la Academia Nacional de la Historia* (Buenos Aires), 34 (1964), 771-783.

of Commons and to obtain a treaty of commerce between the two nations. When the plan fell through in 1815, Robertson was expelled from Paraguay.<sup>6</sup>

While trade with the south was coming to a halt, trade in the north was drying up as well. Since the 1760s there had been an informal trade, mostly in arms and munitions, between the Portuguese in the Mato Grosso and garrisons and towns of the Paraguayan north. Frequent hostilities could not stop the intercourse, which by 1815 had assumed considerable proportions.<sup>7</sup> Francia, despite his need for war materiel, began that year to seal the northern border. He did so because the Portuguese in the Mato Grosso continually sold aguardiente and arms to the hostile M'bayá Indians, who in turn raided Paraguay for the produce needed to buy yet more weapons and fire water. By 1815, the raids were getting out of hand, and Francia's closure of the frontier was to last until his death.<sup>8</sup> Thus Dr. Francia, despite his desire for trade, would not pay the price of political subjection to Buenos Aires or insult in the north.

### *The "New Trade:" Pilar*

Despite the trouble in the south, Paraguayan trade with Buenos Aires and its dependencies was never entirely extinguished—even in the "dead year" of 1818, the *Porteño* customs house recorded the arrival of several ships bearing Paraguayan yerba, tobacco, sweets, cigars and honey.<sup>9</sup> Apparently the Port allowed certain ships and cargo through the blockade when there was need. In 1819, many more ships passed downriver. From April to December at least 13 sailed between Paraguay and Buenos Aires with varied cargo.<sup>10</sup> In that year, a *porteño* vessel carried home from Paraguay 70 tons of yerba, 351 large bales of tobacco, 500 hides and some sweets, constituting a large cargo for the era.<sup>11</sup> The trade increased in 1820, and Para-

6. J. P. and W. P. Robertson, *Letters on Paraguay* (3 vols., London, 1838-1839), III, 255.

7. Dr. Francia to José Joaquín López, commandant of Pilar, July 5, 1815, BN-RJ, Coleção Rio Branco (CRB), Room 1, Cabinet 30, Shelf 24, leg. 19 (1-30,24,19), and R. Antonio Ramos, *La política del Brasil en el Paraguay bajo la dictadura del Dr. Francia* (Asunción, 1959), p. 24.

8. Ramos, *Política*, pp. 31-35.

9. Arrival of Argentine ship *Argentina* in Buenos Aires, July 17, 1818, AGN-BA, X-37-1-16, "Guías de Aduana . . . 1817-1818," p. 223. This ship carried a large cargo from Paraguay which was consigned to five *porteño* merchants.

10. For some incomplete records on trade in 1819, see AGN-BA, X-37-1-18, "Guías de Aduana . . . 1819," pp. 121, 122-123, 254, 302, 304, 308, 309, 353, 357, 368, 369, 383, 387.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 369.

guay eagerly imported grains, cloth, iron, beer, chocolate, wine and olive oil from Buenos Aires.<sup>12</sup>

The scattered and incomplete customs records in Buenos Aires tell only part of the story, and do not indicate the true scope of the Paraguayan export trade. It is important to examine the trade between Corrientes and the Port. Not only is that trade in the same articles produced and traded by Paraguay, but it is in such amounts that it is doubtful that underpopulated Corrientes, wracked by civil war and disorders, could have been more than a way station (as it later clearly was) between Paraguay and the Port.<sup>13</sup> Preliminary research indicates that large amounts of Paraguayan produce were traded to Corrientes and then re-exported to Buenos Aires. In any case, the direct evidence we now have shows that even in the troubled years before 1820, Paraguay and the Port were conducting some trade.

In 1820 Francisco Ramírez turned against Artigas and forced him to flee into Paraguay, and the trade suffered a pause when Ramírez demanded Artigas' extradition and threatened to invade Paraguay if necessary. The threatened invasion did not materialize, however, and Ramírez himself was swept away in the continuing disorders in the *Litoral*.

On New Year's day, 1822, what isolation there had been officially ended for Paraguay with the receipt of a letter from the new governor of Corrientes, Juan José Blanco. Noting the death of Ramírez and the resultant lessening of tension in the *Litoral*, Blanco offered the Paraguayans friendship, open trade, and cooperation.<sup>14</sup> Actual proof of these sentiments was soon forthcoming. On January 30 the commandant of Pilar, a small port between Asunción and the confluence of the Paraguay-Paraná rivers, wrote Francia that a Paraguayan ship had arrived with trade goods from "downstream." More important was the fact that "No one collected any duty in any port beyond a four peso anchorage . . ."<sup>15</sup>

This news marked the beginning of a very considerable commerce, larger perhaps than the better known trade at Ytapúa with Brazil, and notable for the badly needed weapons bought by Para-

12. For information for the year 1820, see AGN-BA, X-37-1-19, "Casilla principal de Resguardo . . . 1820," *passim*.

13. See Héctor José Tanzi, "Estudio sobre la población del Virreinato del Río de la Plata en 1790," *Revista de Indias*, 27: 107-108 (1967), 147-156. Tanzi gives the population of Corrientes as between 4,000 and 6,400 in 1790, while that of Paraguay was at least 100,000.

14. Blanco to Dr. Francia, Jan. 1, 1822, AN-A, SH, Vol. 431, Fol. 2, pp. 83-84.

15. Pedro Nolasco Torres, Commandant of Pilar, to Dr. Francia, Jan. 30, 1822, AN-A, SH, vol. 383 part two, fol. 1, pp. 574-575.

guay—cannon, rifles and munitions. The Asunción archives contain so rich a documentation on this trade—invoices, reports, tax information and pleas—that it is hard to understand why this discrepancy in the “isolation theory” has been so long ignored.<sup>16</sup>

Once in full course, the mechanics of the Pilar trade reflected the iron control of *El Supremo*, by whose permission and in whose interest it went on. All ships clearing Corrientes for Paraguay encountered at Curupaití, on the border, an escort which guided them to Pilar.<sup>17</sup> There the trade goods were checked and samples sent, along with invoices and price lists, to Dr. Francia for his personal perusal. Francia would then judge the suitability of the goods and decide if the prices were fair, at times arbitrarily lowering wholesale and retail rates.<sup>18</sup> The most common goods bought by the government were arms, munitions, and books and reviews from abroad. What most interested Paraguayan merchants were ponchos, coffee, oil, vinegar, wine, salt and iron. Paraguayan exports were largely confined to yerba, tobacco, hides and cotton.<sup>19</sup>

In February of 1822 a ship arrived at Pilar with a load of English rifles,<sup>20</sup> and in March an English merchant brought there a large trove of military supplies, including nine bronze cannons and eight mortars.<sup>21</sup> This important cargo proceeded to Paraguay directly from Buenos Aires and indicates how open were both river and commerce by this time.

While most of the trade was carried on by *porteño* vessels and merchants, Paraguayans were also at times licensed to conduct part of the Pilar trade, sailing south to Corrientes and even beyond.<sup>22</sup>

16. See “Correspondencia del Pueblo del Pilar de Ñeembucú,” AN-A, SH, vols. 393, 394, 383, part two, *passim*. Vol. 394 alone has 203 pages of detailed trade data for the years 1826-1832. AN-A, Sección Nueva Encuadernación (SNE), vol. 3410, is also largely composed of Pilar trade reports.

17. José Tomás Gill, commandant of Pilar, to Dr. Francia, Sept. 4, 1825, AN-A, SH, vol. 393, fol. 1, pp. 275-276.

18. See the *guías* and reports in AN-A-SH, vol. 394, *passim*.

19. *Ibid.*

20. Dr. Francia to Pedro Nolasco Torres at Pilar, Feb. 16, 1822, AN-A, SNE, vol. 3106 (no page no.).

21. Pedro Nolasco Torres to Dr. Francia from Pilar, March 17, 1822, AN-A, SH, vol. 383, part two, fol. 1, pp. 581-582.

22. Although Blas Garay, in his *Historia del Paraguay* (Madrid, 1896), p. 212, asserts that in 1829, Francia began granting permission for Paraguayans to trade directly with and in Corrientes, there are records in that city which show Paraguayans trading there much earlier, AGP-C, Correspondencia Oficial (CO), Expedientes Administrativos (EA), leg. 13 (1823), Manuel Antonio Corrales from Ensenada to Governor Blanco of Corrientes, January 21, 1823. See also José Tomás Gill from Pilar, to Dr. Francia, July 16, 1826, AN-A, SH, vol. 393, fol. 1, pp. 322-323. There are many more such documents attesting to the presence of Paraguayan merchants in Corrientes at an early date.

As the legitimate trade at Pilar grew, so did contraband commerce. In 1826 and 1827, the illicit trade seems to have reached its height, some Spaniards were embargoed from further trade there and several arrests were made. Possibly due to a hint of subversion, five smugglers were shot in the summer of 1826.<sup>23</sup> However, the illegal trade was too profitable to be totally squashed; in 1827, good yerba was selling for twice as much per *arroba* in Corrientes as in Asunción, only 100 miles north.<sup>24</sup>

Trade, legal and otherwise, boomed. On the single day of January 27, 1827, four vessels reached Pilar from Corrientes.<sup>25</sup> Eager Argentines were ready to swap arms of all sorts for Paraguayan produce. On August 8, 1827, three ships arrived from Buenos Aires with firearms, wine and tin, which were swiftly exchanged for yerba and tobacco. By then, there were a large number of *correntino* merchants in the small port.<sup>26</sup> A few weeks later, the commandant of Pilar reported the arrival of four more ships from downriver and that “. . . all those coming from Corrientes now want only yerba.”<sup>27</sup> The economic records of the Treasury in Asunción indicate the growing importance of the trade. On September 4, 1827, the state collected almost 29,000 pesos in duties on 99,500 pounds of yerba and 49,875 pounds of tobacco exported by four Paraguayan merchants.<sup>28</sup>

Even more illustrative of the volume of trade at Pilar were the fines levied against smugglers in 1827. In July, seven merchants were fined a total of 41,200 pesos for their illicit dealings.<sup>29</sup> This huge amount increased total government revenue by almost 50 percent. The episode also informs us that there was still a wealthy merchant community in Paraguay in 1827, mid-way through the *Franciata*.

While 1827 was perhaps the peak year of the trade, it continued

23. “Diary of Nicolás Descalsi,” AGN-BA, VII-17-6-1. Page nine of this diary, which records events between 1826 and 1831 while the writer was held against his will in Paraguay, is especially relevant. See also José Tomás Gill to Dr. Francia from Pilar, May 28, 1826, AN-A, SH, vol. 238, fol. 4, p. 4.

24. José Tomás Gill to Dr. Francia from Pilar, Feb. 20, 1827, noting the huge profits possible in the yerba trade, AN-A, SH, vol. 394, fol. 1, pp. 669-670.

25. José Tomás Gill to Dr. Francia from Pilar, Jan. 27, 1827, AN-A, SH, vol. 394, fol. 1, pp. 666-667.

26. José Tomás Bill to Dr. Francia from Pilar, Aug. 8, 1827, AN-A, SH, vol. 394, fol. 1, pp. 693-694.

27. José Tomás Gill to Dr. Francia from Pilar, Aug. 29, 1827, AN-A, SH, vol. 394, fol. 1, pp. 696-697.

28. For sample taxation figures, see AN-A, Sección Libros de Caja (SLC), vol. 27 (1827), *passim*.

29. Fines levied on smugglers at Pilar, August 24, 1827, AN-A, SLC, vol. 27 (1827), items 142-144, 236, and 241-243.



at a substantial rate throughout the remainder of Dr. Francia's rule. On October 20, 1831, four more merchant ships arrived at Pilar, bringing among other things "gazettes and the four volumes entitled *History of Napoleon . . .*" ordered personally by Francia.<sup>30</sup> In February, 1836, three shipments of Paraguayan produce reached Buenos Aires, marked as "yerba paraguaya," and "tobaco paraguayo" to differentiate them from other varieties which always commanded a lesser price.<sup>31</sup>

Paraguayan produce also reached Buenos Aires through Ytapúa and the Brazilian trade center at São Borja in Brazil Misiones.<sup>32</sup> As late as 1836 Paraguayan merchants, conducting their own ships and cargoes could be found in Buenos Aires.<sup>33</sup> Direct contact continued.

Occasionally, even Brazilian merchants reached Pilar, and after 1834, they were allowed free access to the port. In that year, Francia noted that "Paraguay will trade there with any entity which does not disturb Paraguayan commerce . . ." Any well-behaved merchants from non-hostile nations could trade at Pilar so long as it be in "things useful" to Paraguay.<sup>34</sup> By 1834, these were Francia's only qualifications on trade with his neighbors.

### *The "New Trade:" Ytapúa*

At this point it is worth examining the trade carried on with Brazil through the Paraguayan port of Ytapúa on the Paraná. This trade, which many have declared to have been the only genuine commerce permitted by Dr. Francia,<sup>35</sup> is better known because it was more formal, an outgrowth of Francia's one essay into serious diplomacy.<sup>36</sup>

The Ytapúa trade traversed bitterly contested Candelaria, or Misiones. This yerba-rich area had once been a source of great wealth

30. Miguel Castro, commandant of Pilar, to Dr. Francia, Oct. 20, 1831, AN-A, SH, vol. 394, fol. 1, p. 832.

31. See, for example, "Guías de Aduana . . . 1836," pp. 25, 31, 32, 44, AGN-BA, X-37-2-o.

32. *Ibid.*, *passim*.

33. *Ibid.*, p. 104.

34. Dr. Francia to the commandant of Ytapúa, Dec. 5, 1834, AN-A, SH, vol. 242, fol. 11, p. 172.

35. Johann Rudolph Rengger and Marcellin I. Longchamps, *The Reign of Doctor Joseph Gaspard Roderick de Francia in Paraguay* (London, 1827), p. 95. See also Francisco Wisner, *El Dictador del Paraguay: José Gaspar Francia* (Buenos Aires, 1957), p. 139.

36. For documentation on the Ytapúa trade, see "Correspondencia del Pueblo de Ytapúa," AN-A, SH, vols. 377 and 378, *passim*. For *guías* and *alcabala* data concerning this commerce, see AN-A, SNE, vols. 2930, 2943, 3110, and 3122, *passim*.

to the Jesuits who had administered it. After 1811, claimed by both Buenos Aires and Paraguay, it was alternately despoiled by Artigas, *Litoral* caudillos, Indians, bandits and expeditions from Brazil. By 1815 Dr. Francia backed down, evacuating Candelaria rather than risk a major military effort to hold it.<sup>37</sup> For several years, he sent only occasional patrols into the region.

Despite the hazards, by 1819 some Brazilian merchants were crossing Candelaria to trade at Ytapúa, as one can see from the frequent arrests of Brazilian contrabandistas there.<sup>38</sup> As the trade increased and Dr. Francia became aware of its potential value; he also realized the importance of Candelaria as a pathway between his country and Brazilian Misiones. If trade was to flourish at Ytapúa, control of Candelaria would be a precondition, and with the exile of Artigas and growing stability in the *Litoral*, such control became feasible. In 1821 Dr. Francia sent troops across the Paraná to establish a permanent fort and garrison at San Miguel. The next year more troops were sent and another fort was built at Tranquera de Loreto.<sup>39</sup> A large part of Candelaria was soon garrisoned or regularly patrolled.

As this process was occurring, a Brazilian envoy arrived in Asunción to discuss formal commercial relations. Pleased by this de facto recognition of Paraguayan sovereignty, Francia agreed to a one year trial period, but restricted the trade to Ytapúa.<sup>40</sup> In 1823, the commandant of Brazilian Misiones threw open that area to Paraguayan merchants. Dr. Francia, impressed by this reciprocity, allowed the trade with Brazil to grow and prosper, of course under strict controls.<sup>41</sup> Brazilian merchants were permitted at Ytapúa and in Candelaria, but not inland in Paraguay. Because of continuing Indian troubles in the north, which Francia blamed on the Brazilians, that border would remain sealed except to fugitives.<sup>42</sup>

In Rio de Janeiro interest in fomenting this trade grew as war clouds gathered in the Banda Oriental. Since Rio desired at least

37. Alejandro Audibert, *Los límites de la antigua provincia del Paraguay* (Buenos Aires, 1892), pp. 156-157. See also Juan Antonio Montiel from Santa Maria de Fe, to Dr. Francia, September 16, 1815, BN-RJ, CRB, 1-29, 23, 20. Not only was a Paraguayan force destroyed in Candelaria, but there was even some fear for the vital center of Ytapúa. See also Dr. Francia to the Asunción Cabildo, September 16, 1815, about the need to reinforce the southern frontier, BN-RJ, CRB, 1-29, 21, 35.

38. See inventories of several Portuguese contrabandists, May 1819, AN-A, Sección Propiedades y Testamentos (SPT), vol. 931, fol. 5, pp. 1-16.

39. Audibert, *Los límites*, p. 158.

40. Wister, *El Dictador*, pp. 118-119.

41. Ramos, *Política*, p. 50.

42. Dr. Francia to commandant of Fort San Carlos del Río Apa, April 8, 1824, AN-A, SH, vol. 237, fol. 8, pp. 16-17. See also Ramos, *Política*, pp. 38-39.

Paraguayan neutrality in the coming conflict, commercial and other agreements with Paraguay began to assume greater importance. As a result, on May 31, 1824, the court in Rio named Antonio Manuel Correa da Câmara "Counsel and Commercial Agent of the Empire to the Government of Paraguay." Though not made official until after Francia's death, this represented de facto recognition of Paraguay's independence by a major American power.<sup>43</sup> Correa was also given some powers to deal with the vexatious problems concerning the M'bayá. In this way, Brazil aimed to secure an official trade with Paraguay and perhaps block the rapprochement between Paraguay and Buenos Aires which might be expected to arise out of their increased contact at Pilar.<sup>44</sup>

Correa was sent to Paraguay to treat directly with the Dictator himself. Arriving in Asunción on August 25, 1825, he was the first diplomat to be received by the Paraguayan government since 1813.<sup>45</sup> The Brazilian made an excellent impression on Francia, agreeing that Paraguay should be officially recognized by Brazil and indemnified for the depredations in the north. Eager to please Dr. Francia, but totally lacking in authority, Correa indiscriminately promised to right many of the wrongs done Paraguay.<sup>46</sup> His failure to make good on his promises eventually wrecked the chances for close relations between the two countries.

Before leaving to return to Rio and gain the objectives he promised Francia, Correa unwisely told the Doctor that he would return as a fully accredited ambassador and that he would send a large load of weapons as a sign of his good faith.<sup>47</sup> As he left, he wrote a strange note to his own government extolling the virtues of Paraguay and claiming that "Brazil united in alliance with Paraguay and there is no one to fear . . ." He continued that in the temporary absence of a treaty, Francia's "word of honor is worth a thousand treaties."<sup>48</sup> In December, he left Asunción, delegating a Brazilian merchant to represent the Empire at Ytapúa in his absence.<sup>49</sup> During his short stay, the Cisplatine War had begun in the Banda Oriental; the United

43. Ramos, *Política*, pp. 78-81.

44. *Ibid.*, pp. 190-193 (instructions of Correa da Câmara).

45. *Ibid.*, pp. 82-84.

46. *Ibid.*, pp. 93-94.

47. *Ibid.*, p. 119.

48. R. Antonio Ramos, "Correa da Câmara en Asunción," *Universidad Nacional. Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas. Boletín* (Buenos Aires), 20 (1952), 62-64, and Ramos, *Política*, p. 111.

49. Correa da Câmara to Dr. Francia from Asunción, Sept. 11, 1825, BN-RJ, CRB, 1-29, 34, 21. See also Ramos, *Política*, pp. 123-126.

Provinces and Brazil were struggling for what would become the buffer state of Uruguay.

In Rio de Janeiro, Correa and his mission were lost in the war crisis and red tape. Not until April, 1826 was he confirmed as chargé d'affaires to the Republic of Paraguay (not ambassador as promised), and his powers and instructions were extremely vague, being mainly restricted to matters of commerce.<sup>50</sup> Only in November was it possible to begin his return journey to Paraguay. The arms he had promised the Dictator would never arrive, despite his efforts to procure them.

Disillusioned with the Brazilian, Dr. Francia gave orders that he not be admitted to Paraguay, and in September, 1827, when that hapless diplomat arrived unbidden at Ytapúa, he was told that he might not even write Francia to explain his position.<sup>51</sup> When news reached the Dictator of the treaty ending the Cisplatine War, he ordered Correa to leave Paraguayan territory. Not until June, 1829, however, did the Brazilian leave Ytapúa, now warning his government of an aggressive and dangerous Paraguay, which he predicted, would soon threaten Brazil.<sup>52</sup>

In the 1830s Brazil would make several attempts to reestablish relations with Paraguay, but all such feelers would be rebuffed,<sup>53</sup> even the mission that Correa undertook to Ytapúa in 1839 as agent for the revolutionaries of Rio Grande do Sul. He was again ignored and returned to his rebellion, which won no support from Dr. Francia.<sup>54</sup>

Despite diplomatic frustration, the Ytapúa trade thrived. Because individual merchants behaved inoffensively and dealt in "useful goods," Francia gave his blessing to the interchange.<sup>55</sup> Especially after 1825, the commerce grew to considerable proportions, and Paraguayan vessels took some Brazilian trade goods as well as yerba from Ytapúa along the Paraná to the Port.<sup>56</sup> The wholesale value of goods shipped overland from Ytapúa to the capital between May and October of 1832 was 21,000 pesos.<sup>57</sup> Sales tax receipts climbed steadily

50. Ramos, *Política*, pp. 129-130.

51. Ramos, "Correa da Cámara," p. 61.

52. Ramos, *Política*, pp. 162-163, 167, 168.

53. *Ibid.*, pp. 178, 41, 42.

54. *Ibid.*, pp. 180-187.

55. Norberto Ortellado, Comandante of Ytapúa, to Dr. Francia, March 8, 1823, BN-RJ, CRB, 1-29, 23, 28. This note deals with the first large expedition sent to secure Candelaria and protect the trade routes there.

56. E.g. "Guías de Aduana . . . 1836," AGN-BA, X-37-2-0.

57. List of trade goods and values of same shipped from Ytapúa to Asunción, 1832, AN-A, SNE, vol. 2943 (no page no.).

at Ytapúa, providing a growing portion of state revenues.<sup>58</sup> In 1840, the year of *El Supremo's* death, Ytapúa shipped almost 25,000 pesos in sales taxes to Asunción, a record income.<sup>59</sup> Fines paid by smugglers also became an important part of the state's revenue, as at Pilar. In 1838, 14 Paraguayans were mulcted 10,184 pesos, the assessed value of the goods smuggled.<sup>60</sup>

The trade at Ytapúa as at Pilar was hardly free. In addition to the controls put upon it by the Dictator, the export of hardwoods was early made a government monopoly, and the export of specie was allowed only in payment for arms and munitions. Taxes were variable in type and amount but tended to be very high, but so were demand and production. According to Correa, the double harvests of 1829 had been phenomenal, yielding some ten million pounds of yerba, half that amount of tobacco, and an immense quantity of cotton, hides and rice.<sup>61</sup>

An indication that not all the trade at Ytapúa was in "useful goods" or war materiel was the arrival there in February, 1837, of "513 little wooden dolls, painted in all colors for children's toys."<sup>62</sup> Even in Francia's Paraguay, not everything worked according to "Reason of State." Also on the human side of the commerce was the Dictator's admonition to his commandant at Ytapúa to ignore the loose women some of the Brazilian merchants brought with them, ". . . nor judge if the women brought by some are legitimate or concubine . . ."<sup>63</sup>

Most of the produce exchanged in the Ytapúa trade was drawn from the Yuti area, some 100 kilometers north of the port. This was especially true of tobacco, which is still a staple of the region. A large number of state *estancias* there also provided the beef and hides for much of the government's share of the trade.<sup>64</sup> Consequently,

58. Revenue statistics for alcabala taxes, AN-A, SLC, vol. 41 (1838), items 643, and *passim*.

59. Various fines levied against smugglers in Paraguay, 1840, AN-A, SLC, vol. 43 (1840), *passim*.

60. Various fines levied against smugglers in Paraguay, 1838, AN-A, SLC, vol. 41 (1838), items 310-324, 386, 491.

61. Cecilio Báez, *Ensayo sobre el Dr. Francia y la dictadura en Sudamérica* (Asunción, 1910), p. 93. See also Atilio García Mellid, *Proceso a los falsificadores de la historia del Paraguay* (2 vols., Buenos Aires, 1963), I, 214.

62. José Antonio Vázquez, *El Dr. Francia visto y oído por sus contemporáneos* (Asunción, 1961), pp. 742-743.

63. Dr. Francia to the commandant of Ytapúa, Nov. 2, 1831, AN-A, SH, vol. 241, fol. 7, pp. 42-43.

64. Commandant of Ytapúa to Dr. Francia, Jan. 2, 1840, AN-A, SH, vol. 378, fol. 1, p. 317. See also AN-A, SH, vol. 229, fol. 12, pp. 1-2, for a list (1818) of state *estancias*, and for a sample of Francia's views on free trade, see AN-A, SH, vol. 237, fol. 10, pp. 18-19.

the Yuti area was an active center of contraband and many harvests made their way to Ytapúa, as the records attest, "sin guía."<sup>65</sup>

When the commandant of Ytapúa warned Francia in 1831 that the United Provinces were selling part of Candelaria to some English investors for settlement, the Doctor denounced the plan and tightened his own control of the region. Fearing an attempt to cut Paraguay off from its Brazilian trade, Francia warned that the English should drop any such project and retire.<sup>66</sup> While the English colonization threat did not materialize, ever more frequent clashes with *Correntino* troops did take place, and in 1832 Francia reinforced the region, wiping out a *Correntino* settlement in Western Candelaria, declaring that "Paraguayan troops, as always, will move through their own Territory."<sup>67</sup> The Dictator was willing to run the risk of war to protect the Ytapúa trade and national honor. During the 1832 harvest, he wrote to one of his commanders in the area, ordering him to stop prattling about dying in defense of a now irrelevant liberty, and speak more of defending the property and lands belonging to Paraguay.<sup>68</sup> Citing the "peaceful" occupation of Paraguay for 30 years, he also noted that he was in the habit of sending expeditions as far as the Río Uruguay. Another Paraguayan garrison was established in Candelaria the same year.<sup>69</sup>

Despite various clashes and much tension in both Corrientes and Paraguay, no serious armed conflict resulted. Francia was careful not to push too far, and the *correntinos*, with little allegiance from the scant population of Candelaria, were wary of the consequences of interfering with merchants of the Empire of Brazil. The trade continued.

### *Captive Foreigners in Paraguay*

The presence of foreigners in Paraguay, and attitudes toward them, constitute another index of the "isolation" of the Francia years. Scholars have long been over-impressed by a few notorious examples, such as the kidnapping of French scientist Aimé Bompland and the

65. Fernando Yturburo, smuggler, to Dr. Francia, March 9, 1839, about his activities in the Yuti region, AN-A, SNE, vol. 2611 (no page no.).

66. Dr. Francia to the commandant at Ytapúa Dec. 22, 1831, AN-A, SH, vol. 241, fol. 7, pp. 59-60. See also Dr. Francia to commandant at Concepción, Aug. 18, 1832, AN-A, SNE, vol. 3412 (no page no.).

67. Dr. Francia to commandant at Ytapúa, n.d. (1832), AN-A, SH, vol. 241, fol. 12, p. 36.

68. Dr. Francia to commandant at Ytapúa, Sept. 13, 1832, AN-A, SH, vol. 241, fol. 12, p. 45.

69. *Ibid.*

two Swiss doctors, Rengger and Longchamps.<sup>70</sup> To these impressions must be added the vitriol poured upon Dr. Francia by the Robertson brothers, who, personally maltreated by the Dictator, drew entirely upon rumor for their account of what transpired in Paraguay after their own departure in 1815.<sup>71</sup>

In 1811, the Paraguayan revolutionary junta inherited a foreign community of perhaps 300 Europeans. As Paraguay moved towards independent nationhood, this undigested body became the object of growing suspicion, as elsewhere in Spanish America. While no pogrom was directed against them, a growing number of restrictions hampered their freedom. Beginning in 1814, all foreigners were forced to register and declare their wealth. Forced loans and extraordinary "defense taxes" were levied upon them,<sup>72</sup> and the civil service was entirely "nationalized." In addition to economic discrimination, Francia added a unique prohibition of the marriage of Europeans to any but Indians, "known mulattoes," or blacks.<sup>73</sup> At least as early as 1816, by the Doctor's order, even the priests officiating at such illegal ceremonies were arrested along with the principals.<sup>74</sup> Rigidly adhered to for the 26 years of Francia's rule, these laws completed the genetic revolution in Paraguay, breaking the separate and distinct European upper class and assuring almost complete intermixture. This was the true Paraguayan revolution.

Many Europeans were removed from commerce by fiat or by forced loans and fines, and when trade with the Port revived in 1822, there were few economically solvent enough to participate. In like manner, Francia reduced foreign influence in the Church, by decreeing in 1815 that there would be no further ecclesiastical subordination to the hierarchy in either Buenos Aires or Rome. Several Paraguayan and foreign clerics were expelled at this time.<sup>75</sup>

Another group of foreigners felt the Dictator's wrath. If Paraguay

70. Rengger and Longchamps, *The Reign of Francia*, and Juan F. Pérez-Acosta, *Francia y Bompland* (Buenos Aires, 1942).

71. J. P. and W. P. Robertson, *Francia's Reign of Terror* (2 vols., Philadelphia, 1839).

72. Bando of the Paraguayan Consules, Jan. 5, 1814, AN-A, SH, vol. 223, fol. 4, p. 3. See also cabildo records of Curuguaty, Jan. 17, 1815, AN-A, SH, vol. 222, fol. 7, p. 25.

73. Justo Pastor Benítez, *La vida solitaria del Dr. José Gaspar de Francia, Dictador del Paraguay* (Buenos Aires, 1937), p. 79, and Julio César Chaves, *El Supremo Dictador* (4th ed., Madrid, 1964) p. 169.

74. Miscellaneous court records of Villa Rica, Oct. 14, 1816, AN-A, SNE, vol. 750 (no page no.).

75. Alberto Nogues, *La iglesia en la época del Dr. Francia* (Asunción, 1960), pp. 17-18.

inherited a small European community in 1811, it also found a large number of people from Corrientes, Santa Fe and Entre Ríos within its borders. In the years 1820-1822, when Paraguay was threatened with invasion by *Litoral* chief Ramírez, Francia turned upon those of his compatriots resident in Paraguay as a potential 'fifth column.' Throughout Paraguay, scores were arrested. In the capital, 18 men from Santa Fe were thrown into a dungeon beneath a barracks, where they languished for more than 17 years, until the Dictator's death. We have the record of the survivors in the unique book, *Veinte años en un calabozo*.<sup>76</sup> The authors claim that when they were released, the Paraguayan jails held "606 prisoners, in the majority foreigners."<sup>77</sup>

Dr. Francia was concerned throughout his rule with the large community of *correntinos* in Paraguay, who were found mostly in the vital border areas, at Curupaití, Villeta, Pilar and Ytapúa. By 1820, he began taking active steps to reduce this "danger," transporting groups from the border areas to the far north to be used as colonists on the dangerous frontier.<sup>78</sup> Far from being imprisoned, the exiles were provided with land, livestock, seeds and tools.<sup>79</sup>

In 1822, the migration increased as large numbers of *correntinos* made the trek north, accompanied by scores of *Orientales* who had followed their leader Artigas into exile.<sup>80</sup> While few Paraguayans would voluntarily settle north of the capital, hundreds of "foreigners" were forced to do so. This migration continued during the whole of the Franciata. In the Summer of 1832, fourteen more "*correntino* prisoners" were sent north, Francia ordering his officials to distribute them some distance inland from the Río Paraguay among some local inhabitants who were to keep an eye on them.<sup>81</sup> In October, 1836, another larger party made their way to the Concepción area, indi-

76. Ramón Gil Navarro, *Veinte años en un calabozo; o sea la desgraciada historia de veinte y tantos argentinos muertos o envejecidos en los calabozos del Paraguay* (Rosario, Argentina, 1903), *passim*.

77. *Ibid.*, p. 24.

78. Dr. Francia to the commandant at Concepción, Jan. 20, 1820, AN-A, SH, vol. 232, fol. 3, p. 1.

79. Dr. Francia to commandant at Concepción, April 13, 1820, AN-A, SH, vol. 232, fol. 3, pp. 2-3.

80. Dr. Francia to commandant at Concepción, Jan. 20, 1822, about a new group of *correntinos* heading north, AN-A, SH, vol. 235, fol. 12, p. 5. See also Dr. Francia to commandant at Concepción, Jan. 11, 1822, about sending Artigueños north, AN-A, SH, vol. 235, fol. 11, p. 4, and Dr. Francia to commandant at Concepción, Feb. 15, 1828, BN-RJ, CRB, 1-30, 24, 45.

81. Dr. Francia to commandant at Concepción, Aug. 18, 1832, AN-A, SNE, vol. 3412 (no page no.).



cating that the problem of the "foreign" minority was a continuing one.<sup>82</sup>

The most infamous case of Dr. Francia's xenophobia is that of the kidnapping of Aimé Bompland, famous French scientist and friend of Alexander von Humboldt. With the permission of the governor of Entre Ríos, Bompland entered Candelaria to study yerba culture and methods of increasing its production.<sup>83</sup> Though warned to be discreet, Bompland brought for protection the notorious mestizo bandit chief Nicolás Aripí and his band.

After attempting, with no success, to gain Francia's permission to enter Candelaria, Bompland settled there anyway in late 1821, and began cultivating yerba. Even as the scientist was establishing his base, Francia was writing his commandant at Ytapúa about the "dangerous" Frenchman and his hated protector Aripí. He issued exact instructions on how to end this threat to Paraguayan sovereignty.<sup>84</sup> In December of that year Paraguayan cavalry crashed into Bompland's camp, killing many of the workers there and abducted the scientist.<sup>85</sup>

For ten years Bompland was held in Paraguay despite the requests, supplications and threats of several governments seeking his release. Dr. Francia would rather be branded an international criminal than allow a foreign government to grant permission for other foreigners to trespass on Paraguayan soil. His claim to Candelaria must be defended if it was to be respected.<sup>86</sup>

In February, 1831, Bompland was unexpectedly released from Paraguay by order of *El Supremo*. A few weeks later, from São Borja, where he would voluntarily remain for the rest of his life, he wrote that he had passed a reasonably happy life during the nine years

82. Dr. Francia to commandant at Concepción, Oct. 27, 1836, AN-A, SNE, vol. 3412 (no page no.).

83. Ricardo López Jordan from Paraná to Amado Bompland, Sept. 11, 1821, AN-A, SH, vol. 399, fol. 2, p. 8. See also AGPC, CO, EA, Leg. 10 (1821), for a letter from Juan José Blanco, governor of Corrientes, to commandant Evaristo Carriego of Misiones, Sept. 9, 1821, and Manuel Balcarce from Buenos Aires to Amado Bompland, Sept. 25, 1820, AN-A, SH, vol. 430, fol. 1, p. 238. Balcarce, of the *porteño* government, tenders a passport to Bompland so that he may travel to Misiones. See also Pérez Acosta, *Francia y Bompland*, p. 13.

84. Dr. Francia to Norberto Ortellado, commandant at Ytupúa, Nov. 23, 1821, AN-A, SH, vol. 235, fol. 2, pp. 22-25.

85. Pérez Acosta, *Francia y Bompland*, p. 14, gives the date as December 8, 1823, some two years after the date on the documentation.

86. See Efraím Cardozo, "La política del aislamiento durante la dictadura del Dr. Francia," *Revista de Derecho y Ciencias Sociales* (Asunción), V, No. 17 (July, 1931), pp. 59-90.

of his detention in Paraguay, though deprived of all contact with his family or compatriots.<sup>87</sup>

Aimé Bompland was merely the most famous European to endure Dr. Francia's enforced hospitality. The Swiss medical doctors Rengger and Longchamps were likewise held for many years against their will, and have left us an interesting account of their stay.<sup>88</sup> Various other Europeans were held in Paraguay, especially in the early years of the *Franciata*. Many of these were released due to the good offices and epistolary bribery of Britain's chargé d'affaires in Buenos Aires, Sir Woodbine Parish. That gentleman, one of the few to ever change Francia's mind, wrote the Dictator in 1824, asking for the release of the "various Brittanic Subjects . . . unable to leave said Country."<sup>89</sup> Skillfully he dangled the twin lures of trade and recognition. The implication was that in order to begin the work of "recognition and friendship," the little matter of the British subjects in Paraguay would have to be settled.

Francia answered in January of 1825 that his treatment of foreigners was conditioned by Paraguay's involuntary diplomatic isolation. If the British would act to obtain free navigation, he would accept a resident British "Consul of Commerce" in Asunción and treat foreigners more appropriately. He soon released the British subjects, but Parish did nothing to increase contact between his country and Paraguay. To have done so might have been to jeopardize relations with the more important United Provinces, in which Britain had substantial economic interests.<sup>90</sup>

Lest the world believe that Francia was relenting, in 1826 he detained the members of a scientific expedition, and kept them in Paraguay for five years. Led by a French citizen, Pablo Soria, the mission was charting the course of the Río Bermejo, and included an Englishman and a young Italian astronomer, Nicolás Descalsi, who has left us a fascinating diary of his enforced stay in the Concepción region.<sup>91</sup>

### *Welcomed Foreigners in Paraguay*

Perhaps more significant than the treatment of a small number of suspect foreigners is Dr. Francia's almost unknown but impressive

87. Pérez Acosta, *Francia y Bompland*, pp. 39-41.

88. Rengger and Longchamps, *The Reign of Francia*.

89. Sir Woodbine Parish from Buenos Aires to Dr. Francia, July 17, 1824, BN-RJ, CRB, 1-30, 7, 38.

90. Bernardino Villamayor (secretary to Dr. Francia) from Asunción, to Sir Woodbine Parish, Jan. 26, 1825, BN-RJ, CRB, 1-30, 7, 38.

91. Descalsi Diary (see note 23 above).

open-arms policy which affected many hundreds. Diplomatically, Paraguay was a world apart, but her borders were always open for those seeking asylum or refuge from civil strife. As early as 1813 this policy was operative, as the Paraguayan commander of Fort Borbón in the north refused to surrender a Portuguese deserter to a special envoy from Coimbra. The *derecho de asilo* was soon a Paraguayan hallmark.<sup>92</sup> By 1820 large numbers of people were taking advantage of it, fleeing to Paraguay from the strife-torn neighboring provinces. Certainly the most famous beneficiary was José Artigas, who crossed into Paraguay with some 200 of his men to escape death at the hands of Francisco Ramírez, his rebellious lieutenant. To everyone's surprise, Francia settled his old enemy on a small farm in the interior, with a sizable pension. Artigas remained in Paraguay even after the Dictator's death, eventually dying there himself of old age.<sup>93</sup>

Not only did Ramírez lose his chief prey to Dr. Francia, but one of his river warships defected to Paraguay, and no amount of threats or complaints could convince the Dictator to return either ship or crew to the caudillo.<sup>94</sup>

Refugees from both north and south continued to seek asylum in Paraguay and in 1824 Francia reiterated to his officials in the north that he expected them to aid and assist all Brazilian emigrés, even military deserters.<sup>95</sup> Brazilians also flowed in from the south, via the trade route through Candelaria. In 1837, Dr. Francia wrote his commandant at Ytapúa, stressing that "You have your orders to admit all the Brazilians who come for refuge, just as yesterday one passed with his family to this side."<sup>96</sup> In 1839, an entire company of Brazilian

92. Commandant at Concepción to Dr. Francia, July 5, 1831, AN-A, SH, vol. 394, fol. 1, p. 810. See also J. A. King, *Twenty-Four Years in the Argentine Republic* (London, 1846), pp. 244-245, and commandant at Pilar to Dr. Francia, July 14, 1831, AN-A, SH, vol. 394, fol. 1, p. 811. Commandant of Fort Borbón to Paraguayan Junta, June 16, 1813, AN-A, SH, vol. 363, fol. 1, p. 473.

93. Juan Stefanich, *Artigas, Francia y el Paraguay* (Montevideo, n.d.), pp. 11, 13, 15. See also Eduardo de Salterain, *Artigas en el Paraguay* (2nd ed., Montevideo, 1950), p. 31.

94. Francisco Ramírez from Corrientes to Dr. Francia, July 22, 1820, AN-A, SH, vol. 431, fol. 2, p. 76, and Ramírez to Dr. Francia, Sept. 22, 1820, AN-A, SH, vol. 431, fol. 2, pp. 118-119.

95. Families in flight were not uncommon. The commandant at Pilar to Dr. Francia, Nov. 8, 1823, about a family from Santiago del Estero who were seeking refuge, AN-A, SH, vol. 383 part two, fol. 1, pp. 594-595. See also Dr. Francia to the commandant of Fort San Carlos del Río Apa, April 8, 1824, AN-A, SH, vol. 237, fol. 8, pp. 16-17.

96. Dr. Francia to the commandant at Ytapúa, Sept. 21, 1837, AN-A, SH, vol. 377, fol. 1, pp. 179-180.

troops deserted en masse from their post in Brazilian Misiones and were admitted through Ytapúa.<sup>97</sup>

*Correntinos* also fled north during the Franciata. Late in his rule, Francia wrote his commandant at Ytapúa to aid the *correntino* immigrants passing from Candelaria with canoes, to give them some land in the countryside, and supply them with cattle from a nearby state *estancia*.<sup>98</sup>

Nor was the door open only to free men. In 1820 the Dictator ordered his commandant at Concepción not to return runaway slaves to their Brazilian masters,<sup>99</sup> and in 1837 the commandant at Ytapúa wrote Francia that "I have put at liberty the Negro fleeing from San Borja, as per your orders."<sup>100</sup> Much the same occurred the next year in the case of five runaway slaves from Corrientes.<sup>101</sup> This generosity to oppressed foreigners is a side of the Francia regime and the "isolation" policy rarely mentioned.

A brief glance at the documents of the Franciata reveals a surprising number of Frenchmen in Asunción, along with some eleven Englishmen, as well as foreigners of both nationalities in other parts of the republic.<sup>102</sup> A note of 1825 mentions an English citizen and a Galician at Pilar,<sup>103</sup> and Portuguese and even Germans were also at that port.<sup>104</sup> In 1826, one ship deposited in Pilar a *porteño*, an Italian, three Portuguese, and one person each from Lima and the Canary Islands.<sup>105</sup>

In the 1830s there were Napolese and French in Asunción,<sup>106</sup> French and Portuguese at Fort Borbón,<sup>107</sup> and Genoese at Ypané.<sup>108</sup>

97. Commandant at Ytapúa to Dr. Francia, April 23, 1839, AN-A, SH, Vol. 378, fol. 1, p. 286.

98. Commandant at Ytapúa to Dr. Francia, Jan. 27, 1840, AN-A, SH, vol. 378, fol. 1, pp. 323-324.

99. Dr. Francia to the commandant at Concepción, Oct. 31, 1820, AN-A, SH, vol. 232, fol. 3, p. 24.

100. Commandant at Ytapúa to Dr. Francia, Dec. 16, 1837, AN-A, SH, vol. 377, fol. 1, pp. 187-188.

101. See AN-A, SLC, vol. 41 (1838), item 642.

102. Pérez Acosta, *Francia y Bompland*, pp. 29, 32, and Robertson, *Letters on Paraguay*, III, 260.

103. Commandant at Pilar to Dr. Francia, Aug. 28, 1825, AN-A, SH, vol. 393, fol. 1, p. 274.

104. Commandant at Pilar to Dr. Francia, Nov. 11, 1825, AN-A, SH, vol. 393, fol. 1, p. 284.

105. Commandant of Pilar to Dr. Francia, July 27, 1826, AN-A, SH, vol. 393, fol. 1, pp. 326-327.

106. Vázquez, *Dr. Francia*, p. 304, and Francisco Fornells to Dr. Francia, Aug. 23, 1830, AN-A, SNE, vol. 1262 (no page no.).

107. Commandant of Fort Borbón to Dr. Francia, Dec. 1, 1834, AN-A, SH, vol. 391 part two, fol. 22, pp. 27-28.

108. Pedro Saguier to Dr. Francia, 1819, BN-RJ, CRB, 1-30, 6, 91, and

The index of testaments filed in Paraguay is also instructive, as it indicates Spaniards and Italians in Villa Rica, Spaniards and Portuguese at Paraguari, and other foreigners throughout the country. Paraguay had a larger foreign element than most have since realized.

### *Diplomacy—The True Isolation*

On the formal, diplomatic level, Paraguay was indeed "isolated" during the Franciata, though less owing to the caprice of the Dictator than to the circumstances of the times. Relations between Paraguay and Buenos Aires were frustrated largely due to the unwillingness of the Port to recognize the fact of Paraguayan independence. Paraguay was regarded as a province in rebellion and only other commitments kept Buenos Aires from action even more severe than economic discrimination.

Recognition of Paraguayan sovereignty being Dr. Francia's first requirement for formal relations, normal diplomatic contact with the Port was precluded. Argentine recognition would not come until well after Francia's death, when Paraguayan sovereignty was an incontrovertible fact of Platine life. The Candelaria boundary question also contributed to the poor relations with Buenos Aires, and the sole significant contact, commerce, was allowed only because it proved mutually profitable.

The serious attempt to establish formal commercial and then diplomatic ties with Brazil was frustrated, as we have seen, mainly by outside factors: the erratic behavior of Correa da Câmara, the chaotic international situation, and the Brazilian court's failure to take the decisive step of formal recognition. Relations between Paraguay and Britain were much the same story. The failure of John Parish Robertson to satisfy the unrealistic demands of Francia, and the unwillingness of Woodbine Parish to increase contact after Francia's release of British captives, brought that dream of the Dictator to an early end. In 1815 and again in 1824, overtures were made by French citizens to "permit the free entry of the French flag to your Province," but these seem to have been unofficial and nothing came of them. French consuls in Buenos Aires, however, kept records of Paraguayan affairs for the home government.<sup>109</sup>

Relations with the sister republic of Bolivia were also abortive. Several citizens from the Andine republic, in both official and unofficial capacities, were rebuffed in their attempts to gain a hearing

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Perez Acosta, pp. viii, ix. See also commandant at Ytapúa to Dr. Francia, Aug. 18, 1824, and Aug. 19, 1824 in same legajo.

109. Benítez, *La vida solitaria . . . de Francia*, p. 267.

from *El Supremo*. Francia was suspicious of the envoys who came via the Mato Grosso with rather informal papers. One such "diplomat" was expelled after just four hours on Paraguayan soil.<sup>110</sup>

Footnote to the diplomacy of the Francia years was the appearance in 1825 of the self-styled "Marqués de Guaraní" in Europe. This individual, whose real name seems to have been José Agustín Fort, claimed to be "Colonel of the first Legion of Paraguayan Volunteers," sent "on the authority of Dr. Francia" to establish relations with Spain and Portugal.<sup>111</sup> Well-provided with money, the mysterious Marqués spent several years in the Peninsula (arrested frequently as a "subversive"). As yet no one has been able to determine the veracity of his story, but given the times and the nature of the Dictator, he may not have been the charlatan he is usually supposed to have been.<sup>112</sup>

### *Isolation—A Judgment*

It is difficult to accept the standard version of Paraguayan isolation during the Franciata. Such as it was, Paraguayan insularity was not the creature of a despotic madman. Paraguay had been isolated since its beginnings by geography and ethnic distinctiveness, factors which were compounded after 1811 by the hostility of her neighbors to the fact of her political independence. Given these circumstances, the extent of contact was remarkable, as seen in the large trade at Pilar and Ytapúa, the existence of foreigners from many nations in Paraguay, and the policy of accepting all refugees.

Isolation was on a formal level only, largely forced upon Francia by the diplomatic decisions of his neighbors. On the level of informal reality, Paraguay was not much more limited in its contacts than it had been before the advent of *El Supremo*.

110. Hipólito Sánchez Quell, *La diplomacia paraguaya de Mayo a Cerro Corá* (Buenos Aires, 1964), p. 57; Mariano Molas, *Descripción histórica de la antigua provincia del Paraguay* (Asunción, 1957), p. 87, and commandant of Fort Borbón to Dr. Francia, July 19, 1828, for two letters concerning the Bolivian envoy, AN-A, SH, vol. 391 part two, fol. 1, pp. 22-23.

111. Report of the "Superintendencia general de policía del Reyno," concerning the "Marqués de Guaraní," Sept. 18, 1825, AHN-M, Sección de Estado (SE), Leg. 219.

112. Council of State to the Secretary of the Office of State, Sept. 27, 1827, AHN-M, SE, Leg. 219.